

# THERE GOES THE NEIGHBORHOOD



JADE ADIA



## READING, DISCUSSING & SHARING

### THERE GOES THE NEIGHBORHOOD WITH YOUNG READERS

Whether you're considering using *There Goes the Neighborhood* in the classroom, a library, a community reading group, or a book club, or recommending it to individual readers, this novel can be used as a springboard for timely conversations about the following themes:

- Gentrification
- Housing justice
- Identity
- Fear of change
- Systemic racism
- Found family
- Community organizing
- Social media
- Anti-Blackness
- Friendship

### HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide was designed with convenience in mind for educators, librarians, and discussion leaders. The following pages here will outline and introduce each activity for teachers. Teachers can then download this [PDF of print-and-go pages that can be distributed directly to students for each activity.](#)

### WHAT IS GENTRIFICATION?

#### Summary for teachers and discussion leaders

*The term “gentrification” was initially used in England by sociologist Ruth Glass in the mid-1960s to describe changes in coastal villages and London neighborhoods.<sup>1</sup> Since then, the term has grown to hold many more, often-conflicting ideas. There is a certain level of contention that the term “gentrification” incites whenever evoked. Some use the word interchangeably with “revitalization”—the enhancement of a neighborhood’s physical, social, and commercial components without displacement—thus, implying that both processes are positive in nature. This novel, however, takes a more critical approach.*

*There Goes the Neighborhood* defines gentrification as a process that displaces and excludes low-income residents and businesses while systematically altering the class composition and character of a neighborhood. Gentrification resegregates and scatters low-income people into other historically disinvested neighborhoods without the delicate social ties that have sustained them in their previous communities. Gentrification is not merely an unfortunate side effect of local policies and “natural changes,” but often an intentional outcome of deliberate city policy. The results are destabilizing to both the gentrifying community and those who have been displaced.

### Further resources:

- “Now Is the Time!: Challenging Resegregation and Displacement in the Age of Hypergentrification” (*Fordham Law Review*) by Bethany Y. Li (article)
- *How to Kill a City: Gentrification, Inequality, and the Fight for the Neighborhood* by P.E. Moskowitz (book)
- *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City* by Neil Smith (book)
- “The Case for Reparations” (*The Atlantic*) by Ta-Nehisi Coates (article)
- Living Poor in the Affluent City: Commentary on Land Use Equity in Los Angeles (*UCLA Law Review*) by Scott L. Cummings (article)

### BEFORE READING: HISTORICAL MUTUAL AID ONE-PAGER

Mutual aid is a form of solidarity-based support, in which communities unite against a common struggle and care for one another, rather than leaving individuals to fend for themselves.<sup>2</sup>

In mutual-aid systems, people work together to meet the needs of everyone in the community. It's different from charity, which is a one-way relationship between an organization and recipients, and doesn't always address the root causes of inequality. Mutual aid is an act of solidarity that builds sustained networks between neighbors. The nourishment of community networks like these is one of the major themes of *There Goes the Neighborhood*.

In small groups, have students research an individual or organization in history that practiced mutual aid to support their community. Have students create a physical or digital one-pager on their findings to share with the class. Students should feel free to select a figure from the list below, or choose a local figure or example from their hometown.

- Marsha P. Johnson, Sylvia Rivera, and STAR House
- Fred Hampton, Bobby Seale, and Free Breakfast for School Children Program
- The National Ex-Slave Mutual Relief, Bounty & Pension Association
- Sociedades Mutualistas of Texas
- The Chicken Soup Brigade
- The Young Lords
- Richard Allen, Absalom Jones, and the Free African Society
- Charles Cobb and the Freedom Schools
- Food Not Bombs



**On a blank sheet of paper, have students do the following:**

- Put the name of the mutual-aid movement somewhere on the page where readers will notice it.
- In 10 words or less, describe the goals and motivations of the movement.
- Include at least 3 important quotes that are important to understanding this movement and/or its leaders..
- Somewhere on the page, include the names of 2 to 3 people in the modern world who have similar ideas. Briefly state how their ideas are similar.
- Draw, create, or copy/paste images that represent what this movement stood for.
- Include a border that showcases important dates of this movement.
- Write at least 3 personal statements/connections to what you've read/learned.
- Encourage students to get creative and design the one-pager however they like, but if they want some guidance, you can start them off with a page that looks like this:

