CHRYSALIS

[kris-*uh*-lis]

from Latin chrȳsallis, from Greek khrusallis

1. the obtect pupa of a moth or butterfly

2. anything in the process of developing

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CHRYSALIS was created by Dr. Charmaine A. Nelson as a vehicle to showcase the most innovative, rigorous, and sophisticated research produced by students within the context of her Art History courses at McGill University (Montreal). Over the years, Nelson observed that undergraduate students in her courses were more than capable of producing exceptional research on par with that of graduate students, and at times even professional academics. Disappointed that the majority of these students were faced with a negligible audience (if any) for their incredible work, with the help of her MA Art History student Anna T. January, Nelson came up with the idea to provide another platform for their research dissemination. CHRYSALIS is that platform! In the fourth issue of CHRYSALIS, we welcomed a new Managing Editor, Uma Vespaziani.

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ARTICLES:

CASH'S CLOTHES: APPAREL AS A SITE OF RESISTANCE AND AGENCY IN A FUGITIVE SLAVE NOTICE
Karly Beard

Figure 1: Hugh Ritchie, "Ran Away," Quebec Gazette (Quebec), 4 Nov 1779, vol. no. 740, p. 3, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, Montreal, Canada.

Slavery is a part of Canadian history that is often forgotten.[1] Research on Canadian slavery is lacking, and the lived experiences of those who were enslaved in the regions that became Canada lie buried and untold. Through close analysis of a fugitive slave advertisement, this paper will attempt to recuperate some of the details of one such experience: the escape from bondage of a twenty-six year old female slave named Cash [fig. 1]. In particular, my essay will interrogate how clothing played an important role in the escape process, investigating apparel as a site of identity manipulation. In defining "clothing" or "apparel" as it applies to this paper, I acknowledge the definition of "dress" in Steeve O. Buckridge's book The Language of Dress: Resistance and Accommodation in Jamaica, 1760-1890 (2004). In addition to clothing, his definition includes scent, piercings, hairstyle and accessories, because these types of adornment can communicate vital and highly specific information about the cultural identities of enslaved and freed people.[2] Due to the specificity of the historical source material of this paper, which is a single fugitive slave notice, the scope of my analysis is limited specifically to clothes, rather than

any other forms of personal decoration that may be included in a definition of "dress." Using a combination of close reading of the fugitive slave notice as well as historical scholarship on slavery and slave dress in the American and Canadian context, I will demonstrate how Cash's use of clothing in her escape can be read as a site of resistance, in so far as it was a strategically used to help her "pass" as free, as well as an assertion of agency, enabling her to express her individuality and redefine her status.

In approaching the question of slavery in the Canadian, specifically Quebec, context, Frank Mackey's book Done With Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal 1760-1840 (2010) provides ample discussion on the nature of slavery and the lives of the enslaved in a country that has almost completely erased this history from its collective memory. Mackey concedes that in part, this "forgetting" is a product of the specific "reality of slavery"[3] in Canada, which was firstly, of a much smaller scale than in other colonies, and secondly, due to climate, did not feature the sprawling plantations and "single-crop production – rice, sugar, cotton, or tobacco – that would have necessitated a constant supply of gang labour."[4] Rather, in Canada, the enslaved were more likely found living and working in the domestic sphere:

> "They were housed not in slave huts but in a room in the master's house – sometimes just a spot on the kitchen floor—or in a shed, a stable, a barn, or other outbuilding. In terms of the tasks they performed – cooking, cleaning, washing, waiting on tables, chopping and fetching wood, drawing water, tending to horses, driving coaches, milking cows, running errands etc."[5]

Mackey's book also features an appendix of the ninety-four incidences of printed advertisements on the escape or sale of enslave people that appeared in the Quebec Gazette, the Montreal Gazette and a few outlying advertisements in the Quebec Herald, the Courant and the Mercury.[6] These advertisements are concrete proof that slavery was not only present in Quebec, but widely accepted enough to be unabashedly documented via newsprint. Fugitive slave advertisements are a valuable source for uncovering information about the lives of the enslaved. Written by slave owners attempting to recuperate their human "property" after a slave has run away, the advertisements had to describe the nature of the slave's escape, as well as a variety of personal attributes that could help the reader identify the fugitive slave.[7] As David Waldstreicher notes, in his article "Reading the Runaway: Self-Fashioning, Print Culture, and Confidence in Slavery in the Eighteenth-century Mid-Atlantic" (1999), these attributes of the runaway were often abilities or possessions that the slave owner assumed "might or might not help them 'pretend to be free'."[8] Waldstreicher also highlights a key ideological failure of the fugitive slave advertisement: the advertisements often reveal the skills and ingenuity of the enslaved, as well as the desire for slaves to escape their bondage.[9] Thus, "the authors of advertisements often found themselves explaining, directly or by implication, this failure of slavery and servitude as a cultural system," describing the intelligence and abilities of the human chattel to which they laid claim.[10]

Reading through the fugitive slave advertisements transcribed in Mackey's appendix, clothing stands out as a vital form of description and identification. Almost every fugitive slave advertisement provides a detailed description of the runaway slave's clothing, and even more strikingly, often provides an account of clothing that the fugitive slave was not wearing, but had brought along, or even stolen, as a tool of his or her escape.[11]

A close reading of the 4 November 1779 notice posted in the Quebec Gazette by slave owner Hugh Ritchie regarding the escape of two black slaves reveals how a twenty-six-year old enslaved woman named Cash ran away, and implicates her clothing in an assertion of agency and resistance. Cash is described thus:

> "About 5 feet 8 inches high, speaks English and French very fluently; she carried with her a considerable quantity of Linen and other valuable Effects not her own; and as she has also taken with her a bundle of wearing apparel belonging to herself, consisting of a black sattin Cloak, Caps, Bonnets, Ruffles, Ribbons, six or seven Petticoats, a pair of old Stays, and many other articles of value which cannot be ascertained, it is likely she may change her dress."[12] (sic)

As Art Historian Charmaine A. Nelson notes in her book Representing the Black Female Subject in Western Art (2010), the slave population of Quebec consisted of both enslaved blacks and First Nations people (known as "Panis") – the former a "the slave minority,"[13] and therefore objectified as exotic signifiers of wealth.[14] Furthermore, there were very few female slaves within the black slave population.[15] As such, in the Quebec context, a black female runaway slave is a rarity. Of the fifty-one escape advertisements listed in Mackey's book, only ten are female.[16]

My reading of this advertisement is in part informed by David Waldstreicher's work on fugitive slave notices. Waldstreicher explains:

> "Advertisements for runaways describe their clothing in great detail: since few people had an extensive wardrobe, *describing clothes was as good as describing the man or woman.* All the more reason that slaves and servants took every opportunity to take their own clothes when they absconded along with those of their masters and mistresses. Sometimes different or finer clothes increased the chances of *passing for free* or being unrecognizable." [17] (italics mine)

Access to the slave owner's clothing is particularly relevant when considering Canadian slavery. As Mackey indicated, Canadian slavery was largely tied to the domestic sphere, giving the enslaved greater access to the slave owner's clothing through both the types of work they engaged in (washing, mending etc.),[18] and because Canadian slaves often lived in the same house as the master or mistress. Due to the accessibility of the kind of clothing free people wore, enslaved people like twenty-six-year old Cash used stolen clothing belonging to the slave owner as part of a disguise, trying to pass as a free person of colour. As such, Hugh Ritchie accused Cash of stealing a "considerable quantity of Linen,"[19] which she could sell, barter, or use to make clothes. But she also brought along "a large bundle of wearing apparel,"[20] which Ritchie conceded, belonged to her. Thus, Ritchie's inability to accurately describe what she wore provided an escape strategy that made her more difficult for a reader to identify, as the exact manner of her dress was unknown.

Of course, this advertisement was written by a slave owner, and thus my interpretation of this text must be informed by Waldstreicher's assertion that, "the authors have no small interest in denying the very talents that had otherwise proven valuable to them. The advertisements emphasize certain attributes and fail to discover others."[21] In the case of Cash's fugitive slave advertisement, the fact that she has committed a "crime" of sorts is clearly highlighted. The

advertisement notes disapprovingly that Cash has taken "valuable Effects not her own" – emphasizing that Cash has caused Ritchie personal monetary loss, but also transgressed her devalued status by taking that which is "valuable." Thus, Cash is identified as a thief, but there is no acknowledgement that the rationale behind the theft was a desire to transform her appearance, likely hoping to pass as a free black woman. In fact, it is not just the hope that she will *appear* to be a free black woman, but actually that she will become one: she is, as Waldstreicher says, "pretending to be something else, and, in doing so, becoming something else."[22] Although Cash had ingeniously secured the tools to create a new life for herself via the clothing and possessions of those who enslaved her, her ingenuity and humanity is denied by the wording of the slave advertisement.

