

The racial and colonial dimensions of gentrification

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Abstract

In recent years, studies of gentrification have added a deeper political economic, political, and cultural understanding to this process by demonstrating how it can be understood as not only driven by the physical displacement of working-class residents but also by the political, cultural, and physical displacement of poor and working-class Black, Latinx, Asian, and Indigenous populations. In this study, I review these recent key works in urban sociology, geography, and urban history which examine the specifically racial and colonial dimensions of gentrification. These works provide invaluable insights to the political economic, political, and cultural dimensions of gentrification, but are still constrained by not developing a deeper historical analytics of the racial and colonial structures which shape gentrification. Because of this, the foundations of anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism which make possible the commodification of space and devaluation and dispossession of people that gentrification requires, remain obscured. I argue the alternative frameworks of settler colonialism, internal colonialism, and coloniality—developed largely separate from urban sociology—can provide a sharper analysis to the study of gentrification by helping to more explicitly name and explain the racial and colonial structures, logics, and subjectivities which shape gentrification.

KEYWORDS

coloniality, gentrification, internal colonialism, political economy, racism, settler colonialism, urban

1 | INTRODUCTION

Recent scholarship in the urban sociology of gentrification has shifted the focus on residential displacement to an in-depth examination of cultural and political displacement as well, and thus the overall repression of spatial expressions of working-class Black, Latinx, Asian, and Indigenous people (e.g., Boyd, 2008; Hyra, 2017; Pattillo, 2007). This shift expands the study of gentrification to include its political economic, political, and cultural aspects. But this scholarship often relies upon theoretical frameworks that developed largely through placing primary importance on class as the major determinant of gentrification (Arena, 2012; Smith, 1996). Thus, the specifically colonial and racial foundations of gentrifying working-class spaces are by and large not theorized in this literature.

This is likely shaped in part by a specific theorization on the connection between colonialism and racism (with a specific focus on urban struggles), stemming from critical Black theorists, fading away in the US sociology in recent decades (Pinderhughes, 2010; Steinberg, 2007)—even while earlier work examined this connection (Blauener, 1969, 1972)—and a general erasure from sociology of Indigenous peoples and epistemologies which have historically engaged with an analytics of colonialism, land, and place (see McKay, Vinyeta, & Norgaard, 2020). Meanwhile, a rich tradition of theorizing on colonialism has continued to flourish largely in the humanities (see Go, 2016) and also in anthropology (Asad, 1973; Escobar, 2008; Gupta & Ferguson, 1997b; Scott, 1995; Stoler, 2002; Trouillot, 2003), while remaining relatively separate from sociology. With this absence, more critical approaches to the urban sociology of gentrification are left with Marxist geographer Neil Smith's (1996) *The New Urban Frontier* as a primary touchstone to understand the racialized and classed dispossessions of gentrification. Yet, while this major work offers a sharp analytics of the political economy of gentrification, it has the tendency to reduce the colonial to a metaphor for class. In contrast, recent scholarship in geography studying gentrification and urban redevelopment has moved away from a class-reductionist lens to a more central concern with the specific dimensions of colonialism in shaping urban space through drawing upon critical decolonial approaches from the humanities, especially Black and Indigenous Studies (e.g., Addie & Fraser, 2019; Barraclough, 2018; Bonds & Inwood, 2016; Safransky, 2014). This study aims to consider how urban sociology can learn from these approaches by more critical interrogating the absences and taken for granted categories of analysis deployed within studies of the racial dimensions of gentrification. Following the lead of this work and Evelyn Nakano Glenn's (2015) work of drawing on scholars in Indigenous studies and settler colonial studies in seeking to develop a theory of "settler-colonialism as structure" in order to understand the relationality of the US sexism and racism while calling upon future sociological work to explore what other frameworks—such as internal colonialism—can lend further explanatory power to the relationality of different racism and colonialisms, this study draws upon critical approaches which have been seldom engaged with in urban sociology—settler colonialism, internal colonialism, and coloniality—to encourage a sharper urban sociological analysis of the colonial and racial dimensions of gentrification.

I seek to develop a synthetic theory that demonstrates what the approaches of settler colonial studies (Glenn, 2015; Veracini, 2010, 2011; Wolfe, 2006), internal colonialism (Allen, 1969, 2005; Blauener, 1972), and coloniality (Quijano, 2000; Wynter, 2003) can bring to bear on the study of gentrification. I review major works in urban sociology and beyond (geography and urban history) which seek to explain the racial dimensions of gentrification, grouping them into three distinct but not mutually exclusive emphases: political economy, racial politics, and racial branding. I find these emphases are constrained by treating racism as epiphenomenal to capitalism and colonialism and coloniality as epiphenomenal to race. The political economy approach (e.g., Smith, 1996) foregrounds capitalistic exploitation, but does not specifically theorize on the racial and colonial dimensions of gentrification. The racial politics emphasis (e.g., Arena, 2012; Mele, 2017; Pattillo, 2007) explains how urban political elites racialize space for profit and political gain, but does not historically or theoretically question in-depth the undergirding colonial constructions of race and space that would lead real estate agents and other urban political elites to desire homogenous white spaces in the first place. The racial branding emphasis (Berrey, 2015; Boyd, 2008; Hyra, 2017; Pattillo, 2007; Zukin, 2010) demonstrates how urban spaces are racially branded for profit through constructing racialized desires, but does not provide an analytics of the colonial foundations of these

desires in order to understand the historical content of the cultural realm of gentrification and how it shapes racial and colonial hierarchies in cities. I end by arguing how settler colonialism, internal colonialism, and coloniality can help push critical urban sociological and urban studies approaches to the study of gentrification further by more precisely explaining (a) the racial colonial capitalist logics that shape gentrification, (b) the subjects, bodies, and spaces which are constructed as in need of displacement, and (c) the reproduction of subjects, bodies, and spaces which are constructed as the goals of gentrification projects.

