#FoodforThought: Examining Instagram as a Mechanism of Gentrification

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Abstract

This major research paper argues that Instagram is an emerging mechanism of displacement as it reinforces urban and social inequality to facilitate cycles of racialized displacement and dispossession. Particularly through the circulation of user-generated food/hotspots on Instagram, contribute to the longstanding historical practices of segregation and function as a form of spatial control. This project is divided into three Chapters; the first Chapter consists of a literature review, theoretical framework, and methodology. Here, I critique the work of urban scholars who have failed to integrate the racialized genealogies into their analysis of gentrification. In Chapter 2, entitled *Gentrification & The Digital Black Spatial Imaginary*, I argue there are three main ways social media, particularly Instagram, has facilitated gentrification; Instagram-ability as an extension of white supremacy and spatial control, historical practices of segregation emerging digitally, and Black suppression across various platforms. In this section, I expand on Lipsitz's (2011) concept of the Black spatial imaginary as the digital Black spatial imaginary. The final Chapter, entitled *Parkdale Case Study: Pathologized Parkdale to #Vegandale*, explores the defining moments in the history of Parkdale and how it has always been a target for urban renewal. This project is a Black Studies project that draws from fundamental Black Studies scholars (Lipsitz, 2007; Walcott, 2003), Black feminist geographers (McKittrick, 2013), surveillance studies (Browne, 2017; Noble, 2018), digital studies (Benjamin, 2019), and Black food geographies (Reese, 2019), which is crucial to address how Instagram is an emerging mechanism of gentrification.

Keywords: Gentrification, Instagram, Instagram-ability, The Digital Black Spatial Imaginary, Displacement, Food-sharing.

Foreword

#FoodforThought: Examining Instagram as a Mechanism of Gentrification, takes an interdisciplinary approach to produce a major research paper that weaves my areas of concentration: Food Justice, Digital Technology, and The Digital Black Spatial Imaginary. This paper is written to fulfill the requirements for the Master's in Environmental Studies (MES) degree. The MES program has allowed me to enhance, explore, and refine my interdisciplinary skills to achieve my learning objectives. As outlined in my plan of study (POS), these are my three primary learning objectives:

1. Unmapping Canada's white settler society and understanding how neocolonialism is present in contemporary society.
2. Gain an understanding of how neocolonial ideologies circulate on social media and influence spaces of consumption.
3. Gain an understanding of how food systems are an extension of settler colonialism and function as a neocolonial tool.

Throughout my master's degree, I have taken various courses dedicated to expanding my understanding of the links between food as a method of displacement/resistance, social media as a reflection of dominant ideologies, and how the racialization of space emerges digitally. I have had the opportunity to produce highly researched academic papers on food justice and creative projects on the powers of social media, which have given me the tools to conduct, collect and analyze my data. Doing this work has taught me three important lessons:

1. Unmapping Canada's settler colonial history requires more Black and Indigenous scholars. Canada has successfully created a multicultural narrative that further cemented white supremacist ideologies embedded in urban laws, policies and practices (Maynard,

2017). As I was doing this work, I noticed very few texts spoke to, analyzed, and located the histories of anti-Blackness and the racialization of space in Canada. My MRP utilizes the works of the few Black studies scholars in Canada. Outside of the very few works that focus on Canada, many of the Black studies works that contextualize this form of urban inequality focus on the American landscape. The lack of literature surrounding these topics highlights a gap in the field of urban studies in Canada, as we require more Black and Indigenous scholars dedicated to integrating Black and Indigenous history and critical race perspectives to challenge and dismantle settler colonialism in Canada.

2. Social media does reinforce systemic inequality both through discourse and images. In addition, social media does impact and structure physical spaces. The Instagram-ability of space has played a fundamental role in upgrading restaurants, clubs, and various other locations, functioning as a method of spatial control which seeks to segregate marginalized populations. As we move toward a digital future, we must have more Black and Indigenous experts in this field to address systemic inequality and create more equitable social media platforms, devices, and technology.
3. Although there is not enough research on Food Justice, particularly on Black food geographies, within the Canadian landscape, the food system is built on settler colonialism and has been used as a tool to facilitate Black and Indigenous mortality rates. Black Canadians make up a small percentage of the population, yet in Toronto, they are 3.5 times more likely to be food insecure than their white counterparts (City of Toronto, 2021). Although there is not enough food justice research on Black communities in Canada, I recognize that this form of systemic oppression does not exist in isolation and is a part of a more significant problem. In addition, food has always been a tool of colonization and plays a pivotal role in cementing systemic inequality. My goal beyond

this MRP is to work with food justice organizations and combat the rising rates of food insecurity amongst Black and Indigenous communities across Canada.

Finally, the MES program's interdisciplinary nature provided me with the tools to explore, develop, and engage with concepts in thoughtful and meaningful ways. My MRP is an amalgamation of my plan of study, learning objectives, coursework, the intricacies of my educational and professional background, theoretical knowledge, and lived experiences. My main objective with my MRP is to contribute to the growing literature on Digital Technology, Digital Culture, Urban and Food Justice, and Black studies in Canada.

Dedication

For Aziza, my Hooyo, first educator, friend, Black feminist (s)hero, and support system. Thank you for laughing with me, listening to me, believing in me, and most importantly, all the sacrifices you have made to ensure that I can achieve my goals.

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These past two years have been challenging for me, living in a global pandemic and a racial epidemic. I have experienced tremendous loss and grief in unimaginable ways. However, I would not have been able to complete this MRP without the unwavering love and support of those around me. Thank you to my loved ones, friends (in physical and digital spaces), and family, who have believed in me throughout this journey.

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Abbreviations

CVC—Copenhagen Vegan Café
LAP—Living Archive Project
MAiD—Medical Assisted in Dying
MOCA—Museum of Contemporary Art
NIA — Neighbourhood Improvement Areas
NYM — Not Your Mother
PNLT— Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust
PARC—Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre
PFB—Parkdale Food Bank
WEFC—West End Food Co-op

1.0 Introduction

Figure 1: Parkdale Library, Toronto, Ontario (Abdulkader, 2022).

1.1 Revisiting Parkdale

> *The ghetto is a space of encounter. The sons and daughters of the rich come in search of meaning, vitality, and pleasure. The reformers and the sociologists come in search of the truly disadvantaged, failing to see her and her friends as thinkers or planners, or to notice the beautiful experiments crafted by poor black girls.*
>
> *– Saidiya Hartman, Wayward Lives Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Riotous Black Girls, Troublesome Women and Queer Radicals (2020).*

"Ghetto", this was the first word I heard used to describe Parkdale, an area in southern Toronto, Ontario. I remember that word echoing as I exited Dundas West station. In 2018, I visited Parkdale for the first time to meet a friend for brunch. We had planned to meet at the Drake Commissary, the latest brunch spot in Toronto. We saw many reviews on Instagram about

this restaurant and decided to visit. As I exited Dundas West station, I immediately noticed the old brown buildings. I was intrigued by the older buildings, apartments, and restaurants run by immigrant families. I noticed this area had a large racialized population as I walked through the streets. I then realized that this neighbourhood was the infamous Parkdale, as I had heard stories on the news or from friends about their experiences in Parkdale, claiming the neighbourhood was dangerous, rundown, and unsafe.

The rhetoric I had heard used to describe Parkdale reminded me of the language used by others to describe my neighbourhood. I grew up in a subsidized housing complex next to million-dollar homes, which was spatially divided by the ravine tucked behind my complex. Many people would describe my housing complex as dangerous, undesirable, or 'on the wrong side of the tracks'. As someone who lived in the neighbourhood, predominantly occupied by Somali and Jamaican people, I never thought of my neighbours as dangerous. I reflected on these thoughts on my walk, I wanted to uncover why neighbourhoods primarily occupied by racialized populations often shared the same rhetoric. This discourse sparked my fascination and observation of South Parkdale, I started to take notes on my walk to the commissary. As I began walking toward the commissary, I noticed a series of abandoned landscapes, graffiti on the walls, and a sign pointing to the Parkdale Community Service Centre. When I reached the intersection on Sterling Road, the landscapes shifted. Instead of the old apartment buildings, I noticed an immediate shift to recently renovated warehouses. On Sterling Road, I saw signs for the Modern Contemporary Art Museum (MOCA), advertising the opening of the Banksy exhibit. I noticed the whole street was filled with abandoned warehouses that had been recently renovated and looked industrialized. I saw empty lots with construction signs, and then I saw the Drake Commissary. When I went to the Drake Commissary, I noticed that I was one of the only racialized people in the establishment, and I was surrounded by what I presumed to be affluent white communities.

After finishing brunch, my friend and I walked around Sterling Road to get a closer look at the MOCA. We noticed construction signs and assumed that these emerging buildings would become condos or townhouses. As we continued walking, I thought about the language used to describe this neighbourhood; ghetto, dangerous, undesirable, rundown, and unsafe. These words pathologize communities living in Parkdale, as this neighbourhood is home to many racialized diasporic communities. South Parkdale is known as “Little Tibet” due to the increasingly large Tibetan population (Losman, 2019). However, I have not visited Parkdale for the Tibetan Cuisine. Instead, I have visited Parkdale for all of the new and emerging hotspots, the restaurants which signify a future of urban renewal.

The year prior in 2017, the City of Toronto proposed a strip of vegan restaurants in the heart of Parkdale, a historically diasporic community (5 Must-See Toronto Art Districts | Where.Ca, n.d.). Specifically, the opening of Vegandale contributes to the ongoing ‘colorblind’ food politics that disregards the markers of race and class while contributing to food insecurity in the Parkdale area (Alkon & Aygeman, 2011). During our walk, we discussed the emerging Vegandale and its effects on the community surrounding the strip. Within months after our conversation, I witnessed the surge of user-based reviews circulating on Instagram. I noticed friends posting stories of their weekend endeavours in Vegandale. Soon, I would be getting targeted ads for Vegandale, and I began observing the power that social media had in shaping physical spaces. My observational research journey began in 2018, when I noticed a surge in user-generated food content advertising Vegandale.

In October 2019, I had planned to go out for my birthday dinner at a trendy restaurant I had found on Instagram called the Commoner in Roncesvalles, close to South Parkdale. I was grabbing coffee with a friend on Ossington and Dundas before heading to the Commoner. When I asked him about living in the neighbourhood, he had disclosed that he enjoyed the

neighbourhood, but avoided South Parkdale because he believed the neighbourhood was dangerous. I then came to understand that this rhetoric of “dangerous” meant racialized, undesirable, and disposable under dominant systems of settler colonialism, capitalism, and white supremacy.

This language contributed to the longstanding pathologization of Parkdale which has historically been home to mad, low-income, and racialized populations (Losman, 2019). I recognize this language and discourse within my own life as a Somali-Canadian. In 1991, Somalia’s civil war left millions of Somali people without a home; many of them began to seek refuge in Canada (Abdi & Robbins, 2014). Somali people came to Canada and became introduced to Blackness through the dominant discourse and ideologies of race projected onto their bodies; anti-Black racism, xenophobia, and islamophobia marked this community as a threat to white supremacy (Walcott, 2003; Cole, 2020). Likewise, Robyn Maynard (2017) argues that Canada’s multicultural narrative cemented white supremacy and structural inequality, as the country constructed an identity built on human rights without addressing systemic inequality. As a result, Canada’s structures are built on racial capitalism, white supremacy, and settler colonialism, creating the conditions which force Black communities into poverty.

Growing up as a Somali-Canadian, I have lived in predominantly low-income neighbourhoods in Toronto, such as Jane and Finch, Regent Park, and Rexdale, which share similar characteristics to South Parkdale. Some of the characteristics of these neighbourhoods are over-policing (Maynard, 2017), confinement (Philip, 1997), and the external forces contributing to the pathologization of space. The external forces pathologizing space are structures of white supremacy, settler colonialism, and capitalism which surface in various facets; the media, governmental policies and officials. Similarly, Parastou Saberi’s article *Toronto and the ‘Paris problem’: Community Policing in ‘Immigrant neighbourhoods* (2017) examines the Paris

problem, which is defined as race riots, and the fear of racialized immigrant uprisings met with urban policies targeting neighbourhood improvement areas which results in the over-policing and confinement of racialized populations. The Paris problem surfaces in neighbourhood improvement areas such as Jane and Finch, Rexdale, Regent Park, and South Parkdale, shaping urban policies and the construction of space (Saberi, 2017). Saberi's (2017) work examines how the Paris problem shapes urban policies and facilitates the over-policing of racialized communities across Toronto. For example, Community Safety Minister Michael Tibollo was photographed wearing a bulletproof vest on his first visit to Jane and Finch, fearing the racialized communities that inhabit this space (Ferguson & Benzie, 2018). That same year, Councillor Giorgio Mammoliti referred to some residents of the Jane and Finch community as cockroaches, insisting that they must be evicted, "Scatter them. Evict them. Get them out of Jane and Finch completely" (Rieti, 2018). In 2020, the Toronto police proposed to install CCTV cameras within the Jane and Finch community (Draaisma & Nanowski, 2020).

According to the City of Toronto Neighbourhood of Improvement Areas (NIA) profiles map, in 2014, South Parkdale was considered an NIA, one of the last remaining areas downtown beside Regent Park. In 2022, South Parkdale remained on the NIA list (City of Toronto, 2022). Neighbourhoods deemed areas of improvement often share similar rhetoric as they contain populations pathologized through systems of white supremacy, capitalism, and settler colonialism.

South Parkdale is one of the last remaining NIA downtown Toronto. In 2018, when Vegandale first opened its doors in a historically impoverished neighbourhood, it was met with the support of external forces and served as a beacon of urban renewal. At the same time, South Parkdale residents and organizations resisted this emerging form of gentrification and created a list of demands; one was putting a stop to rebranding Parkdale (Krishnan, 2018). The 5700 Inc.

management group—owners of Vegandale—decided to work with the community and offered one-hundred thousand dollars to go toward community initiatives (Ngabo, 2018).

In 2018, Vegandale emerged in South Parkdale, comprised of five vegan restaurants; Bar Vegandale (formerly known as Vegandale Bracitorium shortly after the Vegandale brewery), Doomies, Mythology Diner, Not Your Mother (NYM), and Copenhagen Vegan Café (CVC) (Gladysz, 2019). In addition, The 5700 Inc. acquired another lease of one establishment named Prohibition Pie (Gladysz, 2019). Vegandale would place these six restaurants next to each other on a strip at the intersection of Queen Street and Brock Avenue. Within five years, Vegandale attempted to rebrand this historically pathologized neighbourhood into a site of urban renewal and a site of gentrification. However, in March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in a worldwide lockdown. Many restaurants faced financial hardship, forcing them to close their doors due to the emerging pandemic. As a result, over 140 restaurants permanently closed down two years into the pandemic, including the remaining restaurants in Vegandale (Carlberg, 2020).

On February 10th, 2022, I revisited Parkdale for the first time—since the pandemic began—in over two years. This time, I walked through the remains of the Vegandale strip. I noticed brown stone apartment buildings, abandoned shops, and emerging construction on this particular day. Walking through the Vegandale strip, I saw many upcoming trendy stores between mom-and-pop local restaurants. However, I noticed the lack of Vegan restaurants as each restaurant began to close during the pandemic. The last remaining restaurant, Bar Vegandale was still open, but I noticed there were not any patrons. The city's plans to expand and build a strip of vegan restaurants came to a close on March 25th, 2022, when the last vegan restaurant closed its doors (Iqbal, 2022).

Although Vegandale was a failed initiative that attempted to push undesirable populations out of a working-class neighbourhood, it highlights a new form of gentrification, one which takes place online. Over five years, Vegandale has gained popularity through its social media presence and discourse; potentially, if the pandemic had not occurred, these efforts could have led to a new form of urban renewal (Iqbal, 2022). However, Vegandale exemplifies the ways in which social media can facilitate and exacerbate the displacement of racialized communities and be used as a tool of gentrification. Vegandale represents the endless possibilities and emerging powers of social media as a tool for gentrification. Thus, Vegandale exemplifies the links between food as a method of displacement, social media as a tool for reinforcing inequality, and the digital emergence of urban gentrification.

1.2 Topic of Paper

Gentrification is the process by which middle-class households move into newly renovated homes in working-class communities, and as a result, these communities are displaced (Glass, 1964). However, many urban scholars have failed to recognize the racialized genealogies of gentrification as an extension of settler colonialism. Scholar Neil Smith (1996) argues that gentrification is not a new phenomenon; instead, the displacement of marginalized people has always served as the underbelly of urban expansion and cultivating cities. Lorretta Lees, Tom Slater, Elvin Wyly's book *Gentrification* (2008), argues that gentrification has mutated and taken on various forms; rural gentrification, new-build gentrification, super-gentrification, and many other emerging variations. Gentrification has shifted from colonialism, the physical displacement of bodies, to neocolonialism, the economic displacement of racialized communities pushed into spaces deemed ghetto or undesirable, to the emerging form of gentrification that further perpetuates this vicious cycle: social media.

Historically, one of the most significant forces of Black displacement was agricultural production (Reese, 2019). In addition, the ongoing dispossession of Black and Indigenous people in Canada is foregrounded in agricultural production (Mintz, 2020). Therefore, food is a staple of both displacement and resistance. Vegandale is an emerging food hotspot, an evolution of the aforementioned agricultural displacement. Vegandale serves as the revitalization of a historically racialized community. This paper explores how Instagram plays a critical role in Parkdale's current gentrification, transforming this neighbourhood of multiple diasporic communities into #Vegandale, a "vibrant mecca for the ethically minded" in Toronto's emerging arts district (Vegandale, 2018).

My research paper argues that Instagram is an emerging mechanism of displacement as it reinforces urban and social inequality to facilitate cycles of racialized displacement and dispossession. Particularly through the circulation of user-generated food/hotspots on Instagram, contributing to the longstanding historical practices of segregation and function as a form of spatial control. This project is divided into three chapters; the first Chapter consists of a literature review, theoretical framework, and methodology. Here, I critique the work of urban scholars who have failed to integrate the racialized genealogies into their analysis of gentrification. My literature review links food-sharing, digital technology, and social media as an emerging form of gentrification. My methodology includes critical discourse analysis, spatial analysis, and counter-archiving to conduct and collect the data needed to analyze the displacement of racialized communities in Parkdale.

This project is a Black Studies project that intentionally draws from fundamental Black Studies scholars (Lipsitz, 2007; Walcott, 2003), Black feminist geographers (McKittrick, 2013), surveillance studies (Browne, 2017; Noble, 2018), digital studies (Benjamin, 2019), and Black food geographies (Reese, 2019), which is crucial to address how Instagram is an emerging

mechanism of gentrification. My theoretical frameworks are food justice, mainly Black Food geographies, Discursive/Digital redlining, and the Digital Black Spatial imaginary. Throughout this paper, food justice is one of my main areas of concentration, and I examine the duality of food as a method of displacement and resistance. In addition, I explore digital redlining through Instagram as a means of suppressing racialized people's forms of resistance. Specifically, the ways in which Instagram's drastic algorithmic shift from chronological order to algorithm-driven was a means of suppressing digital activism and methods of resistance to social inequality. Finally, my main area of concentration draws and expands on George Lipsitz's (2007) work to examine the digitalization of the Black spatial imaginary and how ideologies of Blackness surface on social media to reflect the ongoing displacement in contemporary society.

In Chapter 2, entitled *Gentrification & The Digital Black Spatial Imaginary*, I argue there are three main ways social media, particularly Instagram, has facilitated gentrification; first, I explore Instagram-ability as an extension of white supremacy and spatial control. Next, I examine how the historical process of gentrification has evolved and emerged digitally, utilizing Zukin et al's. (2015) framework of discursive redlining and Lingels's (2021) framework of digital redlining. I examine how these digital practices facilitate displacement. Finally, I expand on Lipsitz's concept of the Black spatial imaginary, as the digital Black spatial imaginary; I explore how algorithmic shifts, shadow banning, and suppression work toward co-opting blackness without the presence of Black people. The final chapter, entitled *Parkdale Case Study: Pathologized Parkdale to #Vegandale*, explores the defining moments in the history of Parkdale and the ways in which it has always been a target for urban renewal. Drawing on Parkdale's founding to Vegandale's origins, I argue that the use of food-sharing and Instagram-ability in Vegandale is an emerging form of urban renewal which facilitates the displacement of racialized communities. Lastly, I explore Parkdale's ongoing resistance and endless futures. My objective

with this research paper is to contribute to the field of Digital technology, Surveillance, Urban, and Food Justice studies to unravel the ways in which Instagram facilitates the displacement of racialized people. Therefore, this paper provides new insights into the emerging body of literature on digital technology and surveillance studies.