If Cash's plan was to pass for free, what constituted passing for free in Canada? Emma Bardes' chapter "The Great White North: Visual and Material Evidence of Black Slavery in the Quebec Winter" (2013), provides a detailed discussion of the kind of garments worn by the enslaved in the midst of the Canadian winter and the particular social and economic circumstances of Canadian slavery, which may shed some light on the matter of "passing." First, Bardes suggests that many items of clothing described in the Quebec fugitive slave advertisements, particularly outerwear like fur hats and blanket coats,[23] are "typical of middle class Canadian costume of the time."[24] Specifically, Bardes points out that the blanket coat, an item present in at least four of the slave advertisements, is a ubiquitous, and even emblematic item of clothing for settlers in Canada. [25] I would argue that this has significant implications in thinking about the nature of "passing" in the Canadian context. If slaves are wearing coats and hats "typical of middle class Canadian costume," is it possible that the cold weather of the Canadian winter actually opened up a set of conditions for "passing" that did not exist in warmer colonies? For example, going barefoot was common to the enslaved in other colonial contexts,[26] but in the Canadian context, slaves who did not wear shoes would suffer frostbite,[27] and thus many of the slave advertisements specify that the slaves are wearing shoes [fig. 2].[28] It is possible to infer that out of necessity, slaves in Canada may have worn outerwear similar to a
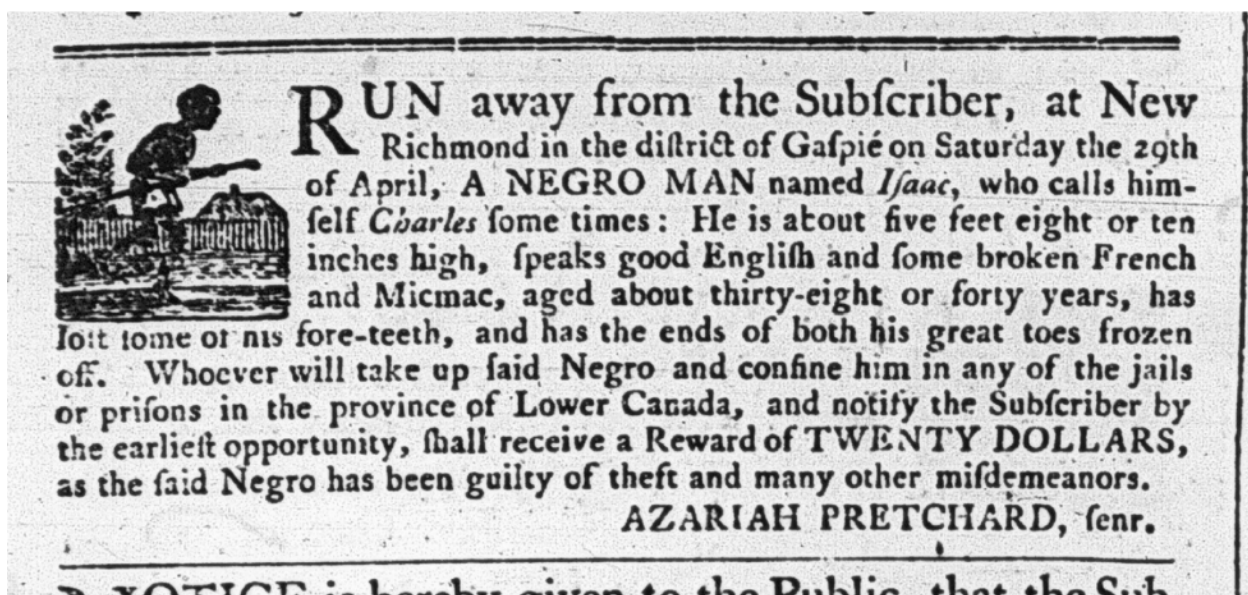

Figure 2: Azariah Pretchard, "Run Away," Quebec Gazette (Quebec), 22 May 1794, vol. no. 1506, p. 5, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, Montreal, Canada.

free person, and therefore were not as clearly marked by their clothing as slaves in warmer colonies. This possibility points to apparel as a site subject to a high degree of manipulation of identity in the Canadian context.

Cash's fugitive slave advertisement does not just highlight the ingenious ways that the enslaved transformed their identities and escaped their enslavement by acquiring clothing. It also points to the way clothing functioned as a site of resistance against the limited mobility and dehumanization institutionalized by slavery. As Shane White and Graham White explain in their article, "Slave Clothing and African American Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries" (1995), American slaves would use clothing to push "the boundaries of the system not only by appropriating items of elite apparel but by combining elements of white clothing in ways which whites often considered startlingly inappropriate."[29] White and White point to African-American traditions where the enslaved would fashion and assemble outfits out of whatever elite European garb they could acquire, as well as creating textiles with bright colours and patterns that "jangled white sensibilities," and shaped the aesthetics of slave communities.[30] They argue that this "distinctive"[31] community aesthetic was "most obviously evident in their Sunday dress."[32] Evidently, it was on Sundays that the enslaved could come together as a community outside working life, a time when dress was not so prescribed, or even legally restricted by laws like South Carolina's Negro Act of 1735, which gave parameters for the kind of cheap materials acceptable for clothing a slave.[33]

Grace Fu's chapter "A Comparative Analysis of Nova Scotia and Southern US Slave Dress in the Latter Half of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries" (2013) suggests that in Canadian slave communities in Halifax, this kind of transgressive community aesthetic was not as present as in the American context, a suggestion she infers based on Canadian reactions to slave dress in America, and because of the smallness of Canadian slave communities.[34] Despite Fu's assertion, a significant section of Cash's fugitive slave notice suggests that Canadian slaves did acquire "elite" items of clothing, and highly decorative ones at that. The notice includes a list of the surprising clothing items Cash brought along with her on her escape; more specifically, these items are surprising because we are told they *belonged* to her, and are clearly distinguished from what she has stolen: "a bundle of wearing apparel belonging to herself, consisting of a black sattin Cloak, Caps, Bonnets, Ruffles, Ribbons, six or seven Petticoats, a pair of old Stays."[35] Particularly striking is the "black sattin Cloak," an item of apparel made of a lustrous and soft material typically reserved for those of high social standing. Furthermore, the sheer number of "Petticoats" and "Ribbons" and "Ruffles" suggests that Cash may have dressed in a decorative, even ostentatious fashion.

In the Canadian context, these "elite" items of clothing may actually have been provided to the slave by the slave owner, a contrast to the American practice of plantations producing crops that would then be used to clothe the slaves working the plantation.[36] Enslaved people in Canada were not tied to plantation agriculture, and thus their clothing was sometimes purchased,[37] but also often given to them in the form of the slave-owner's "cast-off" garments.[38] Regardless of how Cash came to acquire such finery, it must be acknowledged that these luxurious items would likely have been a point of personal pride for a slave woman. As Nelson points out, clothing could be a difficult and painful site of degradation and "forced acculturation"[39] for slaves, and the possession of materials of luxury constituted a kind of resistance to the limitations enforced, through "surveillance, abuse, and torture" on slaves' ability to independently accumulate any wealth or material goods. [40] One might even go as far as to say Cash's striking ownership (and it is explicitly her ownership stated in the notice) of these

clothing items could constitute a deliberate act of social mobility for a woman who was otherwise limited by the dehumanizing practice of slavery. Historian Rebecca Earle suggests that in the eighteenth century, clothing was part of the definition of racial status. According to Earle, "racial categories reflected not only skin colour, but also the level of wealth, and more importantly the culture with which the individual identified."[41] Though painfully bound to the degraded status of slave, Cash's ownership of a satin cloak, decorative ruffles, and a considerable number of petticoats at best may have provided her with a kind of visual social mobility, an appearance that transgressed her devalued status by visually equating her with other racial and social categories, as well as expressing her individuality in an institution that categorized her as sub-human.

Cash's fugitive slave notice provides valuable insight into the lived experience of a rare figure in this history of slavery: the female runaway slave. Through a close reading of this advertisement, the story of Cash's ingenious escape can begin to be recuperated. At the heart of this escape is her use of clothing as a tool to achieve freedom. Close reading and historical investigation into notions of passing for free and slave dress highlights how Cash may have used the clothes of the slave owner, and the clothes she personally acquired in acts of resistance and in assertion of her individual agency. It is almost impossible to know if Cash's escape was permanent, but it is certain that her use of apparel as a way to manipulate identity and "pass" as free would have given her a greater chance at escape. Due to the lack of substantial research on slave dress in Canada, let alone slavery in Canada, reading closely into the singular lived experience of Cash, a woman enslaved in Canada – as documented by the fugitive slave notice – is an important step in finding ways to recover the stories of Canadian slaves that have been largely forgotten by popular historical narratives.