2 | POLITICAL ECONOMY OF GENTRIFICATION

Marxist political economic approaches to gentrification have critically shifted the study of gentrification away from approaches rooted in neoclassical economics and toward a foregrounding of class struggle (Slater, 2009, 2017). In this approach, gentrification is understood as an overall class transformation of a city or neighborhood which displaces working-class residents not only through direct and in-direct (i.e., before the last move-out) physical displacement, but also through exclusionary displacement (being stuck in place due to an unaffordable housing market), and displacement pressure (the alienation of having one's working-class neighborhood change around them; Marcuse, 1985; Slater, 2009, 2017). This approach is particularly useful in explaining how multi-scalar political economic changes drive gentrification. For example, Hackworth (2002) finds that real estate industry changes of increasing financialization and globalization, occurring through the merging of property with financial markets facilitated by global financial deregulation, core manufacturing economies shifting more to real estate markets, and the merging of small-firm developers with corporate developers drove the new wave of gentrification beginning in the 1990s.

Geographer Neil Smith's work in particular has guided this critical political economic pulse in urban sociology. Smith (1996) defines gentrification as the class conquest of a city, characterized by the revalorization or reinvestment of a neighborhood. Smith brings together perspectives on the supply side and demand-side of gentrification by arguing that gentrification is driven by capital's search for new profits and not primarily by individual middle-class actors suddenly demanding less commuting time and closer access to urban amenities. Capital can find those profits where there is a rent gap, or the gap between the current ground rent of property and the potential ground rent which can be actualized after redevelopment.

Smith seeks to understand the demand-side of gentrification through drawing parallels between the white colonial desires of the frontier in the 19th century and the construction of an *urban frontier* to be gentrified in 1980 and 1990s New York City bolstered by cultural branding that draws upon a colonial romantic myth of the American West. Smith takes this phenomenon of cultural branding and seeks to extend the metaphor as he compares whites killing and removing Native Americans from their lands in the 19th century with the myth of the *urban frontier* used to justify the removal of homeless, working-class, Black, and Latinx people from the Tompkins Park Area of New York City. Smith does not provide a specific conceptualization of race and racism, but he does acknowledge to certain extent the racist and colonial dimensions of gentrification in his development of the concepts of the *urban frontier* and the *revanchist city*. The construction of the *urban frontier*—what he defines as the visible and intentional geographic line between disinvestment and reinvestment—is driven by the white middle and ruling classes' dehumanization of racialized and working-class others living in the areas that are to be gentrified. The *revanchist city* is a city whose politics are fueled by political revenge. For example, he argues that gentrification and “taking back the streets” became neoconservative rallying cries in the 1990s as a form of revenge to punish the political gains of Black, immigrant, and LGBTQ urban communities. Furthermore, Smith acknowledges the legacies of racist housing policy in his discussion of redlining and blockbusting, arguing that one of the key parts of the process of revalorizing and reinvesting in a neighborhood is when banks, developers, and political elites agree to “greenline” previously redlined districts, thus priming them for gentrification. While Smith offers an important contribution to

the political economy of gentrification, the under-theorization of racism as a social structure (Bonilla-Silva, 1997) reduces racialized space and racialized bodies as differences that capital can exploit.

Moreover, Smith's concept of the *urban frontier*—guided by metaphorical comparison of histories of settler colonialism to gentrification in the present—obscures the ongoing present of settler colonialism and its impact on urban Indigenous communities. This obscuring is most extreme when Smith refers to gentrification as the new “Indian Wars” (p. 26), the Department of Housing and Urban Development as the new Bureau of Indian Affairs, and working-class white, Black, and Latinx communities as the “new Indians” (p. 28). This is not to say there should be no connection made between earlier histories of settler colonialism and gentrification in the present. Indeed, as legal scholar Cheryl Harris (1993) demonstrates, “...the parallel systems of domination of Black and Native American peoples...created racially contingent forms of property and property rights” (p. 1714) in which a logic of “whiteness as property” is constructed, which, while taking on different forms in different moments, maintains its core exclusionary logic which limits legitimized uses and protections of property to whiteness, thus protecting the assumed privileges and value of whiteness (p. 1715, 1758). As Smith alludes to, the 19th century construction of the frontier and the 20th century *urban frontier* share a connection through their mechanisms of violence and dehumanizing racist justifications. At the same time, drawing upon decolonization to metaphorically refer to a working class struggle against urban capitalism obscures these connections and leaves unanswered how to acknowledge and understand settler colonialism in the present, stymying a serious engagement of what Indigenous decolonization in urban space would require (see Tuck & Yang, 2012).¹ Such an engagement requires examining settler colonialism as a unique social structure, which I describe later in this paper.

Summing up, the Marxist intervention of situating class struggle as foundational to gentrification projects is key, yet the racial and colonial foundations of gentrification are left under-theorized and obscured. Taking the Marxist approach can account for how profit is generated through exploiting rent gaps, but cannot adequately account for the racial and colonial dimensions of who is disproportionately exploited and displaced by rent gaps and gentrification; how racial and colonial structures shape how space is lived, felt, desired, and struggled over; and the racial and colonial dimensions of spatial epistemologies. I argue this signals the need to examine the relationship between colonial theft and gentrification, one that moves us beyond metaphor and also beyond stating the fundamental fact that colonialism is in the present. Rather this call for a development of an approach to studying colonialism in urban space that can begin to account for the both differential racializations and colonizations of urban space and their interconnections to the culture and political economy of space. Literature on the racial politics of gentrification more directly engages with some of these problematics by foregrounding a racial analysis of the connection between post-industrial and neoliberal political economic processes, but as I will argue, does not take us far enough in understanding the connection between racism, colonialism, and gentrification.

