

# Last Ride through Regent

Written by: Dwayne Sybbliss

Supervised by: Carl James

A Major Project Report  
Submitted to the Faculty of Environmental Studies  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master in Environmental Studies  
York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Submitted: Monday July 31, 2017

**Table of Contents**

Abstract	3
Foreword	4
Acknowledgment	6
Introduction	7
Critical Race Theory	10
Regent Park	13
Purpose of Study	22
Gentrification	24
Methodology	27
Racism is endemic	32
Race as social construction	39
Black voices	44
Film	48
Conclusion	51
References	55

## **Abstract**

There is a negative impact that gentrification has on the spaces of Black men in Regent Park, one of Toronto's largest and oldest housing communities. Through visual documentary, narratives of Black men are explored to examine their experiences of gentrification in their community, in hopes of encouraging change in governmental policies and procedures. Gentrification results in the displacement of community members, which deteriorates the bonds created to support the social issues observed in the community including poverty, violence, and loss of culture. One of the most difficult things to witness as a result of gentrification and displacement of families is the loss of a community. This study examines the damage caused by gentrification in the Regent Park community through the lens of Critical Race Theory, which uncovers the systemic issues of Regent Park; particularly in reference to its impact on young Black men.

## **Foreword**

Having lived through the first two stages of the gentrification process in Regent Park, my thoughts, feelings and witnessed events will be evident throughout this paper. I want to specify that my biases will be present, because as a young Black youth, I observed my community's social structures fall apart. As per my Plan of Study (POS), I believe my research interests will contribute to how we re-organize neighbourhood improvement areas (stigmatized neighbourhoods undergoing redevelopment), in order to respect the needs, unique cultures and people in such communities. I firmly believe that the impact of gentrification needs to be documented and discussed through academic research and through art as a means of subversion; in a manner that provides voices to the many that have been silenced. Some of the issues addressed in my study include:

1. Critically examining the impact gentrification has on Black bodies when community supports are dissolved.
2. Researching the relationship between public housing and gentrification by listening to and incorporating the experiences and voices of Regent Park racialized youth.
3. Examining and critically analysing the effect racism and racialization have in the gentrification process on Black bodies through the lens of Critical Race Theory.
4. Evaluating the social, emotional and cultural impacts on residents who are forced out of their neighbourhoods, and how they can use their agency to deal with change.

The courses and field experience helped me develop an understanding of the current gentrification processes through political, economic and social dichotomies happening in Regent Park. The documentary was a vehicle to create a platform for my brothers to have their insights heard.

## Acknowledgment

For G aka Jermaine Auld

I wanted to read one last thing to you. It's actually something a good friend had wrote describing my world. It says:  
The caterpillar is a prisoner to the streets that conceived it  
Its only job is to eat or consume everything around it, in order to protect itself from this mad city  
While consuming its environment the caterpillar begins to notice ways to survive  
One thing it noticed is how much the world shuns him, but praises the butterfly  
The butterfly represents the talent, the thoughtfulness, and the beauty within the caterpillar  
But having a harsh outlook on life the caterpillar sees the butterfly as weak and figures out a way to pimp it to his own benefits  
Already surrounded by this mad city the caterpillar goes to work on the cocoon which institutionalizes him  
He can no longer see past his own thoughts  
He's trapped  
When trapped inside these walls certain ideas take roots, such as going home, and bringing back new concepts to this mad city  
The result?  
Wings begin to emerge, breaking the cycle of feeling stagnant  
Finally free, the butterfly sheds light on situations that the caterpillar never considered, ending the internal struggle  
Although the butterfly and caterpillar are completely different, they are one and the same. "<sup>1</sup>

By Kendrick Lamar

---

<sup>1</sup> Lamar, Kendrick (2015). To Pimp a Butterfly. Motal Man.

Interscope Recoads. Song. This piece represents the contradiction between the directions of choices black boys must make who live in marginalized communities.

## **Introduction**

As a child in school, the subject of math was relatable for me; a kilo, a half gram, a quarter of an ounce, a dime, quarter and a pound were mathematical terms that not only introduced me to the metric system but provided me with references about the weight, cost and profit associated with trafficking particular illegal drugs. This lived reality and learned knowledge influenced how I behaved, interacted and disseminated my knowledge in the classroom. I have often asked myself why I, as a Black male growing up in social housing, did not participate in many of the illicit activities my childhood peers were involved in. Reflecting on my childhood and adult years, I understand there are many mitigating factors that have gifted me the opportunity to carve alternative paths to where I am at the present time writing this paper, which fulfills my obligations for the Masters in Environmental Studies program at York University. I want to stress; I have 'carved' this path, as my choices, similar to many of my friends, were sparse and limited in opportunities. I had to create, chase and fight for opportunities, often without support or guidance.

At a recent funeral, a childhood friend stated, "...I can't believe I sold my self short thinking all I could is sell drugs". My most painful experiences of loss,

the reason I am here in post-secondary education, and my inspiration to film a documentary about Regent Park, is Jermaine Auld. Jermaine was murdered in his home on Friday February 10, 2017, and he was not only my best friend but also my family. Jermaine was my barrier and gatekeeper to the life on the streets. He knew, before I knew, that the life we lived and the life we were exposed to growing up in Regent Park, was going to heavily influence us as boys, teens and men. Similar to most young Black men growing up in social housing communities, the choices in terms of career paths are very narrow with limited social and cultural capital or opportunities for upward social mobility, making involvement in criminal activities more feasible and attractive. But for some of us, for me; I was lucky to have Jermaine in my corner for he deterred me from becoming involved with anti-social activities. Instead, he encouraged me to pursue higher education, and he did not allow me to become the stereotype social housing creates for Black men. Throughout the paper, I will discuss how gentrification has impacted choices and opportunities for young Black men, especially in communities with social housing.

I grew up in Regent Park, on the South Side, which is located ten minutes from Toronto's downtown core. Regent Park is the largest and oldest social housing project in Canada and is currently going through the gentrification process. The Regent Park gentrification project spans over fifteen years that began in 2005. In 2005, the city developer and supporting politicians were



applauded for their plans to give this community a face-lift, although in this transformation much has been lost. The gentrified areas of Regent Park appear to be in line with a neo-colonial agenda that hinders the emotional, social and political progress of the people in this community. Gentrification is a conclusion of white elitism and the persistent interest in expanding the belief that the dominant group is superior to another group, and there is also historic capitalistic exploitation at the expense of certain bodies. For example, the history of slavery entailed the production of bodies for economic gain. Black bodies were and still are an environmental resource for landowners who through colonization occupied land with racist ideologies, (thank you William Lynch), violence, and investment opportunities by selling Black people as labourers to increase the value of land for these owners. Land occupied by Black bodies has also been appropriated for profit.

As a professional photographer, I have captured the community of Regent Park from multiple perspectives throughout the gentrification process and how gentrification has impacted single parenthood as well as the stigmas and labels given to Black members of the community. My aim, when documenting, is to provide a narrative for the voiceless and the silenced; it is to provide a social forum to articulate, discuss and encourage critical conversations about disengaged Black bodies and what they have lost due to gentrification. Additionally, I want to highlight how the erosion of the sub-

culture, in the midst of condominium developments as a result of gentrification, has caused Black bodies to lose ownership of programs, comfort, interpersonal connections, and has increased feelings of disassociation and disfranchisement from their community.