1.3 Personal Location:

My research connects to the intricacies of my educational background, theoretical knowledge, and lived experiences. My background is in Women and Gender Studies and Professional Writing & Communication. Moreover, throughout my undergraduate degree and currently in my Master's, I have taken numerous Women & Gender, Communication Technology, and Environmental Studies courses that have expanded my critical thinking skills to analyze broader systemic barriers and integrate Blackness into Urban, Digital Technology, and Food Justice Studies. Each course has granted me the first-hand experience of utilizing interdisciplinary research methods. Additionally, this background has allowed me to integrate Black feminist methodology and critical theory into decolonial practices.

My research interests began as a child, when I began to question everything to locate myself and understand the complexity of my identity markers. I am a fat Black Muslim femme, a displaced Somali, and a guest on Indigenous land. I must acknowledge my identity markers in relation to my work because it shapes my navigation through systems built on settler colonialism and white supremacy. Although I do not share the same history as those displaced through transatlantic slavery, I was interjected into the anti-Black climate. Cristina Sharpe (2016) argues that anti-Blackness is as inescapable as the weather; "in my text, the weather is the totality of our environments; the weather is the total climate; and that climate is anti-black" (p. 274). Being interjected into what Sharpe (2016) refers to as the "wake" (p. 16), I questioned the structures

around me. I grew up in a working-class single-parent household in a subsidized housing cul-de-sac placed in-between million-dollar homes, isolated away from wealthy populations. My neighbourhood is a built environment that sought to contain Black people, and our everyday community interactions were overpoliced. As a child, I noticed that my neighbourhood was under surveillance as the police were more prevalent than mail carriers. I began questioning why I had been stopped by police on my walk home from school or why my friends and community members had been arrested for being out past the streetlights. I then began questioning the construction of space, which laid the foundation and shaped the trajectory of my work.

Although I did not grow up under food apartheid[1], I lived in a space where four grocery stores were within walking distance. At the same time, the food was unaffordable, and most nights, my family would order take-out. I questioned my access to food very early as I lived amongst community members who would open their pantries for those who could not put food on their table. However, when we left the comfort of our cul-de-sac and attended school with others who lived in million-dollar homes, I found myself being shamed by my peers and teachers about the lunches my mother provided. Not once was I asked about my access to food and offered support. Instead, my identity was heavily policed, scrutinized, and pathologized by those around me. Growing up during the “war against obesity” era, I recognized that there was something researchers failed to address (Ramos-Salas, 2015). Like many who grew up during that time, the Government of Canada would create ads that pathologized fat identities and framed “obesity” as an issue of exercise rather than addressing food insecurity, a result of the neoliberal food system (Ramos-Salas, 2015). Subsequently, neoliberalism in the food system operates on various levels; it reveals itself through policies and practices that perpetuate a colour-blind

[1] Coined by Food Justice Activist Karen Washington (Brones, 2018), a term which challenges food deserts as this terminology fails to recognize that food insecurity is meticulously designed.

narrative and harms Black communities (Alkon & Agyeman, 2011; Sbicca, 2018). Specifically, on a societal level, neoliberalism in the food system pervasively functions by placing responsibility on an individual to make healthy choices, and that one's choices affect their wellbeing (Alkon & Mares, 2012; Kulbaga & Spencer, 2017). For example, in 2010, Michelle Obama launched the *Let's Move!* initiative, which aimed to empower children to make the personal choice of exercising to combat the "obesity epidemic" (Kulbaga & Spencer, 2017, p. 36). *Let's Move!* is one of many neoliberal government initiatives which aims to target systemically disadvantaged youth and teach them that success relies on personal choices, and thus obesity is a personal failing (Kulbaga & Spencer, 2017). Each initiative sparked a new question that led me to pursue a Communication and Women & Gender Studies degree.

My interest in technology and digital spaces began when I took courses on Feminism & Popular Culture and Surveillance Studies at the University of Toronto. Each course explored how mainstream media and digital technology reinforce hegemonic ideologies on race, gender, sexuality, and ability. In 2018, I noticed a surge in user-generated content surrounding an emerging hotspot, Vegandale, a strip of trendy restaurants in a historically racialized neighbourhood. As I was nearing the end of my degree, I followed along closely and questioned the endless powers and possibilities of social media as a method of displacement and resistance. I became interested in understanding how social media impacted race, space, and displacement, which shaped my research and led me to conduct, collect, and analyze data over the past year.

My work merges my research interests in space, food access, and digital technology to unravel the power of Instagram as a tool of displacement. As a researcher, I must acknowledge how my identity markers intersect and shape my research; I aim to do what Eve Tuck (2009) calls "Desire-based" (p. 416) research. Tuck (2009) urges researchers, educators, and communities to suspend damage-based research, which frames marginalized communities as

broken and moves toward desire-based research. Specifically, desire-based research does not fetishize oppression; instead, it celebrates resilience and allows racialized communities to be multifaceted (Tuck, 2009). Thus, I intend to utilize desire-based research to centre racialized communities as multifaceted and diverge from fetishizing oppression. My work draws from my lived experiences and observations to highlight the intricacies, nuances, and resilience of marginalized communities affected by gentrification.

There is an epidemic in Toronto, and the rates of food insecurity are rapidly accelerating due to the rising cost of living. According to the Toronto Black Food Sovereignty Plan (City of Toronto, 2021), Black families are 3.5 times more like to be food insecure than their white counterparts. These statistics do not exist in isolation, as Black people make up a small percentage of the population but have some of the highest rates of unemployment and food insecurity and are at an increased risk of developing chronic illness (City of Toronto, 2021). Ashante Reese (2019) argues that the food system is inherently anti-Black as it dictates and facilitates increasingly high Black mortality rates. At the same time, gentrification in the city of Toronto is reaching an all-time high. Under the Doug Ford government, inflation has increased by 6.7%, the highest in over thirty-one years (Evans, 2022). While the wages remain stagnant, this inflation will most harm racialized communities. However, these events do not exist in isolation, and it is no surprise that the Government of Canada (GOC) recently introduced the Medical Assisted in Dying (MAiD) program, which supports the assisted suicide of chronically ill, disabled, and those with mental illnesses (Government of Canada [GOC], 2022). With MAiD on the horizon and the cost of living going up, many disenfranchised people who cannot afford to live have and will consider this program (Favaro, 2022). My goal with this work is to contribute to Urban, Digital technology, and Food Justice studies. I hope to utilize this work to work toward creating policy changes that can aid in supporting more affordable housing in the city of Toronto

and working with food justice organizations to create better access to food. I hope to continue this work to dismantle structural inequality within digital technology and improve digital environments for marginalized people. Over the past decade, I have dedicated my time to working with diasporic communities actively addressing food insecurity across the GTA. In my current role as an Operations & Facilities Manager at Black Women In motion, I actively create programming which supports Black Survivors of gender-based-violence access to food. I believe that access to food is a human right, and I will actively work with Black and Indigenous communities to support their fight for food sovereignty.

In the future, I hope to continue my research and pursue a Ph.D. to conduct field interviews encapsulating community members' agency and resilience. My goal with this work is to contribute to urban, digital technology, and food justice studies. I hope to continue this work to dismantle structural oppression within digital technology and improve digital environments for marginalized people to utilize social media as a method of resistance.

Chapter 1 – Literature Review, Theoretical Framework, and Methodology

2.1 Literature Review

2.1.1 Genealogies of Gentrification

In 1964, Sociologist Ruth Glass coined the term gentrification, the process by which middle-class households move into newly renovated homes in working-class communities, and as a result, these communities are displaced. As these middle-class communities move into neighbourhoods that had been previously deemed "rundown," the neighbourhood begins to shift characteristics. One of the notable features of gentrification is an influx of affluent, middle-class households moving into renovated working-class communities (Hutchison, 2010). As the middle-class population becomes dominant, the characteristics of the neighbourhood shift; rent prices surge, making these renovated homes unaffordable to working-class communities. Thus, pushing out working-class communities and forcibly displacing them into various other neighbourhoods. Gentrification is defined as both "the physical and social transformation of neighbourhoods" (Hutchison, 2010, p. 1). Likewise, Peter Marcuse (1985) defines gentrification as upper-income households' movement into a formerly working-class community, resulting in the displacement of these communities. Similarly, Tom Angotti (2008) argues that gentrification is a form of appropriation, "This is the essence of what is now known as gentrification. It is not simply a change in demographics. It is the appropriation of economic value by one class from another" (p. 108). Gentrification studies continue to expand and shift to contextually specific meanings, like Gina Perez (2002), who argues that gentrification is a gradual process, reshaping neighbourhoods into spaces of consumption that displace poor and working-class households. Many scholars' definitions of gentrification conceptualize it as a process that continues to displace vulnerable working-class communities to make spaces for affluent households. Gentrification takes on many

different faces and appears in most spaces under different names as it is contextually specific. There are various debates about what constitutes gentrification as it is a highly polarizing concept. However, at its core, gentrification is a reflection of dominant ideologies on space by those in power; "Gentrification is fundamentally about power." (Lingel, 2021, p. 4). Gentrification seeks to claim spaces for desirable, affluent populations while ridding impure undesirable working-class populations (Lipsitz 2007; Lingel, 2021).

Gentrification is a highly contentious concept in urban studies as many scholars have argued that this process is not a new phenomenon. Although Glass (1964) coined the term gentrification, Scholar Neil Smith (1996) argues that this process is not a new phenomenon. Smith (1996) highlights the long history of displacement, which has served as the underbelly of creating cities worldwide. For example, the industrialization of Paris is a result of demolishing residential areas in which poor communities resided. Likewise, scholar Dennis Gale (1984) argues that cities across the United States in the 1930s experienced—what is now called—gentrification. Prior to the 1930s, the industrial boom, the displacement of undesirable populations has always taken place for urban landscapes to accommodate those in power. For example, the creation of Central Park, the most vibrant urban attraction in New York, was first constructed in 1858 as a beacon of urban renewal (Gandy, 2002). However, Central Park was built upon the lands of Seneca Village, a historical Black settlement that once existed in Manhattan. Before there was Central Park, there was Seneca Village, and in order for this city project, there came the destruction of this settlement—leaving thousands of Black residents displaced (Gandy, 2002). The destruction of Seneca Village reflects the racialized origins of displacement.

Over the years, gentrification has expanded, and the process continues to shift and surface in various ways. Lees et al. (2008) argues that there has been a mutation of gentrification, "capturing the temporal and spatial changes to the process" (p. 129). Gentrification has shifted and taken on new characteristics contextually specific to different cities and landscapes. For example, in New York, the conceptual term used for the process of gentrification is Brownstoning. Whereas in Toronto, urban scholars use whitewall painting or whitesplaining to conceptualize a geographically specific form of gentrification (Lees et al., 2018). These terms account for the contextually specific emerging forms of gentrification as they affect communities differently. In addition, gentrification is spatially specific, and the process is ever-expanding depending on the city. Lees et al,. (2008) argues that various terms have come from the mutation of gentrification; rural gentrification, new-build gentrification, super-gentrification, and many other emerging variations. Likewise, Kenneth Gould and Tammy Lewis (2016) conceptualize another mutation, "green gentrification" (p. 23), which aims to improve environmental conditions in a working-class neighbourhood, thus pushing out the working class and racialized communities. Green gentrification attracts affluent white demographics through the promise of green initiatives, which foster the displacement of unwanted and vulnerable populations. One of the many mutations of Green gentrification is food gentrification. Moreover, Isabelle Anguelovski (2015) conceptualizes "supermarket greenlining" (p. 1211) as a facet of food gentrification, the process by which high-end supermarkets target low-income increasing economic disparity in these communities and attracting affluent households, thereby pushing out low-income communities through food access. Thus, food retailers such as restaurants, grocery stores, and health stores contribute to the displacement of undesirable populations and function as a tool of displacement.

Although Glass' (1964) concept of gentrification gives language to a form of displacement, the term gentrification fails to recognize the racialized genealogies of forced displacement, land dispossession, and colonialism. When discussing displacement, there must be an acknowledgement of the historical displacement of Black, Indigenous, and racialized people under systems of settler colonialism, transatlantic slavery, and indentured servitude. Katherine McKittrick's article, *Plantation Futures* (2013) argues that urban spaces and built environments are inherently linked to Blackness. McKittrick furthers this argument by tracing back the genealogies of urban landscapes to the plantation. McKittrick brings forth scholar George Beckford's infamous paper from the 1970s "Beckford persuasively argued that the plantation system during and after transatlantic slavery permeated Black life by contributing to the interlocking workings of dispossession and resistance" (p. 3). Therefore, the legacies of the plantation, anti-Black violence, and dispossession are inherently linked to contemporary landscapes.

Moreover, Henri Lefebvre (2005) conceptualizes the production of space as a reflection of dominant ideologies; "Lefebvre, using the concept of the production of space, posits a theory that understands space as fundamentally bound up with social reality. It follows that space "in itself" can never serve as an epistemological starting position. space does not exist "in itself"; it is produced" (Schmid, 2008, p. 28). Lefebvre's (2005) theorization on the production of space asserts that capitalism often antagonizes the construction of spaces. Therefore, Lefebvre (2005) argues that space is a production and reflection of dominant ideologies and "is at once a precondition and a result of social superstructures" (p. 85) as many dominant discourses and ideologies are shaped by systems of power, including but not limited to capitalism (Foucault, 2002). However, there must be an acknowledgement of racial capitalism.

Cedric Robinson's book *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (2000) was the first text to conceptualize racial capitalism further. Robinson's work builds off South African movements against apartheid, as these groups coined the term racial capitalism (Kundnani, 2020). Moreover, Robinson's (2000) book critiques Marxism by disrupting notions of primitive accumulation to encompass how capitalism is built on the exploitation of labour. Robinson (2000) argues that capitalism was built on the exploitation of labour and cements racial differences, "The tendency of European civilization through capitalism was thus not to homogenize but to differentiate—to exaggerate regional, subcultural, and dialectical differences into "racial" ones" (p. 26). Thus, capitalism was built on inequality, and this system facilitates the exploitation of racialized people's labour. Similarly, abolitionist scholar Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2020) argues that capitalism necessitates inequality, and racism preserves this system. Moreover, Gilmore (2020) draws the connection between capitalism and racism, exploring the functions of racial capitalism. Likewise, abolitionist scholar Angela Y. Davis (2020) argues that racism is inherently linked to capitalism; "The original Capital was provided by the labor of slaves. The Industrial Revolution, which pivoted around the production of capital, was enabled by slave labor in the U.S." (00:48-00:57). In order to address gentrification, there must be an acknowledgement of the racialized origins facilitated by systems of racial capitalism. Therefore, it is essential to address the gaps in the gentrification literature by acknowledging racial capitalism's role in facilitating the exploitation and displacement of racialized people.

Andrea Smith (2016) contends that there are three pillars of white supremacy; capitalism/slavery, genocide/colonialism, and orientalism/war. In this section, I utilize the first two frameworks of white supremacy to trace the genealogies of racial capitalism and land dispossession. Slavery/capitalism is the ideology that Black bodies are inherently slaveable,

"Blackness becomes equated with slaveability." (Smith, 2016, p. 67). Historically, the Black body has been coded as a source of labour, exploited for capitalistic gain and shaping the global economy. Transatlantic slavery and colonialism created a hierarchal system facilitated by race, a widespread ideology that has shaped the global economy (Fanon, 1963). Although slavery has been abolished, the legacies of slavery continue to exist, shaping our contemporary landscape. Thus, all forms of capitalism are inherently racialized, as are contemporary landscapes and the creation of spaces. Naomi Klein (2017) argues that racial capitalism justifies land dispossession; "The ability to discount darker people and darker nations in order to justify stealing their land and labor was foundational" (p. 95). Therefore, racial capitalism is a system that justifies the exploitation, dispossession, and displacement of Black people.

Furthermore, racial capitalism must be accounted for when discussing landscapes and the process of gentrification. Many urban scholars like Glass (1964) fail to recognize the genealogies of displacement. Thus, it is important to fill the gap in this literature as gentrification functions as a form of neocolonial displacement. Gentrification has shifted from colonialism, the physical displacement of bodies, to neocolonialism, the economic displacement of racialized communities pushed into spaces deemed ghetto or undesirable, to the emerging form of gentrification that further perpetuates this vicious cycle: social media.

Scholar Jessa Lingel's book *Gentrifying the Internet* (2021) explores emerging characteristics of gentrification online; displacement, isolation, and commercialization. Lingel's book raises questions about which communities are included and excluded on digital platforms. One of the main ways gentrification has begun to function on the internet, and digital platforms are prioritizing big corporations instead of communities. For example, Instagram prioritizes ecommerce, ads, and other forms of targeted marketing (Tarnoff, 2022). Each platform finds

ways to become a capitalist entity instead of a social network, thus forgetting, displacing, and isolating marginalized communities (Lingel, 2021; Tarnoff, 2022). However, the literature is newly emerging around digital gentrification. Lingel's book *Gentrifying the Internet* (2021) is one of the first to critically examine this emerging form of gentrification.

2.1.2 Racializing Spaces

Canada has created a peaceful white-settler narrative of inclusivity that encompasses multiculturalism and celebrates the hundreds of diasporic communities that inhabit the nation (Razack, 2002). However, this narrative fails to recognize the ways in which Canada is a settler colonial state that perpetually reinforces systemic inequalities that affect marginalized communities (Teelucksingh, 2006). According to Robyn Maynard (2017), there is a "Black side" to this cultural mosaic, one that is built on the legacies of slavery, racial capitalism, and settler colonialism in Canada. Likewise, Cheryl Teelucksingh's book *Claiming Space: Racialization in Canadian Cities* (2006) analyzes the racialization in Canadian cities, which rejects the notion of the multicultural neocolonial narrative. Canada fails to acknowledge the systemic inequalities faced by racialized migrants, "particularly new immigrants, who are essential to the workings of globalizations—are simply being relegated and, literally, spatially shunned to the status of otherness in terms of their access to better paying jobs, housing, and other resources in urban centres" (Teelucksingh, 2006, p. 1). Thus, Teelucksingh (2006) argues that Canada, while a racialized country that claims to thrive on multiculturalism, is still a settler-colonial project that functions on the dispossession and displacement of Black and Indigenous people. This book is essential to fill in the gaps in urban studies literature, as it furthers the understanding of how the racialization of space leads to the revitalization of space which further displaces racialized

migrants. Specifically, the historical practices of settler colonialism continue to evolve and mask themselves through new forms of displacement.

Moreover, Lipsitz (2007) argues that race has a spatial dimension and space has a racial dimension, and thus, racialized spaces share a unique lived experience compared to spaces with non-racialized inhabitants. Lipsitz (2007) conceptualizes the Black spatial imaginary as the opposite of the white spatial imaginary and how this serves as a method of segregation, generational wealth, and access to fresh and affordable foods. Lipsitz's (2007) work examines the Black spatial imaginary as everything that the white spatial imaginary is not, and thus, racialized spaces share a unique lived experience compared to white-dominated suburban spaces. Moreover, these racialized spaces are built environments—causation of transatlantic slavery, Jim crow laws, and racial capitalism. Although Lipstiz's (2007) work primarily focuses on the American landscape, the racialization of spaces can be applied to Canadian landscapes. In Richard Rothstein's book *The Color of Law* (2017), he argues that public housing is a form of segregation that seeks to contain Black populations; "The purposeful use of public housing by federal and local governments to herd African American into urban ghettos' had as big an influence as any in the creation of our de jure system of segregation" (p. 17). Public housing is a built environment aimed to contain undesirable populations and segregate them from the wealthy affluent populations. Jennifer Hodge and Roger McTair's film, *Home Feeling* (1983), captures the subsidized housing complex in Jane and Finch, a neighbourhood located in the northwest end of Toronto, by examining race, space, surveillance, and law enforcement within the Canadian context. Moreover, this film's community members' stories are relevant to Ontario's current subsidized housing issues (Hodge & McTair, 1983). Specifically, Jane and Finch's subsidized

housing is a built environment that seeks to herd Black Canadians into spaces deemed ghetto or undesirable.