3 | RACIAL POLITICS OF GENTRIFICATION

A number of empirical studies show how gentrification projects are facilitated by attacks on affordable housing, the increasing power of finance capital and private corporations to dictate the housing market and other social services (Gotham, 2014; Hackworth, 2007), and post-Civil Rights racialized class formations (Arena, 2012; Boyd, 2008; Kerr, 2011; Pattillo, 2007). Key studies have examined the role of political elites in racializing urban space and shaping redevelopment for their interests as they seek to commodify housing and stymie Black political resistance. In an historical analysis of the demise of public housing alongside the redevelopment of New Orleans' urban core, Arena (2012) finds white business and political elites formed a coalition with the post-Civil Rights Black political class in order to promote the privatization of public housing through using nonprofit organizations to co-opt Black working-class activists. White political elites specifically targeted public housing in response to the strong anti-capitalist Black political movements organized in public housing developments. Also studying racialized class formations in New Orleans, Dawson (2011) demonstrates that white political and business elites took advantage of the weakened

Black public sphere and displaced Black population after Hurricane Katrina by holding local elections which massively limited Black participation in order to initiate anti-affordable housing policies. Also studying racialized class formations, Kerr's (2011) historical analysis of urban development in 20th century Cleveland finds that in the aftermath of the Black working class 1966 Hough rebellion, white political elites developed plans to reshape the built environment to prevent future rebellion, focusing on dispersing majority Black public housing to make way for gentrification in the urban core. These studies show that the weakening of Black political spaces of resistance seems to be a goal of and also helps to facilitate gentrification projects.

Also examining the demise of public housing, Pattillo's (2007) historical ethnography of Black gentrification in the North Kenwood–Oakland neighborhood of Chicago's South Side demonstrates how Black public housing residents' exclusion from elite urban planning networks and the terms of debate in court being narrowed to whether or not certain neighborhoods should be labeled as revitalizing—thus crowding out debates about race and class discrimination—facilitated the demolition of high-rise low-income public housing. Despite local media depicting Black gentrifiers as at the forefront of demolition plans, Pattillo argues that Black middle-class gentrifiers were more intermediaries—whose concerns about the disproportionate placement of public housing in Black communities were often sidelined—rather than instigators in a redevelopment process being largely controlled by white city elites.

Other studies have examined the specific racial ideologies urban political elites intentionally use to racialize and gentrify space for their interests (e.g., Kipfer & Petrunia, 2009; Mele, 2017). For example, Mele (2017) finds that the white Republican urban political class in Chester, PA used *race strategies*, the intentional use of "...rhetoric, representations, and discourses of race [that] are manipulated and employed by key power holders to facilitate and legitimize certain kinds of urban change over others" (p. 8), to promote the decline of the majority Black inner-city in the 70 and 80s and its subsequent gentrification in the early 2000s. In these respective eras, elites racialized the inner city as unworthy of investment and then later as a post-racial, color-blind space—in which collective claims based on race are framed as illegitimate—in need of gentrification because of the supposed individual failings of people of color holding development back. Similarly, Kipfer and Petrunia's (2009) study of the commodification and gentrification of public housing in 2000s Toronto also finds that gentrification through "social mix" is promoted by political elites and urban developers as a solution to the social problems facing working-class people of color. Kipfer and Petrunia equate this process of commodification to a type of 'recolonization' because of the racial and territorial strategies of domination at play. This work goes further than most approaches from urban sociology on the racial politics of gentrification as it seeks to provide an analysis of the specifically colonial dimensions of redevelopment by connecting racial ideologies to earlier colonial histories and discourse. Nonetheless, more clarity is needed on what the connection is between commodification, colonization, and recolonization in their analysis as these concepts slip into one another. Thus, more work is needed to further study the undergirding colonial constructions of race and space that would lead real estate agents and other urban political elites to desire homogenous white spaces in the first place, and thus the foundational historical relationship between property, wealth, and capital on the one hand and race and coloniality on the other hand. Scholarship on the racial branding of gentrification provides an opportunity to begin to explore this relationship through an analysis of the connection between the culture and political economy of space.

4 | RACIAL BRANDING

Racial branding, the promotion of seeing, feeling, or consuming a space through a particular racialized understanding of that space, is deployed to encourage middle-class consumption and the gentrification of majority Black, Asian, and Latinx urban spaces (Acolin & Vitiello, 2018; Berrey, 2015; Boyd, 2008; Dávila, 2004; Hyra, 2017; Zukin, 2010). For example, Boyd's (2008) ethnography of a community development organization in a South Side, Chicago neighborhood shows that in the 1990s, in order to attract Black gentrification supported

by white business and political elites, middle-class African-Americans branded the neighborhood with nostalgic images of early 20th century blackness that mitigated histories of white supremacist and anti-Black violence and intra-racial class conflict. Similarly, Hyra's (2017) ethnography of early 2000s rapidly gentrifying DC finds that blackness was branded and appropriated in a nostalgic fashion, celebrating famous Black musicians and mitigating the Black radical tradition of protest in order to attract white middle-class newcomers. Berrey's (2015) ethnography of Rogers Park, Chicago, and Mele's (2017) historical analysis of Chester, PA show that in addition to blackness, power-muted notions of ethnic and racial diversity are branded and commodified to fuel gentrification.

Studies on racial branding help expand an understanding of displacement by showing how gentrification projects often exacerbate what Hyra (2017) calls the "political displacement" and "cultural displacement" of poor and working class residents, whereby these residents' political voices are marginalized or silenced and their leisure activities and cultural expressions constricted and criminalized (e.g., Pattillo, 2007; Hyra, 2012, 2017). To wit, Zukin's (2010) ethnography on the politics of authenticity in New York City finds working-class Puerto Rican, African American, and Caribbean American communities use public gardens as a form of ethnic place-making in the wake of urban decay, but city government's promotion of gentrification and commodification threatens and often destroys these spaces.