I feel people invest, engage and learn in different ways, and my goal was to produce a documentary and write a paper of my observations based on visual and theoretical underpinnings. The documentary provides a contextual visual piece of a different lived experience of residents and community workers in Regent Park, allowing the viewer to hear their narratives. The paper provides a foundation of critical race and neo-liberal theories that grounds the narratives and stories being told.

### **Critical Race Theory**

Oppressive factors, such as racism and socio-economic status, act as a foundation for the infestation of inequality, which comes alive when communities undergo gentrification. I ask that during such changing periods for a marginalized community, has education improved? Do residents have the right to return to the community? And is the community safer? Using Critical

Race Theory (CRT), I will attempt to unpack the often-silenced narratives of the Black bodies affected by the gentrification of their Regent Park community, and highlight the outcomes for a marginalized community undergoing gentrification processes. Interest convergence, racism being endemic, and race as a social construct are the three tenants I will focus on throughout my discussion of gentrification in Regent park and when disseminating the narratives of my interviewees. Personally, the one tenant that I feel is most connected to the gentrification process is interest convergence. According to Delgado et al. (2012), this form of racism is deeply embedded into the fabric of policies, processes and laws so foundationally, that without critically challenging the reasons why people in positions of power are making decisions, these inequitable power structures become normalized. This can be jarring, especially for citizens who believe they are being heard but in reality are being silenced. Setting up policies or even appeasing citizens by providing them with gifts, such as a community centre, appears to often be enough for institutions in positions of power such as the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) to silence the citizens and dissolve their accountability. Interest convergence occurs when changes are assumed to strive towards equity but such changes do not disrupt the powerful positions of the elite. In other words, we will give them a little to quiet them and/or show that we care about their needs but not enough to really dismantle the power structures maintaining social inequities.

Reading this paper and watching the documentary through a lens of race is essential to fully understand that the foundation of gentrification is based on racialization and specifically anti-Black racism. For example, City TV has been providing coverage about an elementary school in a privileged area of Toronto experiencing revitalization and in an unprecedented move, the Toronto District School Board partnered with the construction company to ensure the mainly white student population in this school did not experience any displacement from their school and community during this revitalization process.<sup>2</sup> Watching this coverage night after night made me understand how deep anti-Black racism is rooted. No one, including the media, did any similar ongoing news coverage or accommodations with the same vigor for students losing their homes, their spaces and their communities in Regent Park over the past 10 years.

Finally, understanding how race is socially constructed parallels what stories we choose to explore, hear, write about, and transmit to others. Understanding what has and continues to transpire in Regent Park through gentrification must be understood through the CRT lens. The remainder of the Major Research Paper will be organized under the tenets of CRT to highlight how

---

<sup>2</sup> Amin, F. <http://www.citynews.ca/2017/03/24/john-fisher-not-school-affected-development/>. March 24, 2017

race and racialization are foundationally embedded in the gentrification processes in Regent Park. Not marrying CRT within this discussion about the impact and effects of gentrification would neglect the heart of what has happened to the citizens of Regent Park — that anti-Black racism has precipitated and continually allowed the displacement of citizens and loss of community.

### **Regent Park**

Regent Park is the largest and oldest social housing project in Canada. Once deemed “Toronto’s slum,” construction began in the early 1950’s to provide housing for European immigrants to settle in the community and establish a life. During the 1990’s, there was dramatic shift in Canada’s social housing policy, moving accountability to the provinces and territories first, then in 1995-1996 this responsibility was transferred to the municipal governments (Sutter, 2016). Thanks to the Harris government in Ontario in 1995, according to Snapcott (2001) the “private development sector has got almost everything that it has asked for: higher rents, reduced regulation, lower municipal taxes, direct

grants and subsidies (p. 11). The idea was for private developers to build affordable housing in myriad communities, but in turn these changes began the era of the condo expansion (boom) in Toronto. Without rent regulations, landlords could increase the cost of rent with limited accountability. As a result, in many communities, especially those deemed as “low-income” or racialized, eviction applications increased as individuals could no longer afford the high rental costs: “.... [applications in] Toronto rose by 9% in 1998 (the year that tenant protection laws were gutted), over the previous years. Evictions jumped by 12% in 1999 and grew by 5% in 2000” (p. 9). The steady rise in evictions and consequent homelessness suggests that during this time period, waiting times for public housing certainly increased, leaving vulnerable, marginalized and racialized people void of affordable housing:

After six years of Harris housing policy, Ontario is facing an affordable housing deficit of at least 74,000 units, according to estimates by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. It will cost at least \$2.9 billion to create those units, money that is no longer available thanks to the decision by the Harris government to cancel all spending on new social housing just days after it was elected in 1995 (p.2).

In 1997, at the height of this housing crisis, there was discussion that Regent Park needed to be revitalized, and a request of proposal was sent out

by the Ontario Housing Corporation (OHC), to find a private sector partner to revitalize Regent Park. While a developer was selected, the project did not move forward as this arrangement fell apart in the negotiations stage.

Responsibility for housing was downloaded from the province to municipalities in 2002 and Regent Park became the responsibility of the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC).

In 2005, city developers and supporting politicians were applauded for their plans to give the Regent Park community a face-lift, and to integrate a mixed-income population into the community, as many developers welcomed a mixed-neighborhood. The Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC), is no stranger to the business of gentrifying public housing communities, and has a long history of such changed communities, including Alexandra Park, Rivertown (formally known as Don Mount Court) and recently, the Lawrence Heights community.<sup>3</sup>

Gentrification commonly takes places in urban areas and low-income communities like Regent Park. Regent Park covers over 70 acres of land, and through the process of gentrification, this community will be absolutely transformed; though the seemingly positive process leaves many community members struggling with a number of issues. Transpiring over 6 phases and

---

<sup>3</sup> n.p; n.d. <https://www.torontohousing.ca/revitalization>. 12<sup>th</sup> April, 2017.

spanning over 15 years, community residents will bear witness to the rapid demolition of historic or much-loved buildings and the re-construction of community spaces that do not resemble spaces they knew growing up. Such destruction and reconstruction are socially and emotionally disruptive to an already vulnerable community, especially since such damage does not provide spatial compensation or mend the slow but steady disappearance of Regent Park's culture, tied to its physical landmarks and space. After all is said and done, 5,400 new condos will be built in the 70 acres of Regent Park, but only a quarter of those new homes will be subsidized for low-income residents – this is a mere 1350 homes for low-income community members. Before this gentrification process began, there were 7,500 tenants living in 2,083 rent geared-to-income units. This leaves a deficit of 733 homes, which means that likely more than one thousand residents of Regent Park will be displaced from Regent Park once the gentrification process is complete.<sup>4</sup>

The Regent Park community has a rich and diverse set of cultures spanning the 70 acres of space that creates the region. As it stands, there are no high schools in the community, resulting in students from the ages of 13 to 19 travelling outside their community to attend high school, which is not an ideal situation for adolescent residents of the community. For me personally, I attend Eastern Commerce High

---

<sup>4</sup> n.p; n.d. <https://www.torontohousing.ca/capital-initiatives/revitalization/Regent-Park/Pages/default.aspx>. 12<sup>th</sup>, April, 2017



School which is located forty minutes from my home, by subway and streetcar. Jarvis Collegiate was fifteen minutes walking distance but due to the streamlining in the Toronto District School Board I was not left with many options, as Jarvis is considered an academic school and I did not meet the academic requirements. Traveling to and from high school was taxing on my ability study and limited my employment opportunities that existed in my community. The cost of taking the TTC added onto the expenses that my mother could not afford, leaving me with the option of walking or sneaking into the subway as I did not have money to pay the fare. However, younger students have a slightly better outlook, as there are two elementary schools located in the community, which are Nelson Mandela Park School and Lord Dufferin Junior and Senior Public School. There are also two elementary schools; Sprucecourt Public School (north of Gerrard Street), and St. Basil's Catholic Elementary School (on the south side of Queen Street), located just outside of the community.