Similarly, Rinaldo Walcott (2003) argues that Black Canadians are simultaneously hyper visible and invisible within the multicultural narrative; "Canadian state institutions and official narratives attempt to render Blackness outside of those same narratives, and simultaneously attempt to contain Blackness through discourses of Canadian benevolence. Thus, Blackness in Canada is situated on a continuum that runs from the invisible to the hyper-visible." (p. 44). He asserts that histories of transatlantic slavery are often left out of the Canadian narrative to render Black Canadians as late arrivals (Walcott, 2003). However, many of these systems, which contain Blackness, such as prisons, public housing, and public policies, are often constructed as central to American narratives, whilst Canada is deemed the multicultural mosaic built by immigrants. However, many Black Canadian scholars like Walcott (2003), Maynard (2017), and McKittrick (2006) excavate these histories of transatlantic slavery, anti-Black landscapes and racist legislation that have created the contemporary reality of Black Canadians.

Maynard (2017) conceptualizes the making of Black poverty in Canada as she states: "Canada's racial hierarchies and has obscured the state's role in failing to address — even proactively re-creating — the material conditions of Black suffering." (p. 204). She claims that Canada's multicultural narrative hides the long and persistent history of anti-Blackness in Canada. Maynard's book *Policing Black Lives* (2017) uncovers the dark sides of multiculturalism in Canada by bringing forth histories of transatlantic slavery, policing, and segregation in Canada. Despite Canada claiming to be a multicultural nation, there has been a large effort to cover the history of anti-Blackness and land dispossession to construct racialized spaces across the country. Similarly, in McKittrick's book *Demonic Grounds* (2006), she argues that Black life

in Canada is an “absented presence,” (p. 33) as Blackness has been and can be erased from Canada’s narrative. Similarly, Sherene Razack (2002) argues that racialized people are framed as late arrivals to Canada’s multicultural narrative. At the same time, Razack fails to emphasize the erasure of Black Canadian history. However, Maynard, Walcott, and McKittrick bring forth the erased narratives of Black Canadians. Likewise, Christina Sharpe (2016) argues that anti-Blackness is as pervasive and inescapable as the weather. Therefore, Lipsitz’s spatial imaginary can be applied to the Canadian landscape as the dark side of multiculturalism is built on similar histories of those navigating the American landscape.

2.1.3 Food Justice

Food is one of the many early signs of gentrification. Many food studies scholars have argued that gentrification through food is greenlining spaces (Anguelovski, 2015). At the same time, Elizabeth Eisenhauer (2001) coined the term supermarket redlining–and this is a common practice that supermarket corporations use by actively avoiding racialized neighbourhoods. As a result, racialized communities in the United States still lack access to fresh and affordable foods and are disproportionately impacted by having limited access to foods, thereby becoming reliant on fast food (Chatelain, 2020). The food system across North America was built on stolen land on the backs of stolen people. Thus, food justice is essential to address the greenlining of low-income communities and address systemic inequalities. Alison Alkon and Julian Agyeman’s book *Cultivating Food Justice: Race, Class, and Sustainability* (2011) analyzes the historical and structural inequalities within food systems that predominantly affect racialized communities and offer solutions for sustainable futures. Alkon & Agyeman (2011) argue that food injustice is an extension of racism. Similarly, Ashanté Reese’s book, *Black Food Geography: Race, Self-reliance, and Food Access in Washington, D.C.* (2019), argues that the food system is inherently

anti-Black as it dictates who lives and who dies, contributing to the increasingly high rates of Black mortality. Her book integrates the Black history of food agency against inequalities. Reese's (2019) historical integration examines Black communities' history of agency and not as non-participants in the fight against food inequality. Many food justice texts focus on the American food system, highlighting that it is an extension of neocolonialism, and neoliberalism as it contributes to the ongoing discrimination that predominately affects Black Communities (Holt-Giménez, 2010).

In 1999, Steven Cummins and Sally Macintyre (1999) coined the term food deserts, which are often impoverished urban spaces where residents lack access to fresh and affordable foods–typically located in predominately Black communities. However, the term food desert is rooted in settler-colonialism, anti-Black racism, and neoliberalism–emphasizing the land, deeming it barren or uninhabitable (Penniman & Washington, 2018; Reese, 2019). Historically, the Europeans deemed Africa uninhabitable due to the hot climate and the racialized inhabitants (McKittrick, 2013). Reese (2019) argues that the term food desert is not adequate in describing the systemic barriers to food. Karen Washington argues that we must replace the term food desert and acknowledge food apartheid which captures the whole food system, "You say, "food apartheid" and you get to the root cause of some of the problems around the food system. It brings in hunger and poverty" (Brones, 2018, para. 15). Food Apartheid addresses the root causes of food insecurity by critically examining the gaps within the food system and integrating race, class, and geography (Brones, 2018).

Furthermore, Joshua Sbicca (2018) argues that food justice is a progressive food movement that confronts neoliberal capitalism, systemic racism and agricultural exploitation, "It uses food as a tool for social justice. This positions the movement to intervene in many

conjunctures in the ongoing dialectic between food and social change" (p. 50). Food justice connects activists from various fields, walks of life, and interests to integrate food politics as a means of challenging various social issues (Sbicca, 2018). For example, food justice can foreground issues such as agricultural workers' exploitation or mass incarceration and various other social issues linked to the production of and access to food (Sbicca, 2018). The core framework of food justice profoundly reflects the environmental justice movement, highlighting that environmental inequalities result from structural inequalities that actively harm racialized communities and severs their relationship to the environment (Sbicca, 2018). Similarly, food justice activism invests in reforming the food system by providing marginalized communities equal access to food and repairing their relationship with the environment (Sbicca, 2018).

Although many emerging food justice texts examine the American food system, the Canadian food system is built on systems of settler-colonialism and land dispossession. Zoe Matties (2016), argues that the Canadian food system is an extension of settler-colonialism. As settlers came to Canada, deeming the land uninhabited and utilizing food as a tool for colonization. Ian Mosby and Tracey Galloway (2017), examine how residential school diets moulded health issues for Indigenous people in Canada. Between 1948-1952, Indigenous children were subjected to medical experimentation through food, which played a fundamental role in shaping the Canada Food Guide. Residential schools have played a large role in stripping Indigenous peoples of their pre-colonial diet. Similarly, Alkon and Agyeman (2011) offer case studies on food insecurity in racialized communities, such as the Karuk people, the indigenous to the land of California (p. 24). The Karuk people's diet consisted of fish, acorns, and fruit gathered off the land (Alkon & Agyeman 2011). In 1960, the California government placed a dam on the Klamath River, which blocked the Karuk people's food supply (Alkon & Agyeman

2011). Specifically, this book touches on the historical and contemporary hunger of the Karuk people, who are denied their traditional pre-colonial diet, which has created food insecurity in their community (Burnett, 2014). Thus, food across North America has been a method of colonization (Mattie, 2016). Although many food justice texts examine the American food system, the Canadian food system is built on the same pillars of colonial violence, land dispossession, and the exploitation of labour.

As previously mentioned, Lipsitz's (2007) concept of the spatial imaginary can be applied to the Canadian landscape as many racialized communities experience the lived realities of racialized spaces. Lipsitz's (2007) conceptualization of the spatial imaginary and lived experiences for racialized spaces include limited access to fresh and affordable foods. Food apartheid results from this form of segregation which seeks to contain Blackness in Canada (Walcott, 2003). Similarly, Penniman and Washington (2018) argue that food apartheid is not race-neutral and that white neighbourhood, on average, have four times the amount of supermarket locations than predominately Black neighbourhoods; often, these communities become victims of supermarket redlining (Eisenhauer, 2001; Reese, 2019). A recent study by the Broadbent Institute found that Black communities across Canada were 3.5 times more likely to experience food insecurity than white Canadians. Matties (2016) argues that agriculture, foodways, and food policies have long been tools of colonization which seek to displace undesirable populations, "Officials were convinced that the regulation of foodways would streamline the colonization process" (par. 8). Like gentrification, food is about power, those who have access and those who lack. This paper draws from Food studies scholars Reese (2019), Sbicca (2018), and Alkon & Aygeman (2011) to unravel the genealogies of the food system as a

method of land dispossession, exploitation and reinforces necropolitics[2] by disproportionately contributing to high mortality rates in racialized communities.

2.1.4 Digitalization of Race

Although the literature surrounding digital and surveillance studies is an emerging field that includes the expansion of digitalized racial profiling, technology, and social media platforms, it is necessary to note that these modes of technology are not neutral and function as an extension of neocolonialism (Noble, 2018). Sharon Zukin, Scarlett Linderman and Laurie Hurson link the use of social media as an emerging tool for gentrification in *The Omnivore's Neighborhood? Online restaurant reviews, race, and gentrification* (2015), examining Yelp's role in gentrification and reinforcing neocolonial practices in Brooklyn, New York. The findings suggest that Yelp is a tool that allows users to act as both 'prosumers' and 'produsers,' which contributes to the gentrification of Brooklyn, New York (Zukin et al., 2015). In the book *The Third Wave*, Alvin Toffler (1980) coined the term prosumer, which argues that producers and consumers would begin to merge into the prosumer role. Zukin et al. (2015) describe how yelp users contribute to the racialized act of discursive redlining through social media. Manuel Castells (2009) argues that the power of communication influences social relationships, behaviours, and digital social networks are emerging forms of capitalism. Nevertheless, Castells' analysis does not acknowledge capitalism in relation to race. However, Scholars Virginia Eubanks (2018), André Brock (2020), Safiya Noble (2018), Ruha Benjamin (2019), and Simone Browne (2015) assert how digital technology reinforces social inequalities.

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[2] Necropolitics, coined by Achille Mbembe (2003), is the politics and external forces which dictate who lives and who dies.

Moreover, the practice of discursive redlining highlights how social media is a neocolonial tool that circulates the historical practice of redlining (Zukin et al., 2015). Similarly, Lingel further conceptualizes digital redlining, which seeks to take advantage of user data and create targeted ads based on users' information. She asserts that digital redlining is directly linked to urban gentrification. She provides the example of the Facebook lawsuit for housing discrimination. In 2016, Facebook let advertisers users based on their race and gender, and as a result, these housing or job ads were hidden from racialized users; "The tools actually created red lines on a map to target users, a direct parallel to "redlining" practices that created housing segregation in the United States in the mid-twentieth century" (Lingel, 2021, p. 40). Lingel's book asserts that there is an inherent link between digital technology, social media, and gentrification.

In Safiya Noble's book *Algorithms of Oppression* (2018), she argues that digital spaces, algorithms, and technology are not inherently neutral. Noble (2018) resists notions that digital spaces are intangible spaces by arguing that digital spaces are physical spaces and affirming the importance of spatial analysis. Noble asserts that digital spaces, algorithms, and technology reinforce systemic inequalities such as racism and sexism. Likewise, Ruha Benjamin's book *Race After Technology* (2019) argues that emerging technology reinforces white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, and colonialism and furthers social inequity. Specifically, this book addresses historical anti-Black ideologies like Jim Crow and examines the emerging New Jim Code that surfaces on the internet and social media platforms to further social inequalities. Both scholars argue that technology is not inherently neutral; instead, technology is formed from the default body in society, white cisgender men. Similarly, Virginia Eubanks (2018) argues that in a post-

digital society, users become more reliant on technology, and thus digital technology can reinforce power dynamics that can further the marginalization of racialized people. Furthermore, Eubanks (2018) argues that technologies which reproduce systemic inequalities are not neutral. Each book resists the notion of colour-blind technology by suggesting that technology, algorithms, and social media can further social inequalities.

Similarly, André Brock (2022) acknowledges how pervasive anti-Blackness is through information and communication technologies (ICTS); “Blackness explicitly acknowledges that the political economy of racism, mediated by ICTs, is driven by the libidinal energies of anti-Blackness and necropolitics, and yet—and yet—Black folk persist” (p. 226). He assets that techno culture must be revised to carve spaces for Blackness.

Finally, digital spaces are shaped by the same power structures that shape urban landscapes; anti-Black violence, white supremacy, colonialism, racial capitalism, and land dispossession (Noble, 2018; Benjamin, 2019; Lingel, 2021; Browne, 2015). As mentioned earlier, gentrification is shaped by power structures that favour desirable populations and seek to dispossess undesirable populations. Scholars Benjamin (2019), Browne (2015), Noble (2018), Lingel (2021), and Zukin et al., (2015) argue that these same systems of power surface on digital platforms and technology. Additionally, food studies scholars argue that food can serve as a method of displacement through supermarket greenlining, food apartheid, and food gentrification. Thus, these same systems that create social inequities and foster displacement can serve as a method of gentrification online.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This project is a Black Studies project that draws from fundamental Black Studies scholars (Lipsitz, 2007; Walcott, 2003), Black feminist geographers (McKittrick, 2013), surveillance studies (Browne, 2017; Noble, 2018), digital studies (Benjamin, 2019), and Black food geographies (Reese, 2019), which is crucial to address how Instagram is an emerging mechanism of gentrification. Food justice is one of my main areas of concentration for this paper, and I aim to examine the duality of food as a method of displacement and resistance. Specifically, linking food as a method of displacement to social media's role in reinforcing structural inequalities and thus, examining how food circulation on social media serves as a mechanism of displacement. Similarly, Ashanté Reese's book *Black Food Geography: Race, Self-Reliance, and Food Access in Washington, D.C.*, (2019) integrates the Black history of food agency against an unjust food system. Reese's (2019) historical integration examines Black communities' history of agency and not as passive participants in the ongoing fight against food inequality. The following chapters examine the ways in which disenfranchised communities coexist and resist the emerging gentrification through food-sharing. Each chapter recognizes that food is a staple of diasporic history and plays a role in sustaining futures. Additionally, Chapter 2, *Gentrification & The Digital Black Spatial Imaginary*, explores the appropriation of food as a means of displacement. Chapter 3, *From Pathologized Parkdale to #Vegandale,* implements Black food geographies into my analysis of food justice as a means of unmapping Vegandale. Specifically, Parkdale is home to multiple diasporic, mad, and low-income communities and has a rich history of multicultural foods (Losman, 2019). The opening of Vegandale serves as the erasure of diasporic foods as a historical staple and a form of displacement. Thus, it is crucial to

examine how food justice is utilized on social media to resist an unjust food system and the ongoing gentrification in Parkdale.

Although the literature surrounding digital and surveillance studies is an emerging field that includes the expansion of digitalized racial profiling, technology, and social media platforms, it is necessary to note that these modes of technology are not neutral and function as an extension of neocolonialism (Noble, 2018). I draw from digital studies scholars (Lingel, 2021; Eubanks, 2018; Brock, 2020; Noble, 2018; Benjamin; 2019) to critically examine the ways in which social inequality is reinforced through technology, algorithms, and digital spaces, and social media. Benjamin's (2019) book *Race After Technology* argues that emerging technology reinforces white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, and colonialism and furthers social inequity. Specifically, this book addresses historical anti-Black ideologies like Jim Crow and examines the emerging New Jim Code that surfaces on the internet and social media platforms to further social inequalities. In Chapter 2, I explore how social media facilitates and reinforces the displacement of marginalized people. I argue that Instagram-ability is an extension of white supremacy and a form of spatial control. In Chapter 3, I expand on this argument while applying it to Vegandale, as the Instagram-ability upgraded this neighbourhood to displace the marginalized populations.

Likewise, Lingel (2021) conceptualizes digital redlining on social media to suppress racialized users' access to housing and jobs. In the Chapter 2, *Gentrification & The Digital Black Spatial Imaginary*, I explore digital redlining through Instagram as a means of suppressing racialized people's forms of resistance. Specifically, the ways in which Instagram's drastic algorithmic shift away from chronological order to algorithm-driven was a means of suppressing digital activism and methods of resistance to social inequality. In addition, Chapter 2 examines how anti-Black historical practices evolved and emerged digitally—utilizing Zukin's (2015)

framework of discursive redlining and Lingels's (2021) framework of digital redlining to examine how historical practices of spatial control function on social media. In addition, I argue that digital redlining contextualizes the targeted ads for Vegandale's demographics and demonstrates that social media furthers social inequality. Moreover, Noble (2018) conceptualizes algorithmic oppression and the ways in which algorithms reinforce structural inequalities and marginalize racialized people. In this paper, I explore Benjamin's (2019) new Jim code as a means of suppressing Black aesthetics, cultures, and foods on Instagram, and thus, social media's role in facilitating the displacement of racialized communities.

Building on the work in Chapter 2, the subsequent Chapter 3, *From Pathologized Parkdale to #Vegandale*, explores the digital revitalization of Parkdale to the vibrant Vegandale, which functions as a form of displacement through food. The creation of Vegandale is both spatial and racial, surfacing digitally. Moreover, I examine how food is a mechanism of displacement in Toronto and how this form of displacement has emerged on Instagram through the circulation of user-generated content and Instagram-ability. Moreover, the racialization of space also emerges on social media to further the displacement of racialized bodies in Toronto. Specifically, Lipsitz (2007) argues that race has a spatial dimension and space has a racial dimension, and thus, racialized spaces share a unique lived experience compared to spaces with non-racialized inhabitants. Specifically, Lipsitz (2007) conceptualizes the Black spatial imaginary as the opposite of the white spatial imaginary and how this serves as a long-standing method of segregation, particularly generational wealth, school districts, and access to fresh and affordable foods. Lipsitz's (2007) work examines the Black spatial imaginary as everything that the white spatial imaginary is not, and thus, racialized spaces share a unique lived experience compared to white-dominated suburban spaces. Consequently, McKittrick (2011) argues that a

Black sense of place would come at the destruction of white supremacy. As a result, Blackness is rendered placeless, and within the structures of contemporary society, there is no Black sense of place (McKittrick, 2011).

Drawing on Lipsitz (2007) and McKittrick's (2011) works, Chapter 2 and 3 examine the digitalization of the Black spatial imaginary and how ideologies of Blackness surface on social media to reflect the ongoing displacement in contemporary society. Thus, the digital Black spatial imaginary is placeless and exists in circulation, as Black aesthetics, culture, and foods are co-opted and utilized by the digital white spatial imaginary. Lipsitz (2007) argues that the white spatial imaginary seeks to create homogenous spaces by ridding impurity, "Yet in order to have pure and homogenous spaces, impure populations had to be removed" (p. 15). My work examines how the digital white spatial imaginary rids impurity by Black suppression on social media. I argue that Instagram-ability is a facet of the digital white spatial imaginary that aims to dispossess Blackness. Therefore, the Black spatial imaginary only exists in circulation on social media, reflecting the ongoing displacement of Black communities in Toronto (Lipsitz, 2007; McKittrick, 2011). I examine the digital Black spatial imaginary through geotagging and examining #Vegandale. Thus, utilizing Vegandale as a case study reflects an emerging method of gentrification–social media.

2.3 Methodology

For this paper, my methods include critical discourse analysis, spatial analysis, and counter-archiving to collect the data needed to analyze the displacement of racialized communities in Parkdale. I aim to utilize these methods to analyze how social media is an emerging mechanism of displacement. I intentionally chose each method to engage in desire-

based research, which brings forth multifaceted narratives of disenfranchised populations. I utilize CDA to draw the links between discourse shaping spaces and facilitating displacement. Throughout the subsequent chapters, I utilize images that commodify marginalized identities and facilitate the displacement of these communities. Similarly, I utilize spatial analysis to analyze both physical and digital spaces. In Chapter 3, I draw from observational research to examine Vegandale and collected digital data on the official Instagram before the strip of restaurants shut down. Analyzing both the physical and digital space, I could make sense of the targeted demographics and how Instagram-ability functions as an extension of white supremacy and a form of spatial control. Finally, I utilize counter-archiving to trace the history of Parkdale before the colonial settlement to the contemporary Vegandale. In Chapter 3, I utilize counter-archives which highlight the mad history of Parkdale and how populations deemed undesirable have coexisted to resist the various attempts at urban renewal. Counter-archiving is essential for desire-based research because it de-centres colonial logic and captures the nuances of the populations living in Parkdale (Haritaworn et al., 2018).

I employed CDA to collect and analyze data on social media discourse surrounding Vegandale. I began my exploration of Instagram posts, tweets, and census data using CDA as my primary method of collecting and analyzing the data. Michel Foucault (2002) defines discourse as:

> Ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and relations between them. Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the "nature" of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects they seek to govern (as cited in Weedon, 1997, p. 108).