ENDNOTES

[1] Frank Mackey, Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal 1760-1840 (Canada: McGill-Queens University Press, 2010), p. 109.

[2] Steeve O. Buckridge, The Language of Dress: Resistance and Accommodation in Jamaica, 1760-1890 (Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2004), p. 3.

[3] Mackey, Done with Slavery, p. 109.

[4] Mackey, Done with Slavery, p. 112.

[5] Mackey, Done with Slavery, p. 117.

[6] Mackey, Done with Slavery, pp. 314-344.

[7] David Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaway: Self-Fashioning, Print Culture, and Confidence in Slavery in the Eighteenth-Century Mid-Atlantic," The William and Mary Quarterly (April 1999), p. 248.

[8] Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaway," p. 248.

[9] Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaway," p. 248.

[10] Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaway," p. 248.

[11] Mackey, Done with Slavery, pp. 323, 334.

[12] Mackey, Done with Slavery, p. 323.

[13] Charmaine A. Nelson, "Slavery, Portraiture and the Colonial Limits of Canadian Art History," Representing the Black Female Subject in Western Art (New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 70.

[14] Nelson, Representing the Black Female Subject, p. 70.

[15] Nelson, Representing the Black Female Subject, p. 70.

[16] Mackey, Done with Slavery, pp. 314-344.

[17] Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaway," p. 252.

[18] Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaway," p. 252.

[19] Mackey, Done with Slavery, p. 323.

[20] Mackey, Done with Slavery, p. 323.

[21] Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaway," p. 247.

[22] Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaway," p. 244.

[23] Emma Bardes, "The Great White North: Visual and Material Evidence of Black Slavery in the Quebec Winter," Legacies Denied: Unearthing the Visual Culture of Canadian Slavery, ed. Charmaine A. Nelson (Montreal: McGill University, 2013), p. 20.

[24] Bardes, "The Great White North," p. 20.

[25] Bardes, "The Great White North," p. 22.

[26] Richard Bickell, The West Indies as They Are: Or, A Real Picture of Slavery: but More Particularly As it Exists In the Island of Jamaica (Birmingham: J. Belcher and Son, 1825); Charmaine A. Nelson, Slavery, Geography and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Marine Landscapes of Montreal and Jamaica (London: Routledge/Taylor and Francis Group, 2016), pp. 360, 373.

[27] Azariah Pritchard Senr., "RUN away from the Subscriber," Quebec Gazette, 22 May 1794; transcribed in Mackey, "Appendix I: Newspaper Notices," p. 337.

[28] Bardes, "The Great White North," p. 19.

[29] Graham White and Shane White, "Slave Clothing and African-American Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," Past and Present, no. 148 (August 1995), p. 150.

[30] White and White, "Slave Clothing," p. 169.

[31] White and White, "Slave Clothing," p. 172.

[32] White and White, "Slave Clothing," p. 172.

[33] White and White, "Slave Clothing," p. 154.

[34] Grace Fu, "A Comparative Analysis of Nova Scotia and Southern US Slave Dress in the Latter Half of the Eighteenth Century," Legacies Denied: Unearthing the Visual Culture of Canadian Slavery, ed. Charmaine A. Nelson (Montreal: McGill University, 2013), p. 63.

[35] Mackey, "Done with Slavery," p. 323.

[36] Fu, "A Comparative Analysis," p. 61.

[37] Colonel Hubert Neilson, "Slavery in Old Canada: Before and After the Conquest," lecture delivered to the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec, 2 March 1906, p. 33; Based upon details in the Quebec slave owner, William Brown's diary, Neilson recounted that Brown made notes about purchasing clothing such as "fur caps and mitts, blanket coats, and moccasin shoes" for two enslaved men, Joe and Saney.

[38] Bardes, "The Great White North," p. 21.

[39] Charmaine A. Nelson, "Tying the Knot: Black Female Slave Dress in Canada," Representing the Black Female Subject in Western Art (New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 97.

[40] Nelson, "Tying the Knot," p. 96.

[41] Rebecca Earle, "'Two Pairs of Pink Satin Shoes!!' Race, Clothing and Identity in the Americas (17th-19th Centuries)," History Workshop Journal, vol. 52 (2001), p. 187.

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BLACKFACE IN CANADIAN UNIVERSITIES
Victoria Bonwell

In 1971, Canada redefined itself as an open and inclusive society when Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau pursued a multiculturalism and biculturalism policy.[1] However, the institutions that people might argue are the safest space for such a policy to flourish – universities – are swiftly becoming a site of racism with reoccurring incidences of blackface. The resurgence of blackface in twenty-first century society comes as a concerning regression towards the past, and the historical racist connotations behind "blacking up."[2] In twenty-first century Canada, a supposedly postcolonial society, one would assume that the majority of the population condemns racism. However, throughout this study, I have found that even people of Generation Y are ignorant to racist themes that have clear historical connections to the violence and ridicule directed at people of African descent since the time of Trans Atlantic Slavery.[3]

Why has blackface become a predominant practice for Halloween costumes? Between 2010 and 2014 in Canada, there have been about 5 publically reported incidences of blackface.[4] One can also assume that there has been a significant amount of unreported "private" occurrences.[5] Why has it again become an acceptable popular cultural activity to wear blackface? One could argue that blackface is not reoccurring but has always been present in society. Throughout this essay, I will focus on the white reaction to blackface and specifically whether white Generation Y feels a sense of responsibility or acceptance when encountering these incidences. While there are obviously a significant amount of white people "blacking up," much more are silent witnesses to this behaviour.

For my research, I conducted five interviews with white McGill University students to gain perspective on this issue and how it is perceived by a predominantly white university population.[6] My research allows me to question the bystanderism that takes place and analyze the resurgence of blackface, but also question the timing of its rather prolific reappearance.[7] How does blackface create intimidation towards people of colour and display a modern version of white supremacy? By focusing on two recent events in Canada – at Brock University in Ontario and HEC (Hautes Études Commerciales) in Montreal – I will argue that these events display white people's constant desire for racial supremacy through blackface and the ignorance that people have toward the history of blackface and minstrelsy.[8] The resurgence of blackface culture is arguably still being used as a form of mockery, and as a tool to remind black people that white power prevails despite the seemingly growing visibility of black power in society.[9]

As a white, European woman, my own cultural background is incredibly relevant to my research. I was bought up in an upper middle-class family and live what I considered a "normal" life. My position in society has been constructed and inherited largely because of my race, ensuring a sense of privilege, directly built on the beliefs and stereotypes from the history of slavery. Through family research I am aware that my family has owned slaves, showing that we played a direct role in the creation of the Black Diaspora.[10] I am a university undergraduate and have the ability to access the historical and visual knowledge surrounding racial issues from the past and in the present. Although this part of my history is something I am not proud of, it is a history that I cannot hide and deny and I believe that it must be addressed when discussing racial issues.[11]

Blackface minstrelsy began in the nineteenth century as a form of entertainment for white middle and lower class citizens in Europe, Canada, and America, predominantly in urban environments.[12] Mainly white actors would paint their faces with black makeup and perform for

the amusement of the crowd, emphasizing skin colour as a humorous racial trait.[13] As American scholar Eric Lott explains, "[Blackface] arose from a white obsession with black (male) bodies which underlies white racial dread to our own day, it ruthlessly disavowed its fleshy investment through ridicule and racist lampoon."[14] The performances mocked and diminished the violence of slavery to publicly demonstrate pro-white sentiments and display control over people of colour. Furthermore, blackface performances gained their greatest popularity after slavery had been abolished in the US. This popularity also coincided with a rise in lynching.[15] Minstrelsy has been banned from mainstream media because of its deeply racist historical roots.

The Halloween 2014 blackface incident at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario, reached students, faculty, and fellow Canadian institutions with wide spread coverage. On October 30th 2014, the Student-Alumni Centre hosted a Halloween party and costume contest.[16] An environment that should be safe and fun for all members of the Brock University community was ultimately the site of covert racist acts. Several white students and a non-black student of colour arrived dressed as the Jamaican bobsled team,

Figure 1: Anonymous, "Brock University Blackface," (2011), digital photograph, Private Collection, accessed 26 November 2014.

complete with black makeup on their faces [fig. 1]. However, not only did these students dress in a racist costume that still carries the negative connotations of minstrelsy's racist history, they also won the contest for the best costume that night.[17]

Brock University is in close proximity to the resort town of Niagara Falls, Ontario. In her chapter "Local Colour: The Spectacle of Race at Niagara Falls," Karen Dubinsky discusses that historically, the fascination with "otherness" was displayed through performances and entertainment such as minstrelsy for tourists, whereby performers would impersonate people of colour.[18] The use of blackface as a form of racial suppression by white people created a tainted reference that still persists today. Frederick Douglass, a self-liberated former slave, wrote in his publication the *North Star*, that minstrelsy was the practice of, "the filthy scum, who have stolen from us a complexion denied to them by nature, in which to make money and pander to the corrupt taste of their white citizens."[19] Clearly, blackface minstrelsy was used as a form of ridicule and control against black people. But does it have any other narrative today that makes it acceptable as a costume?