<b>Key Ideas</b>	<b>Personal Statements/Connections</b>
<b>Name of Mutual-Aid Movement and Its Key Leaders</b>	
<b>Connections to Today</b>	<b>Important Quotes</b>



## BEFORE / AFTER: ANTICIPATION GUIDE

Before reading *There Goes the Neighborhood*, have students take a few minutes to decide whether they agree or disagree with each statement. Next, have students discuss the reasons behind their choices in pairs or in groups of no more than four. Ensure that students use some form of personal evidence (e.g., details from personal lives, real-world events, books, etc.) in their responses. After pair/small group discussions, have students discuss their ideas as a class. After reading *There Goes the Neighborhood*, have students revisit this activity, using the text as a form of evidence for their responses.

### Student Instructions:

Read each statement below. Respond in the left column whether you agree (A) or disagree (D) with each statement. Think about why you agree or disagree and be prepared to share.

Before Reading Agree/Disagree	Statement/ Question	After Reading Agree/Disagree
	People with lots of money are better at deciding what cities should look like than people without money.	
	Change is always bad.	
	If someone has good intentions, then the impact of their actions is always okay.	
	People who have panic attacks are weak.	
	People who commit crimes deserve to go to prison for the rest of their lives.	
	Housing is a human right.	
	There are some people that look naturally suspicious, so law enforcement should pay special attention to them.	
	If a person lives in a building and the rent is suddenly raised, but that person cannot afford the new cost, they should be evicted.	

## BEFORE READING: RESEARCHING HOUSING DISCRIMINATION

The history of housing discrimination is not a major focus in the United States' K–12 education system, so many students may not yet understand the necessary background context to engage with some of the material in the novel. For this activity, students will individually complete a KWLQA (Know, Want to Know, Learn, Questions, Action) chart, watch two videos about housing discrimination throughout United States history, and compare the information to what they know about housing discrimination today.

### Student Instructions:

For this activity, you will watch two short videos about the history of housing discrimination in America and consider how past policies and practices influence what cities, towns, and neighborhoods look like today. For this activity, please do the following:

1. Complete the K column on the chart.
2. Complete the W column on the chart. If you're stuck and not sure what you want to know, look back at your K column and see what gaps are there. How do you see inequality in housing and cities today? If you're from a place that feels segregated—whether by race, class, religion, immigration status, or culture—think about if you know how things came to be that way. Have you observed segregation in your school? What do you know about inequality in your own community today that you may not know the origin of?
3. Watch Video 1, “The Disturbing History of the Suburbs.” Write four bullet points on the key ideas and claims made by the video creators. Put a star next to any claim or idea you feel is important. Put an exclamation point next to any quote or idea you feel is important for others to know. In the L1 column, summarize what you learned from the video in three sentences or less.
4. Watch Video 2, “Housing Segregation in Everything.”\* Repeat steps from part 3.
5. Now that you have watched two videos, consider what you still don't know. What didn't the videos tell you? What new questions do you have? Write these new questions in the Q column.
6. In the A column, write down how you will find answers to your questions. Will you watch some more videos? Read some articles? If so, where might you find articles on this topic? Where will you find videos with the necessary information? Are there teachers in your school or people in your community who might know about this topic? Who are they?

\*Note, there is one curse word at 0:06. Feel free to begin the video at 0:13 to skip over.





K	W	L1	L2	Q	A
What do I know about the history of housing discrimination in the US?	What do I want to know about the history of housing discrimination in the US?	What did I learn about housing discrimination from the video?	What did I learn about housing discrimination from the video?	What questions do I still have about housing discrimination?	How will I take action and find answers to my questions?