Regent Park also has strong community networks, with community agencies and programs in health, parental support, educational and afterschool resources, as well as youth- and seniors- focused programming from agencies such as Dixon Hall, Regent Park Focus, Art Heart, Parents for Better Beginnings, Pathways to Education, the Salvation Army, and Regent Park Community Centre. All of these programs are inclusive to the Regent Park community members, and are tailored to benefit the specific multicultural and low-income make-up of the community.

As I reflect on my experiences growing up in Regent Park, I am reminded from time to time of the instilled belief that “making it out” of Regent Park would somehow make my chances of success in life much greater. I would hear the echoes of this sentiment in educational institutions, work environments, and personal conversations throughout my youth. I believed in and held onto the notion that school and work would enhance my upward social mobility. I recall seeing my mother financially struggle, working in low-end and menial forms of employment that maintained my family in the low-income bracket. Reflecting on these experiences, I know that some of the choices I made in my young adulthood resulted in my realization that the chances of getting myself into a higher economic bracket would be difficult, since I lived in a rapidly-environmentally changing Regent Park. I felt the educational system squeezing me out with consistent reminders of my poor grades, the lack of my mother’s involvement in my education career, and the statistically poor outcome for many Black boys and my community becoming a remnant of what I remembered it to be. As a result of these experiences, I participated in some negative activities and at times, associated with peers that were not involved in the community in a pro-social way. I did these things to feel a sense of belonging as the structures around me were collapsing. I am not proud of some of my choices, although positive or negative, the primary goal in my life was always to “make it out” of Regent Park so that I could “move up” in the

---

world. I find the irony in that statement so indicative of the conflicts I experienced as a Black male growing up in social housing.

My community moulded me but, at the same time, my desire to leave my community was the goal many shared, and leaving the community was seen as a “success” of a young person or family. However, the social and political environment we are living in reminds us of what we do not have, what we do not deserve and what we cannot obtain. These institutions do not educate us about the oppressive systems we are tangled in, and how these systemic and institutional factors participate in producing barriers to social opportunities for many members of the population. Such barriers are not directly stated, but are subtly constructed by various institutions; chiefly schools whose educators are in positions of power and privilege and who consistently and problematically honour a white supremacist curriculum and re-produce and maintain systemic racial oppressions that continue to exist in society. Our insignificance as people, mirroring what was constructed at school-level, was apparent when we walked into Regent Park. Damaged and broken elevators greeted us, the stench of garbage that overflowed from the garbage chutes that had not been maintained overpowered us, and the lack of upkeep of the grounds with garbage and gang-related graffiti strewn about assailed us. The “feins,” known as people dealing with substance abuse issues and the drug dealers who

consistently and constantly made CP24 News criminalize Regent Park helped to solidify its reputation as a dangerous space in the city.

Consequently, when I moved out of Regent Park and bought a home in the suburbs away from the city, and placed my son in a French Immersion program, I thought I had “made it out”; I thought I had succeeded in my upward social mobility. However, I realized quickly that racism continued to follow me and was my shadow in the light and in the dark. I was not only defined by the community I had grown up in, but also by my skin colour. I was a Black male living in the suburbs raising a child that was a Black male, and through raising him, I began to see how race is intricately built into the systems we are all familiar with such as schools, and that this racist ideology is not escapable. For instance, I experienced racism when my son's grade four teacher, during a parent-teacher interview and in the presence of his mother and I, called him a ‘class clown’. This is a perfect example of racist ideology playing out in our education system. Language is a culture capital for many families who speak more than one language. Labeling students, especially students of color, could have detrimental effect to a student's social class and identity. When I heard the teacher say this, I remember thinking that I thought I had “made it out” of my community for good, and that I would not have to hear such words applied to a member of my family. Jay-Z eloquently phrases this sentiment with lyrics: “You can pay

for school but you can't buy class.”<sup>5</sup> At that moment, I realized that my experiences growing up in Regent Park had shaped me and prepared me to deal with horrible and racially-motivated experiences even outside of that community, such as the one with my son. More importantly, this made me realize that my community was and is a huge part of who I was and am. It has shaped how I navigate society as a Black male, and how my “success” was not because I had left my community, but was a result of growing up in my community and my obligation to be loyal to it. I did not want to “run away” from this situation, but in order to dissect my experiences in my suburban region, it was vital to go back to where I came from to unpack how the community influenced me and continues to influence me, and how the impact of dismantling the community through gentrification impacts me and other young Black males.

---

<sup>5</sup> Carter, S. (2008). Swagga like us. Def Jam Records. (2008). This metaphor expresses black bodies may advance in their educational mobility in society but remain in a lower class in society due to the colour of your skin.

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this project comprised of a film and paper is to learn how the re-development of the Regent Park community came about, and how this re-structuring affects racialized bodies whose identities are deeply rooted in their community; particularly Black males. I want to examine the issues in two ways: 1) through a major research paper (for my academic enthusiast), and 2) through a visual narrative of the racialized bodies, to allow their voices to be heard and witnessed. I want to explore how the newly gentrified area of Regent Park affects agency, crime, and displacement among Black males. These bodies have been uprooted for a profitable gain, as geographically Regent Park is located in a prime space: 10 minutes from Downtown Toronto and adjacent to the Eaton Centre which is a tourist attraction, and located next to two major driving arteries; the Don Valley Parkway and the Gardiner Expressway. The new urban setting within the city is changing and the developer; TCHC, and city councillors believe that Regent Park needs to keep up with these changing times. I wanted to understand and explore how disinvestment in the beauty of the Regent Park community created an opportunity for investors to gentrify Regent Park, and how city politicians

---

stigmatize Regent Park in terms of crime, income, and education to justify the deconstruction of the community.

The Regent Park stigma of being high-crime and lower-income encourages policy makers, TCHC, and private developers to gentrify the Regent Park community. This was, and is, a neighbourhood that does not need to be changed or “updated” as it is teeming with its own sense of culture and community. James (2012) speaks about this disinvestment in communities, especially in their existing cultures and traditions, and the structures that maintain the injustices to these communities rather than critically examining the station of these communities in a classist, racist, city: “...rather than seeing the “trouble” within the community and the “at risk” situation of the youth as self-generated (blame-the-victim-ethos), we need to place emphasis on the structures that create and perpetuate the conditions that make them so” (p. 18). Herein lies the agency that residents use to resist such stigma; by utilizing personal and community supports against oppressive structures of public housing and the gentrification process, community members can establish their identities as positive within the urban landscape. I firmly believe that the impact of gentrification needs to be documented and discussed through academic research and through art in a manner that provides voices to the many that have been silenced.

## **Gentrification**

I first heard of the term gentrification from a movie titled “Boyz N the Hood” (1991), which is about life in South Central Los Angeles. It was written and directed by John Singleton. Lawrence Fishburne’s character, Furious Styles, is a mortgage broker who explains gentrification in low income neighborhoods as “what happens when the property value of a certain area is brought down. They can buy the land at a lower price and move all the people out, raise the property values then sell it at a profit” (Singleton 1991). This pivotal quote from the film ‘Boyz N the Hood,’ does not define who buys the land and who gets displaced.