Moreover, discourse can be used to analyze the relationship between systems of power, knowledge production, social practices, and language to reflect dominant ideologies in society. Stuart Hall (1997) expands on Foucault's concept of discourse by arguing that social practices require meaning, and thus all social practices are discursive. For example, Zukin et al. (2015) trace the social practice of discursive redlining on Yelp, analyzing how socio-historical practices, power relationships, and ideologies on race surface on user-generated platforms like Yelp; thus, facilitating the displacement of racialized communities. Discourse is necessary to interpret how language asserts power dynamics and reinforces historical practices like redlining.

Norman Fairclough (1995) founded Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which explores how power is implemented through language. Fairclough's CDA methodology requires three dimensions; 1) text, 2) discursive practice, and 3) social practice (Fairclough, 1995). The first dimension in the CDA methodology is text; this form of communication can be speech or images (Fairclough, 1995). For example, Zukin et al. (2015) addressed a crucial case study of Yelp users' reviews on Polish and Black restaurants. Many reviewers used language that deemed the Black restaurants threatening or unsafe instead of the Polish restaurants that were deemed comforting. Moreover, this form of text serves as a method of discourse and how language can reinforce social structures such as racism. The second dimension of the CDA methodology is discursive practice, the analysis and interpretation of the text. For example, Stuart Hall (1997) argues that discourse signifies beliefs, knowledge, practices and ideologies toward groups of people. Thus, a form of discourse on race can reinforce racist ideologies, practices, and beliefs against a marginalized group in society. The final dimension of the CDA methodology is a social practice, a reflection of how text and discursive practice reflect and shape dominant ideologies in society. For example, Lingel (2021) argues that digital redlining reflects the historical practice of

redlining, which was formed through dominant ideologies on race and the production of space. Similarly, Lefebvre (2005) argues that the production of space is a reflection of dominant ideologies shaped by systems of power.

Using this method, I analyze how this data correlates with the declining rates of immigrant populations in Parkdale. As a result, I collected data from the Canadian Census from 1986-2016 to analyze the rapidly declining immigrant population in Parkdale. Using this data, I found links between the multiple attempts to revitalize Parkdale and the displacement of racialized communities. In addition, I utilized images from the Vegandale website and former Instagram account to critically analyze the discursive practices which reinforce power relationships and reflect society's ideologies on racialized diasporic communities. I also examined Instagram images from Vegan restaurants in Vegandale to analyze how the images reproduce oppressive structures. Specifically, images of cultural slogans, foods, and aesthetics that Vegandale is co-opting. For example, the Vegandale mission statement claims to be "a mecca for the ethically minded" (Vegandale, 2018). Mecca is a city in Saudi Arabia, deemed the holy land for Muslims globally (Peer, 2012). However, the Muslim identity in Canada is highly contentious and pathologized in contemporary society as many face Islamaphobia (Coletta, 2021). Vegandale's claims to be the holy land for vegans reinforce the dehumanization and erasure of racialized diasporas. In addition, this claim exemplifies how the digital white spatial imaginary surface and enforces long-standing structures of oppression. I analyzed over one hundred images, captions, and comments to critically analyze the commodification of Black culture, food, and aesthetics. I explored the dominant internet discourse surrounding Vegandale. I analyzed statements from the website, user-generated content, and the official Instagram. I traced Instagram geotagging to examine the demographics which actively visit Vegandale. Finally, I

analyzed how algorithms prioritize specific populations and facilitate the displacement of undesirable populations, thus, drawing the links between social media and urban gentrification (Lingel, 2021). Through my analysis of Vegandale that I explore in Chapter 3, I found that Vegandale actively commodified Black culture, foods, and aesthetics without the presence of Black people to create an Instagram-able hotspot for consumption.

In addition to CDA, I implemented spatial analysis to collect data. To do this, I utilize unmapping (Razack, 2002), Black feminist geographies (McKittrick, 2006), and the Black spatial imaginary (Lipsitz, 2007). Razack (2002) argues that unmapping aims to decenter colonial logic and interrogate how spaces are formed and exist in contemporary society.
Moreover, unmapping disrupts social norms which shield the legacies of settler colonialism. Thus, unmapping aims to challenge the notions of peaceful settlement and accounts for histories of enslavement, indentureship, and exploitative labour (Razack, 2002). I unmapped Parkdale, historically documented as a peaceful settlement for middle-class and wealthy immigrants. However, the founding of Parkdale reinforces the notion of the peaceful settler narrative, which contributes to colour-blindness. I disrupt colonial logic by unmapping and bringing forth racialized and mad histories in Parkdale. Moreover, McKittrick (2006) utilizes Black feminist geographies to locate the Black body against the "racial codes that mark the Black body as ungeographic" (p. 4). This notion of Black bodies as ungeographic informs my questions about Blackness in relation to space, displacement, and social media. I utilize Black feminist geographies to locate ungeographic bodies and highlight them through my work. Finally, Lipsitz (2007) argues that race has a spatial component and space has a racial component, and this is shaped by various factors, including schools, access to grocery stores, generational wealth, and socio-historical practices such as redlining. In addition, Lipsitz argues that the Black spatial

imaginary is the antithesis of the white spatial imaginary. I implemented unmapping, Black feminist geographies, and the Black spatial imaginary into my spatial analysis to disrupt colonial logics, locate ungeographic bodies, and analyze the racialization of space. Additionally, I utilize observation as a method of spatial analysis. I documented my experiences walking through Parkdale and taking notes of store closures and affordable housing complexes. Throughout my case study of Parkdale, I documented the vegan restaurants, condominium developments and other facets of this emerging arts district.

Finally, I integrate archiving as a form of methodology. Jin Haritaworn, Ghaida Moussa, and Syrus Marcus Ware's (2018) book *Marvellous Grounds: Queer of Colour Histories of Toronto* engages in counter-archiving, which resists colonial logics and the erasure of QTBIPOC as both historical and geographical subjects in Toronto. Moreover, counter-archiving is a method of resistance to the constant erasure of racialized communities. Thus, I utilize counter-archiving as a methodology to bring forth racialized subjects as both historical and geographical subjects in Toronto. Likewise, Michel-Rolph Trouillot's book *Silencing the Past Power and the Production of History* (2015) examines the construction and production of history, examining which perspectives are centred and the authenticity of archives. Trouillot's (2015) work traces the powers which facilitate the construction of history; "It deals with the many ways in which the production of historical narratives involves the uneven access to the means for such production" (p. xxii).

Ann Laura Stoler's book *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (2009) examines the unwritten meanings and messages that have yet to be articulated or intentionally left out of colonial archives. My research merges Haritaworn et al. (2018), Trouillot (2015), and Stoler's (2009) analysis to construct a counter-archive that places

emphasis on those erased from mainstream historical archives and highlights the unwritten histories of Parkdale. By utilizing counter-archiving, my analysis of Parkdale was reshaped by bringing forth forgotten histories and institutions that contained mad populations often erased from colonial archives.

Additionally, Maandeeq Mohamed (2018) examines Black archival methods arguing that Black life exists as excess to archives, and thus, making Black life challenging to locate, capture, and document through traditional archival methods. My work aims to recognize the nuances of Black archival methods and highlight what Katherine McKittrick (2006) refers to as the "ungeographic body" (p. 4). Throughout this study, I traced the history of affordable housing in Parkdale in relation to population demographics.

As a result, I found that Parkdale has a long history of being home to mad, single-women, and working-class communities that are othered by Canada's white supremacist and colonial values (Whitzman, 2009; Losman, 2019). Within Chapter 3, I explore and integrate the histories of madness, immigration, class, and gender into my case study of Parkdale. I analyze various displacement and urban renewal attempts and how this particular community has found ways to mobilize and resist the ongoing gentrification. I link the rapid decline of affordable housing and racialized, mad, and low-income communities' displacement. In addition, I utilize counter-archiving to find community efforts to resist gentrification and the history mad advocacy and food security in Parkdale. I uncovered the archives of support and community initiatives which came before Vegandale to trace the erasure of racialized subjects. However, in doing this work, I recognize that locating Black life in Parkdale comes with a set of challenges because Black existence has long been overlooked, and Black people have been framed as late arrivals in Canada (Walcott, 2003; McKittrick, 2006). Similarly, Saidiya Hartman's book *Wayward Lives,*

Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Riotous Black Girls, Troublesome Women & Queer Radicals (2020) brings forth the forgotten histories of Black women living in New York and Philadelphia during the early twentieth century. Hartman's (2020) work aims to locate the "ungeographic" (Mckittrick, 2006, p. 4) body by writing counter-narratives and crafting narratives to reaffirm the dignity, agency, and autonomy of Black women. My work integrates counter-archives to unravel the pathologizing of Parkdale and center subjects erased by colonial logic and highlight their autonomy, agency, and resilience. Therefore, I utilize both counter-archiving and Black archival methodology to capture the nuances of mad, low-income, and racialized populations in Parkdale.

2.3.1 Limitations

This research project is an entry to understanding the possibilities of Instagram shaping gentrification; it does have various limitations. First, this study is not an all-encompassing piece which tackles the various nuances of gentrification due to the page limitation. Although I want to explore various layers of gentrification, the page limit for this paper made me narrow my scope toward Instagram and Parkdale. Secondly, the COVID-19 pandemic limited how my research could be done due to timelines (World Health Organization, 2020). I wanted to do interviews with various Parkdale activists about the gentrification taking place in Parkdale. However, due to COVID-19 restrictions and access to spaces, while writing, I chose to utilize non-interactive research methods. In addition, the Clara Thomas Archives & Special Collections and Maps Library at York University was closed until further notice during my data collection period, which limited the use of archives as I only had access to limited public archives. Finally, Instagram's decline reshaped this project. Although Instagram was the prominent social media platform while researching, other platforms have become more popularized during the pandemic,

like TikTok, which has played a crucial role in shaping consumer preferences and hotspots (Steingrad, 2021). In the future, I hope to explore various social media platforms and their role in facilitating gentrification. Additionally, I would like to explore the endless possibilities for social media activism as a resistance to this form of gentrification. Given the circumstances in which this paper was written, it has various limitations that will be implemented into future research surrounding social media's role in gentrification.

3.0 Chapter 2 – Gentrification & The Digital Black Spatial Imaginary

The early ages of social media were a free space that lacked cyber laws and prioritized the connection of millions worldwide. Social networks created a promising future for those who felt restricted by their everyday lives. In fact, Sabrina Khan-Ibarra (2015) argues that social media is one of the most powerful forms of activism and mobilization. Although many believe social media is inherently neutral or unbiased, digital technology was created through the lens of white cisgender men. Therefore, digital technology reinforces hegemonic ideologies on race, gender, sexuality, and digital spaces reproduce social and urban inequality. At the same time, social media once presented endless possibilities for people to resist and mobilize due to its global reach. Moreover, social media provides everyday people with the tools to call out, organize against, and fight social injustices (Khan-Ibarra, 2015). This chapter examines the role of hashtag activism as a method of resistance by exploring the use of social media to mobilize the Standing Rock, and Black Lives Matter protests.

Over the span of a decade, social media has become an extension of capitalist consumption, prioritizing profit over communities (Lingel, 2021). Social media has transformed within two decades to become a reliable tool and extension of capitalism. Initially, social media

platforms did not have ads and prioritized building and sustaining connections within your network. Currently, social media has prioritized e-commerce and businesses, which has limited the powers of activists and community organizers (Lingel, 2021; Tarnoff, 2022). Before the pandemic, James Ash, Rob Kitchin, and Angieszka Leszczynski (2018) argued that geography had taken a digital turn and examined the endless possibilities for digital technology. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, social media and digital technology became the primary outlet that people could use to connect with their loved ones. As a result, social media's power has drastically grown due to the heavy reliance on connectivity and has become the primary way of finding/creating the latest hotspots for consumption. Due to the pandemic, I argue that social media holds more power to facilitate the construction of both digital and physical spaces.

This section examines the turn toward digital geographies and how social media has become an emerging tool of gentrification. There are various ways social media has contributed to gentrification across the globe. However, I argue there are three main ways social media, particularly Instagram, has facilitated gentrification; first, I explore Instagram-ability as an extension of white supremacy and spatial control (Lipsitz, 2007; Lingel, 2021). Next, I examine how the historical process of gentrification has evolved and emerged digitally, utilizing Zukin's (2015) framework of discursive redlining and Lingels's (2021) framework of digital redlining. I examine how these digital practices facilitate displacement. Finally, I expand on Lipsitz's (2007) concept of the Black spatial imaginary, as the digital Black spatial imaginary, as I explore how algorithmic shifts, shadow banning, and suppression work toward co-opting blackness without the presence of Black people.

3.1 Instagram-ability & Spatial Control

In 2010, Instagram launched and reshaped how people consume food, art, and the ways we engage with space (Budge & McDowall, 2021). Kylie Budge and Lachlan McDowall's (2021) book *Art after Instagram* argues that Instagram has transformed the art world. Likewise, Zeena Feldman (2021) argues that Instagram reshaped how food reviewers engage and interact. Many scholars have argued that Instagram has transformed culture, aesthetics, and space due to its accessibility (Bronsvoort & Uitermark, 2021; MacDowall, & Budge, 2021; Reithmeier & Kanwischer, 2020; Shelton et al., 2015). Before social networks existed, the web functioned as a one-direction stream of information (DiNucci, 1999). Creators, corporations, and news outlets utilized blogs and websites to deliver information. During this period, consumers would not be able to interact with other users and producers. However, social media's advancement has reshaped how people communicate, socialize, and think (Castells, 2009). The interactive Web 2.0[3] thrives from user-generated content and allows the consumer to be a producer. User-generated content shifted the way people engage with space as everyday people can become producers and facilitate upgrading spaces. Specifically, in the age of social media, user-generated content acts as a tool of gentrification through geo-tagging, hotspots, targeted ads, and reinforcing the racialization of spaces (Gibbons et al., 2018).

Instagram presented the endless possibilities to shape, produce, and facilitate spaces through a spot's aesthetics. In the digital age, spaces are shaped by consumer preferences, user-generated content, and targeted ads (Lingel, 2021). According to a study done by Christina Reithmeier and Detlef Kanwischer (2020), adolescents utilize geo-tagging for spaces they deem

[3] Coined by Darcy DiNucci (1999) and refers to user-generated content. Web 1.0 requires a consumer and producer. Whereas, Web 2.0 allows the consumer to become a producer.

exciting or Instagram-worthy in order to circulate the latest hotspots, "The practice of geotagging exceptional places becomes a practice for constructing places as status symbols, meaning places are not only 'upgraded' but define a persons' affiliation to a certain group" (p. 103). Thus, Instagram has played a crucial role in upgrading spaces because it can shape one's affiliation to a particular group. When a restaurant becomes deemed Instagram-able, it becomes upgraded to a space which shapes one's affiliation to a particular group. Often, restaurants will be deemed hotspots which can detail one's class and social group. Using Instagram to upgrade spaces can put trendy restaurants on the map and reshape the meaning of fine dining and good food (Feldman, 202l; Reithmeier & Kanwischer, 2020). According to Zeena Feldman (2021), before Instagram, food reviewers held power to put places on the map and establish a refined dining culture. Now, Instagram holds power to establish places as trendy hotspots, and more consumers are taking on the role of producers due to accessibility (Feldman, 2021; Reithmeier & Kanwischer, 2020). Instagram-ability allows everyday consumers to shape, contribute, and advertise spaces they deem trendy. At the same time, Instagram-ability relegates desirable populations to upgraded spaces to uphold capitalist consumerism. Moreover, populations deemed desirable are white, cis-gendered, able-bodied, affluent, and undesirable are those othered by systems of white supremacy, racial capitalism, and settler colonialism (Lipsitz, 2011; Robinson, 2021; Vergès, 2019). Likewise, spatial control has always functioned as an extension of white supremacy, aiming to segregate populations based on race, gender, sexuality, citizenship, ability, and, most importantly, class (Lipsitz, 2011). Irene Bronsvoort and Justus Uitermark (2021) argue that gentrifiers utilize Instagram to advertise recently renovated neighbourhoods, which facilitates gentrification. Thus, Instagram-ability is an emerging form of spatial control to reinforce systems of white supremacy, capitalism, and settler colonialism.

A prominent example in Toronto, one of the most significant hotspots is the Cactus Club Cafe, a franchise restaurant located across the city. Currently, the Cactus Club Cafe (2022) Instagram account has over hundred-thousand followers and is verified due to its large following. The cactus club is an Instagram-able space which upgrades many affluent white people's relationships with space. When examining the hashtag, one can see that the restaurant has been tagged over twenty-six thousand times. After examining the photos under this tag, I noticed a pattern of white middle-class families, couples, and friend groups sharing their meals on Instagram. The cactus club reflects how Instagram-able spaces, user-generated content, and food intersect to upgrade physical spaces. At the same time, The Cactus Club is a prominent example of how Instagram-ability functions as an emerging tool of spatial control and thus an extension of white supremacy. For example, over the past five years, there have been numerous accusations against the Cactus club for instances of racism.

Figure 2: Cactus Club Exposed (Jacks, 2019).

As shown in figure 2, in 2019, a series of tweets surfaced that accused the Cactus Club of cancelling DJs during Caribana weekend, a Caribbean festival which celebrates West Indian culture and falls on the same weekend as the emancipation of Anglophone Caribbean slavery (Jacks, 2019; Parris, 2017). Many other racialized people disclosed their experiences with the Cactus Club (Carlberg, 2019). The cactus club highlights how Instagram can reinforce the production of space and invite desirable populations while policing those deemed deviant (Lipsitz, 2011; Walcott, 2003; Maynard, 2017). The Cactus Club is not the only restaurant in Toronto with a history of excluding, policing, and turning away Black people (Dzhanova, 2018). Nevertheless, it is one of the most popular hotspots in Toronto, which has had various instances of racism as detailed; Black patrons actively being turned away, Black music being limited during certain weekends, and even one instance where the general manager has stated, "it's getting too dark in here" when referring to the Black presence in the restaurant (Jacks, 2019; Carlberg, 2019).

Many scholars have argued that Instagram has the power to transform, shape, and create impressions of spaces. When users of a particular privilege use their platform for advertising restaurants, spaces, and neighbourhoods, these areas become popularized among the desirable populations as a space for consumption. Likewise, Katherine Burnett explores the revitalization of impoverished neighbourhoods in the article *Commodifying poverty: gentrification and consumption in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside* (2014), highlighting the nuances of racialized spaces as both pathologized and commodified. Burnett (2014) examines the exploitation of Vancouver's most historically low-income neighbourhood and discusses the commodification of

poverty through emerging hotspots/restaurants. She claims that through revitalization, poverty becomes a significant part of tourism which affluent people increasingly participate in: "Downtown Eastside and crafting marketing strategies that will draw customers, the adventure of dining in a marginalized neighbourhood appears to be an increasingly important reason that some consumers patronize the new spaces of consumption" (Burnett, 2014, p. 163). Moreover, user-generated content in working-class neighbourhoods undergoing renovation becomes a space of commodification through the consumption of these upgraded spaces for young, affluent people.

Irene Bronsvoort and Justus Uitermark's (2021) case study of Javastraat, a street in a neighbourhood undergoing gentrification in Amsterdam, uncovers how Instagram facilitates gentrification. These scholars utilize Sharon Zukin et al's. (2015) concept of discursive investing when people use their skills and time to construct visual, textual and physical representations and thus discursively shape physical spaces. Likewise, one could argue that Instagram-ability is an extension of discursive investing, contributing to urban inequality and ultimately displacing undesirable communities. Within the study on Javastraat, the scholars found that many of their interviewees praised the neighbourhood developments and felt this gave them the status of being in an up-and-coming neighbourhood (Bronsvoort & Uitermark, 2021). Similarly, Instagram-able upgraded spaces allow those who engage, interact, and live in newly renovated neighbourhoods a status of belonging to a desirable social group. Those who participated in the study of Javastrat found that being in that neighbourhood enriches their quality of life and presence and allows them to claim a certain level of status (Bronsvoort & Uitermark, 2021). In addition to user-generated content, when a space becomes upgraded, targeted ads from trendy establishments will appear on their feed, continuing to attract desirable populations and facilitating gentrification; "We cannot know for sure whether these representations indeed attract other gentrifiers, but

many of the posts are intended to achieve this effect. Sometimes posts are actually advertisements posted by an establishment's personnel, influencers or marketing agencies" (Bronsvoort & Uitermark, 2021, p. 14). In collaboration with user-generated content, ads source data from users and utilize the data to create hyper-specific ads to facilitate the displacement of undesirable populations (Lingel, 2021).