Figure 3: Anonymous, "Julianne Hough in Blackface," digital photograph, Private Collection, accessed 27 November 2014.

Figure 2: Anonymous, "Blackface in a Nightclub," digital photograph, Private Collection, accessed 25 November 2014.

In a statement from Simon Black, a professor at Brock University and one of the authors of an open letter response, he stated, "The university is satisfied that this incident was the result of a lack of awareness, not a lack of sensitivity and that the participants had no intention of being inflammatory or racially offensive."[20] This statement read by Kevin Cavanagh, spokesman for Brock University, pleads innocence for the students that participated in the blackface incident. Although there was no punishment for the students, Brock University stated that the university was going to take steps to ensure that this did not happen again.[21] This poses the question: are students solely ignorant to the historical connection, or are they searching for racial superiority and reassurance? White people have asserted their racial supremacy over people of colour for generations, a feeling that pre-dates slavery.[22] The racial narratives of blackface as a method of celebrating white supremacy has persisted over time. Therefore, although the perpetrators of the incident at Brock University would most likely wish to disguise this racist event as an innocent joke, mockery of the "other" is precisely how minstrelsy has persisted for so long as a source of entertainment.

Canadian universities have experienced a diversification of their student populations in recent years. As Francis Henry and Carol Tator have argued, "Caribbean students have been a part of the Canadian academic scene since the 1950s and 1960s when numbers of young migrants travelled from the British colonies or newly independent Caribbean nations to the great white north to seek a higher education, part of the 'brain drain' from the Caribbean."[23] Statistics show that Jamaicans comprise a considerable amount of the black Canadian population between the years of 1980 to 2000.[24] Within the context of my research, the main group of black people that are clearly targeted for marginalization during Halloween is Jamaican or Caribbean people [fig. 2]. Throughout my interviews with white students, the main figures that were repeatedly referred to were Bob Marley, Usain Bolt, and the Jamaican bobsled team.

Figure 4: Anonymous, "Robert Downey Jr. Tropic Thunder Character," digital photograph, Private Collection, accessed 27 November 2014.

In the past, I have stood by, and to my embarrassment, allowed a friend to dress up as Bob Marley during Halloween, with blackface makeup and a wig of locked hair. At the time, I thought it was an amusing costume and to my regret, I did not say anything. Similar, to the students at Brock University, I would have pleaded my ignorance and claimed that the racist act was not intentional. Therefore, I could surmise that *I* was not a racist. However, through my studies of the history of racism in the west, I now understand my complicity. I was racist for not stopping my friend and for finding her costume amusing.[25] In an interview with a white female, she also stated that she would have found it funny as well. She commented, "I don't see the problem with blacking up for a costume. It isn't meant to be racist, people should learn to take a joke."[26] This statement displays the lack of awareness many white people have regarding the history of blackface, and the great level of offensiveness the act holds.

Halloween has become a yearly occasion for blackface to occur, forming a space that allows for racial gestures in society, not only by university students but also by celebrities as well [fig. 3]. Although blackface minstrelsy has been widely banned from radio, television and film for decades, there are more covert examples of blackface present in the media today. For example, "Tropic Thunder" (2008) depicts actor Robert Downey Jr. in black makeup.[27] [fig. 4]. Our ability to access resources at the push of a button should make us more aware of the issue of blackface minstrelsy. But instead, we are misinterpreting our accessibility as a sign that blackface is still acceptable in society. Additionally, the resurfacing of blackface in society can still be interpreted as a miscommunication, which is a similar excuse to pleading innocence that has been explained throughout the essay. But it also shows the threat white people feel during a time of "black power." In society, people of colour are stepping forward in positions of influence and power. The most obvious examples are Barack Obama and Oprah Winfrey. Their sphere of influence as seen in their politics and media power respectively makes them a threat to the belief that white people are the top of the racial hierarchy. Lott argues, "the black mask offered a way to play with collective fears of a degraded and threatening – and male – Other while at the same time maintaining some symbolic control over them."[28] Therefore, the re-emergence of blackface

Figure 6: Anonymous, "HEC Montreal Blackface Incident," digital photograph, Private Collection, accessed 25 November 2014.

Figure 5: Anthony Morgan, "HEC Montreal Blackface Incident," digital photograph, Private Collection, accessed 25 November 2014.

is not only a source of entertainment but continues to be a source of racial control, parallel to its historical use in minstrel shows. It is a way of maintaining white supremacy over people of colour.

My second case study involves a 2011 frosh event where students of Hautes Études Commerciales, the business school of the University of Montreal, donned blackface. The event was supposedly organized to encourage students to take part in athletics [fig. 5]. Anthony Morgan, a black man of Jamaican descent who was at the time a McGill University undergraduate law student, was on campus at the time and recorded the event.[29] As Morgan argues, "They had reduced all of who I am and the history of Jamaica and culture of Jamaica to these negative connotations of weed smoking, black skin, rastas."[30] Morgan's decisive action to record the event and make it public demonstrates his courage in taking a stand to stop the activity, shedding light on the reality that these racist incidents do in fact manifest in Canada.

If I return to my earlier question of bystanderism, the question arises, why did it take a black student to report the incident and why did a white student, of the hundreds who must have seen the spectacle, not take action? The public spectacle of blackface at this event was most definitely witnessed by other students that walked by and others that participated on other teams. Even some of the white students who were a part of the team in question appeared uncomfortable with the blackface aspect of the performance in which they did not participate. However, it would appear that they did not refuse to participate altogether and we do not know if they privately protested the act of blacking up by their fellow team members.

Since HEC is a business school with students from rural areas of Quebec with very little racial diversity, these students were presumably white.[31] However, as a business school, some of them were likely pursuing professional degrees and therefore not new to university life. Standing by and watching this racist event unfold made them complicit in the incident even if they were not themselves wearing the black makeup. In the video taken, there are some people dressed as

Figure 7: Anthony Morgan, "HEC Montreal Blackface Incident," digital photograph, Private Collection, accessed 25 November 2014.

Jamaican sprinters without blackface. This clearly demonstrates that some students strategically chose to get out of the blackface portion of the frosh "dress up" event. Although one can argue that more respect to people of colour was displayed, they still allowed friends or peers to wear black makeup. [fig. 6] Therefore, bystanderism and the act of not intervening shows a fatal flaw in contemporary society. Throughout my five interviews with white McGill students, each stated that they would not have publically spoken out about the event, but a few may have posted it on a media website.[32] This is a direct display of white complacency and ignorance to racial issues and a sense of fear to speak out publically against racist acts.

The response to the event came swiftly after Morgan's video was publically viewed on YouTube. Jacques Nantel, Secretary-General for Haute Etudes Commerciales stated, "it's really not a matter of intent. If the whole thing offended only one person, that's enough."[33] He also acknowledged that this incident was likely due to a lack of education about the history of blackface minstrelsy. White people use innocence as an excuse to ensure that they are not seen as racist, even when the event counters this argument. The unwelcome result of this event, particularly to people of colour, goes against the mandate of universities providing their students with a safe environment.

Student Society of McGill University (SSMU) has an equity policy, which applies to all events, ensuring that no discrimination occurs.[34] On the other hand, in the video of the HEC frosh event, viewers can see a white male with black makeup on, clothed in Jamaican flag colours and holding a monkey. This man looks at Anthony Morgan and says **"**Look a real one."[35] [fig. 7] The objectification and intimidation of people of colour show a lack of innocence and a racist intent on behalf of the student. Additionally, such acts amount to a power play by white people who declare the supremacy of their bodies as well as their ownership of the university space to reassure themselves of their racial power. Eternity E. Matis argues, "It's one mistake to dress up as blackface, a whole other one to approach black people in a white supremacist costume."[36] Matis, a lifestyle writer and blogger, describes the feeling of seeing blackface as a woman of colour. White people approaching black people while in blackface are guilty of a blatantly racist act used to acknowledge their power and the imbalance of privilege between black and white people.

Blackface is not the only form of racist dress up during Halloween season. In Campbellford, Ontario a costume party and contest took place at a local Legion Hall and the winners were a male pair dressed in costumes that have many negative connotations about the history of violence against people of colour.[37] [fig. 8] In the image from the party, the man on the

left is wearing a KKK robe while his friend is wearing black makeup and has a noose around his neck.[38] Blackface minstrelsy was not the only negative link to a history of white people wearing black makeup. During the 1834 riots in Philadelphia, men wore black masks and makeup while attacking people of colour.[39] The history of blackface therefore does not only have a direct connection to white entertainment, but also to this history of physical violence against black people.