Overall, a focus on racial branding highlights how ethnoracial signifiers are mobilized in order to promote gentrification and the overall commodification of public space. In her pathbreaking work, *The Cultures of Cities*, Zukin (1995) argues that a focus on culture can be used to understand how white city leaders' and residents' anxieties over increasing ethnoracial diversity are managed by the increasingly powerful cultural industries and their desire for profit and also city elites' desires to manage and normalize bodies and spaces. This line of inquiry is found in Zukin's (2010) multi-sited ethnography of New York City, where she demonstrates that the branding of a space as authentic—as desired by majority middle class and elite whites—as a strategy to supposedly combat modern urban homogenization, often tears at the roots communities are built upon, thus physically and culturally displacing working class Black and Latinx communities. I agree with this understanding of culture not only as a framing process but also as a commodity that can be managed and consumed, and one that can be the driving force behind the entire remaking of an urban space. Zukin (2010) argues further that when city officials seek to remake urban space they often forget the importance of origins, for what Zukin (2010) should be understood as "...a moral right to the city that enables people to put down roots. This is the right to inhabit a space, not just to consume it as an experience" (p. 5). With this said, to extend this analysis of authenticity and belonging, I argue we need a specific analytics of the racial and colonial in order to understand the historical material content of this cultural realm and its vastly unequal power dynamics in cities. In other words, Zukin's identification of the tensions between origins and new beginnings encourages the reimagining of urban property beyond its most exclusionary and exploitative logics, but this approach also reaches a limit by not directly engaging with an analytics of racism and colonization and how both shape the exploitative and possessive logics of urban property and space.

To get at the root of the tension between origins and new beginnings, we can confront origins not only in the cultural and moral sense that Zukin (2010) calls for, but also in the historical and material sense that an analysis of settler colonialism urges us to engage with (Estes, 2019) as it acknowledges and builds from Indigenous people's histories and the construction of the specifically settler colonial dimensions of property and space. To understand the power and oppression shaping gentrification, I contend we must foreground an understanding of the originating and ongoing logics of eliminating Indigenous people and denying Black spatiality as foundational to racial and colonial violence which shapes the ideologies and technologies of property and space which structure capitalistic accumulation and the denial of Black, Asian, Indigenous, Latinx, and working class placemaking. I turn to the frameworks of settler colonialism, internal colonialism, and coloniality in order to understand these ideologies and technologies.

5 | SETTLER COLONIALISM

Settler colonialism can be understood as a colonial social structure with the foundational project of building a “new world” through the elimination and dispossession of Indigenous people by invading populations (McKay et al., 2020; Tuck & Yang, 2012; Veracini, 2010; Wolfe, 2006). Paradoxically, these populations seek to build a settler state which simultaneously seeks Indigenous elimination and appropriates Indigenous culture in order to “indigenize” settlers and legitimize settler claims to the land (Tuck & Yang, 2012; Veracini, 2010, 2011). These settler claims to the land and the dispossession of Indigenous land are carried out by physical violence and legitimized by an “ideology of improvement,” articulated through the construction of epistemological and legal frameworks which support settlers putting land to a “higher use” for commercial trade while denying Indigenous forms of sovereignty and relations to the land (Bhandar, 2018) through discursively fixing Indigenous people in place and relegating them to the past within the worldview of Eurocentric modernity (Byrd, 2011; Moreton-Robinson, 2015). Thus, central to settler colonialism and decolonial politics against this structure is a struggle over the land (Coulthard, 2014; McKay et al., 2020; Tuck & Yang, 2012).

The settler colonial “logics of elimination” is found across the diverse spaces, temporalities, and technologies of settler states (Wolfe, 2006), such as in homicidal frontier violence—such as during the US’s wars waged against Native Americans and the weekly killings of Palestinians by the Israeli state—and assimilation projects such as the US’s mid-20th century relocation policies directed toward Native Americans (Fixico, 2000; LaGrand, 2002; Miller, 2019). Evelyn Nakano Glenn (2015) examines how diverse regional specificities of US racisms are connected through the structure of settler colonialism and its logics of elimination. After introducing the centrality of settler colonialism to the construction of whiteness, anti-Indian racism, and the “structural genocide” (Wolfe, 2006) directed towards Native American and Black populations, Glenn (2015) explores how racisms are linked through examining the white settler colonial racism directed towards Asian and Latinx populations, in the form of containment, terroristic removal, restriction/disablement, and exclusion targeting Chinese immigrants in California and containment, exploitation, terrorism, and removal targeting Mexicans in the Southwest.

Glenn does not argue that colonial racism enacted against these populations can be analogized with anti-Black racism and anti-Indian racism, but rather, argues that the US racisms are linked through the foundational dimensions of the US white settler colonialism: (a) the project of acquiring land for white settlers to exploit and occupy and (b) the intensive exploitation of the land through the exploitation of people. White settler colonialism constitutes what Glenn calls a “race-gender project” because the construction of white masculinity has been central to the settler colonial project in the United States which “transplanted certain racialized and gendered conceptions and regimes from the *metropole* but also transformed them in the context of experiences in the New World” (p. 58). Analyzing the centrality of the construction of race and gender to colonialism has been well established as a critical field of analysis in anthropology and the humanities², but Glenn’s (2015) intervention is especially critical to sociology, where the centrality of colonialism and empire building to racism and its spatial and territorial dimensions has been too often underemphasized (also see Jung, 2015; Jung & Kwon, 2013). Within the race-gender project of settler colonialism, the specifically white, male possessive individual becomes the ideal subject of new legal and epistemological worldviews created to justify the theft of Indigenous land and the denigration of Indigenous and other racialized others’ relations with one another and the land (Bhandar, 2018). It is the construction of this white male possessive subject as the ideal property owner and subject of the state that legitimizes marking Native Americans for elimination and dispossessing them of their land and Africans for slavery and dispossessing them of the right to their own bodies (Harris, 1993). Thus, anti-Black and anti-Indian racism are both foundational to the racial, colonial, and gendered property regimes that have emerged in white settler colonialism which transform land and people into commodities in order to promote white patriarchal colonial capitalism (Glenn, 2015). These property regimes are upheld through the construction and maintenance of whiteness as status and property, conferring economic, social, and cultural benefits to those inhabiting it (Bhandar, 2018; Harris, 1993).

White status is constructed in relation to the perpetual “savagery” of the other—the racialized marker of the Indigenous subject—whose exclusion and death forms the basis for the inside of the “civilized” settler nation (Bhandar, 2018; Moreton-Robinson, 2015). The building of the landscape of the nation, for example in the form of the built environment of cities, is an act of continuously denying Indigenous sovereignty and an attempted assertion of the territorial domination of white patriarchal sovereignty (Moreton-Robinson, 2015).

