

What critics are saying about MY BROOKLYN
by Kelly Anderson and Allison Lirish Dean

Variety

Striking a fine balance between personal journal and political expose Kelly Anderson's docu examines the unnatural causes of changes wrought in Brooklyn neighborhoods due to gentrification ... this absorbing pic eschews militant outrage for a quietly devastating look at social commodification. "My Brooklyn" should rock on cable.

(<http://www.variety.com/review/VE1117948940/>)

New York Times

Anderson's sensitive study of gentrification ... traces a tale of aggressive rezoning, multimillion-dollar development deals and racial displacement. The history of the American city is in itself one of cyclical displacement, but here the apparent lack of transparency and official callousness are especially troubling.

(<http://movies.nytimes.com/2013/01/04/movies/my-brooklyn-a-documentary-from-kelly-anderson.html>)

Bloomberg News

At first "My Brooklyn" looks like the kind of studious documentary that well-meaning liberals put audiences to sleep with. By the end, though, it's likely to have viewers boiling... [Anderson and Dean] explode the comforting idea that the gentrification changing downtown Brooklyn is just an organic process of some people moving in and others moving out.

(<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-01-04/apted-s-7-up-kids-at-56-obscene-new-brooklyn-films.html>)

Village Voice

My Brooklyn is persuasive in making the case that gentrification was, is, and continues to be even more racially motivated and systematic than conventional wisdom suggests.

(<http://www.villagevoice.com/2013-01-02/film/my-brooklyn/full/>)

Slant Magazine

A thoughtful piece of documentary journalism ... Anderson's refreshing honesty about her feelings of both guilt and excitement at the changes that take place when a neighborhood begins to accommodate this new class of people will likely be relatable to many who've moved to lower-income neighborhoods.

(<http://www.slantmagazine.com/film/review/my-brooklyn/6758>)

NEW YORK TIMES MOVIE REVIEW

Branding in Brooklyn: A World of Change

'My Brooklyn,' a Documentary From Kelly Anderson



Jamel Shabazz

By JEANNETTE CATSOULIS Published: January 3, 2013

“[My Brooklyn](#),” Kelly Anderson’s sensitive study of gentrification in her home borough, is as much personal essay as urban-policy survey. Having watched her once ethnically diverse Park Slope neighborhood slowly transform into “a hip, expensive brand” — and realizing that she had been in the vanguard of that transformation — Ms. Anderson begins to question the complex forces that determine a city’s character.

Focusing on the redevelopment of [Fulton Street Mall](#), for decades a popular and profitable Caribbean and African-American shopping destination, Ms. Anderson traces a tale of aggressive rezoning, multimillion-dollar development deals and racial displacement.

Tracking the actions of the Bloomberg administration and the [Downtown Brooklyn Partnership](#), she follows the money all the way to the pockets of developers and, later, home buyers promised 10 years without property taxes. And as thriving small businesses and nearby units of affordable housing made way for luxury condos, owners and residents were essentially left to fend for themselves.

The history of the American city is in itself one of cyclical displacement, but here the apparent lack of transparency and official callousness are especially troubling. Filming from 2006 to 2012 and invaluabley assisted by the historian [Craig S. Wilder](#), Ms. Anderson grounds her investigation in the commercial lifeblood of black culture: the barbershops and music stores and [snappy-suit](#) emporiums that gave the mall its flavor.

And, contrary to the belief of one particularly condescending white interviewee, they gave downtown Brooklynites rather more than the opportunity to purchase a [“Scarface” beach towel](#).

A version of this review appeared in print on January 4, 2013, on page C9 of the New York edition with the headline: My Brooklyn.



Posted: Mon., Dec. 31, 2012, 6:30pm PT
New U.S. Release

My Brooklyn (Documentary)

By RONNIE SCHEIB

A New Day Films production. Produced by Allison Lirish Dean, Kelly Anderson. Co-producer, Lisa Willis. Directed by Kelly Anderson.

With: Jamel Shabazz, Rahsun Houston, Charles Barron, Craig Wilder, Purnima Kapur, Joe Chan, Alyssa Katz, Tom Angotti.

