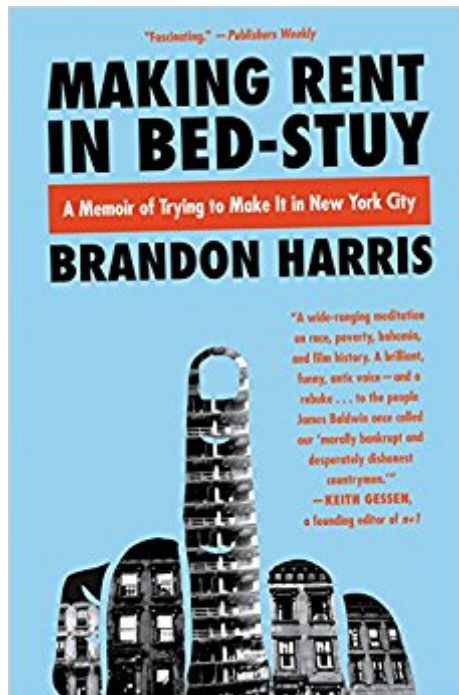




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# Making Rent In Bed-Stuy: A Memoir Of Trying To Make It In New York City



## Synopsis

A young African American millennial filmmaker's funny, sometimes painful, true-life coming-of-age story of trying to make it in New York City • a chronicle of poverty and wealth, creativity and commerce, struggle and insecurity, and the economic and cultural forces intertwined with "the serious, life-threatening process" of gentrification. Making Rent in Bed-Stuy explores the history and sociocultural importance of Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn's largest historically black community, through the lens of a coming-of-age young American negro artist living at the dawn of an era in which urban class warfare is politely referred to as gentrification. Bookended by accounts of two different breakups, from a roommate and a lover, both who come from the white American elite, the book oscillates between chapters of urban bildungsroman and a historical examination of some of Bed-Stuy's most salient aesthetic and political legacies. Filled with personal stories and a vibrant cast of iconoclastic characters • friends and acquaintances such as Spike Lee; Lena Dunham; and Paul MacCleod, who made a living charging \$5 for a tour of his extensive Elvis collection • Making Rent in Bed-Stuy poignantly captures what happens when youthful idealism clashes head-on with adult reality. Melding in-depth reportage and personal narrative that investigates the disappointments and ironies of the Obama era, the book describes Brandon Harris's radicalization, and the things he lost, and gained, along the way.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Brandon Harris's first book is a wide-ranging meditation on race, poverty, bohemia, and film history. It's the introduction to American letters of a brilliant, funny, antic

voice-and a rebuke, in a form newly discovered, to the people James Baldwin once called our  
 “morally bankrupt and desperately dishonest countrymen.” (Keith  
 Gessen, a founding editor of *n+1* and the author of *All the Sad Young Literary  
 Men*) “Fascinating” This memoir provides hard-won insights into the divided loyalties  
 of middle-class African-Americans, and a convincing description of a 21st-century New York City  
 where only the rich can thrive. (Publishers Weekly) “A thought-provoking  
 examination of the millennial black experience in the first decade of the 21st century.”  
 (Kirkus Reviews) “There were passages that made me burst out laughing, paragraphs that  
 made me want to scream, and pages that made me want to take Brandon by the collar and simply  
 shake him to his senses. Clever and powerful. Everybody interested in discovering how Millennials  
 are living will find *Making Rent in Bed-Stuy* fascinating.” (Julianne Malveaux, economist and  
 author of *Are We Better Off? Race, Obama, and Public Policy* Julianne Malveaux, economist and  
 author of *Are We Better Off? Race, Obama, and Public Policy* Julianne Malveaux, economist and  
 author of *Are We Better Off? Race, Obama, and Public Policy* R) “A searing debut memoir” With its stinging truths and  
 inventive language, *Making Rent in Bed-Stuy* stands as a monument to what is lost when New  
 York’s low-rent underdog outer borough becomes just another county of kings.  
 (New York Times Book Review) “A melancholic, lyrical new memoir”  
 Harris’s memoir has a pleasing specificity. (The New Yorker)