6 | THE SETTLER COLONIALISM OF URBAN SPACE

Research on settler colonial urbanisms examines how these settler colonial property relations are uniquely articulated in urban space (Barracough, 2018; Blatman-Thomas & Porter, 2019; Dorries, Henry, Hugill, McCreary, & Tomiak, 2019; Estes, 2019; Grandinetti, 2018; Hugill, 2017; Safransky, 2014; Tomiak, 2017) and how Indigenous resurgence (Tomiak, McCreary, Hugill, Henry, & Dorries, 2019) and Indigenous women's political practices and imaginaries continue to engage in spatial practices which “(re)map” space and land against and also outside settler cartographies, thus troubling and challenging settler colonial and imperial projects (Goeman, 2013). Thus, it is critical to understand settler colonial urbanisms as projects of seeking to produce settler localities (Addie & Fraser, 2019), but at the same time understand that these projects never fully “settle” territory, as Indigenous maps, sovereignty, and world-making cannot be fully erased or stolen by settler colonialism (Goeman, 2008; Wolfe, 2016). Drawing on Appadurai's (1996) key insight that the production of locality, as “structures of feeling” is actively constructed through the production of spatio-temporal boundaries which provide context for local subjects to emerge and reproduce, requires foundational violence and the ritualized organization of practices aimed at controlling peoples and places marked as disruptive or chaotic, Addie and Fraser (2019) describe how in the context of settler colonial urbanisms this entails a settler reimagining of the city concerning whom it belongs to and whom it is for (Addie & Fraser, 2019, p. 1373). At first glance, this might bring us back to the racial branding approach, discussed earlier, but this approach goes deeper through engaging in historical and genealogical analyses of how both settler colonial urbanisms and gentrification projects built through the former are historically layered with the settler colonial imaginaries, discourses and technologies of erasure and dispossession which articulate with urban capitalism (e.g., Addie & Fraser, 2019; Clarno, 2017; Edmonds, 2010).

Settler colonial capitalism seeks out the production of urban spaces that are built from the foundation on Indigenous dispossession (Blatman-Thomas & Porter, 2019). For example, building on Stoler's (2002) work demonstrating how the management of gender, sexuality and intimate relations, and sentiments and affections surrounding these, is central to colonial and imperial power, Edmonds (2010) examines the resignification of spaces and bodies during the transition from fur-trading mercantilism to settler colonialism in mid-19th century British Columbia. White settlers' ideologies of a pure, white British civic space were counterposed with discourses of nuisance, prostitution, uncleanliness, and later vagrancy which attached to First Nations people in white-settler government and media reports. White colonial policies became increasingly punitive with the increasing desire to steal the land, and ideologies of Indigenous women as sexually promiscuous and diseased were mobilized to fuel racial colonial spatial anxieties regarding the protection of a white civic space. When the local colonial government blamed Indigenous people for a smallpox break out, these ideologies fueled mass evictions and displacement of Indigenous people from the city space. This case demonstrates how the “race-gender project” of settler colonialism (Glenn, 2015) can operate in urban spaces as it draws upon gendered colonial ideologies of pathology in the construction of a settler city.

Nick Estes (2019) examines a more recent case of the settler colonial dimensions of urban space. In an historical analysis, the building of Rapid City, South Dakota, Estes connects the early colonial occupation of the area serving as an outpost to support illegal settler mining in the Lakota region of the Black Hills and as a direct violation of the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty to the selling of trust-restricted land to the Rapid City government and private companies in the mid-20th century, thus concentrating Indigenous people in an impoverished housing community

and limiting their movement through their city and access to social services. The white settler city government sought to justify these exclusions and restrictions through pathologizing Indigenous people as “transient” and Indigenous women in particular as “gypsy tramps” who are a burden on the welfare state. He connects this settler colonial racism to the mass displacement of Native Americans from Rapid City in the wake of a massive flood in 1974 followed by state-sponsored gentrification and segregation of the city whose boundaries were heavily policed by ideologies of the “drunk Indian.”

In addition to pathologizing discourses of the body, political elites mobilize settler colonial logics of putting property to “higher use” in attempts to seize and privatize Indigenous land. For example, Launius and Boyce’s (2020) historical analysis of settler colonialism and racial capitalism in Tucson, AZ find that in 2009 the Arizona state government took over the board of the Rio Nuevo redevelopment project and threatened to sue both the City of Tucson and Pima County if they did not hand over land of the S’cuk Son site, where the O’odham have lived for over 4000 years, “marking it as the site with the longest known continuous agricultural practice and inhabitation in the present day United States” (8–9). While 67% of Tucson residents voted to protect the land, the state government argued the plans for ecological and cultural preservation would not stimulate enough “economic activity,” thus marking it for commercial development. Indigenous, Chicana, and other residents responded by forming a coalition, Rio Nuestro, with a specifically decolonial praxis aimed at stemming dispossession of Indigenous, Mexican American, and other racialized people throughout the city and repatriating the S’cuk Son Site to the O’odham. Rio Nuestro was able to effectively protect some of S’cuk Son Site from commercial development and negotiations are now ongoing with the Tohono O’odham Nation and the City of Tucson regarding the repatriation of some their land. However, the Rio Nuevo board still moved forward with mixed-used development, and property values have skyrocketed as the new development has facilitated white gentrification of the West Tucson neighborhood in the last decade, thus threatening largescale displacement. This ongoing struggle demonstrates how struggles against settler colonialism can intersect with struggles against gentrification (Launius & Boyce, 2020; Quizar, 2019), and the salience of Indigenous critiques of framing gentrification as the “new” colonialism (which relegates settler colonialism to the past; Waánataq, 2017) by demonstrating the continuation of settler colonialism within urban development projects and racial capitalism and how Indigenous led resistance against these structures can entail practicing and defending Indigenous sovereignty while connecting it with resistance to the racialized displacement of other populations.