After slavery was abolished and the Civil Rights Movement had ended, people spoke of an equal society where racial hierarchy no longer existed. Falsely led to believe this, as a young person I am now aware and take notice of the everyday racist acts against people of colour in modern society and at universities. As Matis has explained, "when I went home, there was nothing to wash off but my makeup, because the distress they left me with couldn't be removed with soap."[40] White people's inability to move away from this colonial hierarchy of race and desire constantly reminds people of colour of their supposed inferiority, and therefore limits us from achieving equality. Furthermore, it speaks volumes about the instability and frailty of whiteness if indeed it's supposed supremacy needs to be constantly maintained through social and cultural violence.

Figure 8: Anonymous, "Royal Canadian Legion Blackface Incident," digital photograph, Private Collection, accessed 30 November 2014.

The steps taken by HEC and Brock University aim to ensure that these events do not happen again. However, both statements from the universities were only given after the press reported the blackface event, and neither university has taken any further steps towards re-educating people on racial issues. In both cases, it was the media attention that prompted the universities to make definitive statements denouncing the actions and addressing the issues of racism. But once the event is forgotten and the media has moved on to the next story, no concrete action has been taken to ensure that it does not occur again.

Although white people continuously assume a position of innocence and misunderstanding around their role in the culture of slavery and the oppression of black people, this cannot be a justifiable excuse for blackface. As one of my interviewees explains, "We didn't mean to be racist, so, therefore, we can't possibly be racist."[41] White bystanderism comes from the denial of wrongdoing. However, this explanation is the rationale of someone who desires to be blameless and guiltless. On the other hand, the role of the bystander in the twenty-first-century rebirth of blackface comes down to white people's fear of losing their racial supremacy. Therefore, practices such as blackface are enacted to demonstrate the ability to ridicule and remain racially dominant within a supposedly multicultural nation.

University environments are often advertised as a multicultural, safe and welcoming space for all races. However, the university has become the main battleground for racial issues

and a too frequent site of racist incidents, where students often claim their innocence under the guise of humour. However, such acts create psychological damage for blacks and people of colour who are made to feel unwelcome at their own universities and feel intimidated in what should be safe spaces.[42] Blackface then stops the development of an equal society and retains a hold on an oppressive past.

One must question, to what level are universities responding to these events? Through the analysis of these two events, we can see that faculty is responding to the issues at hand publically, but is that enough? It is not just blackface that threatens the racial boundaries of society, but also the fact that other historically violent events have been used as the foundation of Halloween costumes, such as the lynching costume in Campbellford, Ontario. While white people use the excuse of innocence when donning blackface, it is more clearly a method for reassurance and a power play for white people because of the growing influence of people of colour in society.

ENDNOTES

[1] Charmaine A. Nelson, Ebony Roots, Northern Soil: Perspectives on Blackness in Canada (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2010), p. 81.

[2] White people when referring to the method or practice of blackface commonly use this phrase. During my interviews with white students at McGill University, they used this phrase to explain the act of blackface.

[3] Generation Y, also known as Millennials, ranges from those born between the early 1980s to early 2000s.

[4] McGill University was involved in a blackface incident at a Students' Society of McGill University (SSMU) event, *4Floors*, in 2012.

[5] Some cases that occur at house parties, fraternity parties and other private events likely do not get reported and therefore do not reach broader public circulation.

[6] My interviews involved two white males and three white females. In these interviews I asked simple questions, allowing people to expand and interpret these questions as they wished. Since the subject of race can be an uncomfortable and contentious topic, I felt it was easier to let people go into as much or as little depth as they desired. I posed questions such as: Do you believe racism is present in university communities? Would you ever claim that you have been racist? Do you think blackface is a racist act? The students were between the ages of nineteen and twenty-one, and because of their ability to attend McGill University, they were assumed to be from a middle-class background.

[7] "Bystanderism" is the phenomenon of standing by with passivity and allowing situations that may be construed as inappropriate, immoral or even dangerous to happen. In this case, I am referring to people who may not black up themselves, but who stand by passively while it occurs.

[8] The persistence of blackface amongst the generation Y population seems also to be connected to the phenomenon of "ghetto parties" which take place on college and university campuses. See Catherine M. Cole, "American Ghetto Parties and Ghanaian Concert Parties: A Transnational Perspective on Blackface," Burnt Cork Traditions and Legacies of Blackface Minstrelsy, ed. Stephen Johnson (Massachusetts, US: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012)

[9] This instance of "black power" does not refer to the Civil Rights movement, but instead the growth of powerful black figures in society such as Barack Obama, Oprah Winfrey, Michaëlle Jean, and Michael Lee Chin.

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[10] This research has been collected by my family throughout generations and was not solely for this essay.

[11] My whiteness also allowed me to appear "approachable" to the white students I interviewed, who were arguably more forthcoming with me than they would have been with a black student.

[12] Eric Lott, <u>Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class</u> (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 3.

[13] Lower class white people, such as Jewish and Irish people, predominantly carried out these performances. Lott, <u>Love and Theft</u>, p. 3.

[14] Lott, <u>Love and Theft</u>, p. 3.

[15] Lott, <u>Love and Theft</u>, p. 24.

[16] "Open Letter re: Blackface at Brock University – Brock Labour Studies," <u>Brock Labour Studies</u> <u>https://www.facebook.com/BrockLabourStudies/posts/639359819505716</u> (date of last access 27 November 2014)

[17] While conducting research for this essay, I attempted to find out the identity of each student in order to get a comment from them, but through my search on social media, I discovered that they had deactivated and removed their twitter accounts as well as their photos in blackface. However, through the Internet, this picture is not lost and remains a constant reminder of these students disregard for the people of colour in their university community.

[18] Karen Dubinsky, "Local Colour: The spectacle of Race at Niagara Falls," <u>Racism Eh?: A Critical Inter-Disciplinary Anthology of Race and Racism in Canada</u>, eds. Camille Nelson and Charmaine Nelson (Concord, Ontario: Captus Press/Captus University Publications, 2004), p. 224.

[19] Lott, <u>Love and Theft,</u> p. 15.

[20] "Brock University students in blackface win in Halloween contest," <u>CBC Hamilton,</u> <u>http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/news/brock-university-students-in-blackface-win-halloween-contest-1.2822958</u> (date of last access 1 December 2014)

[21] "Students who wore Blackface at Brock University will not be disciplined," <u>Huffington Post</u>, <u>http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2014/11/05/blackface-costume-brock-university_n_6103990.html</u> (date of last access 30 November 2014)

[22] European racism have also encapsulated ethnic biases as seen in the internal British colonization of white "others" such as Irish people.

[23] Frances Henry and Carol Tator, <u>Racism in the Canadian University: Demanding Social Justice, Inclusion and Equity</u> (Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 2009), p. 106.

[24] "Jamaica: From Diverse Beginning to Diaspora in the Developed World," <u>Migration Policy</u> <u>http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/jamaica-diverse-beginning-diaspora-developed-world</u> (date of last access 1 December 2014). These statistics only show the migration information, but second or third generation Jamaican-Canadians are significantly larger.

[25] Lectures and Seminars at McGill University have educated me on racial issues in society and history. Classes with Professor Charmaine A. Nelson, "Visual Culture of Slavery" and "Art and Race in Canada" have opened my eyes to the presence of racism and white superiority in the twenty-first century.

[26] Interview, 2, Victoria Bonwell with anonymous white female student, McGill University, Montreal, Canada, 24 November 2014.

[27] Generation Y has shifted in their use of technology from TV to Internet viewing, where the latter is not policed for inappropriate content to the same extent.

[28] Lott, Love and Theft, p. 25.

[29] "HEC Montreal Froshies Wear Blackface," McGill Daily, http://www.mcgilldaily.com/2011/09/hec-montreal-froshies-wear-blackface (date of last access 28 November 2014)

[30] "Montreal University Students don Blackface," CBC Montreal, http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/montreal-university-students-don-blackface-1.1113695 (date of last access 1 December 2014)

[31] "HEC Administrators apologize for students' blackface stunt," CTV News Montreal, http://montreal.ctvnews.ca/hec-administrators-apologize-for-students-blackface-stunt-1.699757 (date of last access 29 November 2014)

[32] All of these interviews were done anonymously to ensure that truthful opinions were expressed. Additionally, many students would not have participated in the interview if they were directly quoted and named.

[33] "HEC Administrators apologize for students' blackface stunt," CTV News Montreal http://montreal.ctvnews.ca/hec-administrators-apologize-for-students-blackface-stunt-1.699757 (date of last access 29 November 2014)

[34] "All Students' Society endeavors shall be undertaken with full respect for human dignity and without discrimination on the basis of irrelevant personal characteristics that include but are not limited to race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, gender identification, age, mental or physical disability, language, sexual orientation or social class." "SSMU Equity Policy," p. 65, http://ssmu.mcgill.ca/representation/ssmu-policies/ssmu-equity (date of late access 31 November 2014)

[35] This exchange was spoken in French.