Striking a fine balance between personal journal and political expose, Kelly Anderson's docu examines the unnatural causes of changes wrought in Brooklyn neighborhoods due to gentrification. Unsurprisingly, the film, like 2011's "Battle for Brooklyn," presents yet another example of how large corporations, working in collusion with city government, can legally destroy communities, riding roughshod over the rights of the middle- and lower-class inhabitants they dispossess. Filled with colorful, articulate neighborhood champions, this absorbing pic eschews militant outrage for a quietly devastating look at social commodification. Bowing Jan. 4 in Gotham, "My Brooklyn" should rock on cable.

Anderson begins her film by enumerating the various sections of Brooklyn in which she lived, attracted to their low rents and diverse communities, only to discover that, as a young, white, middle-class woman, she was part of the gentrifying wave that soon chased away the very people she had sought to join and sent property values soaring, chasing her out as well.

Anderson manages to personalize her docu just enough to place herself in the socioeconomic picture and show where she's coming from, never thrusting herself as a subject into the narrative, but lending the docu an engagingly informal note. Her moves from Park Slope to Boerum Hill to Fort Greene, before these locales became "fashionable brands," focus almost exclusively on shots of ethnically mixed neighbors and neighborhoods. She seems to grudgingly accept gentrification as an unfortunate, unscripted change.

But when the city unveils a plan to raze the colorful, cheap Fulton Mall (the third most successful shopping area in the entire city and a meeting place for blacks and Latinos from all boroughs) in favor of luxury housing towers, upscale office buildings and expensive franchise shops, Anderson resolves to find out, in her words, what Brooklyn is becoming and who is calling the shots.

Mayor Michael Bloomberg, in an excerpted TV appearance, makes no attempt to disguise the language that turns viable community space with affordable shopping into an outright commodity: "New York is in a fierce competitive worldwide competition. We must offer the best product and sell it forcefully." In this global marketplace, people are perceived as mere consumers, the more affluent the better. Residents of loftier Brooklyn neighborhoods show disdain or condescension when speaking of the Fulton Mall, while longtime habitues are appalled by this wholesale eradication of their gathering place.

A dissident city council member speaks of the powerlessness of ordinary people to sway the will of real-estate giants in bed with politicians. Photog Jamel Shabazz (himself the subject of Charlie Ahearn's recent docu) tells of the milieu where he grew up, his pictures offering wondrous snapshots of communal Brooklyn life. Anderson interviews social workers and shopkeepers in downtown Brooklyn, forced to relocate decades-old, one-of-a-kind businesses without compensation. A bookstore owner mourns the loss of a repository of African-American history, while record stores fold in an area where hip-hop first famously flourished.

Camera (color, HD), Chris Dapkins, Quenell Jones, Laela Kilbourn, Edin Velez; editor, Kathryn Barnier; music, Benjamin Fries, Simon Beins; sound, Dapkins, Fivel Rothberg; re-recording mixers, Martin Czembor, Bill Seery. Reviewed on DVD, New York, Dec. 29, 2012. Running time: 77 MIN.

BLOOMBERG NEWS MOVIE REVIEW

'Obscene' New Brooklyn: Films

By Greg Evans & Craig Seligman

'My Brooklyn'

At first "[My Brooklyn](#)" looks like the kind of studious documentary that well-meaning liberals put audiences to sleep with. By the end, though, it's likely to have viewers boiling.

Kelly Anderson, the director, and her chief researcher, Allison Lirish Dean, explode the comforting idea that the gentrification changing downtown [Brooklyn](#) is just an organic process of some people moving in and others moving out.

The city of New York and private developers, following a 2004 blueprint called the Downtown Brooklyn Plan -- which was swiftly endorsed by every local agency in possession of a rubber stamp -- made it happen.

In 2004, according to Anderson, the Fulton Mall in downtown Brooklyn was the third most successful shopping area in New York (after Fifth and Madison avenues), attracting 100,000 consumers a day. Then why alter it? Because its sneaker stores and wig shops, which had been building up their (largely minority) clientele for decades, didn't appeal to the upscale transplants from [Manhattan](#) who were snapping up brownstones nearby.