Summing up, these cases foreground the gendered settler colonial dimensions and foundations of city-building, highlighting how settler colonial histories of conquest, genocide, and exploitation and their ongoing present shape the production of urban space and its role in the formation of racialized, colonial, and gendered subjectivities and ideologies. The analysis of the ongoing structure of settler colonialism in urban space urges us to retool our approaches to the political economy, politics, and branding of gentrification by looking beyond the taken-for-granted purview of urban politics of gentrification which seldom makes deep connections with earlier histories of racial and colonial dispossession (Hightower & Fraser, 2020). This move can be made by incorporating histories of settler colonialism and how they continue to operate in the present, reproducing relations of property which privilege the white possessive individual through the abstraction of urban space from Indigenous histories and relations with the land (Bhandar, 2018), and justifying urban dispossession through producing pathologizing stereotypes of Indigenous people. Whereas in some urban spaces marked by an extremely visible Indigenous/settler binary—such as Rapid City—the racial and colonial exclusion of Indigenous people is readily apparent, in other urban spaces marked by considerable diversity beyond the Indigenous/settler binary, there remains a need to understand the settler colonial histories and logics shaping these spaces since Indigenous people and land remain targets of dispossession and erasure in these spaces (Launius & Boyce, 2020; Quizar, 2019) and Black populations are targeted by white settler logics (Quizar, 2019) as white spaces are produced through settler violence and worldviews, compounding both anti-Indigenous and anti-Black racism (Quizar, 2019). Thus, Settler colonial logics remain foundational to the dynamics of territorial domination in the US across diverse spaces (Lloyd & Wolfe, 2016) and intersect with the white domination of other racialized populations. For example, Addie and Fraser’s (2019) analysis of the political

economy and discourse of the Over-the-Rhine, Cincinnati gentrification project in the 2000s finds the discourses of neighborhood revitalization lie at the nexus of settler-colonialism and anti-Black racism, celebrating German settlers as the “original settlers” (p. 1371) and pathologizing Black populations as the cause of crime and economic decline of the neighborhood.

With this said, it must be cautioned that not all histories of racial domination can be theorized in this settler colonial framework alone (Sexton, 2016). Specifically, the history and afterlife of racial slavery is a structure that is distinct from but also overlaps with settler colonialism. Within the articulation of settler colonized suffering, Black people are often misplaced in categories which do not speak to the specificities of anti-Black violence and racial slavery (Cordis, 2019; Sexton, 2016), for example, being placed in the category of settler (Miles, 2019). This placement obscures the incomparability and centrality of antiblackness and the position of blackness as slave-ness within modern institutions (Sexton, 2016; Wilderson III, 2010) and how the interruption of Black spatial capacity—specifically Black women's spatial capacity—is central to the construction of white supremacy and settler colonialism (Cordis, 2019). To more centrally address how the ongoing legacy of slavery and anti-Black racism shapes the production of urban space and gentrification, I engage with the internal colonialism perspective which—while losing traction in sociology in recent decades (Pinderhughes, 2010)—remains an important framework. Emerging from critical sociology, ethnic studies, and Black studies it directly engages with the perspectives and struggles of Black Americans resisting white urban domination.

7 | INTERNAL COLONIALISM IN THE CITY

Rooted in a tradition of Black radical thinkers including Martin Delaney, W.E.B. Du Bois and Malcom X (Allen, 2005), internal colonialism theory often takes the suffering articulated by Black freedom movements struggling for liberation from the grips of white racist urban domination as a foundational empirical and theoretical perspective (e.g., Allen, 1969; Blauner, 1972; Cowen & Lewis, 2016; Cruse, 1968; Hamilton & Carmichael [Ture], 1967). Using this theory to explain all forms of US colonization is limiting, in particular because of the conceptual tendency of “internal” domestic spaces to obscure the external of sovereign Indigenous Nations in the Western Hemisphere (Byrd, 2011). Taking this limitation into account, sustaining an analysis of settler colonialism is critical to maintaining an understanding of how the US settler state continues to seek Indigenous erasure as the foundation through which it seeks to build empire (Williams, 2005). That said, internal colonialism should not be read as a theory that explains or specifically speaks to settler colonialism, but one that can sit alongside or be brought into conversation with settler colonialism. Thus, I engage with this approach's specific analysis of the racial and colonial dimensions of racial urban domination enacted against Black Americans in the wake of the 1960s urban rebellions.

Robert Allen's (1969, 2005) contribution to this theory—which has been minimally engaged with in sociology (Pinderhughes, 2010)—explains how anti-Black policies and techniques of captivity articulated in the post-Civil Rights Era in the US cities. Allen (1969) describes how white America's racist and colonial response to the urban rebellions congealed into a neocolonial strategy of an iron fist and velvet glove. The iron fist manifested in Nixon's “tough on crime” laws, comprised of congressional bills to militarize the police to prevent future Black rebellions. The velvet-glove approach also promoted by Nixon through the ideology of “black capitalism” and aided by the designs of the Ford Foundation and Urban Coalition, consisted of promoting a buffer class of Black business owners and politicians beholden to white capital and expanding working and middle-class jobs as strategies to stymie Black working-class resistance³. Moreover, demonstrating that internal colonialism cannot be reduced to mere metaphor but rather can be understand as a specific political formation, Roy, Schrader, and Crane (2015) connect the iron fist and velvet glove approach of a “double system of pacification” (p. 140) in US imperial policy in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations—which relied on military invasion alongside other forms of pacification such as aid—to the Ford Foundation Gray Areas Program and the subsequent War on Poverty, both which promoted assimilation and integration into liberal urban policy. The Gray Areas Program, as a precursor to War on Poverty strategies,

specifically targeted Black people living in urban spaces marked as more likely to engage in revolutionary forms of political resistance while also promoting increasingly more punitive policing. In this process, poverty and community development became the rubrics through which liberal urban policy articulated and carried out this colonial politics in urban spaces as poverty became territorialized as an “urban problem” that needed to be contained.

In sum, the internal colonialism approach demonstrates that remaking city spaces is not only grounded in generating profit and surplus value, but also by the desire to destroy or contain the Black freedom movement. For example, connecting Allen's internal colonialism analysis to gentrification in the 2000s in Cincinnati, Dutton (2007) connects the counter-revolution to the Civil Rights Movement—attacks on New Deal-Great Society social safety nets and Civil Rights and Black Power leaders, and increasingly militarized and punitive tactics of control—to a contemporary urban policy of social control which relies on the aggressive targeting and removal of poor people of color. This targeted removal is justified by “tough on crime” ideologies which signal the “urban” as a Black space in need of control and containment in order to make way for gentrification as a “solution” to urban social problems.