Additionally, social media's monetization through ads reinforces systemic social and urban inequality. Moreover, targeted ads simultaneously withhold and overwhelm users based on various characteristics; "Armed with incredibly detailed data about our likes, dislikes, and social networks, advertisers can target their ads to hyper specific groups of people" (Lingel, 2021, p. 38). Social media possesses the data required to facilitate, shape, and control space. When Instagram first launched, many underestimated the power of photos in shaping art, food, aesthetics, and space. However, over a decade, Instagram has become enmeshed in capitalism and plays a prominent role in the production of space. Big tech prioritizes those deemed desirable and can support the monetization of each social network (Lingel, 2021). Likewise, gentrification is a process heavily tangled in capitalism, white supremacy, and settler colonialism to claim power over those who are bothered by these same systems (Lipsitz, 2011). Social media, particularly Instagram, reinforces this process through the user-generated production of space; thus, this practice facilitates gentrification.

3.2 Digital Redlining/Discursive Redlining

Gentrification is a process that masks itself in various ways and facilitates the displacement of low-income populations. Likewise, space is shaped by systems of power and dominant ideologies on race, gender, sexuality, ability and class. Urban inequality is produced by

social inequality, which fosters spaces for desirable and undesirable populations. Many scholars have argued that digital technology is not neutral; instead, it reinforces systemic inequality. Benjamin (2019) argues that historical anti-Black ideologies and practices from the Jim Crow era emerge digitally. According to Benjamin (2019), digital technology reproduces systemic inequality, a term she coined called the new Jim Code: “the employment of new technologies that reflect and reproduce existing inequities but that are promoted and perceived as more objective or progressive than the discriminatory systems of a previous era” (p. 28). Moreover, digital technology and geographies produce, reflect, and reinforce social inequality. Social media utilizes colonial practices of spatial control like redlining to reinforce urban inequality in the physical world.

Jessa Lingel (2021) claims that social media utilizes historical practices of redlining, which she coins; Digital redlining, “which is when online advertising discriminates against users based on race and class” (p. 23). Moreover, social media has become an extension of capitalism, which is shaped by race, and thus it seeks to reinforce existing inequalities. For example, in 2019, Facebook was under investigation after accusations of discriminatory housing advertisements (Lingel, 2021). The Facebook ads under investigation were housing ads based on the user’s race, national origin, and gender. The use of this information infringes on the fair housing act, which was established to limit urban inequality (Lingel, 2021; Isaac, 2022). In 2022, they reached a settlement requiring Facebook, Inc., and Instagram, now known as Meta Platforms, Inc., to stop utilizing characteristics for housing ads (Isaac, 2022). These characteristics are reminiscent of the historical Jim Crow era practice of redlining, which sought to segregate Black populations. Thus, existing forms and practices of inequality emerge digitally and reinforce the marginalization of racialized, low-income communities online.

In addition, redlining has surfaced on various other platforms, including Yelp, a user-generated restaurant reviewer platform. Zukin, et. al (2015) study found that Yelp users claimed that Black restaurants were deemed threatening compared to polish restaurants, which were viewed as comforting (Zukin et al., 2015). Moreover, Yelp users claimed that Black restaurants were threatening compared to the Polish restaurants, which were documented as comforting. Zukin et al., (2015) argue that this is a form of discursive redlining that seeks to reproduce existing inequalities and contribute to the gentrification in Brooklyn. Moreover, this form of user-generated text serves as a method of discourse and exemplifies how language can reinforce social structures such as racism. As a result, various forms of social media utilize existing practices that have facilitated urban inequality and ongoing gentrification.

3.3 Suppression & The Digital Black Spatial Imaginary

On February 26, 2012, a seventeen-year-old Black teenager named Trayvon Martin was shot in Sanford, Florida. On the night of his death, he was unarmed, wearing a hoodie and carrying an iced tea and a bag of skittles (Fasching-Varner, Reynold, Albert & Martin, 2014). Martin was shot dead by a 28-year-old white volunteer neighbourhood patrol, George Zimmerman. According to Kenneth Fasching-Varner, Rema Reynolds, Katrice Albert and Lori Martin's book Trayvon Martin, *Race and American Justice; Writing Wron*g (2014), many Americans had anticipated Zimmerman's conviction for the killing of Trayvon Martin. Nevertheless, when the verdict came, Zimmerman was not charged guilty of any charges. Fasching et al. (2014) recall the reactions following the verdict; thousands took to social media to express their frustration:

> Social media, text messages, and calls continuously expressed outrage over the verdict. While the jury may not have been informed with the requisite academic knowledge about how race operates within the United States, academics did possess that knowledge and took to the internet to communicate the disparity in convictions for stand-your-ground laws as applied along lines of race. (p. 2).

According to Alicia Garza (2014), one of the founders of Black Lives Matter (BLM), the death of Trayvon Martin sparked the hashtag— and eventual social movement— #Blacklivesmatter. Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi (2014) began the BLM movement as a call to action to raise awareness, call out, and dismantle anti-Black racism within society. What began as a hashtag soon became a social movement that mobilized millions worldwide. Soon BLM Chapters began sprouting across the world, from London to Toronto; this movement emerged to address systemic anti-Blackness and work toward eradicating police brutality and carceral systems (Garza, 2014).

Two years after Trayvon Martin's death, an 18-year-old Black teenager named Michael Brown was fatally shot by a police officer named Darren Wilson in Ferguson, Missouri. The case received national coverage, and millions across the country awaited the verdict, which came after the killing of Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, and John Crawford (Cobbina, 2019). On November 24, 2014, the grand jury decided not to indict Darren Wilson for the killing of Michael Brown (Cobbina, 2019). Michael Brown's case verdict sparked what Jennifer Cobbina (2019) refers to as the historic Ferguson Unrest; "The pronouncement triggered civil unrest in Ferguson and mobilized protests throughout the nation against police brutality that were documented across social media platforms" (p. 72). The Death of Michael Brown incited a yearlong Black Lives Matter protest to seek justice for Brown's Family (Cobbina, 2019).

Five months after Darren Wilson's trial—and amid the ongoing Ferguson protests—in 2015, a twenty-five-year-old Black man and Baltimore resident named Freddie Gray was arrested by the Baltimore Police Department (Cobbina, 2019). While in police custody, Freddi Gray obtained a spinal cord injury and shortly after died on April 19, 2015 (Cobbina, 2019). Gray played a crucial role in the mobilization of Black Lives Matter; "Gray's death sparked outrage that erupted into protests and looting in Baltimore, which was also covered in detail on social media" (Cobbina, 2019, p. 72). The Ferguson and Baltimore protests continued to surge throughout the summer, thousands of protestors actively taking to the streets to resist ongoing injustices. Deen Freelon, Charlton Mcllwain, and Meredith Clark (2016) argue that social media was a powerful mobilization tool for social movements, including the Ferguson Black Lives Matter protests.

At the same time, there are consequences to mobilizing with digital technology, including but not limited to the ongoing carceral surveillance. With the rise of digital technology, the media coverage and social media circulation of the Ferguson protest put many protestors at risk of carceral forces. In Baltimore, during the summer of the civil unrest, the FBI utilized aerial surveillance methods to capture protestors' images. Before Baltimore, these same practices were utilized to capture Ferguson protestor's identities. Daniel Grinberg (2019) claims that the FBI utilized facial recognition software to scan through social media images of protestors and find the protestors with outstanding warrants as grounds to arrest them. Grinberg (2019) argues that the use of carceral surveillance is racially motivated as the population and demographics of both protests were majority Black people. The use of facial recognition software and social media images has served as a detriment to the mobilization of protestors. Simone Browne (2015) argues that surveillance practices were founded in slavery, and these practices are still in repetition.

Specifically, Browne (2015) claims that biometric data has always served as a means of suppressing Blackness and policing Black bodies. Collecting protestors' biometric data to enforce carceral presences and suppress Black resistance is one of the main consequences of social media activism. Black people's bodies carry a history in which surveillance practices were constructed to target their navigation through space (Monaghan, 2013; Browne, 2015). As a result, this history follows them and aims to suppress their fight for liberation. Although social media provides a promising space for activism and community methods of resistance, at the same time, social media can be a tool of carceral surveillance as digital technology can be used to track and contain Blackness.

Almost four years after the protests, six activists died, two allegedly murdered and four by alleged suicide. In 2019, two men were found dead inside a torched vehicle. According to *NBC News* (2019), protestor Edward Crawford Jr. was under distress due to personal issues and took his own life. In addition, 24-year-old Danye Jones was found hanging from a tree in his yard, and although his mother claims he was lynched, ultimately, the death was ruled a suicide (NBC, 2019). Many protestors of the Ferguson and Baltimore unrest faced various consequences, being targeted by carceral forces, resulting in many of them losing employment opportunities (White, 2015; Oh, 2016; Grinberg, 2019). Specifically, in Baltimore, the FBI utilized aerial surveillance technology to capture protestors' visuals and deploy facial recognition technology (Grinberg, 2019).

Similarly, in 2016, a group of Indigenous activists in Dakota took it upon themselves to protest the Dakota Access Pipeline. The Dakota Access Pipeline protests revealed the powers of digital mobilization, as the protestors came up with a hashtag, #NoDAPL, to resist the ongoing

pipeline construction. At the same time, this protest unlocked the settler-colonial practices that take place on social media: "During the protests, a rumour started that the police were using Facebook to track, and arrest activists involved in the protests" (Hunt & Gruszczynski, p. 1028). Although this rumour emerged, protestors asked people worldwide to check into the Standing Rock location on Facebook to increase the privacy of those protesting the cause. The Standing Rock protests highlight both the surveillance/resistance and the mobilization/scattering on social media.

It is no coincidence that after the Ferguson protests and during the Standing Rock protests, Meta, Inc., owners of Instagram and Facebook, announced the algorithm-driven feed. In an announcement that has since been deleted, Meta stated that the algorithm would prioritize moments based, "Ordered to show the moments we believe you will care about the most" (Hunt, 2016, para. 5). The former algorithm was chronologically based, allowing users to see their feed in chronological order. At the same time, the algorithm-driven feed would highlight moments picked by the algorithm, which was designed to reinforce systemic inequality. I argue that the switch to algorithm-driven is a form of Black suppression which seeks to limit Black mobilization and resistance. In addition to algorithm-driven feeds, there was a rise in carceral surveillance, laws, policies, and practices put in place to suppress mobilization and resistance. Without access to chronological posts, users cannot access information about potential protests and miss time-sensitive events. The switch to the algorithm-driven feed serves as a form of Black suppression, contributing to the spatial control of undesirable populations. Instagram algorithms have and will continue to prioritize capitalist interests and dominant populations. Over a decade, Instagram has transformed into a commerce application that supports the monetization of businesses and consumerism over the users. Thus, the switch to the algorithm-driven feed serves

as an extension of white supremacy and capitalism systems, which aim to suppress the liberation of marginalized populations. Consequently, the sudden algorithmic shift emphasizes Instagram's role in gentrification.

In the summer of 2020, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, a racial epidemic re-emerged that required urgent attention (McLaughlin, 2020). The same year, on May 25, a traumatic nine-minute video surfaced of police officer Derek Chauvin kneeling on George Floyd's neck, resulting in Floyd's death, the video that went viral and shifted the nation's attention toward the ongoing racial violence perpetrated by the state (McLaughlin, 2020). As a result, Floyd's death galvanized a global movement surrounding the long-standing history of racialized violence in the United States; activists sought justice for his family and for all victims of state-sanctioned violence (Rogers, 2020). Consequently, the summer had become filled with riots, protests, and demonstrations fueled by grief and motivated by change; some were violent while others were not (Rogers, 2020). This protest took place before the emergent curfew was announced in Washington, D.C when former President Trump attempted to suppress the protestor's right to take to the streets and demand justice (Rogers, 2020). Before the curfew, the Washington D.C. Black Lives Matter (BLM) chapter held daily protests to resist the ongoing racial injustice in the United States (Rogers, 2020). On June 1, 2020, BLM held a protest in Washington, D.C., between Lafayette park and St. John's church (Gjelten, 2020; Rogers, 2020). However, that same day, former President Donald Trump wanted to walk from the White House to St. John's church to take a picture with a bible, and he had called for extra police protection (Rogers, 2020). Within moments, there was a heavy police presence, officers on horses, others with riot shields in hand, the sound of flash-bang explosions and tear gas dispersed – thousands of protestors startled). Trump went on his walk to the church at 7:01 pm for a photo-op with a

bible; this session lasted seventeen minutes before deciding to go back to the white house (Rogers, 2020). This photo remains a symbolic image of colonial power and how the use of violence against racialized people is what shapes America, the land of the "free" (Quijano, 2000).

During this period, an end-to-end encrypted text-messaging app called signal was released, which allowed protestors to mobilize without the tracking technology embedded in Instagram, Facebook, and IMessage. Protestors used social media and created TikToks on how to protest without being tracked by carceral forces. For example, TikTok user Eliza Orlins (2022), tells users to disable fingerprint and face ID technology, and she encourages users to turn off location services and never allow police to search through protestor's phones. In addition, many other users encourage protestors to wear face coverings which cover the bridge of their noses to resist facial recognition technology. During this period, Instagram still had an algorithm-driven feed which worked toward suppressing protest news and information. On Tuesday, June 2, 2020, amid BLM protests, Instagram users were told to take a break from posting to pause the exploitation of Black trauma in the music industry. Two Black women, Jamila Thomas and Brianna Agyemang, encouraged users to participate in the hashtag #TheShowMustBePaused. According to Mariah Wellman (2022), the movement became misunderstood by white allies, posting Black squares on their Instagram feed and hashtagging #BlackLivesMatter. Now referred to as Black Square Tuesday was harmful and enforced the suppression of BLM-related resources, content, and protest information. In addition to this suppression, many Black users across platforms claimed during this period that their content was being suppressed by social media platforms (Bishop, 2019; Cotter, 2021).

Social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram have come under accusations of shadow banning content from marginalized creators (Cotter, 2021). Shadow banning is a term

which emerged through what Bishop (2019) refers to as algorithmic gossip, an emerging form of knowledge production amongst digital creators. Algorithmic gossip can unveil valuable information and resources on how algorithms function and support content producers. Shadow banning is the act of the algorithm actively suppressing users' content (Cotter, 2019). Although social media platforms and big tech will never actively admit to the suppression of content, it is a common understanding amongst creators and users on social media. In a 2020 article by *Time Magazine*, Black creators claimed that Tiktok was suppressing their content during the Black Lives Matter Protests (Mccluskey, 2020). According to the article, many creators expressed that their viewership would plummet or face community guideline violations (Mccluskey, 2020). Black creators have spoken up against the emerging app countless times over the last two years about the unfair treatment.

More recently, a *Forbes Magazine* article revealed that the top-earning TikTokers in 2022, all of the highest-paid influencers, were white (Brown & Freeman, 2022). The list contained one of the biggest TikTokers, Addison Rae, who made 8.5 million dollars from being on TikTok. Many Black creators have called out Rae for appropriating Blackness (Jennings, 2021). For example, in March 2021, Addison Rae was invited onto the *Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon* to do tutorials on TikTok dances. While on stage, Rae did dances originally created by Black Tiktokers; each creator was not credited or cited for their work on the *Tonight Show* (Jennings, 2021). The infamous dance controversy speaks to more significant conversations about the Black Digital Spatial imaginary, which exists in circulation as Black aesthetics, foods, and culture are co-opted by the digital white spatial imaginary. Rae's performance is a prominent example of how the white digital spatial imaginary commodifies Blackness without the presents of Black people. Her attempt at claiming these dances as TikTok

trends without paying credit or homage to Black creators' labour reinforces centuries of Black exploitation. The digital white spatial imaginary consumes, conquers, and commodifies Blackness while rendering Black people disposable. As a result, Social media reinforces centurylong practices of suppressing Black liberation. Not only with dances, but many food content creators also reinforce the commodification of Blackness without the presence of Black people (Cherid, 2021; Persadie, 2019). A popular TikTok trend in Food reviewer culture in Toronto has many non-black users speaking in a caricature of the "Toronto accent," which is an amalgamation of Jamaican Patios and Somali (Persadie, 2019). One particular user named Foodini [@Foodieinhoodiiie] (2021) uses a Toronto accent in all of her food reviewer videos. Like many other food reviewers, she utilizes Toronto accents and slang for views and does not contribute to or support Black-owned businesses.

As stated before, McKittrick (2011) argues that Blackness is embedded in every physical landscape because each landscape is built on anti-Black violence. I argue that Blackness is embedded in every digital landscape as Black foods, aesthetics, dances and culture are circulated without the presence of Black people. Digital landscapes are reminiscent of physical landscapes as they seek to dispossess Black people and exploit elements of Blackness.

To conclude, digital activism and geographies provide endless mobilization and social change possibilities. However, social media can facilitate the displacement and dispossession of racialized people in three ways. First, Instagram-ability is an extension of white supremacy and spatial control. Second, historical practices of anti-blackness emerging digitally, like digital and discursive redlining. Finally, the suppression of Blackness on social media reinforces the digital Black spatial imaginary where Black culture is commodifiable, but Black people are contained or suppressed by carceral presences. All of this comes back to how food and food sharing is an

extension of the digital white spatial imaginary, which seeks to displace Black people. In the following chapter, I closely examine these methods of suppression concerning the construction and demise of Vegandale.

4.0 Chapter #3—Parkdale Case Study: From Pathologized Parkdale to #Vegandale

Parkdale, in its founding, was once a vibrant suburb with a promising future. However, over decades, Parkdale transformed into a slum with undesirable occupants. Parkdale's demise reflects how spaces are constructed to relegate undesirable and desirable populations. According to Razack (2002), the construction of space is not neutral; instead, it is meticulously designed and shaped by interlocking systems of power. One of the many underlying narratives ascribed to Parkdale is inherently racialized, as this neighbourhood has transformed over decades to house many non-British immigrants, mad populations, and low-income labourers, deemed undesirable populations (Whitzman, 2009). For decades, many developers, city planners, and affluent populations have tried to create plans for urban renewal in the neighbourhood of Parkdale, but these efforts have not been successful. In the 1800s, Parkdale formed its first railway and began to expand underground and construct subway rails. To the pressing City of Toronto 1930s Slum removal plan of action that targeted vulnerable populations in Parkdale (Whitzman, 2009; George, 2011). In the 1960s, community members fought for high-rise apartments which sought to attract middle-class households (Whitzman, 2009; Lossman, 2019). Each city-planned initiative highlights the pathologization of Parkdale and efforts to displace undesirable populations. Even more recently, in 2017 when the City of Toronto proposed a strip of Vegan restaurants in the heart of Parkdale, rebranding this neighbourhood as Vegandale, which was popularized through social media (Krishnan, 2018). Vegandale represents the ways in which social media can reinforce forms of gentrification because digital technology, like space, is not neutral; instead, it is a reflection of dominant ideologies of race, class, and gender. Over the course of five years, Vegandale's attempt at food gentrification was facilitated by the circulation of food sharing on Instagram.

In March of 2022, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Vegandale's last restaurant closed its doors officially, marking the closing of Vegandale (Iqbal, 2022). Although Vegandale is now closed, this neighbourhood development represents the endless possibilities for social media's role in reinforcing systemic inequalities and the role of Instagram and social media in facilitating gentrification. Before Vegandale, Parkdale's pathologization served as a reflection of dominant ideologies on class, race and ability to shape neighbourhoods.

Prior to the creation of Vegandale, Parkdale's long-standing pathologization stemmed from the ways dominant ideologies on class, race and ability shape and produce space. From the moment of inception, Parkdale was considered a good neighbourhood for middle-class families. However, this neighbourhood became dangerous to the middle class due to ongoing development projects. Many residents moved to different parts of the city, leaving Parkdale as a new home to many working-class, non-British immigrants and mad communities. Through the trials and tribulations, Parkdale represents the production of space as means of inclusion and exclusion, a reflection of dominant ideologies and systems of power. At the same time, Parkdale reflects how spaces become racialized through the occupation of undesirable populations that deviate from the norms of whiteness, compulsory heterosexuality, ability, and class. This section explores the defining moments in the history of Parkdale and the ways in which it has always been a target for urban renewal. Drawing on Parkdale's founding to Vegandale's origins, I argue that the use of food-sharing and Instagram-ability in Vegandale is an emerging form of urban renewal which facilitates the displacement of racialized communities. Finally, I explore Parkdale's ongoing resistance and endless futures.