## *DURING READING: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS*

### **Part One:**

- In the opening chapter, why is Rhea so offended by the new billboard at the Metro stop in her neighborhood? Does the way that advertisements and other forms of media describe a neighborhood really matter? Why or why not?
- In Chapter 2, Rhea and her friends encounter a group of young lawyers organizing around eviction defense. They tell Rhea, “We can coordinate the meetings with your landlords, lead the discussion, and facilitate it all. We can get you justice.” Why might Rhea not trust this group initially, despite their eagerness to help?
- Anti-Blackness is defined as the behaviors, attitudes, and practices of people and institutions that work to dehumanize Black people in order to maintain white supremacy. Using evidence from the text, discuss how Rhea observes instances of anti-Blackness in the world around her. How do Rhea’s observations ultimately help her form the SOSI plan?
- In Chapter 13, before the girls pull their stunt, Marley reminds Rhea that while their plan is fake, “The fear *is* real, though.” What does Marley mean by this? In what ways does fear motivate Rhea’s actions? What would be alternative emotions for her to base her decisions off of?

## Part Two:

- In Chapter 16, the characters learn that someone they know (and dislike) has been falsely accused of murder. Rhea and Malachi debate whether or not they should let this person take the fall for the crime. Whose side are you on? Is it ever okay to let an innocent person be blamed for something, even if you know that they've hurt other people in the past?
- Compare and contrast how Rhea and Malachi think about change. How might someone's feelings about their friendships, neighborhood, and relationships changing differ depending on where a person is from and how they were raised?
- How do you think Rhea would define family? What about Auntie, Comesha, and Zeke? Do you have to be related by blood to consider a person family? How do you define family?
- How does this book comment on the ways in which the accessibility of cities can often be skewed by those with money?

## Part Three + Epilogue:

- Revisit Rhea conversation with Auntie in the car in Chapter 32. Why is Auntie concerned about Rhea's plan? Why is Rhea suspicious of Auntie's plan? Debate the merits of each character's approach to stopping the evictions.
- Each section heading begins with a quote (Assata Shakur, Malcolm X, Audre Lorde). What's your understanding of each quote? Why do you think the author chose these quotes to represent these sections? Using evidence from the text, determine how the section headings detail a particular theme or central idea of the novel.
- Consider Amelia's motivation for her community revitalization plan. Does she have a point? Why or why not?
- How is anxiety handled by the characters in the book? Why did the author choose to discuss anxiety in this way?
- What are the consequences of Rhea's SOSI plan? Revisit the community Zeggit thread: How does her plan make her neighbors feel? Using evidence from the text, cite at least three examples of the negative effects of SOSI that she did not expect.
- Why do you think the author chose the title *There Goes the Neighborhood*?
- In the epilogue, the characters all add to a mural, completing the sentence: "Gentrification is . . ." Based on your feelings and reactions to the book, add your own line to the mural. What do you think of now when you think about gentrification? How is it the same or different from how you thought before?
- Rhea pledges to stay involved in the #Rooted movement. After reading this book, how can you use your voice to promote and advance racial and economic justice? Reflect on how you and your community discuss and address inequality.





## *DURING READING: MAPPING SOCIAL CAPITAL*

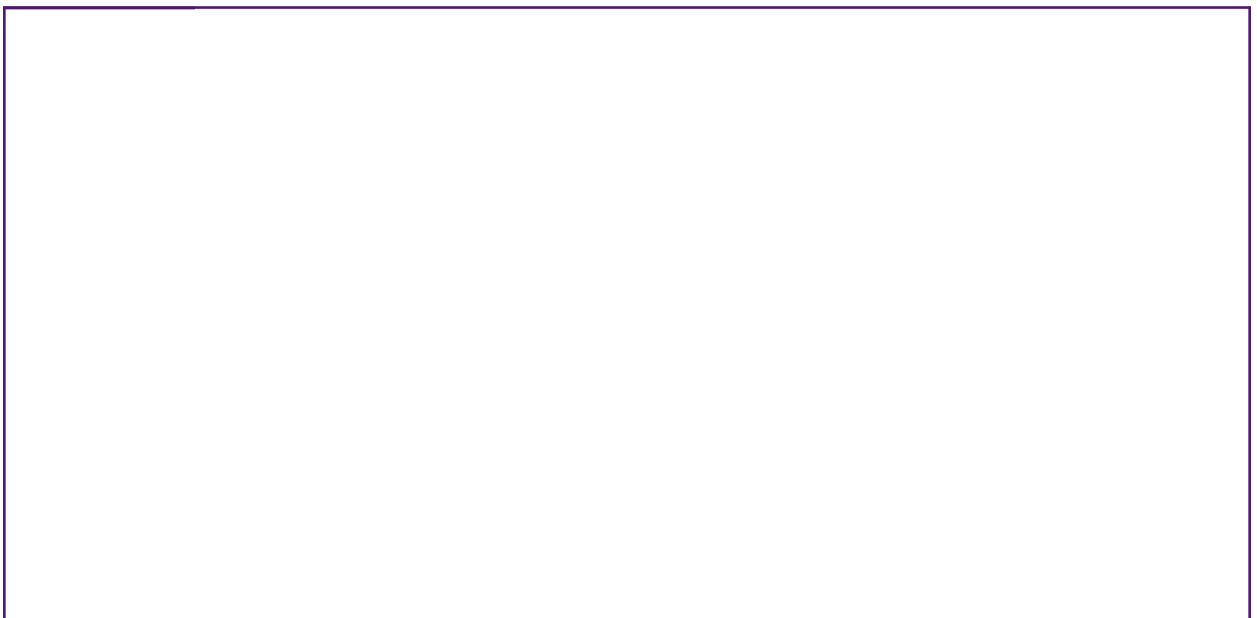
Legal scholar Bethany Y. Li writes extensively about the threat that gentrification poses to social capital. To begin, share the following quote with the class:

“**Social capital** is built through the relationships and connections of individuals or organizations. Social capital can create a self-sustaining community. For example, a small flower shop in Los Angeles’s Highland Park allows immigrants in the community without bank accounts to pay utility bills. Social capital can also increase **political power** outside of neighborhoods and within the city. Collective efficacy in neighborhoods—the established social connections and relations that enable intervention on behalf of the common good—corresponds with increased **civic participation** and collective movement against policies that encroach on the community’s sense of place. Social capital is difficult to quantify, but its loss has far reaching effects.”<sup>3</sup>

Next, invite students to talk through and develop a working definition of the highlighted key terms. The definitions provided below are merely guiding examples:

- **Social capital.** Social capital is the “networks of relationships among people who live and work in a particular society, enabling that society to function effectively.”<sup>4</sup>
- **Political power.** Political power is the ability to control the behavior of people and/or influence the outcome of events. Political power enables people or groups to control the policies, functions, and culture of society.
- **Civic participation.** Civic engagement includes communities working together or individuals working alone in both political and nonpolitical actions to protect public values or make a change in a community.

Now grounded in a discussion of these key terms, revisit the quote from Bethany Y. Li. Then have students **draw a map** of their own community or school and think of at least five examples of relationships and connections between individuals or organizations that build social capital.



## DURING READING: CHARACTER BODY COLLAGE

The cover art for *There Goes the Neighborhood* features a collage. Collages are artistic compositions made by sticking various materials (photos, pieces of paper, found objects, fabric, etc.) to a backing. They are often used for structuring, developing, and presenting visual issues that are hard to express in words. For this assignment, have students work in pairs to analyze the book cover and identify how the art represents some of the themes that they've seen in the book so far. Then students will develop a collage that visually represents one of the characters: Rhea, Malachi, Zeke, Marley, or Lou. Students can complete this assignment on a computer or on paper, but if paper is used, teachers must provide magazines, construction paper, ribbons, scissors, etc.

### Student Instructions:

For this assignment, you will create a collage of one of the characters in the shape of a body. You may use words in the collage, but try to focus on visuals to create a portrait of one of the story's main characters. Analyze the choices that your character makes, consider the changes your character goes through in the novel, and examine the relationships your character forms. You can also think about the following in your analysis:

- What is the character's main goal in the novel? Why do they want to achieve this goal?
- What is the character's outlook on life? What emotions do they carry day-to-day?
- What colors should be associated with the character?
- What is their greatest weakness?
- Who are the important people in their lives?
- How does the character see themselves versus how others perceive them?
- Think about the visuals that would best represent your answers. Additionally, as you consider which visuals would be most appropriate, think about how you could best organize the visuals to represent the character.

## DURING READING: CULTURAL MOVEMENTS EXERCISE

Cities have long been centers of culture and creativity, but gentrification has impacted the ability of middle- and low-income people to live in urban neighborhoods. Throughout US history, major cultural and artistic movements have grown out of diverse neighborhoods where people of many cultures and income levels can live and create alongside one another.