The root of the word ‘gentrification’ historically originated from ‘gentry’ which, according to Redfern (2003), was used to describe rural land owning classes (p. 2361; Vandergrift, 2006). In the spirit of its roots, gentrification is marinated in a proverbial sauce prepared with a mix of ingredients: class relations, power imbalances, racism, and loss of ownership. Gentrification can be a very complex process that intertwines social, political and cultural power differentials, highlighting inequalities and racism. Ruth Glass coined the word ‘gentrification’ in 1964; a word that captures the complexities of oppressive factors that maintain and continue to marginalize low-income and poor,



---

racialized people and families. According to Tom Slater (2011), Ruth Glass's word '...captures the class inequalities and injustices created by capitalist urban land markets and policies" (p. 571). The simple explanation of gentrification as beautifying a community is not the true priority of gentrification, as such 'beautifications' result in the displacement of citizens, especially the most at risk and marginalized. The results of gentrification continue to feed power imbalances in major institutions in the city and do not increase the health, safety, and educational needs of marginalized and usually racialized citizens. In fact, the process of gentrification raises housing costs, and increases only displacement of families. Slater (2011) states that:

The rising house expense burden for low-income and working-class households, and the personal catastrophes of displacement, eviction, and homelessness, are symptoms of a set of institutional arrangements (private property rights and a free market) that favour the creation of urban environments to serve the needs of capital accumulation at the expense of the social needs of home, community, family (p. 571-572).

From the literature on gentrification, we see that the causes and effects of gentrification are multiple and multi-layered, and the effects of gentrification include positive outcomes of gentrification as well. Some arguments against gentrification state that land-rent valorization is a key driver of displacement (Vandergrift 2006). They argue that conditions of gentrification include dis-

---

investment and devaluation of land (Vandergrift, 2006; Kipfer & Petrunia, 2009), which can result in conditions that facilitate the inflation of property values when such land is bought under the guise of 'redevelopment' and 'revitalization,' thus driving residents out of their own communities (Freeman, 2006; Vandergrift, 2006; Kipfer & Petrunia 2009). According to James (2012) displacement is defined as: "when the cost of living increases; or when neighborhood schools close and children must walk a considerable distance to school or commute; or when governments charge fees for social services and recreational programs; or when developers move in to gentrify the area and in the process displace residents who are unable to afford the new high cost of living in the neighborhood" (p. 18). There are many examples to illustrate that the negative impact of gentrification in regards to class and race, in that gentrification usually displaces citizens from lower-income and poverty economic brackets, and that gentrification disproportionately displaces Black citizens and vulnerable populations (Kipfer & Petrunia, 2009).

---

## **Methodology**

My choice to complete a qualitative research approach is to better understand how gentrification affects Black bodies when their community will be completely changed. As one of the few Black men from Regent Park to obtain my Masters in Environmental Studies, I also hold the distinction of being an artist in the community and therefore, I wanted to use a visual display as a way to document my journey into the impact that gentrification has had on my home. I decided to interview men who self-identify as Black and who reside in the Regent Park community. These individuals provided their voices and narratives for this study of their experiences with gentrification within Regent Park. This documentary allows them to share their voices and stories of their community from their personal lens. In total I interviewed 17 people:

- Black men self-identified: 11
- Black women self-identified: 3
- Filipino men self-identified: 1
- White men self-identified: 2

The people interviewed have at least one a physical, social or emotional connection to the Regent Park community, though many listed all three as their connection to the community. There are people who work for community

agencies, Daniels Spectrum the developer, and people who have lived in Regent Park and continue to live there as change is currently happening. A written oral consent was read to each participant, detailing why the interview was being conducted, how the interview was being done (which was by videotaping), and whom was involved in the filming process. Tristan Prime was the videographer for part of the project. Under my direction and treatment of the documentary, Tristan's function was to film the documentary. Jason Thompson, who is the editor of the documentary, under my direction and treatment edited the film as per my POS and major research proposal. Under the request of the people who were interviewed, their transcripts were kept in a safe and secure space, but upon the completion of my major research and interviews, I agreed to return the transcripts to each of the people who were interviewed.

With regards to the questions that I asked the participants, these questions varied depending on the social location of the interviewee within the community of Regent Park. However, there were five main questions that usually began the conversation:

- a. How do Black males describe and see their identity within the gentrification process?
- b. How has gentrification impacted their relationships with their neighbours, with community members, and what are their thoughts on their community ownership?

c. In what ways has gentrification impacted their relationship with the police and governmental officials?

d. As their community continues to gentrify, what are their opinions, thoughts and views about the impact their voice has had in this process, and what forums have they been provided with to voice and influence the process?

e. How has gentrification changed their use of public space, and how has the availability of religious and community facilities changed with gentrification?

All participants, with the exception of one person, expressed frustration, sadness, and lamented a lack of communication regarding the process of relocation of residents and their right to return to Regent Park. Crime and safety was mentioned in the interviews by the Black men that were interviewed. With regards to crime in the community, some participants mentioned, "murders are still taking place in the community. They thought building new buildings would stop the problem. This is systemic not aesthetics." One participant highlighted how systemic violence is asymmetrical and it does not benefit people of colour "a lot of shootings, especially drive by shootings, have happened in this community, which unfortunately affects young Black men. You do not hear about it in the news as you did before in the old Regent Park and the reason for that is it could affect how they are trying to change the community from bad to good. Now you say why not mention it as a community? The problem with that is you get the opposite reaction from the community at large and the police."

The Regent Park community gets over-policed and the target becomes young Black men walking in their community. With regards to safety in the community, the idea of gentrification was to build streets that run through the community, as the community faced inward and was cut off from the rest of Toronto.<sup>6</sup> When this idea was mentioned, one participant said “safety for whom? Listen, I remember I could look out my backyard and see the playground. Right now I have to cross three different streets to access any of these amenities. And if you wanted to get a man you would have to drive into Regent and get out your car....you couldn't drive through Regent back then like you can now. That's why you see these drive by shootings.”

Some of participants did express that the buildings needed to be replaced and that change to the community needed to happen. For example, the improved lighting around the buildings, the expanded green space and the centralization of community programs/agencies into one space or in proximity to each other, are all changes of gentrification. They expressed the sentiment that social mixing has created, in some of the participants' eyes, “an us versus them mentally.....you can see who is an old Regent Parker and who is not.”

Daniels Spectrum, which is located on Dundas Street in-between Parliament Street and River Street, houses many different cultural agencies in

---

<sup>6</sup> Paikin, S (2014). The Agenda: Regent Park Rebuild (transcript). 2017 The Ontario Educational Communications Authority (TVO) <http://tvo.org/transcript/2232366/video/programs/the-agenda-with-steve-paikin/regent-park-rebuild>.

one building. The building has won many awards such as Civic Trust Award, Environmental Design Research Association Great Places Award (US, 2015), and Architectural Record's Good Design is Good Business Award (US, 2014)<sup>7</sup>. Participants expressed a positive outlook on the accessibility of this facility by residents of the community, and the many programs youth are engaged with that are offered within the building such as Art Heart, Pathways to Education, Regent Park Film festival, and Regent Park School of Music. Some of the interviews were fortunate enough to be taped at Daniel's Spectrum in various parts of the building, behind a beautiful backdrop of photographs and artwork, which reveals the vibrancy and significance of this building to the community. I was not able to get the participants to photograph their community as stated in my major research proposal. My limitation around this was the filming of the piece was too time-consuming, and with scheduling conflicts, it was difficult to get participants to meet again after their initial interview was completed.