Fresh out of college, Brandon Harris needs an affordable place to live—a search that leads  
 him to the neighborhood of Bedford-Stuyvesant. *Making Rent in Bed-Stuy* explores the history and  
 cultural importance of Brooklyn’s largest historically black community as it illuminates the  
 experiences of one young man at the dawn of an era in which urban class warfare is politely  
 referred to as gentrification. Bookended by two different breakups, a roommate and a lover, both  
 from the white American elite, the memoir interweaves Harris’s story with a serious look at  
 some of Bed-Stuy’s most salient legacies. From the childhood of Jay-Z to the  
 disappointing late career of Spike Lee, *Making Rent in Bed-Stuy* takes account of the famous heart  
 of black Brooklyn’s cultural scene. Recounting Harris’s own encounters with  
 figures as far-flung as Lena Dunham, doyenne of the Brooklyn zeitgeist who would never take the J  
 train into Bed-Stuy to catch a house party, to Paul MacLeod, a gun-toting Mississippi man who  
 makes a living charging \$5 for a tour of his extensive Elvis collection • *Making Rent in  
 Bed-Stuy* poignantly captures what happens when youthful idealism clashes head-on with adult  
 reality. Blending in-depth reportage and personal narrative, *Making Rent in Bed-Stuy* investigates

the disappointments and ironies of millennial life, revealing Harris's radicalization and the things he lost, and gained, along the way.

A highly entertaining and brilliantly insightful book, funny, candid, and quite original in form, a freewheeling mix of memoir, criticism, cultural history, and reporting. Harris is obsessed with teasing out the complexities of race and class in America, whether writing about his privileged upbringing in Cincinnati and his bohemian days as a black face among mostly white gentrifiers in Brooklyn, or riffing on the life and work of Spike Lee and Jay-Z, and his observations are unfailingly interesting. Cop it!

Great insights into Brooklyn history, modern living in the borough, and tensions existing therein for an eloquent Brandon Harris. MRiBS is honest, informative, and endlessly entertaining. Highly recommended.

I'd hate to be the guy that writes a review while only halfway done, but...The book holds some appeal to me as I grew up in Brooklyn not far from the addresses he lists. I've seen the incredible transition from crack era Brooklyn to hipster paradise. So I like the tidbits of Brooklyn history interspersed throughout. He does offer some meaningful reflections on race...,but I am struggling a bit to continue. First i find his language quite head-shakingly pretentious: "in my weaker moments, I felt a turn in the gut on many an ebony night that summer striding past the hopped-up Marcy boys..." secondly, maybe it's the Brooklyn in me, but I don't have much tolerance for bougie problems. An upper class kid from Ohio, goes to film school, moves in with an even wealthier friend in Brooklyn, and complains about how poor he is and what a struggle...until mommy sends him a few G's. Really? Let me know when you've spent a night on a bench in fort Greene park or slept on the G train. So between that and the mundane tales of his fledgling film career, I can't help but peek at my to-read pile and see what other options I have.

My copy arrived yesterday and I have been devouring pages. Harris peers around many corners of the human experience and while he doesn't always seem to like what he finds, his appreciation of its existence and respective analysis provide contemplation, often humor, always new thoughts, and certainly enjoyment for the reader.

A brilliant and moving memoir comprised of film-criticism, cultural analysis, and the complexities of

Harris's transition into adulthood. This is a book that should be read by anyone interested in Brooklyn, gentrification, race, art, or an unusually perceptive individual's vision of the world.

I bought this book expecting to take a walk down memory lane. I lived in Bed Stuy in the late 90's as it started to gentrify, and was fascinated by the slow ripples of change. After the first couple of chapters of this book, I was turned off. Why? For the following reasons:- The authors obsessive recounting of all of the white women that he has bedded.-His lack of perspective or self-reflection on why he was never able to relate socially to his black neighbors.- The uninteresting forays into the authors film career, or lack thereof.- His Afro American Studies 101-level discourses on Jay Z. Amateurish and yawn inducing. In all, this book is boring and shallow.

Honest, wickedly funny, self-deprecating, evocative, and true. This book seamlessly blends cultural criticism and frank memoir. I raced through it in one weekend and wished for more. Recommended!

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