For this exercise, students will look at a major grassroots cultural or artistic movement in US history that flourished due to the important social bonds built between neighbors within a local community.

- The Harlem Renaissance in New York (1920s–1930s)
- Skateboarding culture in California (1950s–1960s)
- Birth of hip-hop in the Bronx (1980s)
- The invention of grunge rock in Seattle (1990s)
- Underground ball culture in New York City (1960s–1980s)



Students will start by researching the history of the social/cultural movement of their choice from the list above. They'll write down five bullet points about what types of people were involved in these communities, and what made these movements special.

Then students will imagine that they are a member of one of these cultural or artistic movements and their local community is facing the threat of displacement. They'll help their "neighbors" by creating a flyer for a protest to keep the community together. Either on the front of the poster, or in a few sentences on the back, students should answer the following questions:

- Who would be at the protest?
- What slogan would you use?
- Why is your community worth fighting for?
- What does it take to organize a successful protest?
- What is your strategy? What is your goal?
- How will you frame your demands?
- Who/what other groups will you partner with to achieve your goals?
- What do you think makes a protest effective or not?

### *AFTER READING: CLOSE-OUT ACTIVITIES AND ADVANCED ESSAY QUESTIONS*

- **Family tree.** Create a visual family tree for Rhea's "found family" of neighbors, friends, mentors, and loved ones. For each found family member represented, include the following information: a quote from the text that represents the character, details from the text about their physical description, and an adjective to describe them.
- **Land acknowledgment.** At the protest, Auntie Inga invites a Native American protester to join her up front to do a land acknowledgment. Look at the history of your city: What tribe's land are you on? (If you don't already know, you can check here: <https://native-land.ca.>) How does an understanding of colonialism and Native American land theft enrich and/or complicate our understanding of gentrification today?
- **Identity playlist.** Create a playlist for Rhea that shows her emotional growth throughout the novel, from starting off afraid of change to accepting that change is a part of life. Have students explain their song choices by referring to specific events and relationships in the novel.
- **Mental health.** What effect does gentrification have on the mental health of community members at risk of displacement? In your answer, think about how each of the main characters—Rhea, Zeke, Malachi, Marley, and Lou—responds to the eviction crisis.
- **Housing discrimination and gentrification:** Think back to the two videos that you watched before reading the book. After so many years of housing discrimination, why do you think gentrification is happening today? Rhea's neighborhood was described by real estate developers as "hip" and "up-and-coming," which is why it was targeted for gentrification. How do you make sense of all of these conflicting histories and motivations? What role does "coolness" play in gentrification? When a neighborhood is "cool" because of the diverse community that exists there, what do you think would happen if all of those people were no longer able to afford to stay there? Think about your own hometown in your response.

- **Disparate impact.** Auntie Inga mentions the “war on gang culture” and “war on drugs” as racist. Begin by looking up the definition of “disparate impact.” Then answer the following: How can a law enforcement policy that appears as “racially neutral” (meaning the policy didn’t explicitly mention targeting any particular race) actually have a disparate impact on communities of color? What is the role of racism and anti-Blackness in how law enforcement targets alleged criminal activity in certain communities?
- **Zoning.** When affluent white neighborhoods are hostile to low-income housing, the amount of areas where low-income people can afford to live shrinks. This process of restricting development and lowering the density of a neighborhood is called “downzoning.” This often happens alongside “upzoning,” which is when developers try to increase density in low-income neighborhoods. A common example of upzoning can be when developers target gentrifying neighborhoods for high-density luxury housing projects, like Zeke’s building. For example, many cities today allow for *more* luxury development in lower-income neighborhoods of color while creating *less* opportunities for that same type of development in more affluent and predominantly white neighborhoods. The result of upzoning and downzoning is that low-income communities of color are being squeezed from both ends—they’re excluded from the wealthy white areas and priced out of the gentrifying neighborhoods with increasing density projects targeted at higher-income people. Debate the pros and cons of upzoning vs. downzoning. How do you think that cities can balance building enough housing for everyone, without displacing low-income communities and communities of color?