I wanted to use this opportunity, of creating a research paper and recorded interview, to give the voice of Black men from Regent Park a platform. Utilizing my expertise in photography and film, I hoped to leverage this

---

<sup>7</sup> n.a October 27, 2016. <http://dsai.ca/news/daniels-spectrum-wins-award-of-excellence-from-urban-land-institute/>

advantage to create a piece that is central to the conversation about Black bodies being erased in their community.

### **Racism Is Endemic**

The first tenet of Critical Race Theory, as discussed by Delgado et. al., (2012), is that racism and discriminatory practices are common experiences for most people of colour; racism is embedded in the laws and policies of organizations, institutions and laws and therefore it is difficult to address, difficult to communicate about, and difficult to make changes that equally include the voices of non-white people. The narratives of my interviewees and the participants in the documentary are indicative of the notion that the processes of gentrification are being guided by racist ideologies as opposed to an ideology of inclusive spaces. These racist ideologies may not seem to intersect with gentrification processes, but since these ideologies are deeply embedded in numerous city institutions, it is crucial to understand that these biases are therefore endemic to any process of the city, including gentrification. In fact, numerous studies indicate that race, especially anti-Black racism, is pervasive in the criminal justice system and in the education system (James, 2012; Dei, 1997; Dei et. al., 1996). It is crucial, then, to consider how the government revitalization



projects enable the continuance of biases and prejudices that affect racialized bodies.

According to the Toronto Community House Corporation (TCHC), the revitalization project in Regent Park was to happen in six phase as shown here:



Figure 1.1 Image of Regent Park revitalization

In each phase, residents would be moved out of their unit and displaced to another community. Residents were given three options to choose which area of the city they would be moved to in Toronto. The relocation plans to the Regent Park residents are seen below:

<sup>8</sup> n.p; n.d. <https://www.torontohousing.ca/capital-initiatives/revitalization/Regent-Park/Pages/default.aspx>.  
12<sup>th</sup> April, 2017

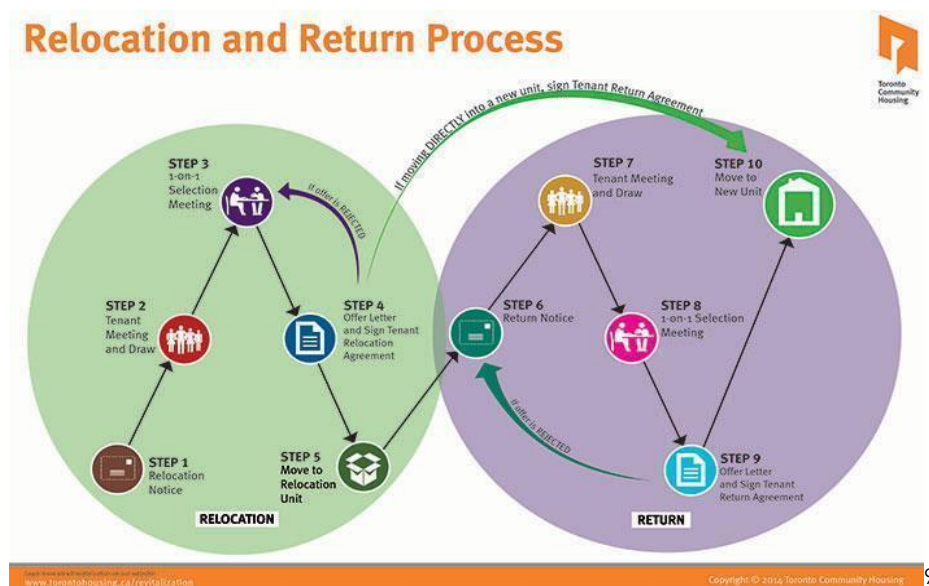


Figure 2.1 image of the relocation process explained to community.

Conversely, from my personal experiences and in the noted experiences of racialized men I interviewed for this project, their experiences collectively are quite different from the relocation plan as set out by TCHC. The interviewees expressed concerns that some people “were not allowed to come back,” or were given the option to move to another property owned by TCHC, but could not return to their original Regent Park home. During the completion of Phase One of the redevelopment of Regent Park, TCHC built three off-site buildings: 92 Carlton Street; 60 Richmond Street East, and 501 Adelaide Street

<sup>9</sup> n.p; n.d. <https://www.torontohousing.ca/capital-initiatives/revitalization/Regent-Park/Pages/default.aspx>.  
12<sup>th</sup> April, 2017

East.<sup>10</sup> Speaking to a community member, who does not want to be identified due to their position within the agency that is constructing the revitalization of Regent Park, I learned that some Regent Park residents believe that TCHC's intention was not to provide inclusive spaces for the residents but to segregate, exclude and racialized residents of the community. This community member stated that the rationale for these off-site buildings was to have residents move in-proximity to the Regent Park community, while the construction of the first phase was completed to avoid feelings of displacement during the revitalization process. However, according to Sue-Ann Levy (2012) of the *Toronto Sun*, residents of Regent Park who were promised they would have a unit to return to in Regent Park:

have been shoved into new units some 1.5-km away from the neighbourhood -- not just on Adelaide St. but in two other new buildings at 60 Richmond St. E. and 92 Carlton St. None of these three off-site affordable housing developments were actually built by Daniels Corp., the developer that won the bid to redevelop all six phases of Regent Park, even though they are being promoted as part of the revitalization plan."

This suggests that promises and procedures of the gentrification process were not accurately followed through by TCHC. Furthermore, race plays a key role in

---

<sup>10</sup> Levy, S (2012). McConnell sheds crocodile tears over proposed TCHC sale. *Toronto Sun*, Toronto. April 2012. <http://www.torontosun.com/2012/04/03/mcconnell-sheds-crocodile-tears-over-tchc-sale>

this lack of follow-through. The notion of 'colour-blindness' situates people of non-color to overlook the negative experiences racialized people face in society. Working in the actions of the decision makers, in this case, TCHC is indicating that race is taken into consideration when decisions are being made about space, though it is abundantly clear that this is not the truth. Gentrification processes appear to displace citizens in poverty economic brackets, "...especially Black citizens (Kipfer & Petrunia, 2009; Delgado et. al. 2012). Therefore, displacement can be both class- and race- specific. As we know, Regent Park is a community comprised of "low-income, underemployed or welfare-dependent families, a significant portion of whom were led by single women" (Kipfer & Petrunia, 2009, p.119). Kipfer & Petrunia (2009) further states "...80 percent of Regent residents were people of color, most of whom were immigrants" (p. 119).

Interest Convergence is an additional tenet of CRT, and outlines changes to laws, policies, and procedures which require a critical racial lens to determine if such changes are in fact creating equitable spaces for Black bodies. For example, in response to the social construction of crime and Black males, TCHC has instituted a policy that would provide TCHC the power to evict residents who have criminal records and their families. In addition, TCHC will be able to

amend re-housing individuals who re-apply for housing.<sup>11</sup> Although the guise of this policy is to make the social housing communities 'safer,' I question, safer for whom? More families are being displaced and now, TCHC in Regent Park can legally ensure certain displaced families who were promised their return to their community cannot return.