4.1 Finding Parkdale — Suburban Dreams, Mad Realities

Before there was Parkdale, there was a settlement which predated colonization for over ten thousand years; many Indigenous peoples cared for and shared the land now known as Parkdale, including the Huron, Iroquois, followed by the Mississaugas and Senecas (Parkdale Village BIA, n.d; High Park Nature, 2018). Moreover, to examine the history of Parkdale, there must be an acknowledgement of Indigenous history and settler colonial forces which displaced and dispossessed Indigenous peoples. According to Razack (2002), a white settler society is one in which Europeans claim, occupy, and inhabit non-European soil. The most pervasive myth of settler colonialism is one which frames white settlers as the first to found and develop the land; "In the national mythologies of such societies, it is believed that white people came first and that it is they who principally developed the land; Aboriginal peoples are presumed to be mostly dead or assimilated" (Razack, 2002, p. 2). As a result, the history which is documented, archived and produced crafts a narrative which frames European settlers as the original inhabitants of the uninhabited land (Razack, 2002; Trouillot, 2015). In order to examine the history of Parkdale, there must be an acknowledgement of the settler colonial forces which seek to dispossess and erase Indigenous people—from what is now known as—Canada's history.

The settler colonial state, now known as Canada, was founded on July 1, 1867 (Parkdale Village BIA, n.d). In 1875, Parkdale was first named and became established as a prosperous neighbourhood. Carolyn Whitzman (2009) suggests that Parkdale's name was a marketing strategy to attract an affluent demographic: "The name Parkdale was thus a combination of two important signifiers in the late-nineteenth-century suburban culture, both suggesting natural beauty and remoteness from the sights and smells of the city" (p. 76). One of the most prominent attractions for middle-class families in Parkdale was the lakeshore in South Parkdale. Parkdale

became home to European immigrants and a presented sign of prosperity for the recently established neighbourhood. In January 1879, Parkdale became a municipality filled with emerging urban renewal and expansion plans (Whitzman, 2009; Whitzman Slater, 2006; Parkdale Village BIA, n.d). However, the first attempt at urban renewal in Parkdale demolished housing property and shifted the landscape of this town. According to Whitzman (2009), the project which demolished property values in the neighbourhood was the construction of what is now known as the Queen and Dufferin subway line: “The project that brought Parkdale close to bankruptcy and led to its annexation by Toronto was an underpass, or subway as' it was then called, under the rail tracks at Queen and Dufferin” (p. 85).

Figure 3: Parkdale Railway Station (Victor, 1957).

While building the subway line, middle-class families began to move out of Parkdale to save their families from potential risks of injury. Thus, property values in Parkdale began to decline as middle-class families moved out to the suburbs rapidly (Whitzman, 2009; Whitzman

& Slater, 2006).

At the same time, Parkdale became home to the mad. During this period, three psychiatric asylums were built; the Provincial Lunatic Asylum, Parkdale's Magdalen Asylum for Fallen Women, and the Home for Incurables (Whitzman, 2009; Lossman, 2019). In 1850, the Provincial Lunatic Asylum opened, now known as the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). This institution held over 200 incurable patients, many of those mad, low-income, and precariously housed (Lossman, 2019; Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 2022). Parkdale's Magdalen's Asylum for Fallen Women incarcerated over 70 women, and girls deemed immoral due to their promiscuous lifestyles (Witzman, 2009). According to the annual report, the Asylum for Fallen women served as a place to rid poor, orphaned, and deviant women of sin rather than misfortune; "This house is overshadowed by the dark cloud of sin, rather than of misfortune, and, therefore, its claims upon Christian compassion are quite peculiar" (Magdalene Asylum, 1871, p. 5). The Home for incurables housed mostly elderly populations, many considered to be senile (Whitzman, 2009). These psychiatric intuitions bordered on or existed within Parkdale and played a crucial role in pathologizing this neighbourhood.

Moreover, characteristics of madness are inherently linked to Blackness. Therí Alyce Pickens book *Black Madness :: Mad Blackness* (2019) argues that Blackness and ability are intertwined, "In an ideological construct of white supremacy, Blackness is considered synonymous with madness or the prerequisite for creating madness" (p. 4). Therefore, madness and Blackness are intrinsically linked, and those deemed mad are disposed of through systems of white supremacy and capitalism (Pickens, 2019). Although mad white communities have privileges of whiteness, their madness has led to the forcible disposability/incarceration in psychiatric asylums (Losman, 2019). The longstanding narrative around Parkdale being

dangerous is due to the populations which occupy this working-class neighbourhood. At its core, madness is an integral part of Parkdale's history.

After the middle-class families left Parkdale in hopes of finding better property values, by 1881, the vast majority of the working population in Parkdale were railway workers, making up 41% of the population (Whitzman & Slater, 2006). At this time, Parkdale was its own municipality. Over the years, Parkdale attempted to merge and become a part of Toronto, but it was voted against due to the declining housing rates. Parkdale was subjected to be a separate municipality surrounded by districts of Toronto. After years of voting to integrate Parkdale into the city of Toronto, the efforts finally succeeded. By January 1889, Parkdale finally became annexed by the city of Toronto; "The ten-year life of Parkdale as an independent municipality provides a counter-example to the usual stereotypes of politically independent suburbs existing to protect middle-class people's property values by excluding non-residential uses and poor people." (Whitzman, 2006, p. 86).

Parkdale's isolation serves as a prime example of how independent suburbs reinforce class hierarchies and protect the wealth of the upper class and thus, dictate desirable and undesirable populations. Henri Lefebvre (2005) argues that space reflects dominant ideologies produced through systems of power. Those who hold power are the wealthy upper-class, who play a fundamental role in shaping spaces. Whereas those who are deemed undesirable, single women, racialized, and mad populations are relegated to spaces that are deemed undesirable. Francoise Vergès (2019) argues that for the white able body male to function, there must be the exhausted woman of colour who cleans the offices in which these men work. The exhausted women of colour are the backbone of capitalism. For clean, white suburban spaces to exist, there

must be racialized slums that consume the waste of capitalism—the working class who continue to provide energy and labour to the affluent. One could argue that Parkdale's pathologization must exist for the suburban dream to come to fruition. Undesirable populations must be relegated to slums, ghettos, and urban spaces for desirable populations to exist within the confines of their gated communities.

4.2 Ghettos, Slums, and Suburbs

> *They fought to keep Black people out of their neighborhoods because they associated them with the ghettos that whites created and from which they profited*
> *– George Lipsitz, How Racism Takes place (2011)*

In order to detail the pathologization of Parkdale and the neighbourhood's contentious history, there must be an understanding of how spaces become racialized. There must be an analysis of ghettos, suburbs, and slums. Lipsitz (2011) argues that the plantations, prisons, and ghettos reflect white supremacy's role in shaping space. He contends that ghettos are often framed as naturally occurring neighbourhoods rather than meticulously designed as an extension of white supremacy; "Spatial control, displacement, dispossession, and exclusion have been linked to racial subordination and exploitation in decisive ways" (Lipsitz, 2011, p. 52). Thus, spatial control is an extension of white supremacy, relegating those who are othered to undesirable neighbourhoods. The white spatial imaginary fosters a homogenous space of purity; populations that deviate from these ideologies and beliefs are othered and forced into neighbourhoods where they can be policed, contained, and excluded from the suburbs. According to Whitzman (2009), although slums in the United States are determined by race, within Canada, it is determined by class and those who utilize government assistance. However, Whitzman fails to acknowledge how poverty, disease, madness, and promiscuity are inherently linked to Blackness as a site of

pathologization. McKittrick (2011) argues urban landscapes are enmeshed in anti-Black violence; thus, anti-Blackness, violence, and dispossession are embedded in every landscape. Therefore, slum constructions within North America are inherently linked to Blackness as a site of contention.

Furthermore, housing is determined by income; poor and rich people are relegated to spaces based on their income. David Harvey (2007) contends that poor communities are forced into living in the inner city, whereas the rich are sprawled into spaces outside of the city. Moreover, low-income housing is often highly concentrated and over-crowded. Likewise, slums function to pack in as many working-class people in small apartments. Similarly, Sarah Wise's book *The Blackest Streets* (2009) examines the city of London, England's efforts in facilitating the clearance of the Nichol Street slum. In addition to the clearance, Wise (2009) details the emergence of slum rhetoric as a site of contention. Within the Nichol Street slum, there were many reported diseases which led to an increase in infant mortality rates (Wise, 2009). Due to the high mortality rates, medical experts linked these deaths to the living conditions of slums. Thus, slums became deemed unsanitary, primitive, and deviant. Likewise, Whitzman (2009) argues that the usage of social services determines ghettos and slums in Canada. At the same time, Whitzman's (2009) analysis fails to recognize the ways in which systemic oppression places mad and racialized populations into forced poverty. Parkdale housed low-income and deviant populations for over a century, which has contributed to the pathologization.

According to George Gonzalez (2009), the suburbs are a spacious utopia shaped by consumer preferences, often located on the outskirts of cities, where the middle-class drive in for work and out to find themselves at home. In addition, the development of suburban spaces directly correlates with the creation and boom of automobiles (Gonzalez, 2009). Soon after, the

development of highways allowed suburban homeowners to commute into the city for work and return to their quiet, spacious neighbourhoods. The suburbs are spacious, sprawled neighbourhoods which facilitate and gatekeep generational wealth, access, and space (Gonzalez, 2009; Lipsitz, 2007). In comparison, the slums are the antithesis—overpopulated, overcrowded, and filled with working-class and deviant populations (Wise, 2009; Lipsitz, 2011). Thus, the slums are the anthesis of the suburbs. Parkdale was once a suburb on the horizon of giving middle-class households the promise of the future. However, after failed developments, the middle-class communities moved out, making Parkdale home to the working class (Whitzman, 2009; Whitzman & Slater, 2006). According to Ben Losman (2019), Parkdale's transformation into a slum threatens Toronto's attempts at being a prosperous city, "As a slum space, Parkdale was considered "unhealthy, unsafe, and immoral," and was therefore a threat to Toronto's colonial respectability" (p. 337). Slums became attributed to dirty, undesirable, and overcrowded neighbourhoods which housed morally deviant, racialized, and mad communities (Wise, 2009; Whitzman, 2009; Lipsitz, 2011). In contrast, the suburbs represented prosperity, generational wealth, and exclusivity (Gonzalez, 2009; Lipsitz, 2011). The suburbs house the desirable populations, the white, wealthy, and able-bodied. The slums house the morally deviant and corrupt, the racialized, mad, working-class and single women. For the suburbs to thrive and prosper, the slums must exist in their shadows, housing undesirable populations. Therefore Parkdale, being deemed a slum surrounded by vibrant suburbs, plays a crucial role in shaping property values (Whitzman, 2009; Wise, 2009). Although urban renewal seeks to rid impure populations, there must be spaces for the working class, mad, racialized, disabled, and single women to serve the economy and fuel those living in the suburbs (Vergès, 2019; Lipsitz, 2011). As mentioned above, capitalism necessitates inequality, and racism is that inequality; this can be reflected through access to labour, housing, and wealth (Robinson, 2000; Lipsitz, 2011). For the

wealthy to exist, there must be the poor, and for capitalism to function, there must be exhausted racialized bodies.

4.3 Constructing a Slum

During the 1930s and great depression, public housing and slums became a federal issue needing solutions. According to Ryan George (2011), one of the most significant urban projects in Toronto was the clearance of slums and the rebuilding of housing infrastructures to improve economic growth and development. According to the infamous report by the Lieutenant Governor's Committee on Housing Conditions in Toronto, also known as the Bruce Report (1934), a planning survey detailing slums across the city of Toronto. In 1934, following the release of the Bruce Report (1934), Parkdale became deemed a slum:

> Parkdale's housing problem is the result of the economic deterioration of what was formerly a prosperous district of quite large, substantial houses. Into these houses are now crowded a vastly greater number of families than the architects ever foresaw. Many of these families are of foreign origin. (p. 23).

Thirty years after its founding, Parkdale went from a promising suburb with promising futures for middle-class families to a dangerous slum. According to Whitzman (2009), there are three main reasons why Parkdale suddenly transformed; first, the media played a crucial role in constructing and facilitating the pathologization of Parkdale as a neighbourhood which housed deviant populations due to the increasing rates of unmarried men and women, mad, and low-income populations living in apartments. The suburbs represent the morally righteous and virtuous communities where women lived with their husbands and children (Whitzman, 2009; Hammonds, 1997; Lipsitz, 2011). However, the slums are the antithesis, an overpopulated

neighbourhood with promiscuous and morally corrupt women live (Wise, 2009; Whitzman, 2009). In addition, the main ideologies behind promiscuity are inherently racialized, as promiscuity was often associated with Blackness. In Parkdale, the fears behind promiscuity often held racialized connotations as many feared the morally deviant women would produce mixed-race offspring (Whitzman, 2009).

Similarly, Hammonds (1997) argues that white femininity is the antithesis of Black femininity. White women were constructed to be morally virtuous, a site of chastity, and frail; however, Black women were constructed to be morally deviant, a site of promiscuity, and strong. When white women take on the designed characteristics of Black femininity, they are othered in society. Thus, the construction of Parkdale's slum elements is inherently racialized.

The second reason is the lakeside in Parkdale; what once was deemed a prosperous addition to the neighbourhood became a barrier to the city's plans for urban renewal (Whitzman, 2009; Losman, 2019). The City of Toronto wanted to create highways, subways, and various other modes of transit to cultivate the city. During the 1910s, the automobile industry had taken off, and there were more car owners. Similarly, Gonzalez (2009) argues that the automobile industry had become vital for homeowners who wanted to live in spacious suburban homes. Desirable populations and wealthy homeowners shape the production of space because they hold power. Many living in suburban spaces simultaneously wanted the spacious comfort away from the busy city, but at the same time access to the city through highways and trains (Gonzalez, 2009). Parkdale's lakeside was once a promising feature; however, during the city's urban expansion, it played a significant role to the detriment of the neighbourhood, rendering it an undesirable slum, home to deviant populations (Whitzman, 2009; Whitzman & Slater, 2006).

Finally, Parkdale prioritized working-class communities by building apartment buildings instead of creating spacious homes. In the 1910's Parkdale began turning villas into flats and

creating more small apartment spaces to house more people. The construction of these apartments caused moral panic across the city as news outlets continued constructing narratives around Parkdale. After World War One, Parkdale became a destination for single women, “Parkdale also had a higher proportion of widows, spinsters, and other women heads of households than the rest of Toronto” (Whitzman, 2009, p. 128). The overwhelming number of single autonomous women contributed significantly to the demonization and construction of Parkdale as a slum.

The 1910s to 1960s marked the rapid decline of Parkdale. According to Whitzman (2009), many factors contributed to this decline, including the population, media circulation, and housing. Parkdale was a mixed-income, race, and gendered neighbourhood with affordable housing options attracting various demographics; skilled labourers, businesspeople, and middleclass women/widows. Parkdale was a highly sought-out destination for the working class due to the former mansions constructed into single-apartment complexes and affordable housing options for those who could not afford to become homeowners.

Next, the media has always played a prominent role in the construction of Parkdale. From the origin of this neighbourhood, it was once a prosperous suburb. However, newspapers like the *Toronto Star* and *Global News*, have contributed to the transformation of Parkdale from the suburbs to the slums. Finally, housing in Parkdale sparked moral panic as Parkdale went from a spacious suburban neighbourhood to a highly densely populated part of the city. Parkdale constructed apartment buildings during this era and became one of the most densely populated neighbourhoods in all of Toronto. The construction of Parkdale as a dangerous or undesirable neighbourhood purely stems from the white spatial imaginary, which seeks to keep spaces homogenized and pure. The white spatial imaginary is a form of gatekeeping, as suburban spaces thrive off exclusion. As discussed above, gentrification is about power, those who have resources

and those who lack. The suburb and city dichotomy exists to enforce power over undesirable populations and cement their inferiority (Harvey, 2007; Whitzman, 2009). For those who hold power, possess wealth and can afford homes, the suburbs act as a border, keeping out those who are undesirable working-class and hoarding wealth (Lipsitz, 2007). During this period, Parkdale rapidly declined in middle-class households and became a working-class community due to its affordability.

The City of Toronto's efforts to demolish Parkdale persisted, like the 1930s urgency to engage in slum clearance. In 1950, the City of Toronto began its following expansion, drastically altering Parkdale. According to Losman (2019), during this period, the city began to build the Garnier Expressway, a highway that extends from the west to east end of the city. This highway led to the demolition of hundreds of homes in Parkdale. One could argue that this was another form of the city targeting the most vulnerable populations. Likewise, Whitzman (2009) argues that after the expansion, Parkdale became an overlooked neighbourhood: "But by the 1960s, it was increasingly anonymous, viewed through the window of a car along the Gardiner Expressway, or cruised by people looking for parking at the CNE. It was dismissed by planning reports and ignored by newspapers" (p. 150). Parkdale's decline became solidified to cement the prosperity of the surrounding neighbourhoods. The City of Toronto prioritizes the wealthy affluent communities' access to the city while continuing to demonize those othered by the white spatial imaginary.

4.4 Pathologizing Parkdale: 1960s-1970s

During the 1960s and 1970s, significant shifts took place in Parkdale, cementing the pathologization of this neighbourhood. After the Garnier Expressway expansion, another urban renewal initiative took place in Parkdale (Whitzman, 2009). Two streams of activism emerged

during this period; one focused on Parkdale's preservation, and the second focused on the rising numbers of impoverished people living in Parkdale (Whitzman, 2009; Losman, 2019). According to Whitzman (2009), these two causes were linked; however, these streams of activism shifted over time. Reverend Graham Cotter, a priest at St. Mark's Anglican Church, was the leader of an emerging movement to unify the community and re-establish Parkdale (Whitzman, 2009). He believed in breaking the patterns in Parkdale and wanted to utilize diversity to re-establish a prosperous neighbourhood (Whitzman, 2009; Losman, 2019). He did this by pushing for the banning of bachelorettes and rooming houses. Like many urban activists at the time, Cotter believed that privately-owned high-rises would demolish low-cost housing and re-establish these neighbourhoods with prosperous high-priced housing. According to Losman (2019), an extensive attempt was to build high-rise apartments to attract middle-class populations.

However, during this period, the Queen Street Mental hospital (2022)—formerly known as the Provincial lunatic asylum—was undergoing a reform which would deinstitutionalize mad patients (Losman, 2019). The shift toward reform would discharge thousands of mad people who had been formerly incarcerated and forced to endure harsh conditions (Losman, 2019; Whitzman, 2009). By the mid-1970s, psychiatric institutions began to discharge over one-third of their patients. At the same time, there was a rise in racialized immigrants who made Parkdale their new home due to the affordable housing (Whitzman, 2009). The vast majority of demographics which moved into Parkdale during this boom were Tamil, Filipino, West Indians, Sikhs, and Tibetans (Slater, 2006; Losman, 2019). Parkdale became the perfect starter neighbourhood for displaced racialized immigrants and refugees due to its affordable housing. According to Losman (2019), mad populations in south Parkdale were the sole reason rent prices remained affordable;

Thanks in large part to the presence of Mad bodies, the average rent was cheaper in Parkdale than in the rest of the city; recent immigrants, many of whom were political refugees, were drawn to the affordable housing and social services in the area. (p. 338). Although there was an attempt for middle-class families to move into the new high-rise apartments, due to the rising rates of racialized and mad populations in Parkdale, the middleclass families fled quickly. During this period, Parkdale began building group homes and nursing homes and housed most social service housing in Toronto. According to Whitzman (2009), these forms of housing contributed significantly to the pathologization of Parkdale. Since these social services were not being built in other parts of the city, during this period, Parkdale became home to the displaced mad community who occupied legal and illegal single-room houses, group homes, and social housing. In addition to the racialized populations who co-existed with mad populations in their arrival to Canada. Planners, city officials, and the media deemed Parkdale a site of impurity to the white spatial imaginary and a continued target of urban renewal.