**THANK YOU** to Disney-Hyperion for publishing this book and helping make this guide accessible, as well as to Danielle Parker for providing feedback on teacher accessibility. And most of all, thank you, teachers and librarians, for sharing this book with young readers!

## ENDNOTES

1 “Proof of Discriminatory Effect of Zoning or Land Use Practices Resulting in Urban Gentrification.” Eric M. Larsson. 165 Am. Jur. Proof of Facts 3d 205 (originally published in 2017)

2 “A Visual History of Mutual Aid.” Bloomberg.com, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2020-12-22/a-visual-history-of-mutual-aid>.

3 Bethany Y. Li. “Now Is the Time!: Challenging Resegregation and Displacement in the Age of Hypergentrification.” 85 *Fordham L. Rev.* 1189 (2016).

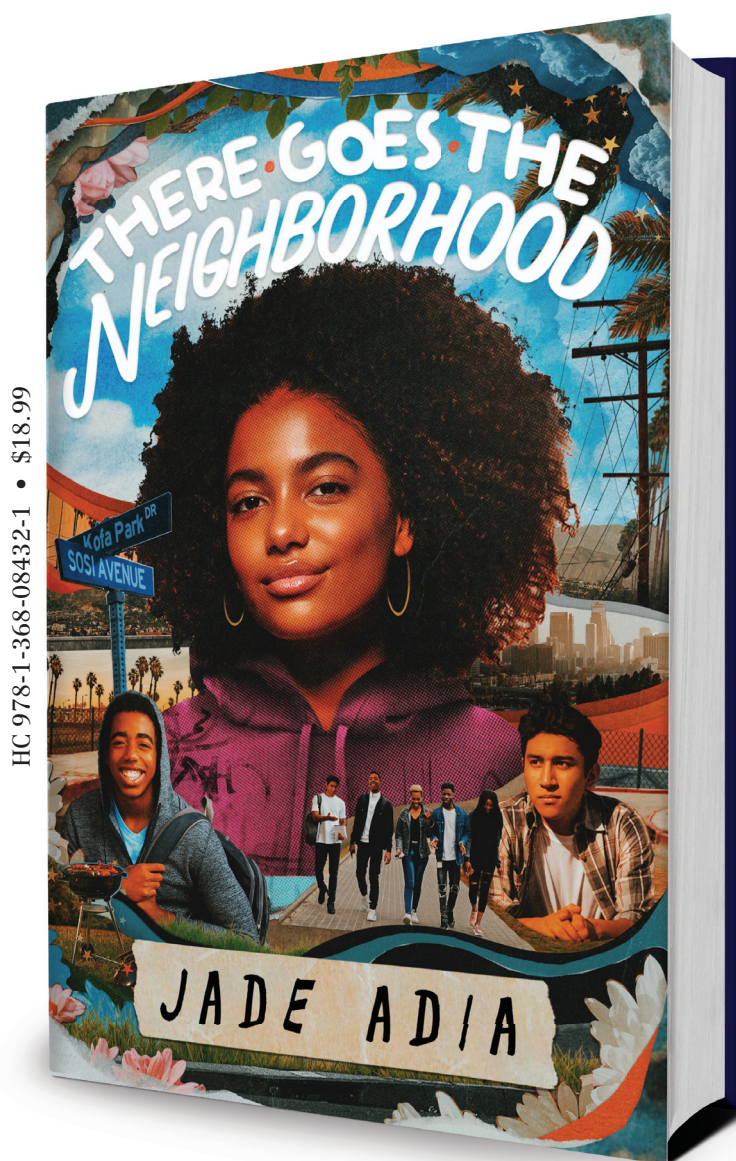
4 “Social Capital, Definition of Social Capital by Oxford Dictionary on Lexico.com also meaning of Social Capital.” Lexico Dictionaries, English. Retrieved 17 January 2021.





This guide was created by the book's author. Born and raised in South LA, Jade Adia writes stories about gentrification, Black teen joy, and the sh\*tshow that is capitalism. She holds a bachelor's degree in Ethnicity, Race & Migration, and a certificate in Human Rights. She recently survived law school, graduating with a specialization in Critical Race Studies. *There Goes the Neighborhood* is her debut novel. Find her online at [www.jadeadia.com](http://www.jadeadia.com) and on Instagram @jadeadia.

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