[36] "What It's Like to See Blackface on Halloween as a Woman of Colour," Huffington Post http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/eternity-e-martis/blackface-halloween_b_6050876.html (date of last access 29 November 2014)

[37] A Legion Hall is similar to a community centre for the Royal Canadian Legion.

[38] The Klu Klux Klan is a group of people that have committed many violent atrocities against black people and was born during the Reconstruction period after the American Civil War. David Cunningham, Klansville, U.S.A: the rise and fall of the civil rights-era Ku Klux Klan (New York, US, Oxford University Press, 2013)

[39] Lott, Love and Theft, p. 29.

[40] "What It's Like to See Blackface on Halloween as a Woman of Colour," Huffington Post http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/eternity-e-martis/blackface-halloween_b_6050876.html (date of last access 29 November 2014)

[41] Interview, 3, Victoria Bonwell with anonymous white male student, McGill University, Montreal, Canada, 26 November 2014.

[42] Racial issues and white supremacy are not solely present among students, but also within the institution's faculty. It often falls upon the small minority of black faculty members of Canadian universities to further educate their students and peers on issues surrounding race and privilege. See Charmaine A. Nelson, "Toppling the 'Great White North': Tales of a Black Female Professor in Canadian Academia," The Black Professorate: Negotiating a Habitable Space, eds. Sandra Jackson and Richard Gregory Johnson III (New York: Peter Lang, 2011), pp. 108-34.

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PERSISTENCE AND WOUND: AN EXAMINATION OF REBECCA BELMORE'S FRINGE
Klea Hawkins

Figure 1: Rebecca Belmore, Fringe (2008), backlit transparency in lightbox, 3 x 8 m, Photo: Courtesy of the artist.

A report released by the RCMP in 2013, revealed that over 1,000 aboriginal women either disappeared or were murdered in Canada between 1980 and 2012.[1] While aboriginal[2] women represent only 4.3 percent of the entire Canadian population, they "account for 16 percent of female homicides and 11.3 percent of missing women."[3] Despite widespread public outcry and a United Nations call for a national inquiry,[4] violence towards Canada's aboriginal women, as Rachel Deutsch notes, "has extended into the present day with no sign of abating and often involving the same groups and same patterns of violence as two or three hundred years ago."[5]

It is against this shocking background of ongoing racist and sexist violence directed towards aboriginal women in Canada that Rebecca Belmore (b. 1960), a Canadian Anishinaabe artist, and member of the Lac Seul First Nations, has operated since the late 1980s.[6] As a politically and socially engaged, self-proclaimed feminist artist, Belmore, through performance, installation, film, sculpture, and photography, has explored themes including "social and economic injustice, environmental issues, as well as personal issues of identity, loss and love."[7] Often seeking out public spaces in which to display and/or perform her art, Belmore critiques received histories and challenges gallery and/or museum institutions by representing the violence inflicted upon the colonized aboriginal body.[8]

Particularly representative of Belmore's engagement with issues raised by this crisis of continuing colonial violence is her 2008 installation and photographic work, Fringe [fig. 1]. In 2008, photography was a relatively new medium for Belmore, which she "wanted to explore … not as a question (a theme) but as a wound."[9] It is through Fringe that she speaks to the colonial history and violence of photography, which has long worked to claim aboriginal identity through so-called objective means of representation.[10] Sexualized and stereotyped photographic depictions of Native women from the nineteenth century have continued to feed into and fuel contemporary society's racist imaginary. It is particularly the imagery of the so-called Squaw, engrained within western colonial thought, which has contributed to aboriginal women's ongoing objectification and victimization.[11] While Fringe recalls sexualized depictions of the aboriginal

Figure 2: Rebecca Belmore, Fringe (2008), backlit transparency in lightbox, 3 x 8 m, Billboard installation for Plan Large, Quartier Ephemere, corner Duke and Ottawa, Montreal, Canada.

female body thereby inviting the colonial male gaze, the inclusion of a wound inscribed on the aboriginal woman's back simultaneously disrupts this gaze.

Belmore shares with semiologist and critic Roland Barthes the notion of photography as a wound. For Barthes, there are two categories of photograph: the *punctum* and the *studium*. The *studium,* states Barthes, "are photographs I am interested in, whether I receive them as political testimony or enjoy them as good historical scenes." The *punctum,* however, "is the second element which will break or puncture the *studium*. This time it is not I who seek it out, it is this element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me."[12] Belmore's Fringe constantly oscillates between *studium* and *punctum.* Fringe is at once disquieting and soothing, shocking and comforting, heavy and hopeful, abject and beautiful. Moreover, it is through these constant oscillations that the image speaks to the colonial violence inflicted upon the aboriginal female body – both past and present – and finally, engages with notions of healing and endurance through cultural practice and survival. Despite the violence, Fringe suggests that aboriginal cultural traditions survive and so too do aboriginal people.

Fringe was first presented as a large scale photographic installation displayed on the scaffolding for a commercial billboard on the corners of Duke and Ottawa streets in Montreal [fig. 2], overlooking the Autoroute Bonaventure, a major expressway.[13] Fringe's initial audience was the tens of thousands of drivers and passengers speeding daily into the city's centre. Seen from a distance, the piece would have appeared similar to other billboard advertisements. An artfully posed nearly nude female, seen from the back, reclines on white sheets. It is an ad man's cliché, the banal sort of sexually exploitative image used to sell everything from deodorant to vacation packages. It is the sort of image we have all seen thousands of times and one that is, at the same time, deeply rooted in both art historical and colonialist practices.

Since its introduction in the nineteenth century, photography has worked to classify, categorize and mark bodies. "Photography has helped not only to record but also to shape our

current violent predicaments of race, class, and gender," remarks Laura Wexler.[14] Documenting the so-called "doomed and vanishing races"[15] of the "New World," photography was an oppressive tool through which expansionists, missionaries, and colonialists alike could objectify, assimilate, and exert power and control over the bodies of the "wild" and "unruly" Native populations. Photography turned the pictured subjects into objects. It disavowed and stripped the Native populations of identity by locking them into a racialized hierarchical system – they were anything and everything the colonizer was not, the nameless, faceless "other". Perceived as a threat, for they did not abide by Eurocentric ideas of "civility," Native peoples became objects of the colonial or ethnographic gaze.[16] As Jonathan Schroder has noted, "to gaze implies more than to look at – it signifies a psychological relationship of power, in which the gazer is superior to that of the object of the gaze."[17] The colonial or ethnographic gaze "fixes the colonized in the position of 'Other' and expects it to behave in accordance with the expectations of the colonizer," state Sagarika Chattopadhyay and Amarjeet Nayak.[18] With the development of commercial photography, the bodies of Native women were turned into sexual commodities for the pleasure of the male colonist viewer. Often staging young Native girls and women in sexually suggestive poses, colonial commercial photographers were further able to impose Eurocentric gendered patriarchal norms onto the bodies of these young women while simultaneously affirming their status as "other".[19]

Figure 3: Will Soule, Wichita Woman (Squaw 2), (ca. 1867), albumen print, 17.8 x 12.7 cm, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., United States.

Fringe engages and deconstructs these practices recalling as it does nineteenth-century commercial photographs of the sexually available "Squaw." Aleta Ringlero has suggested that nineteenth-century photographers such as Will Soule may have been drawing on the western art historical tradition of depicting the "sleeping Venus, odalisque, and unwrapped goddess." [20] Will Soule's photograph of a Wichita woman [fig. 3], for example, shares an uncanny resemblance to Édouard Manet's Olympia [fig. 4].[21] In a similar vein, Fringe recalls Auguste-Dominique Ingres' La Grande Odalisque [fig. 5].[22] If North American commercial photographers were indeed drawing on European high art traditions of the nude, they would have certainly known of the marketability of these "Squaw" images in both the Americas and across the Atlantic. The "Squaw" photographs, like those of the odalisque, fed into the dangerous game of attraction and repulsion. While the white western male secretly desired the nude body of the "primitive," "exotic," Native female body, he was simultaneously disgusted by it, for it was a site of

Figure 4: Édouard Manet, <u>Olympia</u>, (1863), oil on canvas, 130. 5 x 190 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.

difference – a racialized "other". Due to the Native female's otherness, the western male viewer could assert his sense of dominance over her body, as well as reassure himself of his superiority.[23]

As Belmore states, photography is itself a "wound" in the history and representation of aboriginal peoples, and as the viewer examines <u>Fringe</u> more closely, this becomes increasingly apparent. <u>Fringe</u> is clearly no ordinary billboard advertisement. There is no obvious product being marketed and the seemingly banal, clichéd yet visually appealing image – in Barthes terms the *stadium* – is transformed by a massive abject wound running diagonally across this unidentified and unknown aboriginal woman's back, dripping copious amounts of what seems to be blood. This horrific wound, inflicted by some unknown assailant, "appears to have been made in one long slash."[24] The viewer's perception of and reaction to the image thus transforms rapidly into what Barthes describes as the piercing, wounding *punctum*. While the reclining nude initially invites the male gaze, the gash simultaneously upsets and repels it. The comfortable and racialized scopophilic gaze is disrupted by the clear evidence of an act of horrific and disfiguring violence. By continuing to gaze, the viewer is first confronted with and then becomes implicated in this violence – it is impossible to shy away from.