Before long, with generous subsidies from the city, a swarm of luxury high-rises was changing the Brooklyn skyline. Meanwhile, the mall's small-business owners were getting eviction notices -- without, of course, any offers of subsidies to help them relocate.

As outraged activists howled over the displacement of their community, city officials nodded sympathetically. Just as they do for Anderson's camera.

Craig Wilder, an eloquent MIT historian who was born in Brooklyn, sums up the process in two words: "It's obscene."

"My Brooklyn," from New Day Films, is playing in Brooklyn. Rating: **** (Seligman)

My Brooklyn

BY [KALVIN HENELY](#) ON DECEMBER 31, 2012

My Brooklyn is a thoughtful piece of documentary journalism that synecdochically uses the controversial redevelopment of the Fulton Street Mall—the third most profitable commercial district in NYC, which was targeted by developers because it didn't cater to the upper class that are starting to live around it—to talk about the process of gentrification. Director Kelly Anderson, a teacher of film and media at Hunter College, has been both a participant in and, when she was priced out of her Fort Greene apartment, a sufferer of gentrification. Starting from Anderson's own experiences, she and writer-researcher-producer Allison Lirish Dean have admirably created a doc that offers diverse perspectives on, and takes a long-view look at the history of, a subject that people on both sides of the issue can't (or won't) fully understand: The rich and powerful lie to both themselves and their victims, and the poor, being excluded from the decision-making process, feel so helpless that they accept the former's deceitful mantra that change is inevitable and good.

My Brooklyn blames the damage caused by gentrification on poor public policy, such as when a city government rezones an area to make room for new, more expensive properties, often at the expense of current residents and businesses. Additionally, interviews with Craig Wilder, a professor of history at MIT, help explain further how the evils of gentrification have less to do with the people who migrate than with the bankers, insurers, and lawmakers who more or less control people's ability to move or stay put through the practice of redlining, in which a certain group of people are denied financial services based on their race or class. These often unseen forces are powerful; they're a major player in Brooklyn's history, and they should serve as a lesson about the abuse of power and the insidiousness of racism. Yet as *My Brooklyn* makes convincing, might still makes right, as we see similar powerful interests, both of government and private business, at play in the Fulton Street Mall, plowing through attempts to counteract their bluntness, such as FUREE's activism and the respectful recommendations made by the Pratt Center in regard to the how the new developments might incorporate some of the old and help preserve the local character.

Though *My Brooklyn* does occasionally feel like it could have benefitted from more elaboration on topics it touches on too briefly, it still offers a complex understanding of defining changes that happen in cities the world over, ones that'll likely continue to increase as more people move into urban areas. Anderson's refreshing honesty about her feelings of both guilt and excitement at the changes that take place when a neighborhood begins to accommodate this new class of people will likely be relatable to many who've moved to lower-income neighborhoods. And for those who know who the Brooklyn Nets are, but not what gentrification is, *My Brooklyn* can be eye-opening.

DIRECTOR(S): Kelly Anderson , RUNTIME: 87 min. , RATING: NR , YEAR: 2012

Sponsored Links

1 Food For Losing 28 Lbs

They Lost An Avg 28 Lbs Using This Rare Food Diet Pill. Doctors... healthy lifestyles digest.com

Mom is 53 But Looks 23

New York Mom publishes free facelift trick that angered doctors.. WebWeekly-Updates.com



Editor [C. Zawadi Morris](#) c.zawadi.morris@patch.com



Like

1.3k

[Patch Newsletter](#)

[Nearby](#)

[Join](#)

[Sign In](#)

Bed-StuyPatch

48°

Drive more local traffic to your dealership. [ADVERTISE NOW](#) Patch.



[Home](#)

[News](#)

[Events](#)

[Directory](#)

[Pics & Clips](#)

[Commute](#)

[Real Estate](#)

[More Stuff](#)



The Neighborhood Files

Whose Brooklyn? My Brooklyn!

The critically acclaimed documentary "My Brooklyn," examines what Brooklyn is becoming, who it is for, and who is really calling the shots

By [C. Zawadi Morris](#) | [Email the author](#) | January 22, 2013

Recommend 79

Tweet 4

[Email](#)

[Print](#)

[1 Comment](#)

Related Topics: [Craig Wilder](#), [Kelly Anderson](#), [My Brooklyn](#), and [reRun Theatre](#)



Can a person claim ownership of a borough?