While the racial politics emphasis—discussed earlier—is able to articulate the racialized classed fissures and contradictions which emerge as cities pursue gentrification as well as identify how elites target working-class Black politics, the internal colonialism perspective is able to more squarely explain why gentrification projects are presented as “solutions” to urban poverty and Black populations are aggressively targeted in the process as this approach provides a more in-depth analysis of the colonial technologies and strategies mobilized to repress Black freedom struggles. Seeking to push work engaging with the internal colonialism frame even further, Bledsoe and Wright (2019) develop an alternative framework of Black a-spatiality, arguing that “anti-Blackness is not a mere result of global capital but actually scaffolds the ground on which capitalism stands” (p. 9) and that the negation of Black spatiality is the condition of possibility for global capitalism. This negation constructs Black spaces as empty spaces, open for accumulation and dispossession. This denial of Black spatiality is contingent on a global denial of Black and Indigenous humanity, which the coloniality perspective grapples with, thus offering an opportunity to connect arguments from theories of settler colonialism and internal colonialism.

8 | THE COLONIALITY OF RACE AND SPACE

The coloniality approach asks why colonial modes of domination persist despite large-scale political economic and geopolitical shifts taking place throughout the epoch of the post-long 16th century world system (Dussel, 2000; Lao-Montes, n.d.; Quijano, 2000). Lao-Montes's (n.d.) reading of Anibal Quijano's articulation of the concept describes coloniality as an “articulating” global axis organizing the global system of racial, patriarchal, and capitalistic domination. An understanding of coloniality thus entails an analytics of race and racism which seeks to apprehend different modes of social formations, such as city, state, and political economy. Coloniality is not reducible to a single political form, but rather sits as the foundation of the racial patriarchal colonial capitalist world system. Moreover, coloniality can be thought of as a paradigm through which to understand both the overlapping and distinct structures of colonialism—and its nominally postcolonial variants—since it theorizes on the abstract level of the epistemic and ontological structures emerging across different articulations of colonialism. This perspective demonstrates that racial colonial structures are not eliminated but take on new manifestations in the wake of changes in forms of statecraft and epistemological production, as exemplified in critical philosopher and transdisciplinary scholar of Africana thought Sylvia Wynter's (2003) work.

Wynter (2003) theorizes on a coloniality structured by an overrepresentation of the European human shaped by the denial and pathologizing of Black and Indigenous humanity. This overrepresentation of an “ethno-class of Man” structures Eurocentric modern articulations of the body politic, space, and epistemology which cut across different forms of colonialism. Building upon Wynter's work, Tiffany Lethabo King (2016, 2019) argues the racial—and specifically anti-Black and anti-Native—violence of conquest reproduces the human/conquistador/settler self. The self-actualization of the human/conquistador takes place through multiple modes of violence—enslavement,

genocide, epistemic violence, labor exploitation, and cultural appropriation. We can understand these forms of violence as articulated through racial and colonial configurations of property which produce subjectivities constrained by the logics of *possessive individualism* (Bhandar, 2018). Thus, the study of the racial and colonial dimensions of gentrification can examine how racial and colonial subjectivities and property regimes make possible the commodification of urban space which facilitates gentrification projects. I turn to the discussion, where I outline directions for future research that can examine these dynamics.

9 | DISCUSSION

The political economy, racial politics, and racial branding approaches demonstrate how shifting modes of capital accumulation, racialized class formations, and marketing strategies shape gentrification. While some of the aforementioned studies (e.g., Arena, 2012; Mele, 2017) analyze racial ideologies' role in facilitating urban redevelopment, these studies do not theorize on the longer-term historical and foundational racial and colonial technologies and ideologies shaping urban spaces in the 20th and into the 21st century United States. To address this gap, we can examine how the settler colonial construction of space is not only part of the early colonial era but also fundamentally structures racial and colonial dynamics of contemporary US cities as it continues to target Indigenous people for elimination (Dorries et al., 2019; Estes, 2019). Moreover, the internal colonialism approach demonstrates how the containment of Black liberation movements through (neo)colonial tactics (Allen, 1969, 2005) is a key facet of racial urban domination in the post-Civil Rights era. Pushing this approach further, Bledsoe and Wright (2019) argue the denial of Black spatiality is the condition of possibility for accumulation and dispossession. In a similar theoretical move, the settler colonialism approach argues that understanding racial domination and capital accumulation requires foregrounding the long enduring structure of settler colonial violence in its many forms (Wolfe, 2006; 2016).

While internal colonialism theorizes on the neocolonial modes of domination enacted against Black populations through urban policy emerging in the post-Civil Rights era, studies on urban settler colonialism specifically examine how the production of urban spaces is built on and seeks to sustain Indigenous erasure and dispossession. Understanding that these approaches speak to different phenomena, these approaches can also speak to one another in their examination of how racial and colonial ideologies and political tactics seek to maintain white control of urban space. Engaging with this relational approach calls for unsettling assumptions which assume a discontinuity of space and a natural connection between certain peoples and territories (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997a, p. 40, p. 40)—such as conceptually confining Indigenous people to rural spaces and Black people to urban spaces—through engaging in a more dynamic approach to the racial and colonial production of urban space by foregrounding the hierarchical interconnection of spaces (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997a) shaped by settler colonialism, internal colonialism, and coloniality. This calls for an analysis of how the production of gentrifying localities (Addie & Fraser, 2019) operate through intersecting racial and colonial logics in the same space. The coloniality perspective is generative here, as it argues the production of the bourgeois “ethno-class” of Man (Wynter, 2003) is a foundational social formation of Eurocentric capitalist modernity shaping its intricately connected social problems, such as racism, colonialism, genocide, capitalistic exploitation, and epistemic violence. “Ethno-class” distinctions work to legitimize and drive the discourses of gentrification projects (Hightower & Fraser, 2020) as white middle- and upper-class residents and consumers are tacitly celebrated by urban elites as adding new life and value to neighborhoods racially denigrated as in decline (also see Mele, 2017). Meanwhile, long-time Black and Indigenous residents are physically, culturally, economically, and politically blocked out of sharing in the celebrated “renewal” of the neighborhood (e.g., Hightower & Fraser, 2020; Hyra, 2017).