Why are the residents of the condominiums which are being erected within Regent Park, not given the same scrutiny with regards to their criminal histories? Imagine the power TCHC has been provided to utilize this policy to ensure they get to choose who gets access to affordable and social housing while maintaining that they are making these decisions for the betterment of the community. This policy disproportionately affects people of colour, young people, and Black bodies. Interest Convergence is also rampant within the education and criminal justice systems, both of which are systems that have the pretence that they want to change power imbalances for Black bodies through anti-Black racism training, forums to address citizens' concerns, and speaking with the politically correct discourse that, on the surface, may be seen by Black bodies as the idea that "they are trying to change things for US; improve things for US and listen to US." Yet, statistics clearly indicate that Black males continue to encompass almost 50% of expelled and excluded students in education and

---

<sup>11</sup> n.p. (2017). City moves to stop renting TCHC unity to previously evicted "criminals" tenants Toronto. Signaltoronto.ca. (2017)

there has been an 80% increase in Black male incarceration in Canada since 2005, though Black males only make up 2.9% of Canadian population<sup>12</sup>.

According to Pauline Lipman as Haymes (1995) the “concepts 'public' and 'private' are racialized metaphors. Private is equated with being 'good' and 'white' and that which is public with being 'bad' and 'Black'” (p. 20). Racism is the ideological soil for appeals to individual responsibility and ending “dependency” on the state. Constructing people of colour as the undeserving, poor, lazy, pathological, and welfare-dependent provides policy makers with a rationale to restructure or eliminate government-funded social programs and to diminish state responsibility for social welfare (M. Katz, 1989). In particular, the “inner city” and the public institutions with which the “inner city” is identified are pathologized in a racially-coded morality discourse that legitimates the dismantling of public spaces and institutions. This racialized logic justifies privatization of public housing, schools, and health clinics, and encourages gentrification through dispossession of urban Black communities (Lipman 2011 p. 12). However, the gentrification process and its impact systematically continues to move forward without acknowledging the inherent systemic racism that exists in well-established policies and decision-making, which continues without critical challenges to ideas about race, racism and power dynamics. A great example

---

<sup>12</sup> Annual Report from the Office of the Correctional Investigator 2012/2013 (2013 June) retrieved from <http://www.oci-bec.gc.ca/cnt/rpt/annrpt/annrpt20142015-eng.aspx>.2015, p. 9. This report discusses race representation within the Canadian correctional system.

of interest convergence that benefits people of non-colour is this: there is a family of six people living in public housing before the revitalization. Their townhome is comprised of 1200 square feet of space. They have been displaced somewhere in the city and have returned back to their brand new unit, but now the family has 800 square feet of living space to live in. Gentrification does not account for the culture capital of many families returning to Regent Park. Space is limited in the new Regent Park, and intensification is much more cost-effective for TCHC and the developer.

### **Race as Social Construction**

If we are to understand race as a social construct, then Black bodies that inhabit an area in a particular community will also be socially constructed. CRT discusses the notion of our systems being 'colour-blind' and that our policies, which include directives, rules and programming in a variety of institutions in the city related to crime, education, and health, do not take into account the oppressive factors racialized groups experience in our systems. Such structures continue to promote the white power differentials, which was termed 'material determinism' by Delgado et. al.,(2012). They state "...racism advances the interests of both white elites (materially) and working-class people (psychically), large segments of society have little incentive to eradicate it" (Delgado et. al.,

2012, p. 3).

Daniels Corporation won the bid in 2005 to change Regent Park, and partnered with TCHC to revitalize the community of Regent Park. To date, the redevelopment is in its third phase of the project. According to community agencies and residents, the change of the community is positive with regards to aesthetic, access public space, and brand new buildings which are a jointed venture between TCHC, Daniels Corporation, the City of Toronto and MLSE, which create new Regent Park Athletic grounds:



13

Figure 3.1 Image of the proposed athletic grounds in Regent Park

<sup>13</sup> Landau, J (2014). Construction progressing at the Regent Park athletic grounds.

<http://urbantoronto.ca/news/2014/11/construction-progressing-regent-park-athletic-grounds>



Daniels Spectrum is a building named after Jack Daniels; part owner of Daniels Corporations, which is currently headed by President Mitchell Cohen. As mentioned earlier in the paper, Daniels Spectrum is a cultural hub in Regent Park, home to many agencies that are vital to the life and wellbeing of the community. While these agencies serve many families, young people and seniors from the community and produce great work; 30 years from now a kid in the new, revitalized Regent Park community will ask someone who works at Daniels Spectrum, who is Daniels Spectrum and what is his significance to me? This is how interest convergence is woven into histories, space, and in this case the gentrification of Regent Park. By having Daniels, a wealthy owner, as the name of a significant building in the community, this erases the histories of community members that work and live in Regent Park and ignores the much more multi-faceted lived experiences of bodies, especially Black bodies, in the community.

As Regent Park geographically sits just 10 minutes east of the busy and tourist-heavy Yonge Street, it is prime real estate in Toronto. The original plan of gentrification for Regent Park was to create 3,000 condos and replace all 2,083 social housing units.<sup>14</sup> This split was 60-40 for condo owners to Regent Park

---

<sup>14</sup> Wong, J. [https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2010/09/12/regent\\_park\\_revitalization\\_or\\_gentrification.html](https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2010/09/12/regent_park_revitalization_or_gentrification.html). September 12, 2010.

residents, but over the years that plan has dramatically changed and is currently at 80-20. August (2014) remarks:

The question that I'm asking in my work is: how come we can't have that type of investment in the absence of a kind of state-driven gentrification in Regent Park for themselves without having to build 5400 new condos in that community, dramatically intensify it. I'm asking if we're going to be investing 1.1 billion dollars is the figure I'm familiar with but now I'm hearing that it's two, if that's going to be public money going into that community, I don't believe there's a need for a private partner and I'm not sure there's the need to privatize that valuable asset we have right in downtown Toronto.<sup>15</sup>

Intensifying the community results in a shift in power balance and a shift in equity in terms of policy and socioeconomic landscapes. This advances the dominant culture and enables certain individuals to benefit drastically. The result of this intensification is that it materially benefits a socioeconomic class who have a small family and the socioeconomic resources to afford the stores newly injected in the community. However, a Regent Park family who has been accustomed to their old unit which could accommodate their family must now

---

<sup>15</sup> Paikin, S (2014). The Agenda: Regent Park Rebuild (transcript).  
2017 The Ontario Educational Communications Authority (TVO)  
<http://tvo.org/transcript/2232366/video/programs/the-agenda-with-steve-paikin/regent-park-rebuild>.

make a decision on what furniture to throw out, which personal items to keep and if their older children might have to find somewhere else to live. These families suffer immensely due to the intensification by TCHC, and their development partner who builds smaller units for families. This results in people of colour or low-income individuals being affected physically as well as emotionally by the decision of the city of Toronto, TCHC and developers.

One consistent theme that has emerged throughout this research is the way in which criminal structures have been impacted by the revitalization of Regent Park, and how this has negatively affected the community. The people who were interviewed indicated that the policy of TCHC identifying and displacing Black bodies of local residents has significantly undermined criminal networks in the area - networks that ironically, served to protect residents who did not engage in criminal structures. Consequently, both criminal and non-criminal residents have expressed increased feelings of fear and increased instances of victimization within the neighbourhood since the onset of the revitalization. Regent Park's stigma of being a high-crime and low-income area encourages the policymakers, Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC), and private developers to gentrify the Regent Park community. According to August (2014) "...while public housing redevelopment is typically framed as a compassionate intervention to help poor people in dilapidated homes, critics view it as another liberal policy approach that facilitates capital accumulation,

with the potential to reinforce and exacerbate processes of marginalization and exclusion" (p. 1318).

