

# Rickey Williams Western Kentucky University (Done)

Fri, 3/13 1:51PM 10:29

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

gentrification, body, home, ai, house, live, hiv, neighborhoods, feel, queer, disappearing, foreign, crowded spaces, virus, broken, renovate, poetry, space, blood, infected cells

## SPEAKERS

Rickey Williams, Audience

- 
- R** Rickey Williams 00:00  
HIV is when the virus attaches itself to white blood cells and new infected cells grow. These cells break away causing damage to the
  - R** Rickey Williams 00:00  
The immune systems it spreads quickly turns the familiar road of your veins into neighborhoods you don't even recognize.
  - R** Rickey Williams 00:00  
So you tell me what is the difference between HIV and gentrification?
  - A** Audience 00:00  
Huh
  - R** Rickey Williams 00:00  
My body feels like- like a churning coffee bean grinder set to a backdrop of new

construction. A wrecking ball swung from my grandmother's house to move on through my bones, my heart, my liver, I can't tell the difference between the grind outside and the grind inside feeding on me.

R

Rickey Williams 00:00

I feel the crawling all over me pulling out my nails. They pulled those, my memory, burning me until the ground was flattened, so you tell me how do you identify what keeps disappearing like a floorboards that lift up from under your feet then the whole room then the whole house and shh.

R

Rickey Williams 00:00

Brand new floor board, brand new house, but no more you.

R

Rickey Williams 00:00

In her book "The Gentrification of the Mind" poet Sarah Schulman writes, "while we often discuss gentrification through the lenses of race and poverty, we have long overlooked one of the greatest gentrifiers in American history. The HIV-AIDS epidemic." She knows for every leaseholder who died of AIDS in the 80s an apartment with some market rate. This physical, spiritual and cultural phenomenon primarily affected positive queer bodies who inhabited one of the many now extinct gayborhoods. In other words, we killed these victims twice, once with our apathy toward their conditions, and again, with the decimation of their homes, so thru the poetry "Gentrification" inspired by Javon Johnson Gentrification by Crystal Valentine and poems from Melvin Dixon, Tory Dent, Reinaldo Arenas, Steve Abbott, and William Barber, all from the anthology "Persistent Voices: Poetry by Poets Lost to AIDS". A program not only for the victims, but for the spaces they once occupied.

R

Rickey Williams 00:00

You can't renovate a borough

R

Rickey Williams 00:00

without burying the people already living there

R Rickey Williams 00:00  
but these streets will never forgets my name

R Rickey Williams 00:00  
These streets are drunk of my blood

R Rickey Williams 00:00  
What's your blood taste like

R Rickey Williams 00:00  
Honey, do you even know how to bleed? Why would you want something you ain't bleed for? Well even Jesus can tell you that shit ain't right. A doctor put a for sale sign on my chest it read for throw von through where test blood come cells red things white. Low. athe virus didn't care that the body would never be whole.

R Rickey Williams 00:00  
Or that the body had a family

R Rickey Williams 00:00  
The city didn't care about families

R Rickey Williams 00:00  
didn't care that the only space you have ever called home would be made to feel strange and foreign and out of place would become too expensive to breathe in to live in. They lived in Capitol Hill, the West Village, Greenwich, Castro District, where they are tearing down queer bodies quicker than they can build new high rises. Lately, my body feels like, like an open house.

R Rickey Williams 00:00  
Caucasian blood cells and virus multiplied by the dozens. They smash my walls and called it an open concept. I mean, I pray for a cure, I pray for a new foundation, I prayed for help. But a contractor answered. Gentrification ain't nothing but some no name unseasoned,

uncultured Cracker Barrel eatin ass after trying to steal my man. He gonna help me.  
They straightup Lewis and Clarked my ass!

R Rickey Williams 00:00  
Don't you look familiar no matter where I look.

R Rickey Williams 00:00  
Foreign sky foreign street foreign trees with their foreign leaves broken dreams hover like  
the shadow of a giant.

R Rickey Williams 00:00  
They raised the rent on the house by the roadside and colled it a neighborhood update  
but only updated my neighbors I watched my home my life my family sink into a grave.  
Do you know what it feels like to die before death? A realtor spray painted my test results  
on my house in read move in me he's dead he's dying a home a house for sale for you.  
Gentrification is to take the body and gut it. It is to treat it the entire city like a chubby  
hume will feel everything until you feel nothing. The virus didn't care that the body had a  
home.


R Rickey Williams 00:00  
Or that the body had people who love them that at this point we are still moving our debt  
into grounds that they couldn't afford to live on. So what should I do when the ghosts  
start knocking?

R Rickey Williams 00:00  
Don't you know you're sharing a bed with somebody's tombstone? You can't renovate a  
borough without burying the people already living there.

R Rickey Williams 00:00  
Say you want to save the street say you want to save the people but all the people keep  
disappearing.

R Rickey Williams 00:00  
Whose bones not willing to be dusted, which skeleton is ready to be exterminated.

R Rickey Williams 08:24  
How about we sacrifice your family and drown them in our blood.

R Rickey Williams 08:28   
This being more than your vacation home. This being more than a fucking trend we ain't got no game, so picket white fences just bodies. No I won't be one. I ain't die one but you don't aske me how I got here.

R Rickey Williams 08:52  
Oh why is my body eating itself alive? Oh where did the God go in all of this?

R Rickey Williams 09:01  
I am a burned down player in a broken church house, which is to say, I am positive, and I feel hopeless. And this is exactly what gentrification does. It pushes the God out of the body and sometimes the body has neighborhoods and lives which is to say that these fists are wrecking balls which is to say that I am a house. So all live with the dead, but still a home.

R Rickey Williams 09:29  
Lately my body feels more hospice than home. These veins, hollow halls these walls are crowded spaces.

R Rickey Williams 09:55  
But I am learning to become all the space that I need. Walking this abandoned field, I'm searching for something when'll ya be?

R Rickey Williams 10:10  
You'd only finding memories from how high I once climbed.

