



Protecting Suburban America: Gentrification, Advocacy and the Historic Imaginary

Denise Lawrence-Zuniga

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Protecting Suburban America explores the dynamics and conflicts inherent in preserving historic twentieth-century suburban landscapes in America.

Bridging architecture, anthropology, planning, and urban studies, its unique approach combines a study of historic preservation with multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork, to shed fascinating light on issues of heritage, preservation, gentrification, class, ethnicity, and contested values in suburbia. These are subjects which reach far beyond the setting of the book's focus in California to touch on topical debates in cities, suburbia, and gentrifying neighborhoods worldwide.

At the heart of the book is a detailed comparative ethnography of preservation practices and the changing landscapes of five suburban cities, where affluent homeowners have begun to restore their early twentieth-century houses in neighborhoods once suffering from decline. Not every neighbor, however, shares the same aesthetic values, and complex dynamics can arise. The study compares experiences in five different cities, and in different long-term, immigrant, and gentrifying populations. Themes revealed include homeowner restoration practices, aesthetic contestations, local advocacy, and public policy, alongside an exploration of the social construction of the historic restoration process, and how homeowners construct 'historical' meaning in their homes and neighbourhoods. These are themes with consequences for national and global settings – of interest wherever contested preservation aesthetics and regulations are reshaping older residential neighbourhoods and their social dynamics.

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