The repetitive narrative about the Regent Park community is that the community is isolated, has high rates of crime, and is absent of any viable streets throughout the community. However, these notions ignore the rich community traditions that many members of the Regent Park community cherish. As August (2014) states "...tenants engaged in mutual assistance and material exchange; watch over each other's children and homes; felt a sense of unity from 'being in the same boat', which helped them cope with external stigma and prejudice" (p. 1320).

### **Black Voices**

I was speaking to one of my mentors once, and he reminded me that I am not the only hero in my story. I reflected thoroughly on my experience growing up in Regent Park, and the different phases in my life that helped me get to this exact moment; pursuing higher education. Storytelling connects people and enables them to engage in a critical dialogue that can produce a knowledge transfer that symbolizes and creates change. It gives space and time for narratives to be guided without interruptions. As I read many articles, newspaper headlines,

---

reports and more on my Regent Park community, I was unaware of what the interpretations are of Black bodies, particularly Black men. There needs to be a space where Black bodies can recount their narrative on the current changes to their community, and this space comes through storytelling, particularly in artistic modes.

Music is great example of this narrative of the Black voice. Yes, there are power dynamics within the social and economic structures in the music industry. However, some artists locate their agency within the confinement of this system, and produce and articulate critical pieces of work. For example, Beyoncé's Formation<sup>16</sup> video and song provides an insight to the many identities of Blackness, particularly how it is to be Black in the south. Her position visually on a cop car flooded in water is a parallel to the flooding in the city of New Orleans after 2005 hurricane Katrina, by which the city's Black residents were disproportionately affected. This is the same pattern of affect that residents of a rapidly gentrifying Regent Park experience – Black bodies are those most victimized by the changes to landscape and policy. Beyoncé retells her history, and by the end of the song reclaims it. Storytelling is an integral part of CRT, but more importantly, it is a framework of resistance (Delgado, 2012).

---

<sup>16</sup> Knowles, B. February 6, 2016. Formation (video). [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WDZJPJV\\_\\_bQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WDZJPJV__bQ)

Engaging in storytelling, and acknowledging and understanding resistance, I am going to highlight a narrative from my interviewees: The resistance for (Twin interviewee) was that he refused to leave his community and continues to engage and provide support to the residents even as his community, as he knows it, is falling apart before his eyes. (Twin) grew up in Regent Park and has been working as a community worker for many years within Regent Park. (He) discussed TCHC's position on making the community safer and that it was a fallacy. Has Regent Park seen its share of community violence? Yes, although (He) states that the new gentrification of the community made it easier for police to navigate but also for potential drive-by shootings. Although previously, Regent Park was designed with green space in the middle, making it more difficult for police cars to enter, though possibly not considering police on bicycles or police walking through the community. Now considering this, would a community with police walking through engaging with the residents seem more community-based than one with police cars driving by? (He) feels that the changes have only created more problems for the residents and exasperated potential violence.

There is a narrative being pushed in Regent Park that the revitalization is a great thing happening to the community. Whether you are a reader, visually seeing the change as you walk or drive by, or a condo owner, it is essential to hear the experiences of residents and how this massive change has affected

them socially and emotionally, and how these changes have been disruptive to the community because there has been no provision of spatial compensation as the culture of Regent Park slowly disappears. Delgado (2012) states that literary and narrative theory holds that we each occupy a normative universe or “nomos” (or perhaps many of them), from which we are not easily dislodged<sup>17</sup>. Talented storytellers nevertheless struggle to reach broad audiences with their messages: “Everyone loves a story” (p. 41). The hope is that well-told stories, describing the reality of Black and Brown lives, can help readers bridge the gap between their worlds and those of the “Others.” Engaging stories can help us understand what life is like for others, and invite the reader into a new and unfamiliar world. Has the purchase of your new condo silenced the voiceless? As you walk through the community to meet up with your friends at the local coffee shop, how will you describe the history of Regent Park?

Another interviewee discussed how gentrification has broken interpersonal bonds in the community through the forced movements of residents. (He) stated that he recalls people relying on one another to babysit each other’s children, and to support and assist one another as many worked variable hours, shifts and days. With the loss of these interpersonal bonds, the safety of the

---

<sup>17</sup>Delgado, R & Stefancic J. *Critical Race Theory* (New York & London: New York University Press, 2001) 41.

community, residents, and children is lost. How does one produce resilience from that? Where does that single Black mother go when she needs to work but has no affordable day-care or babysitting? The fact that this interviewee is able to discuss such a loss of interpersonal relationships and critically assess how such relationships impact the community individually, socially and systemically, is knowledge that includes forms of resistance. It is up to policy-makers to understand these interpersonal stories and bonds, and to work to nurture, rather than destroy, what makes the Regent Park community so vibrant.

### **Film**

This is not the first film that explores communities undergoing a gentrification process. Racialized bodies in cities like New York, Chicago, and Atlanta have a seen the rapid transformation and change to their communities. In Canada, residents of locations such as Parkdale, Liberty Village, and Africville in Nova Scotia have also been driven out of their communities. With this film; 'Last Ride through Regent,' you will experience and hear the voices of community members, understand the importance of their community, and learn how displacement in their home fractured social networks.



The focus was to specifically look at how gentrification affects Black men during a time when their community is going through a massive and significant change. Hearing their voices and creating a safe space to allow their narratives to be heard is imperative to understand its impact on them. The interesting aspect of collating this documentary is that you are never in control of what people share or the stories you may hear. The Black men I interviewed spoke about their experiences as they relate to the community and community members (seniors, youth and friends). The interviewees disclosed their own personal experiences and expectations. The experiences shared varied; however there were many parallels to the stories, which became a collective voice.

Throughout this paper I was able to tease out how their experiences are connected to CRT, while highlighting that Regent Park is beyond its space and land – Regent Park is built on community, relationships, and connections, which mould cultural identities. Another point that was taken from the film was the idea of 'internal economies'. One of the interviewees mentioned this term and before filming and researching this point never crossed my mind. What is the cost of these internal relationships being fractured due to gentrification? Thinking about massive change projects, we need to think beyond bricks, bright lights and amenities. We need a plan of action and a safety plan for these

pivotal relationships that are created over years of trust and love and then torn away by a council vote.

Many of the positive aspects mentioned about the community come from the perspective of the people interviewed in the film. Some would argue that Regent Park has a reputation of gang activity and violence. As a result, city officials, along with TCHC, used this as a medium to stigmatize Regent Park for the justification to gentrify Regent Park.

There were many interesting facts and nuances displayed in this film and a more important point the viewer may leave with, which is as follows. Living in this community for the majority of my life, I felt it was important for me to tell a story the way my friends would tell stories when we would hang out as young men. I've attained higher education in university that allowed me the opportunity to share a piece of me. This film is a testament of my life experiences as well as providing an avenue for others' voices to be heard. I invite you, the viewer, to delve in and explore this topic in the hopes to generate discussions of community, family and changes that can never be undone.

## **Conclusion**

As a kid growing up in Regent Park, I remember that my mother would always buy one pair of brand-new sneakers at the beginning of the school year, as part of 'the back to school shopping,' which was usually a pair of Nikes. Growing up, my friends and I could relate to this experience every new school year. The new pair of shoes incited this great feeling of "freshness" on the first day of school, giving you bragging rights to your friends and, if you were lucky, maybe that girl you liked would comment on your brand new shoes. However, if you were gifted the opportunity to critically reflect on those pair of Nikes in terms of globalization and marketization of Nike, those new pair of "Nikes" took on a whole different feeling. If I were told at an early age that my mother would need to work extra shifts to buy these coveted sneakers for me to look "fresh" on my first day of school, and that children in more disenfranchised countries were working night and day for minimal pay so I could look "fresh" for the girl I like, I think maybe, just maybe, I would have been more socially conscious and responsible. The analogy I am trying to draw from this personal vignette is that these new condominium buildings are really nice and make some people feel "fresh" about living in such beautified residences, but at what consequence to the community has such beauty been erected? For whom? I want us, and with 'us' I mean the condo owner, TCHC, private

developers, city officials, residents, and even the construction workers, to critically design a framework that challenges how changes to a community wrought through gentrification will affect the residents and overall community connectedness.