4.5 "The wrong side of the Tracks"[4]:1980s-2010s

By the 1980's Parkdale had become solidified as a deviant neighbourhood which housed undesirable populations. At the same time, this neighbourhood was becoming a new home to Tibetan populations. South Parkdale, now known as Little Tibet, became home to the Tibetan refugees fleeing their home country. In addition, community activism emerged to support the mad population's transition out of institutionalization with the founding of the Parkdale Activity Recreation Centre (PARC). PARC is a social service agency that supports socially marginalized, precariously housed, low-income, and psychiatric survivors (Horgan, 2018; Slater, 2004). PARC

[4] 4 (Wright, 2007, para,5).

provided support to the thousands displaced after the deinstitutionalization of psychiatric asylums. Many activist efforts exposed the harsh housing conditions of psychiatric survivors living in illegal single-room housing during this period, which led to a push to provide more social services. Specifically, news surfaced around one particular site where the housing conditions were inhumane, the infamous 1495 queen west, which had undergone a drastic fire in 1998, killing ten people. The Rupert Hotel had some of the harshest housing conditions for vulnerable populations (Slater, 2004; Horgan, 2018). A year prior, a landlord had evicted a tenant named Edmond Yu (Horgan, 2018).

On February 20, 1997, Edmond Yu, a 35-year-old mad medical student, was shot six times by Toronto police on a Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) bus after having a schizophrenic episode (Gillis & McDiarmid, 2013). Yu's death reflects the policing, containment, and violence which often occurs in racialized spaces. Parkdale is a built environment, a manmade-made space constructed through colonialism deemed a site of deviance, constructed through dispossession, and a threat to the white spatial imaginary (Lipsitz, 2007). Parkdale's landscape is inherently embedded in the anti-Black violence which has built the settler-colonial state. In addition, madness is intrinsically linked to Blackness (Pickens, 2019). Furthermore, Blackness is universally a threat to white supremacy; thus, it must be policed, confined, and segregated from the general population (Walcott, 2003; Maynard, 2017; Cole, 2020). Although Yu is East Asian, his death is a result of how white supremacy seeks to rid impure populations through the pathologization of racialized spaces and madness.

Mobilized by Yu's death, PARC proposed a renovation of the site to create housing for psychiatric survivors, precariously housed and those struggling with addiction (Horgan, 2018; Living Archive Project [LAP], 2011). By 2008, PARC signed a fifty-year lease in collaboration with the City of Toronto (LAP, 2011). PARC transformed this site of trauma for many mad

people into social service housing which sought to help survivors (Horgan, 2018). These efforts highlight how community mobilization has always cultivated safe spaces for vulnerable populations in Parkdale. However, the social services for vulnerable communities cemented the pathologization of Parkdale as a site of deviance, one that must be contained, policed, and renewed (Lipsitz, 2011; McKittrick, 2013; Maynard, 2017).

In 2007, the *National Post* wrote an article about Parkdale's ongoing gentrification and asked, "So, what's it all mean for the wrong side of the tracks?" (Wright, 2007). Parkdale has notably been described as the wrong side of the tracks, ghetto, or slum-like, a rhetoric which is inherently racialized. According to Lipsitz (2011), ghettos are creations of white supremacy and are meticulously designed to enforce the inferiority of Black or racialized populations deemed a threat to the white spatial imaginary. This article, among the others written over a century, has weaponized white supremacist language to facilitate the construction of Parkdale, being deemed a dangerous and undesirable slum.

During this period, Parkdale was undergoing another attempt at gentrification, what Slater calls municipally managed gentrification, a process in which various forces work toward pushing out undesirable populations to foster urban renewal; "A process in which city planners, private developers, and middle-class business/resident associations collude to push out degenerate bodies in the name of revitalization" (Losman, 2019, p. 338). According to Losman (2019), municipally managed gentrification utilizes settler colonial patterns which seek to; "dissposes, destroy, and rebuild" (p. 338). He outlines that between 1996 to 2006, Parkdale's attempts at real estate development raised the rent by 45%, resulting in forty-five rooming home closures. According to the 2006 census, the total amount of dwellings in the high park area is
46,195, 42.1% of the population owns the property, and 57.9% rents (Statistics Canada, 2006). Losman (2019) details that 91% of the population in South Parkdale rented as opposed to owning

property. In addition, 45% of South Parkdale's population is below the poverty line. Losman (2019) argues that gentrification efforts in Parkdale have become more aggressive since this rapid increase. During this period, Parkdale housed artists, displaced racialized people, and survivors of psychiatric institutions.

Although gentrification was underway, neighbourhood efforts to resist this process persisted. The Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust (PNLT) has actively worked toward resisting gentrification in Parkdale through attempts to lease land to non-profits as a means of creating more affordable housing (PNLT, N.D). Other organizations like The West End Food Co-op provided fresh and affordable food to low-income populations in Parkdale.

4.6#Vegandale: 2017-2022

Figure 4: Parkdale Reimagined (Vegandale, 2018).

In 2017, Toronto proposed a strip of vegan restaurants in the heart of Parkdale, a historically diasporic, mad, and low-income community (5 Must-See Toronto Art Districts | Where.Ca, n.d.). Vegandale, once a festival, became an initiative and site of urban renewal

funded by The 5700 Inc. management group. Vegandale was comprised of five restaurants: Bar Vegandale (formerly known as Vegandale Bracitorium shortly after the Vegandale brewery), Doomies, Mythology Diner, Not Your Mother (NYM), and Copenhagen Vegan Café (CVC) (Gladysz, 2018). In addition, The 5700 Inc. acquired another lease of one establishment named Prohibition Pie. Vegandale would place these six restaurants next to each other on a strip at Queen and Brock Avenue's intersection. According to the online blog Modern Restaurant Management (MRM), Vegandale was a social justice initiative "with their roots in abolitionism, the company's unapologetic vegan messaging is the connection between all of the projects they have a hand in" (MRM, 2018). Likewise, an article published by the Toronto Star claimed that Vegandale was "bringing veganism to the masses" (Harris, 2018).

The mission behind Vegandale was to cultivate "a mecca for the ethically minded" (Vegandale, 2018). However, Parkdale community members claimed that Vegandale was another forceful attempt at gentrification, a form of appropriation, and a shared effort to displace marginalized communities through food (Krishnan, 2018). Specifically, the opening of Vegandale contributes to the ongoing 'colorblind' food politics that disregards the markers of race and class while contributing to food insecurity in the Parkdale area. Alkon and Agyeman (2011) argue that inequitable food systems are a form of racism, extensions of neocolonialism meant to enforce this is the 'colorblind' narrative used in food politics. Moreover, they contend, "In a colorblind or "post-racist" society, it is believed that racism no longer exists because skin color no longer has social significance" (Alkon & Agyeman, 2011, p. 223). Thus, these colorblind narratives circulate in countries like Canada and are used as justifications for the revitalization of Parkdale. First, there was a proposed strip of vegan restaurants to rebrand Parkdale as Toronto's first vegan neighbourhood (Vegandale, 2018). Second, an emerging community hub, the Museum of Contemporary Art's (MOCA) grand opening in the heart of

Parkdale (MOCA, 2018). Finally, in 2020 the Gladstone hotel was sold to condo developers, a historic community hub and one of Parkdale's last significant spaces (O'Neil, 2020). Currently, Parkdale is undergoing gentrification, fostering another mutation of gentrification—social media.

For over a century, Parkdale has housed the mad, the deviant, and the racialized; however, the stigmatization of poverty, race, sexuality, and madness directly results from antiBlackness (Hammonds, 1997; Maynard, 2017; Pickens, 2019). Although Canada has constructed and facilitates a colour-blind narrative, the forced poverty of racialized, mad, and other vulnerable populations is meticulously embedded in the structures of the settler-colonial state, built on the dispossession of Indigenous peoples and the anti-Black violence which is intrinsically linked to urban landscapes (Razack, 2002; McKittrick, 2011; Maynard, 2017). Thus, Vegandale's existence serves as an extension of settler colonialism, constantly transforming and masking itself in new ways, such as the displacement of diasporic communities in the city of Toronto. Gentrification has shifted from colonialism, the physical displacement of bodies, to neocolonialism, the economic displacement of racialized communities pushed into spaces deemed ghetto or undesirable, to the emerging form of gentrification that further perpetuates this vicious cycle: social media.

Initially, the process of spatial control has always served as an extension of colonialism, white supremacy, and capitalism which relegated the racialized, mad, low-income populations to the inner city (Harvey, 2007; Lipsitz, 2011). Gentrification is the process in which middle-class populations move into working-class neighbourhoods, displacing low-income communities. However, over a century, gentrification has mutated and taken on various forms that seek to displace marginalized people from the city and create spaces for affluent populations (Lees et al., 2008). As aforementioned, gentrification is not a new phenomenon; instead, this process has

always involved the displacement of vulnerable populations to create spaces for those in power (Neil, 1996; Perez, 2002).

According to the Neighbourhood Changes Report (2014), which detailed incomes in Toronto from the 1960s-2010s; found that in the 1960s lower-income neighbourhoods were found in the inner-city. However, within decades, lower-income communities have been pushed out of the inner city and to the outskirts to built environments that are easily contained and policed (Lipsitz, 2007; Maynard, 2017).

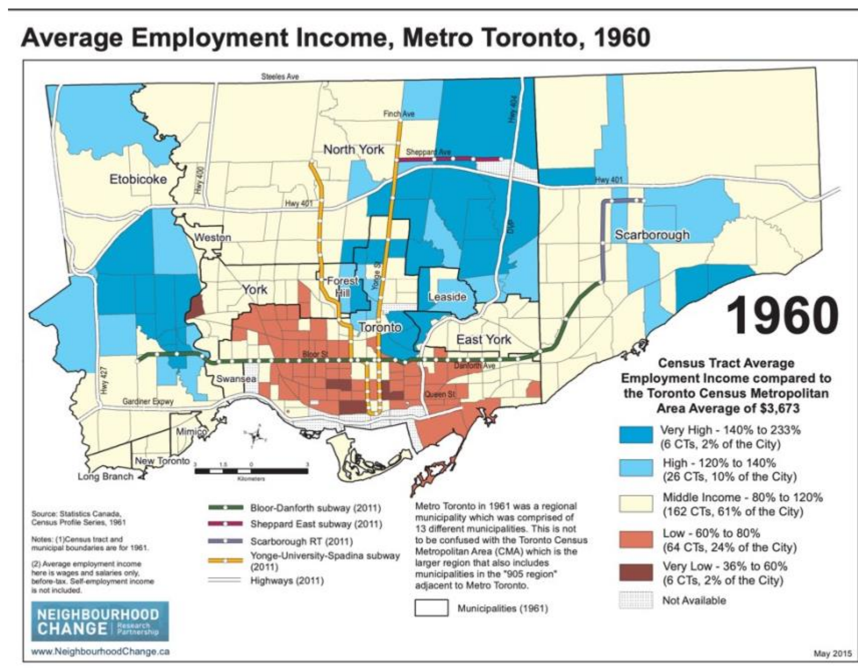

Figure 5: Average Income by Neighbourhood, 1960 (Neighbourhood Change Research Partnership, 2014)

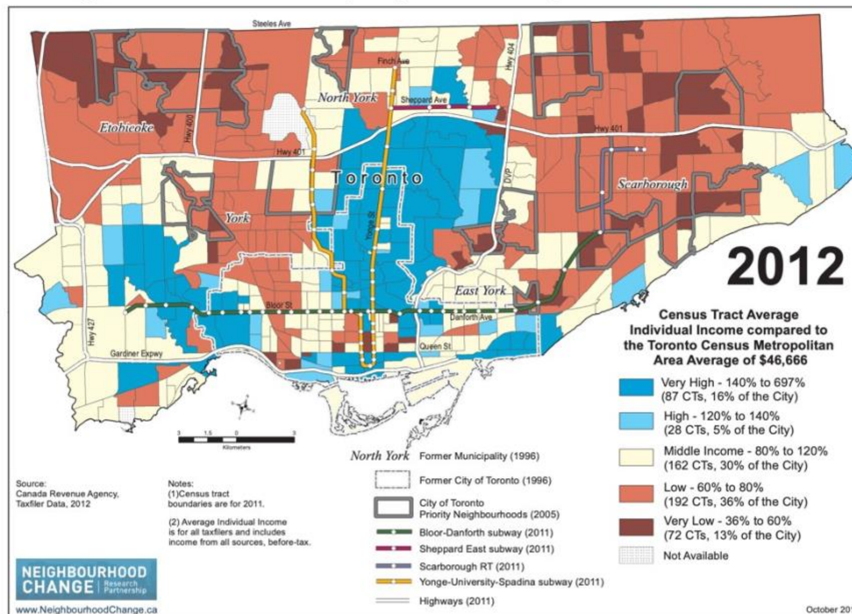

Figure 6: Average Income by Neighbourhood, 2012 (Neighbourhood Change Research Partnership, 2014)

As shown above in Figure 5 and 6, gentrification is rapidly shifting but has always been an extension of the settler-colonial mission to rid undesirable populations and expand the white spatial imaginary (Losman, 2019). Gentrification, at its core, is a process that seeks to claim spaces for desirable populations while ridding the deviant, impure, and undesirable populations of space. This process is an evolution of settler-colonial tactics that seek to dispossess, displace, and eradicate impure populations (Lipsitz, 2007; Losman, 2019). One of the many mutations of gentrification is green gentrification, which aims to improve environmental conditions in a working-class neighbourhood, thus pushing out the working class and racialized communities (Gould & Lewis, 2016). Green gentrification attracts affluent white demographics through the promise of green initiatives, which foster the displacement of vulnerable populations (Gould & Lewis, 2016). Likewise, food gentrification is an extension of this process, by which high-end health stores, restaurants, and grocery stores target low-income neighbourhoods, increasing

economic disparity in these communities and attracting affluent households, thereby pushing out marginalized communities through food access (Anguelovski, 2015). Thus, food retailers such as restaurants, grocery stores, and health stores contribute to the displacement of undesirable populations and function as a tool of displacement. Food is the first essential sign of gentrification and a historical staple of identity for racialized communities (Reese, 2019).

Although Vegandale utilizes tactics of food gentrification, it has exemplified a new mutation: how social media, particularly Instagram, can reinforce and facilitate gentrification. There is a new mutation which has been cultivated by digital spaces and the use of social media. Specifically, in the age of social media, user-generated content acts as a tool of gentrification through geo-tagging, hotspots, and targeted ads play a significant role in reinforcing the racialization of spaces (Gibbons et al., 2018; Lingel, 2021). Moreover, the rise of social media has reshaped how people communicate, socialize, and think (Castells, 2009). Likewise, Noble (2018) argues that digital spaces are as tangible as physical spaces and require spatial analysis. Noble contends that algorithms, technology, and digital spaces are shaped by systems of power and can reinforce systemic inequalities such as racism and sexism. Similarly, Benjamin (2019) argues that emerging technology can reinforce systems of white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, and colonialism which can further social inequality.

Vegandale exemplifies the endless possibilities in which social media can facilitate gentrification, as one of the most prominent features of this neighbourhood development was the ‘Instagram-ability.’ Moreover, in the digital age, spaces are shaped by consumer preferences, user-generated content, and targeted ads (Reithmeier & Kanwischer, 2020; Feldman, 2021). As previously mentioned, adolescents utilize geo-tagging for spaces they deem exciting or Instagram-worthy in order to circulate the latest hotspots and become a part of an upgraded social

class (Reithmeier & Kanwischer 2020). Thus, Instagram has played a crucial role in upgrading spaces due to its ability to shape one's affiliation to a particular group. Vegandale is targeted to the "ethically minded" vegans (Vegandale, 2018). Vegandale seeks to abolish animal cruelty, a call to action for affluent white vegans. Although veganism is a push toward dismantling the agricultural and industrial complex which harms animals, the movement has been co-opted by white, affluent people who reinforce white supremacy, neoliberalism, colorblindness, and capitalist consumption (Greenebaum, 2018). White veganism utilizes white supremacists' ideologies, appropriates various cultural foods, and repackages them for an unaffordable price to the communities they originate from (Greenebaum, 2018). Food gentrification utilizes higher-cost health stores, grocery stores, and restaurants to displace the working-class communities.

Although Vegandale's mission was to create a space for vegans, it utilized white vegan ideologies and tactics embedded in capitalist consumption, including high-priced vegan foods unaffordable to the communities living in Parkdale. According to South Parkdale's 2016 community profile, the median household income was $41,761, with 37% of the population's incomes between $20,000-49,999 and roughly 34% living in poverty (City of Toronto, 2016). South Parkdale has one of the highest poverty rates in the city of Toronto. Vegandale's mission to abolish animal cruelty came with ulterior motives to violently gentrify this neighbourhood due to its unaffordable prices. By taking up the core strip in Parkdale, down the street from the local Tibetan mom-and- pop shops, Vegandale was set up to take over the entire block. One of the many ways Vegandale had an advantage was through its extensive social media following; in 2021, the account had 21,000 followers just before its closure. Vegandale utilized social media to attract demographics outside South Parkdale to make this one of the city's newest hotspots.

In order to understand Vegandale's use of Instagram to facilitate gentrification, I expand Lipsitz's (2007) concept of the Black spatial imaginary as the modern Digital Black spatial imaginary–which exists in circulation as Black aesthetics, foods, and culture are co-opted by what I describe as the digital white spatial imaginary. One of the many facets of the digital white spatial imaginary is how it co-opts, appropriates, and displaces the digital Black spatial imaginary. Various facets have heightened the ways Vegandale has sought to gentrify functions in three main ways. First is the appropriation of both the vegan and abolitionist, social movements through food. Second, how Instagram-ability can facilitate and shape spaces. Finally, the ways in which white supremacy, capitalism, and colonialism work together emerge digitally, dictating and reinforcing spatial control.

The digital Black spatial imaginary is placeless and exists in circulation, as Black aesthetics, culture, and foods are co-opted and utilized by the digital white spatial imaginary. Lipsitz (2007) argues that the white spatial imaginary seeks to create homogenous spaces by ridding impurity, "Yet in order to have pure and homogenous spaces, impure populations had to be removed" (p. 15). Thus, my work examines how the digital white spatial imaginary rids impurity by Black suppression on social media. Vegandale has heavily appropriated Black aesthetics, foods, and movements without the presence of Black people.

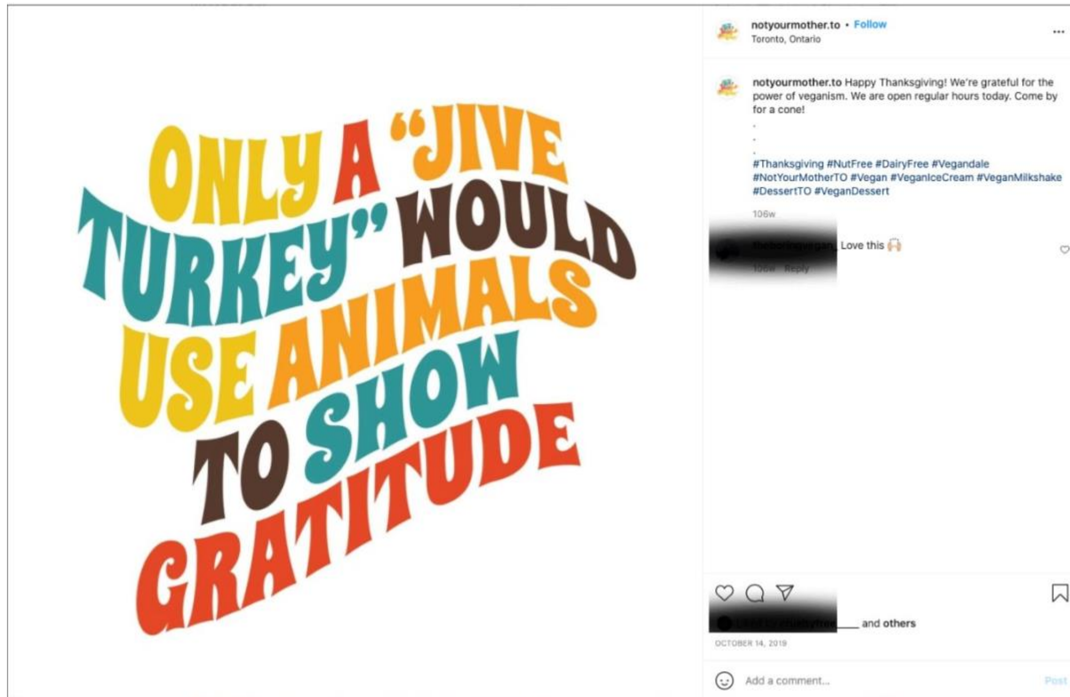

Figure 7: NYM—0% Dairy, 100% Appropriation (Not Your Mother, 2019).