Moving yet closer, the viewer becomes aware that this wound is in fact sutured with thin white thread. Thus, although forever scarred, this traumatized body may (it seems) eventually heal. What had appeared to be drops of blood oozing from the sutured gash are in fact red-glass Anishnaabe beads and their placement recalls the beaded fringes found on many First Nations handcrafted garments.[25] The presence of the beads suggests that in the face of colonialist racist and gender based violence, aboriginal cultural traditions endure, and it is these traditions, states Viviane Gray, that "have contributed to our survival."[26] Thus while the timeless female Native
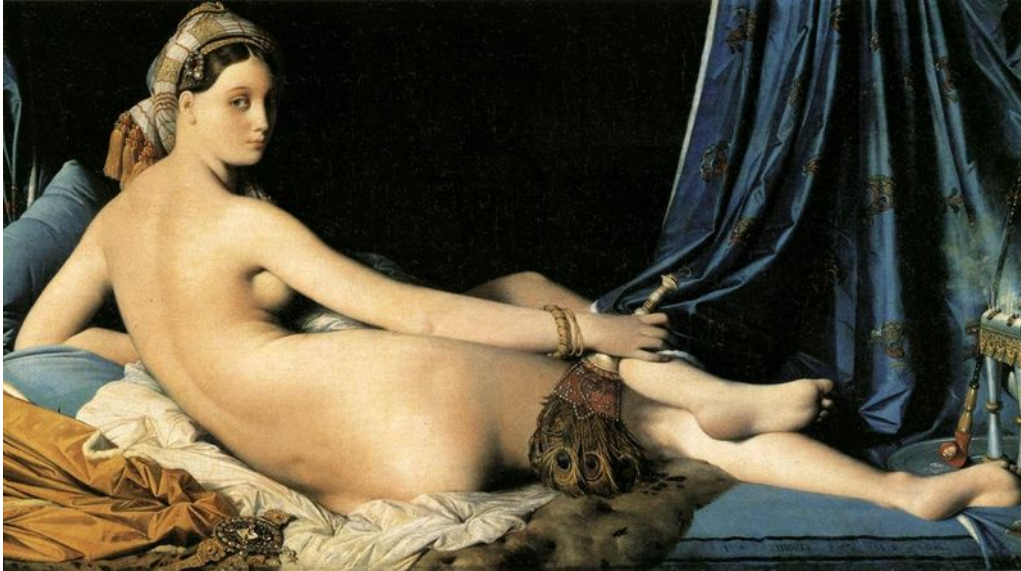
Figure 5: Jean-Auguste Dominique Ingres, La Grande Odalisque, (1814),
oil on canvas, 91 x 162 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

body has been and continues to be a site of colonial violence, racial and gendered hatred, it is through Native identity and cultural practices that she will endure and perhaps ultimately heal.

The devalued and sexualized nineteenth-century photographic imagery of the Native woman as "Squaw," or prostitute, has its roots in the moments of first contact with Europeans. As Robert Young has noted, "colonialism was always locked into the machine of desire." [27] One of the first recorded encounters between European colonizers and an aboriginal woman is a powerful testament describing the appalling abuse and sexual violence directed towards Native women:

> "I wanted to put my desire into execution but she did not want it and treated me with her fingernails in such a manner that I wished I had never begun. But seeing that (to tell you the end of it all), I took a rope and thrashed her well, for which she raised such unheard of screams that you would not have believed your ears. Finally, we came to an agreement in such manner that I can tell you she seemed to have been brought up in a school of harlots."[28]

This European colonizer felt entitled to possess the body of the aboriginal woman. She was a "harlot" after all, and not an individual – not a human being. "Like the land itself," states Barbara Perry, "the people – especially the women – were seen as free for the taking."[29] As Shandra Spears has noted, "the colonizer living with a 'civilized,' sexually repressive culture projects his or her own sexuality onto the colonized. This is particularly important when dealing with Indigenous women, as it is the 'loose, sexually-available squaw' image which most often leads to [their] sexualized victimization."[30] In other words, it is as a result of racist, sexist and colonialist discourse surrounding the notion of the Native woman, a discourse that continues to victimize Native women in the twenty-first century.

Fringe not only dissects the colonial past as it is embedded in the image, but it also engages with the present as well. In December 2007, only months before Fringe was created,

Robert Pickton, the infamous former pig-farmer from British Columbia, was convicted of the second-degree murders of six women.[31] He was also charged in the deaths of an additional twenty women, many of whom were coping with addiction problems and working in the sex-trade in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver. Over half of Pickton's victims were aboriginal.[32] This over-representation is yet another clear indicator of the racial hatred that still prevails in contemporary Canadian society. In media reports circulating at the time, these women were described as "remains," "bodies," and "vanished women."[33] They thus appear lacking wholeness, argues Deutsch.[34] This notion of a lack of wholeness is also apparent in Fringe, suggested by the gaping wound.[35] Moreover, like the unidentified missing women of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, Belmore's image of a Native female body also remains unknown, unidentified and nameless. With her back turned to the viewer, she refuses to return the gaze. She could be anyone. She is, in fact, anyone, a nobody. Contemporary Canadian society's refusal to acknowledge aboriginal women as human individuals is reflected in the government's (non) response to the murders and disappearances of aboriginal women. Their lives are too often dismissed and devalued because they are seen as nothing more than mere street corner prostitutes. It is the largely unacknowledged but dangerous racist colonial stereotype of the "Squaw," the sexually available "loose" woman, which has had such very real and very tragic repercussions for Native women in Canada.

Thus, while Fringe is itself a staged photographic fiction, it presents a much more honest depiction of the situation of Native women in Canada – both past and present – than the colonialist "objective" ethnographic and commercial photographic depictions of Native women from the nineteenth century. Fringe is then, finally, the *punctum,* or the traumatic, abject wound which speaks a truth. In other words, that which is real *is* the wound. As Hal Foster has argued, "the violated body is often the evidentiary basis of important witnessing of truth, of necessary testimonials against power."[36] Fringe and the wound it portrays then affirm this unidentified Native woman's identity. Symbolically speaking, all aboriginal women carry this scar, for they are each forever marked by their sex and gender, as well as by their racial and ethnic identity.

However, to say that this work is only about victimization, violence, and trauma would be to deny the agency of this aboriginal woman or aboriginal women more generally. Fringe is about overcoming pain – about having the ability and strength to heal.[37] It is about endurance and perseverance. The abject wound thus also becomes something beautiful, drawing the viewer in. The beaded fringe itself, a symbol of Native female craftwork, identity, culture, and beauty, becomes a solace and a source of healing and empowerment. Rebecca Belmore herself states of the piece:

> "Some people look at this reclining figure and think that it is a cadaver, but I look at it and I don't see that. I see it as a wound that is on the mend. It wasn't self-inflicted, but nonetheless, it is bearable. She can sustain it. So it is a very simple scenario. She will get up and go on, but she will carry that mark with her."[38]

Thus, although forever scarred and wounded this aboriginal woman will endure. Her survival is dependent on her Native culture, identity and history – dependent on her so-called otherness. Despite the ongoing colonial violence, with which Fringe engages, this unknown aboriginal woman has the strength to heal. The violence does not define her and empowerment remains possible.

ENDNOTES

[1] "Wynne Slams Harper over Missing, Murdered Aboriginal Women Comments," CBC News, http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/wynne-slams-harper-over-missing-murdered-aboriginal-women-comments-1.2744668 (date of last access 6 December 2014)

[2] Throughout the essay, I have used the terms aboriginal, Indigenous and Native interchangeably for the peoples who first inhabited the regions that became Canada, prior to colonial contact with Europeans.