In my research, the Black bodies I interviewed discussed safety and loss of community as consistent themes. There are major improvements to the community set out of by developer Daniels Corporation, such as Daniels Spectrum, the partnership with Maple Leafs Sports and Entertainment (MLSE), the green space available to residents and an upgrade to poorly maintained buildings which were managed by TCHC. Unfortunately, this came at a price for many Black men affected by the gentrifying of Regent Park community - bottom line profits; stigmatizing a community where most of their residents are non-white, and displacing residents outside of their community. Gentrification is intertwined with racial oppression and this broadens our scope of analysis to longer histories of oppression. According to Mascarenhas (2012) "...dispossession continues every day in Ontario as majoritarian interest (white privilege), authorizes the allocation of land and resources for their satisfaction" (p. 91). White privilege results in benefits for whites while further oppressing racialized people. Such oppressions can be noted directly and indirectly in the gentrification process, transcending non-white bodies through oppressive histories by using coded terms such as 'revitalization' and 'social

mixing' to justify why non-white communities remain lower-income to the benefit of white privilege. According to Pulido (2000) "...white privilege allows us to see how the racial order works to the benefit of whites, whether in the form of economic and political benefits" (p. 15). She further explains how white privilege enables racism "...because most white people do not see themselves as having malicious intentions, and because racism is associated with malicious intent, whites can exonerate themselves of all racist tendencies, all the while ignoring their investment in white privilege" (p. 15). However, what distinguishes this form of dispossession from that of past racism is how this dispossession is executed (Mascarenhas, 2012 p. 91). Low-income neighbourhoods inhabited by people of colour can be examples of "racial segregation" according to Patricia Hill Collins (2004). She writes, "...racial segregation...exploits black people by keeping them confined to the worst jobs, locked up in the worst neighborhoods" (p.69). This pattern of racial segregation often continues when citizens of colour are displaced from their community as a result of gentrification. The outcome of gentrification, as is seen in the gentrification of Regent Park, does not appreciate the impact of racial oppression historically or in modern day.

The Lawrence Heights community is currently going through a revitalization process similar to what is happening to Regent Park. Daniels Corporation is not the developer, although TCHC is the property manager of this

community. After speaking to residents who live and work in Lawrence Heights, the relocation process of families appears to be different than how the residents in Regent Park Community were displaced. As residents move within the Lawrence Heights community as each phase is being completed, I hope that more research based within critical race theory, incorporation of voices of non-white residents and the understanding of the long-term impact of breaking interpersonal bonds in such communities will be areas TCHC will consider — taking their lead from the mistakes made when gentrifying Regent Park. To see the progression of the Lawrence Heights community, my hope is that the people of this community will be able to enjoy the benefits of brand new spaces without any negative surprises or silencing. Progress is a slow process, but a process that needs to be critically inclusive of the community.

I love you Regent Park, and may you continue to produce many more critical thinkers and doers.

## References

- Amin, F. (2017). John Fisher not the only school affected by development. Citynews, Toronto. March 2017.
- August, Martine and Alan Walks (2012) 'From Social Mix to Political Marginalization In Mixed Communities: Gentrification by Stealth Eds. Gary Bridge, Tim Butler, Loretta Lees (Bristol: Policy Press) 273-297.
- August, M. (2014). Challenging the rhetoric of stigmatization: The benefits of concentrated poverty in Toronto's Regent Park. Environment and Planning A. Special Issue on Territorial Stigmatization, Tom Slater, Virgilio Borges Pereira, and Loic Wacquant, Editors.
- August, M. (2014). Negotiating social mix in Toronto's first public housing redevelopment: Power, space, and social control in Don Mount Court. International Journal of Urban and Regional Research. 38(4): 1161-1182.
- Biernacki, Patrick and Woldorf, Dan (1981) "Snowball Sampling Problems and Techniques of Chain Referral Sampling" Sociological Methods and Research, Vol. 10, No. 7., November p. 141-163
- Carter, S. (2008). Swagga like us. Def Jam Records. (2008)
- Cravatts, R.L., (2007). "Gentrification is good for the poor and everyone else". American Thinker URL [http://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2007/08/gentrification\\_is\\_good\\_for\\_the.html](http://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2007/08/gentrification_is_good_for_the.html)
- Collins, Patrica Hill. (2004). Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender and the New Racism. Florence, KY. USA: Roulledge.
- Delgado, R & Stefancic, J. (2001). Critical Race Theory. New York & London: New York University Press
- James, C. (2012). Life at the Intersection: Community, Class and Schooling. Halifax and Winnipeg. Fernwood Publishing.

- James, C & Turner, T. (2017). Towards race equity in Education: The schooling of Black students in the greater Toronto Area. York University.
- Kipfer, S. & Petrunia, J. (2009). Recolonization and public housing: A Toronto case study. Studies in Political Economy 2009 83:111-39
- Lamar, K (2015). To Pimp a Butterfly. Motal Man. Interscope Records. Song
- Levy, S. (2012). TCHC residents feel like they were "duped" in Regent Park redevelopment. Toronto Sun, Toronto. March 2012
- Lipman, P. (2011). The New Political Economy of Urban Education: Neoliberalism, Race, and the right to the city. New York, NY. Routledge.
- Masscarenas, M. (2012). Where the water divide: Neoliberalism, White Privilage and Environmental racism in Canada. Toronto: Lexington Books
- Nicolson, M. (2012). A ccomparison of the RFP procurement process for the revitalization of Regent Park. Queen's University. (2012)
- Pulido, L (2000). Rethinking Environmental Racism: White Privilege and Urban Development in Southern California. Malden, MA. Association of American Geographers.
- Redfern, P.A., (2003). "What makes gentrification 'gentrification'?" Urban Studies (Routledge), Vol. 10, No. 12, p. 2351-2366.
- Slater, Tom (2011). Gentrification of the City. In Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson (Ed.), The New Blackwell Companion to the City (p. 571-585). Blackwell Publishing Ltd.; retrieved from <http://www.geos.ed.ac.uk/homes/tslater/gotcbridgewatson.pdf>
- Shapcott, M (2001). Made in Ontario housing crisis: A project of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. Technical paper #12
- Singleton, John, dir. Boyz N The Hood. Columbia Pictures. 1991. Film.



Suttor, G (2016). Canadian Social Housing: Policy evolution and program periods. McGill-Queens University Press. (2016).

Vandergrift, J., (2006). "Gentrification and Displacement". Urban Altruism, Spring, Calvin College, p. 1-10, URL <http://www.calvin.edu/~jks4/city/litrevs/gentrification.pdf>.

Wong, J. (2010). Regent Park: revitalization or gentrification? The Star, Toronto. September 2012

(2016). Daniels Spectrum wins award of excellence from urban land institute. Toronto. <http://dsai.ca/news/daniels-spectrum-wins-award-of-excellence-from-urban-land-institute/>

(2017). City moves to stop renting TCHC unity to previously evicted "criminals" tenants Toronto. Signaltoronto.ca. (2017)