gentrification in the bay area BOOM
The photographs in this book were produced by the students in the Fall 2015 "Visual Storytelling: Advanced Documentary" class at the UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism, under the instruction of Professor Ken Light.

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“It's an odd thing, but anyone who disappears is said to be seen in San Francisco. It must be a delightful city and possess all the attractions of the next world.” - Oscar Wilde

San Francisco gained its reputation as a wild, carefree, all-encompassing, radical, left-wing, on-the-brink-of-something-new city as early as the Gold Rush days, when the city was filled with outlaws, brothels, prostitution, gambling, and more saloons than churches.

San Francisco’s Financial District grew and thrived, as other neighborhoods explored and embraced counterculture. These nonconformist communities spanned through decades, and at the very least, played a role in shaping the city’s eccentric character. The Beat writers and poets of the 1950s questioned the “American way” as they loitered, lived and lit up in bohemian, jazzy, boozy North Beach. The 1960s hippie movement found its heart in Berkeley and San Francisco’s Haight neighborhood, fueled by communal living, free love, drugs, rock n’ roll, and activism for social and environmental change. The gay rights movement made way in the ’70s and ’80s, bringing thousands more people to the area’s gay community, which found its home in the Castro.
The 1990s brought the onset of the Internet, and the Bay Area became the forefront of a new Gold Rush: the Digital Gold Rush. Once again, people from far and wide came in droves to the Bay Area to hit the jackpot as the city exploded with new tech businesses and overnight millionaires.

The millennium saw the dot.com bubble burst, leaving many in the industry in limbo. But before long, Google, YouTube, Twitter and Facebook were among the companies that showed enough innovation to not only change the city, but the world.

Young people from all over the world still come in droves to San Francisco, most to find jobs in the teeming tech scene and its ancillary industries. This has spurred an incredible growth in employment opportunities: San Francisco now has the highest rate of job creation of all major U.S. cities, according to Ken Rosen, an economist at UC Berkeley. And the number of high-tech jobs has almost tripled since 2009, according to CBRE, a global real estate company.

The dark side of this boom is that San Francisco also has the nation’s fastest growing income inequality, according to a recent study by the Brookings Institution. This inequality takes a most unfortunate form in the city’s problem of widespread homelessness; at the beginning of 2015, there were over 7,000 people counted as either homeless or living in shelters, according to a survey commissioned by San Francisco City Hall.

Skyrocketing rental prices (as of October 2015, the median rent for a one-bedroom apartment in San Francisco was $3,620, according to rental website Zumper) and the high cost of living now drive people out of San Francisco to Oakland, Berkeley and elsewhere. In turn, middle- and low-income families are squeezed out of the housing market, many looking eastward for work and shelter.

Add to that the expansion of successful tech companies -- Uber is set to open their new headquarters in Oakland in 2017, bringing 2,500 employees with them -- and no neighborhood will be left unaffected. While we can trace the beginnings of this gentrification, it’s difficult to predict how it will play out in the coming years. Inevitably, the Bay Area will look radically different in 10 years.

It was for this reason that we wanted to document the change we see and what neighborhoods look like in 2015, to capture a moment in time when one of America’s great metropolitan areas finds itself in a period of great change. Six student photographers set out to capture what we saw as hallmarks of the gentrification in San Francisco and the East Bay, and the result is the following book: BOOM: Gentrification in the Bay Area.
“I am either a homeless entrepreneur, or a guy with 650 homes in San Francisco. Depends on your perspective.”

—Brian Chesky, on moving out of Rausch and living solely on Airbnb.
THE FINEST APARTMENTS IN THE CITY!
TRINITYSF.COM
Theresa Flandrich, 60
Longtime North Beach resident, received an eviction notice in April 2013

“I cried a lot. I thought ‘Oh, my God, this is no longer my home.’”

“I’m seeing the whole character and the feeling of my neighborhood change.”

“I lived here for 32 years and I raised my son here, who is now 27. So there are many memories of birthdays, Christmases, always celebrating here with the warm light of candles. There are many mementos from his childhood, some of my own childhood. I don’t know what I will do with all these mementos that are too difficult for me just to toss away.”