In New York City, a metropolis divided into five boroughs each reflecting five very distinct histories, lifestyles and cultural developments, borough ownership becomes almost part and parcel of a New Yorker's self-identification.

In the documentary, "My Brooklyn," the film's director Kelly Anderson explores how the intersection of race, class and culture makes the idea of borough ownership at best a mere notion of the middle-class and at worst a delusion of the poor.

As a white woman who self-identifies as a Brooklyn "gentrifier," Anderson seeks to understand the forces reshaping her neighborhood, as she watches the Brooklyn she has lived in for the past 25 years bought, sold and redefined before her very eyes.

"Brooklyn had become a hip, expensive brand," Anderson narrates in the film. "A lot of my African-American and Puerto Rican neighbors were moving out. And I started to feel like the neighborhood character that drew me to Brooklyn was slipping away."

The documentary -- which already is creating an enormous buzz -- takes a soul-searching, contemporary and candid look at the intentional and unintentional forces reshaping Brooklyn's identity, focusing on the changes at Fulton Street Mall, while exposing a lot of naked truths.

Famed photographer Jamel Shabazz shares a catalogue of his photos all of which poignantly capture the face of Brooklyn during the 80s-- remembered as a particularly rough time in Brooklyn's history, but also one of Brooklyn's most soulful and creative.

"Then all of a sudden, everything just changed," said Shabazz in the film. "I mean gentrification is real, people do need a place to live, but my whole thing is, what's happened to the people?"

Redlining, land ownership, and the ongoing tug-of-war between community, development and identity are big themes.

Also in the film, M.I.T. professor, historian and Bed-Stuy resident Dr. Craig Wilder outlines surrounding neighborhoods. He and Anderson both show how Fulton Mall's transform

[Close](#)

[Close](#)

Although at the time, Bed-Stuy's homeownership was only 5 percent black, banks abandoned all efforts of lending to black potential homeowners in mixed neighborhoods, such as Bedford-Stuyvesant.

At the same time, suburban development kicked into full swing, along with an aggressive lending effort by banks encouraging homeownership by whites who were willing to relocate out of the city and into the suburbs, where black people were still barred.

"And so one of the great myths of the process of ghettoization is that Blacks and Puerto Ricans destroyed [their neighborhoods]," said Wilder. "Those neighborhoods were actually targeted for destruction. The very resources that people depend upon to sustain a quality of life were withdrawn."

The film also looks at the current practice of rezoning commercial and residential districts – the demolition of affordable housing replaced with luxury housing – and the role it continues to play today in the massive reshaping of the borough.

"The process of gentrifying is not necessarily a process of making Brooklyn a better place to live," said Dr. Wilder. "These kinds of wars about space need to be dealt with a little more honestly."

The documentary is an eye-opener. Because no matter *what you think you know* about the story of Brooklyn's gentrification, the film stirs a realization there are several more moving parts to a much bigger story.

Most notably, "My Brooklyn" does more than just offer the familiar two-sides-of-the-coin anecdotes that so often define the face of gentrification, but instead presents a stark and emotional yet matter-of-fact re-telling of what has actually taken place.

Due to its popularity with NYC audiences (the film sold out every show during its first run in early February), *My Brooklyn* is returning to the [reRun Theater](#) in Dumbo, January 25 – February 3. Tickets are available at www.reruntheater.com and <http://mybrooklynrerun.eventbrite.com>.

For more information on the film and a list of scheduled guest speakers, visit www.mybrooklynmovie.com

[Email me updates about this story.](#)

Recommend 79

Tweet 4

[Email](#)

[Print](#)

[Follow comments](#)

[Submit tip](#)

[1 Comment](#)

Qiana Flag as inappropriate
 4:09 pm on Wednesday, January 23, 2013
 So true. I can't wait to see it.

Leave a comment

READ MORE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD FILES [Close](#)
[Red Hook Paletas Producer Launches Kickstarter Campaign](#)