As shown above in Figure 7, a screenshot from Not Your Mother [NYM] (2019), a vegan ice cream parlour in Vegandale, appropriates Black aesthetics and language to repackage it toward the ethically minded vegans (Cherid, 2021; Vegandale, 2018). The term "Jive" is a form of African American Vernacular (AAVE) utilized by Black jazz musicians to describe insincerity, un-enthusiasm, and someone that is sub-par (Barrett, n.d). However, AAVE has been heavily demonized and scrutinized through systems of white supremacy (Cherid, 2021). The utilization of AAVE by non-black people is a form of cultural appropriation, taking cultural aspects that are not your own and utilizing them without the proper understanding of the cultural significance (Cherid, 2021). One aspect of the digital white spatial imaginary is appropriating once demonized aspects of Black culture, aesthetics, and food for commercial gain. Many Black Studies scholars have documented the commodification of Blackness to gain financial benefits (Cherid, 2021; Gibson, 2010). NYM (2019) utilizes Black aesthetics and languages without an

understanding of cultural significance. Utilizing AAVE, a once demonized language for commercial gain, is a prominent form of commodifying Blackness through the Digital White Spatial imaginary. This form of promotion took place on social media while suppressing Blackness.

Moreover, white veganism has appropriated various cultural foods for financial gain (Greenebaum, 2018). One specific cultural food that has circulated across Vegandale is soul food, the use of fried chicken, and mac and cheese without the presence of Blackness.

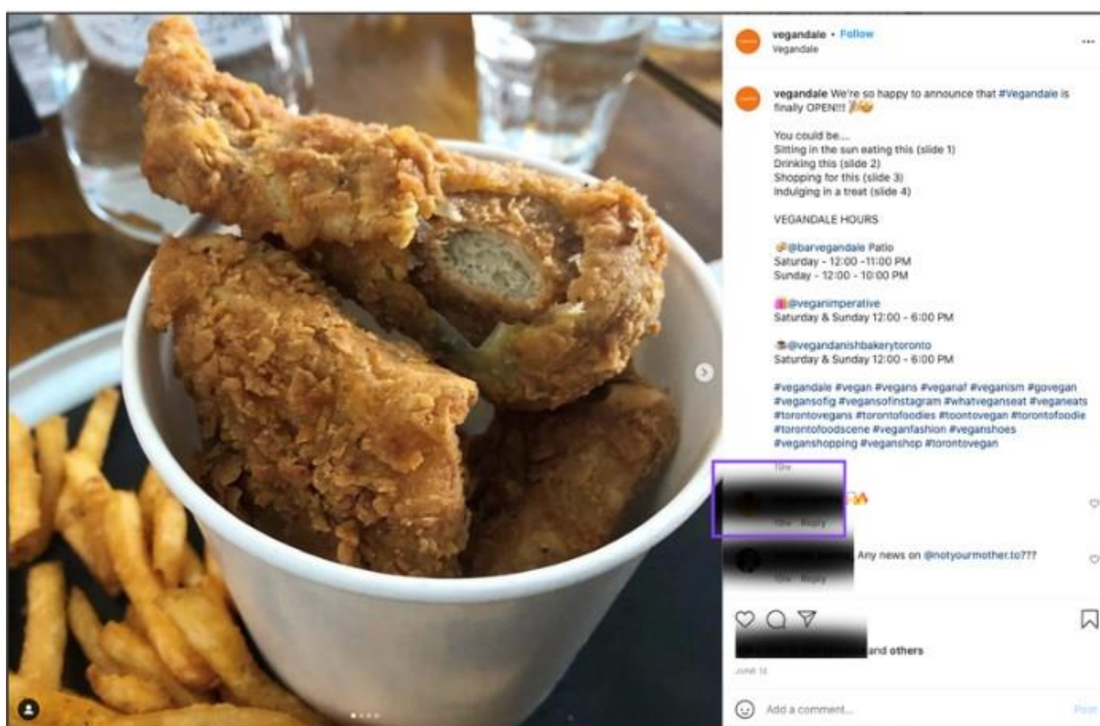

Figure 8: Fried (Tofu) Chicken (Vegandale, 2021).

As shown in Figure 8, many Vegandale restaurants have meticulously appropriated Black cultural foods, language, and aesthetics for commercial gain. Moreover, fried chicken is a demonized food which originated during slavery and has been since attributed to various stereotypes that have plagued the Black community (Witt, 1999). Doris Witt's book *Black Hunger: Soul Food and America examines the history of Soul food* (1999), a cuisine birthed out

of slavery, as enslaved African Americans utilized traditional knowledge to turn scraps into feasts. Witt (1999) argues that fried chicken was once demonized due to its association with the enslaved; “Even more important, the rise of Black Power also contributed to the celebration of foods previously stigmatized because of their association with the slave diet—fried chicken and collard greens certainly among them” (p. 6). Soul food was once a demonized cuisine due to its origins and has considerably shifted over the course of centuries. Witt (1999) argues that soul food became fetishized by the late 1960s, as white southerners began to claim their love for the cuisine. The fetishization of soul food further reinforces the commodification and appropriation of Blackness for the digital white spatial imaginary. In terms of Vegandale, the use of fried chicken as an innovative, healthy, commodifiable version strips this meal of its historical significance to the Black community. Vegandale fetishizes Black aesthetics, culture, and food to appropriate and commodify Blackness for white consumption. Vegandale has utilized Instagram to cultivate a space for like-minded vegans; this neighbourhood then became upgraded through its Instagram-ability as many users have uploaded pictures in these restaurants. As discussed above, Instagram-ability is an extension of white supremacy, which seeks to enforce spatial control and contain Blackness. User-generated content facilitates this by shaping consumer preferences, and corporations utilize this data to create targeted ads—contributing to the revitalization of spaces.

In addition, Doomies, one of the restaurants in Vegandale, sold vegan big macs, another prominent form of appropriation. McDonald’s has a long history of existing in historically Black, food insecure, impoverished neighbourhoods as an accessible place for these communities to access foods (Chatelain, 2020). However, through the media circulation of documentaries like

Super-Size Me (Spurlock, 2004), an experiment where director Morgan Spurlock ate super-sized McDonald's meals for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. After the documentary's release, the discourse surrounding McDonald's as a threat to public health as many poor people are shamed for consuming and supporting this organization (Harrison, 2021; Chatelain, 2019; Spurlock, 2004). However, Doomies cultural repackaging of the Big Mac, without understanding the racialized impacts of this meal, contributes to the appropriation of poverty. The digital white spatial imaginary commodifies Blackness while rendering the digital Black Spatial imaginary as placeless, only to exist in circulation.

Figure 9: Vegan Poppa (Vegandale, 2020).

As seen in Figure 9, Vegandale is a direct result of the digital white spatial imaginary. The Caption "I love it when you call me Big Poppa" is a lyric from a Notorious B.I.G. song *Big Poppa* (Wallace, 1994), and he was one of the most highly contentious rappers (Codrington, 2007; Tinsley, 2022). In addition to Plantain chips, Ting is a sparkling grapefruit drink, a highly

popularized Caribbean drink. The account is riddled with appropriative language and foods. At the same time, this account has furthered the demonization of racialized people who eat meat out of survival. In addition, Vegandale utilizes similar rhetoric that has furthered racialized vegans' marginalization (Greenebaum, 2018; Harper, 2011). According to Harper (2011), white veganism utilizes the exoticization of cultural foods, like Caribbean foods, African American foods, and various other cultural dishes. At the same time, white veganism comes from a place of privilege and lacks a critical understanding of the significance of each cultural dish.

Furthermore, white veganism does not work toward dismantling systemic racism that has played a crucial role in demonizing "ethnic" foods (Harper, 2011). Many of the restaurants in Vegandale's appropriate and culturally repackage Blackness for consumption. Thus, Vegandale (2018) is an extension of the digital white spatial imaginary coming to fruition on Instagram. In addition, the user-generated discourse has contributed to making Vegandale (2018) the newest hotspot for the "ethically minded" vegans.

One of the most accessible aspects of social media is Web 2.0, the ability to create content and respond to one another (DeNucci, 1999). Now, users can build their brands online instead of using the internet for one-sided discourse, which has opened doors to everyday people who can cultivate food blogs or become certified "foodies." According to Feldman (2021), Instagram has played a crucial role in shaping digital food culture, as it has become a discursive way to shape and upgrade spaces. Likewise, user-generated sites like Yelp have played a crucial role in facilitating restaurant consumerism (Zukin et al., 2015). However, Instagram has reshaped the digital landscape through the visual aesthetics of space and can play a crucial role in dictating good food (Feldman, 2021). In the past, reviewers would post their work in newspapers, blogs, and various other forms of media. Currently, Food reviewing is accessible to anyone who has

access to their phone, and these reviewers shape the market. Now, restaurants aim to serve good food and aesthetics that are Instagram-able to generate capital. Thus, Vegandale as a concept is a marketing tactic to upgrade South Parkdale as a site of change, and social justice, resulting in the displacement of vulnerable populations. Instagram-ability has played a crucial role in shaping Vegandale, as many user-generated reviews shift consumer markets (Bronsvoort & Uitermark, 2021; Reithmeier & Kanwischer, 2020). According to a 2018 article posted by the *Toronto Star*, Vegandale was set out to be the next tourist destination as one tourist stated: “Our family just can’t wait to visit Vegandale and bring our tourist dollars to Toronto to show our appreciation and excitement. Note to all Parkdale residents: Veganism isn’t meant to be an exclusive movement. Join us!” (Toronto Star, 2018). Many tourists extended the offer to residents living in Parkdale without understanding the demographics which occupy the space, the mad, the impoverished, and the precariously housed.

Vegandale’s Instagram-ability has played a significant role in constructing Parkdale as an upgraded space for the affluent. This neighbourhood was now deemed a “mecca” for vegans through aesthetics, exoticization, and repackaging of once demonized foods. Mecca is a city in Saudi Arabia, deemed the holy land for Muslims globally (Peer, 2012). However, the Muslim identity in Canada is highly contentious and pathologized in contemporary society as many face Islamophobia (Coletta, 2021). Vegandale’s claims to be the holy land for vegans reinforce the dehumanization and erasure of racialized diasporas. In addition, this claim exemplifies how the digital white spatial imaginary surface and enforces long-standing structures of oppression.

Finally, Vegandale utilized access to resources to claim space. As aforementioned, gentrification is about power, who lacks and can access resources, spaces, and capital. When affluent communities move into working-class spaces, the prices of living go up in that

neighbourhood, making it unaffordable to the communities which inhabit this space. As Vegandale emerged in South Parkdale, the closure of the West End Food Co-op (WEFC) raised concerns amongst community members (Gupta, 2018). Many claimed this initiative was a forceful attempt at gentrification, which sought to displace vulnerable populations. To combat this, Vegandale offered $100,000 to the Parkdale community over six years “following complaints about its effort to rebrand west end neighbourhood” (Ngabo, 2018, para, 1).

Vegandale aimed to combat food insecurity in Parkdale. Although this initiative intended to support vulnerable populations, Vegandales existence would play a significant role in the rapidly increasing rates of food insecurity in Parkdale. Thus, the team which funds Vegandale has access to support the community in limited ways that the government has failed to do, and residents cannot afford.

On March 11, 2020, The World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in a worldwide lockdown. Many restaurants faced financial hardship, forcing them to close their doors due to the emerging pandemic. Vegandale was affected by this lockdown, as five Vegandale locations closed within the first year of the pandemic (Iqbal, 2022). With the closure of four Vegandale restaurants, Bar Vegandale and Prohibition Pie were the remaining restaurants on the once-promising strip. The pandemic altered dining, causing financial hardships, which resulted in many small businesses permanently shutting down. Amy Calberg (2020) claims that over 140 restaurants permanently closed down two years into the pandemic, including the remaining restaurants in Vegandale (Carlberg, 2020).

In March 2022, Vegandale’s last restaurant closed its doors, which meant that the initiative ceased to exist. Over five years, what was once an attempt at gentrification failed again

in South Parkdale. Maria Iqbal (2022) claims the COVID-19 pandemic played an instrumental role in the closure of Vegandale. Hellenic Vincent De Paul, president of Vegandale, claims that Parkdale is not a lucrative neighbourhood for business ventures; "Operating (a) brick and mortar locations during COVID and post-COVID in a low-income neighbourhood such as Parkdale isn't a viable business" (Iqbal, 2022, para, 4). After five years, Vegandale had come to a close, proving that low-income neighbourhoods must exist for the wealthy neighbourhoods to thrive.

De Paul's (Iqbal, 2022) remarks are reminiscent of the planners, government officials, and various external forces which seek to rid Parkdale of an undesirable population. Vegandale was once a threat to the Parkdale population, as it gained popularity through its social media presence and discourse; potentially, if the pandemic had not occurred, these efforts could have led to a new form of urban renewal (Iqbal, 2022). Although Vegandale closed its doors, it pinpoints an emerging form of gentrification facilitated by social media, particularly Instagram. This new form of gentrification takes shape through appropriation, Instagram-ability, and access to claim space in undesirable working-class communities.

4.7 Parkdale Futures

In the slum, everything is in short supply except sensation. The experience is too much. The terrible beauty is more than one could ever hope to assimilate, order, and explain. The reformers snap their pictures of the buildings, the kitchenettes. The clotheslines, and the outhouses.

– Saidiya Hartman, Wayward Lives Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Riotous Black Girls, Troublesome Women and Queer Radicals (2020).

Over a Century, Parkdale has become home to populations othered through the white spatial imaginary. Those who are mad, sexually deviant, racialized, and impoverished/working-class have found ways to co-exist. Although South Parkdale has always been a site of urban renewal and is now a target of gentrification, the community initiatives are what have kept this

neighbourhood safe from the hands of city planners, public officials, and management groups like the 5700 Inc. Due to their ongoing efforts, South Parkdale can remain a space for those who cannot afford to live in the city. Initiatives like Parkdale People's Economy (PPE), Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre (PARC), Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust (PNLT), Parkdale Life, Parkdale Food Bank, and the community members who actively protested Vegandale since its inception.

PPE (2022) is a community-based organization with various organizations and hundreds of community members working toward building an equitable Parkdale. Each year, this organization puts out a planning report on the Parkdale community, detailing how this neighbourhood has shifted. In addition, they have organized a pivotal meeting detailing concerns surrounding Vegandale with a list of demands, including a commitment to 60% local and equitable hiring, removal of carceral technology, the removal of moral signage, and stopping the branding and expansion of Vegandale. Due to these demands, Vegandale offered the community $100,000 to support community initiatives. After Vegandale's closure, PPE has finally gotten their primary demand, which was to stop the rebranding of Parkdale.

PNLT (2022) is an extension of PPE (2022) and works toward managing land through a community ownership model. PNLT's goal is to secure land and lease it to non-profit partners to create affordable housing for those who are low-income and precariously housed in South Parkdale. They currently own three properties, including the Milky Way Garden (MWG). MWG is a gardening initiative for Tibetan newcomers who actively grow culturally appropriate foods, build community and access social services like learning English (Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust, 2022b). PNLT is actively working toward securing more property in hopes of building an equitable Parkdale.

PARC (2022), a social service shelter for those precariously housed, has worked with psychiatric survivors for decades before Vegandale. As mentioned above, they mobilized after the death of Edmond Yu by purchasing the building in which he was evicted and creating safe housing for those precariously housed (Horgan, 2018).

Finally, the Parkdale Life (2020) Instagram account gathered over 30,000 followers on Instagram before finally handing over the account to the Parkdale Food Bank (2022). This account highlights the staples in Parkdale which made this community unique. In 2020, the owner of Parkdale life finally said goodbye and passed on their account to the Parkdale Food Bank in hopes of raising more awareness of food insecurity in the neighbourhood. Currently, The Parkdale Foodbank feeds over 3000 families living under food insecurity monthly (Parkdale Food Bank, 2022). Parkdale life has utilized Instagram to counteract the effects of Vegandale, a form of resistance to this emerging form of gentrification.

Although the planners, researchers, and media have spent a century pathologizing Parkdale as a site of impurity, a site of urban renewal. These various forces fail to recognize the resilience within this neighbourhood and how the marginalized have mobilized to support one another against the threat of displacement. Parkdale is essential in understanding how a community can come together and resist the ongoing gentrification. Although no one knows what the future holds for South Parkdale, it has and always will be a space for those who are othered. Parkdale has become home to many marginalized populations who have learned to coexist and come together when needed to save this neighbourhood. With initiatives like PPE and PNLT, Parkdale's future is equitable housing. Parkdale's future is food security. Parkdale will continue to survive the violent attempts at displacement to remain a space for the low-income.

5.0 Conclusion

For clean, white suburban spaces to exist, there must be racialized slums that consume the waste of capitalism—the working class who continue to provide energy and labour to the affluent. I argue that Parkdale's pathologization must exist for the suburban dream to come to fruition. Undesirable populations must be relegated to slums, ghettos, and urban spaces for desirable populations to exist within the confines of their gated communities. Although Vegandale utilizes tactics of food gentrification, it has exemplified a new mutation: how social media, particularly Instagram, can reinforce and facilitate gentrification. There is a new mutation which has been cultivated by digital spaces and the use of social media. Specifically, in the age of social media, user-generated content acts as a tool of gentrification through geo-tagging, hotspots, and targeted ads play a significant role in reinforcing the racialization of spaces (Gibbons et al., 2018; Lingel, 2021). Moreover, the rise of social media has reshaped how people communicate, socialize, and think (Castells, 2009). My paper has argued that Instagram is an emerging mechanism of displacement as it reinforces urban and social inequality to facilitate cycles of racialized displacement and dispossession. Particularly through the circulation of user-generated food/hotspots on Instagram, contributing to the longstanding historical practices of segregation and functions as a form of spatial control. Although Vegandale was a failed initiative that attempted to push undesirable populations out of a working-class neighbourhood, it highlights a new form of gentrification, one which takes place online. One of the main reasons Vegandale was unsuccessful is because even though urban renewal seeks to rid impure populations, there must be spaces for the working class, mad, racialized, disabled, and single women to serve the economy and fuel those living in the suburbs (Vergès, 2019; Lipsitz, 2011).

Gentrification is the process by which working-class neighbourhoods are renovated to attract middle-class populations, resulting in the forced displacement of those who once inhabited the neighbourhood. However, as previously mentioned, gentrification is not a new phenomenon; rather, what most urban studies scholars fail to acknowledge is the racialized origins of gentrification. In addition, gentrification has mutated, evolved, and taken on new characteristics contextually specific to different cities and landscapes. One of the most recent mutations of gentrification is social media, particularly Instagram. Throughout this paper, I have examined the emerging powers, possibilities, and role Instagram has played in gentrification. Chapter 2 explored the ways in which digital activism and geographies provide endless mobilization and social change possibilities. I argued that social media can facilitate the displacement and dispossession of racialized people in three ways. First, Instagram-ability is an extension of white supremacy and spatial control. Second, historical practices of anti-blackness emerging digitally, like digital and discursive redlining. Finally, the suppression of Blackness on social media reinforces the digital Black spatial imaginary where Black culture is commodifiable but Black people are contained or suppressed by carceral presences. All of this comes back to how food and food sharing is an extension of the digital white spatial imaginary, which seeks to displace Black people. In Chapter 3, I examined the longstanding pathologization of South Parkdale, and how this neighbourhood has always been under threat of urban renewal.

To conclude, this is a work of solidarity, allyship, and co-constructing pathways to addressing the longstanding displacement of racialized communities. I am committed to utilizing my interdisciplinary background to work within the field of Digital technology, Surveillance, and Urban and Food Justice studies to bring forth the nuanced discussions needed to dismantle

systemic and urban inequality that emerges digitally. My objective is to cultivate the tools needed to mobilize marginalized communities and create better digital futures.

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