“Many people have been forced out without knowing their rights, so that is when I decided I needed to do something to make sure they knew they had rights.”

“Everyone has a right to housing and security instead of the anxiety that everyone feels right now. ‘When will it be my turn?’ ‘When will I receive an eviction note?’”
John Mendoza, 52
San Francisco resident, evicted from his home in October 2015

“We’ve been dealing with gentrification in so many different phases. I feel we are the end of the wave that hit New York where everybody was rolled over before they even had a chance to know what they were doing. We kind of had heads up because we saw it coming."

“People all over the United States are looking to us right here, to what we are doing. To show that after they’ve been washed out and gone, that there is still something that we can do. We can still get up and fight."

“The fact that I’m homeless now is making me even more angry and more aware of what’s going on. You see a homeless person and it’s so ugly that we try to ignore it, but we shouldn’t ignore it because that could be us. We are one step away from living under a bridge.”
Marla Bastien Knight
Fifth generation San Franciscan, received an eviction notice in 2012 one day after Thanksgiving

"What’s happening is not progress. I’m surely not against people fixing up their places and making things look better, but that’s not what’s happening here. What we are talking about is demographic cleansing."

"I’m staying on a housing list because you never know what might come down the pipeline."

"I don’t want San Francisco to become a shell of its former self. People love San Francisco because we have all kinds of different people here: different ethnic groups, different income groups, and we are all kind of in it together. And I don’t want to see that go."
The changing face of Oakland

Oakland neighborhoods like Temescal and Uptown have changed rapidly in the past decade, with new restaurants, taprooms, boutiques and coffee shops moving onto blocks that were once home exclusively to decades-old businesses that defined the characters of their neighborhoods.

Clockwise from top left: Homeroom, a macaroni and cheese restaurant; Temescal Alley, a row of new shops off of Telegraph Avenue and 49th Street; FATHOM, a 3D printing company; a new Blue Bottle Coffee location in an historic building on Broadway.

Above: Space Burger, which opened in 2015 in the space on Telegraph Avenue that longtime late-night burger joint Giant Burger once occupied.
Ricardo Peña, 44
Owner of Mixcoatl Arts & Crafts in the Mission District

"[Gentrification] is a bad thing that happens to the community because the culture of the Mission District is missing. It is disappearing. New people come and they bring their own idea but it’s different than the one we used to have here in the Mission. I’ve been here for more than 25 years and I love how the Mission District used to be. Now everybody is worrying about money and they don’t care about culture."
Unlikeable Braintrust Eliminating Rules

Uber, Lyft take real jobs from working people

Lyft: a danger to the riding public

Uber must be stopped

Ride service apps have changed
I have an affection for a great city.
I feel safe in the neighborhood of man,
and enjoy the sweet security of the streets.

~ H.W. Longfellow
Amin Aaser
is a children’s author from Minneapolis studying at the Haas School of Business. He often thinks about what Dr. Suess would do with an MBA.

Bonnie Chan
is a narrative and photojournalism student at the UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism. She likes snacks of all kinds.

Jacqui Ipp
is a writer, photographer and documentary filmmaker. She’s a music fanatic, travel enthusiast and adventure seeker who’s often told she was born into the wrong decade.

Martin Totland
is a photographer and reporter from Norway who likes to photograph wildlife and great nature scenes.

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Nina Zou
is a multimedia student at the UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism. A born and raised Beijing-er, she is passionate about technology and design.

Ken Light
is the Reva and David Logan Professor of Photojournalism at UC Berkeley’s Graduate School of Journalism. He is a working documentary photographer and the author of nine books.
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Welcome to San Francisco


Narratives of Displacement

12,000+
No-Fault Evictions
Since 1991: Ellis Act Evictions, Owner Move-Ins (O.M.I), Demolition...

More than 33,000 people displaced!

Buyouts. Rent increases, harassment, "no-fault" evictions since the latest tech.

BOOM!