Summing up, through incorporating settler colonialism, internal colonialism, and coloniality into the urban sociology of gentrification, we can dig deeper than the political economy, racial politics, and racial branding frames by examining how racial and colonial dispossession, elimination, and containment are at the foundation of

gentrification projects. Furthermore, incorporating these frames can allow for an examination of how gentrification cannot be understood through the logics of political economy alone, but also at the level of the racialized and colonial representations of the human legalistically, politically, and culturally constructed by Eurocentric white supremacist worldviews, which seek to legitimize white elites and gentrifiers as having the rights to project their desires onto and inhabit a geographic space (see Ansfield, 2018). I end with recommendations of how future research can incorporate this type of analysis.

Future research can seek to empirically demonstrate and explain links between the historical technologies of the structures of settler colonialism, internal colonialism, and coloniality and contemporary gentrification projects (e.g., Estes, 2019). Rigorously examining the specificities of settler colonialism, internal colonialism, and coloniality will guide in the analysis of the racial and colonial dimensions of gentrification projects without slipping into the trap of using colonialism as a metaphor (Tuck & Yang, 2012) for gentrification. One potential direction here is examining the intersections of urban policy, slavery and incarceration law, imperial policy, and Indian law in shaping urban space. For example, drawing upon Black women's political narratives, King (2010) analyzes One Strike eviction policies in Tampa, FL as "colonial technologies" disproportionately targeting and dispossessing Black women. These technologies emerge from racist "anticrime" bills in the War on Drugs and anti-Black ideologies around welfare assistance producing the "evictable" Black-female body and justifying political repression. King (2010) situates these evictions which facilitate gentrification within a longer history of Indigenous genocide and racial slavery, both foundational to the building of the white settler colonial state of Florida. For another example, focusing explicitly on settler colonialism and imperialism in the 20th and 21st century, Grandinetti (2018), traces the emergence of neoliberal gentrification in Honolulu to the expanding white settler colonial project of tourism and commercial development in Hawai'i in the wake of World War II, statehood, and the imperial expansion of the US Empire. Demonstrating how neoliberal gentrification compounds Indigenous dispossession, Grandinetti (2018) shows that Indigenous resistance is not reducible to a Marxist return to the commons—indeed the study finds that white settlers appropriate Indigenous decolonization struggles in their own fight against urban development and commodification—but must be understood specifically within the framework of Kanaka Maoli's struggle for decolonization and sovereignty.⁴

Future research can also examine how narratives of newness or renewal in gentrification projects are connected to the settler colonial myths of nation-building and "logics of improvement" (Bhandar, 2018) by asking what specific historical time periods and people are celebrated in the process of creating the racial, colonial, class, and gender aesthetics of a gentrification project (e.g., Addie & Fraser, 2019), and which specific forms of space-making and cultural expression are repressed (e.g., Grandinetti, 2018) as a strategy of profit-making and upholding the notion of white status as a property to be protected (Harris, 1993). This research can go deeper than the more common approaches in urban sociology by examining the specifically colonial histories and subjectivities of the US cities when answering these questions. On a related note, future work can foreground analyses of which racialized subjects are targeted for containment and removal in gentrification projects and why. This can be done by connecting the technologies of control and narratives of justification to colonial logics of space and nation-making and by examining how political repression—for example in the form of the internal colonization of Black neighborhoods or the settler-colonization of Indigenous land—drives the logics of urban development and the strategies of governance deployed to maintain the gentrification process.

Summing up, taking these approaches can help explain how different articulations of settler colonialism, internal colonialism, and coloniality are driven by logics reinforcing one another within racial gentrification projects. We can move from understanding gentrification as a class conquest of the city to understanding gentrification as (a) the commodification and redevelopment of city space contingent on and perpetuating the colonization of Black and Indigenous communities and the repression of Black and Indigenous space-making and (b) as the spatial reproduction of white colonial desire and consumption facilitated by the racialized physical, cultural, and political displacement of Black, Indigenous, Asian, Latinx, and working class people. This approach will better explain how and why gentrification targets Indigenous, Black, and other negatively racialized people for spatial removal and

captivity and targets those same spaces of violence for the social reproduction of majority white middle-class gentrifiers.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ For more on this, see Tuck and Yang's (2012) critique of the rhetoric and praxis of the Occupy Movement, widely celebrated by Marxist thinkers and activists as a return of the commons to the 99%, but as Tuck and Yang argue: "The pursuit of workers' rights (and rights to work) and minoritized people's rights in a settler colonial context can appear to be anti-capitalist, but this approach is nonetheless pro-colonial. That is, the ideal of 'redistribution of wealth' camouflages how much of that wealth is land, Native land. In Occupy, the 99% is deserved as a supermajority, in contrast to the unearned wealth of the "1%." It renders Indigenous people (a 0.9% superminority) completely invisible and absorbed, just an asterisk group to subsumed into the legion of occupiers" (p. 23).
- ² For key referents, see Stoler's (2002) key work on this emerging field across the social sciences and humanities, especially her overview in Ch. 1. Also see Julian Go's (2016) critique of sociology from the perspective of postcolonial theory in the humanities.
- ³ Highlighting the close connection between colonialism within and outside the US, Allen (1969, p. 73) notes that the president of the Ford Foundation key in designing this velvet-glove approach was McGeorge Bundy, who had previously worked in the White House as Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs and was an architect for the US invasion of Vietnam.
- ⁴ Also see for example Park (2016). Though this work does not specifically focus on gentrification, it provides a lucid historical argument that the quotidian practice of mortgage foreclosure in the US emerged as a strategy used by British settler colonizers to dispossess Indigenous people of their land in what is now called New England.

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