[3] "Wynne Slams Harper," (date of last access 6 December 2014)

[4] Mike Blanchfield, "Canada Rejects UN Call for Review of Violence against Aboriginal Women," The Globe and Mail, http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/canada-to-reject-un-panels-call-for-review-of-violence-on-aboriginal-women/article14406434/ (date of last access 6 December 2014)

An official national inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women was finally launched in August 2016 under the new Liberal government of prime minister Justin Trudeau. However, the inquiry, described as "beleaguered," has suffered major setbacks. Ashifa Kassam, "Canadian Inquiry into Murdered Indigenous Women may end empty," The Guardian, 10 August 2017 https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/aug/10/canadian-murdered-indigenous-women-invesitgation-staff-losses (29 December 2017)

[5] Rachel Deutsch, "Rebelling Against Discourses of Denial and Destruction: Mainstream Representations of Aboriginal Women and Violence; Resistance through the Art of Rebecca Belmore and Shelly Niro," (Toronto: MA Department of Social Work, University of Toronto, 2008), p. 9.

[6] Viviane Gray, "A Culture of Art: Profiles of Contemporary First Nations Women Artists," Restoring the Balance: First Nations Women, Community, and Culture, eds. Gail Guthrie Valaskakis, Madeleine Dion Stout, and Eric Guimond (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2009), p. 273. Lac Seul First Nation is located on the southeastern shore of Lac Seul in northern Ontario.

[7] Gray, "A Culture of Art," p. 273.

[8] Deutsch, "Rebelling Against Discourses," p. 38.

[9] Kathleen Ritter, "The Reclining Figure and Other Provocations," Rebecca Belmore: Rising to the Occasion, eds. Diana Augaitis and Kathleen Ritter (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 2008), p. 62.

[10] Amber-Dawn Bear Robe, "Rebecca Belmore's Performance of Photography," Aboriginal Curatorial Collective, http://www.aboriginalcuratorialcollective.org/features/bearrobe.html (date of last access 3 December 2014)

[11] "Squaw" Def. 1 Oxford Dictionaries Online, http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/squaw (date of last access 3 December 2014) Squaw, defined as an aboriginal woman or wife, is often considered an offensive and derogatory term used to demean Native women.

[12] Laura Wexler, "Seeing Sentiment: Photography, Race, and the Innocent Eye," Female Subjects in Black and White: Race, Psychoanalysis, Feminism, eds. Elizabeth Abel, Barbara Christian, and Helene Moglen (Berkley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 160-161.

[13] Ritter, "The Reclining Figure," p. 62.

[14] Wexler, "Seeing Sentiment," p. 181.

[15] Aleta M. Ringlero, "Prairie Pinups: Reconsidering Historic Portraits of American Indian Women," <u>Only Skin Deep: Changing Visions of the American Self</u>, eds. Coco Fusco and Brian Wallis (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Incorporated, 2003), p. 186.

[16] Robe, "Rebecca Belmore's Performance," (date of last access 3 December 2014)

[17] Shandra Spears, "Re-Constructing the Colonizer: Self-Representation by First Nations Artists," <u>Atlantis</u>, vol. 29, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 2005), p. 132.

[18] Sagarika Chattopadhyay and Amarjeet Nayak, "Performing the Stare in Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*," <u>Disability and the Global South</u>, vol. 1, no. 1 (2014), p. 33.

[19] Spears, "Re-Constructing the Colonizer," p. 131.

[20] Ringlero, "Prairie Pinups," p. 183.

[21] Ringlero, "Prairie Pinups," p. 190.

[22] Ritter, "The Reclining Figure," p. 63.

[23] Spears, "Re-Constructing the Colonizer," p. 132.

[24] Ritter, "The Reclining Figure," p. 62.

[25] Ritter, "The Reclining Figure," p. 62; Sherry Farrell Racette, "What Stories do these Garments Tell," <u>Wearing Our Identity: The First Peoples Collection</u>, eds. Suzanne Sauvage, Guislaine Lemay, and Sherry Farrell Racette (Montreal: McCord Museum, 2013), pp. 16-18. Glass beads, first acquired through trade in the seventeenth century became an integral element in Native decorative arts. Beadwork more specifically stands as an essential medium for the expression of female artistry and creativity. Beaded aboriginal garments can be understood as a visual text, through which women expressed the identity, history and culture of their tribes. Ornamented garments were not separate from but were rather an extension of the body and were imbued with spiritual qualities.

[26] Gray, "A Culture of Art," p. 270.

[27] Robert Young, "The Cultural Politics of Hybridity," <u>The Post-Colonial Studies Reader</u>, 2nd ed., eds. Bill Ashcroft et al. (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 161.

[28] Barbara Perry, "A History of Violence: Colonization of America," <u>Silent Victims: Hate Crimes against Native Americans</u> (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2008), p. 34.

[29] Perry, "Silent Victims," p. 34.

[30] Spears, "Re-Constructing the Colonizer," p. 132.

[31] "Pickton now a Convicted Serial Killer," <u>Canada.com,</u> <u>http://www.canada.com/topics/news/story.html?id=9fefd5df-acf7-4cbf-b254-ead666c00f58</u> (date of last access 6 December 2014)

[32] Elizabeth Kalbfleish, "Bordering on Feminism: Space, Solidarity, and Transnationalism in Rebecca Belmore's *Vigil*," <u>Indigenous Women and Feminism: Politics, Activism, Culture</u>, eds. Cheryl Suzack et al. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), p. 280.

[33] Deutsch, "Rebelling Against Discourses," p. 53.

[34] Deutsch, "Rebelling Against Discourses," p. 53.

[35] The title of the work, <u>Fringe</u>, of course, can be seen as an allusion to the marginal position of the Native woman on the "fringes" of society.

[36] Hal Foster, "Obscene, Abject, Traumatic," <u>October</u>, vol. 78 (Autumn, 1996), p. 123.

[37] Although the wound has been hastily or unprofessionally sutured, the fact that the gash has indeed been mended implies that someone else has come to this unknown woman's aid (since surely its position on her back means that she could not have done the suturing herself).

[38] Ritter, "The Reclining Figure," p. 65.

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STAMPED OUT: THE CASE AND COMMEMORATION OF VIOLA DESMOND
Erica Morassutti

On 9 November 1946, a thirty-two-year-old woman named Viola Desmond was convicted of tax evasion in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia. While attending a movie premiere at the *Roseland Theatre* the night before, Desmond allegedly violated the province's Theatre and Amusements Act, which required that each patron pay a percentage of amusement tax on theatre tickets.[1] The *Roseland Theatre* sold two types of tickets – forty-cent tickets for main floor seats, which included two cents of tax, and thirty-cent tickets for seats on the balcony, which included one cent of tax. Despite having been sold a balcony ticket, Desmond chose a seat on the main floor. Having purchased a balcony ticket – and thus having paid only one cent in tax, as opposed to two – Desmond had allegedly defrauded the province of the grand total of one cent. After a brief verbal confrontation with theatre personnel in which she refused to relocate to the balcony, Desmond was forcibly removed from the theatre by two policemen and spent the night in jail.[2] Her trial was heard in a local court the next morning,

Figure 1: Anonymous, "Mrs. Viola Desmond," (1946), print, The Clarion, p.1, newspaper microfilm 4350, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada.

where she was convicted of tax evasion and forced to pay a twenty-six-dollar fine.[3]

Such is the tale told by the court records of the trial. Neither the fact that Viola Desmond was black nor that she had attempted to purchase a main floor ticket and was refused one on the basis of her race were discussed during the trial, and consequently do not appear on the record. Accordingly, the true significance of the case was obscured and would have remained so had Desmond not taken further legal action. Today, Viola Desmond is remembered as the first black woman in Canada to take legal action against racial segregation – a claim based on reported cases only, leaving to the imagination the number of cases whose legal documentation similarly obscured the issue of race.[4]

This essay will explore the case of Viola Desmond and its initial repression from and later establishment within Canadian historical memory through various acts of commemoration. After a brief discussion of segregation practices in mid-twentieth-century Nova Scotia, I will examine the photograph of Desmond featured in newspaper coverage of her case. This photo of Desmond, who was the owner of a successful beauty parlour in Halifax at the time of her

conviction, affirmed her identity as a prominent and refined member of the black middle-class – an identity that served to garner community support and strengthen her case in the eyes of both the black and white communities. Next, I will analyze the visual culture of Desmond's posthumous commemoration. Focusing on the permanent installation of her portrait in the historic Government House of Halifax and her appearance on a Canadian postage stamp, I argue that the establishment of Viola Desmond as an important figure in Canadian memory is a task of critical importance.

Part I: Nova Scotia's Black Population and Segregation Laws

Nova Scotia has a complex discriminatory past characterized by racial segregation. While a comprehensive illustration of this history is beyond the scope of this article, some facts are worth noting in order to contextualize the social climate in which Desmond's case unfolded. Originally known as the "hub of Canada's black citizenry,"[5] the existing black population of Nova Scotia was considerably augmented by the arrival of three thousand free blacks following the American Revolutionary War[6] – soldiers who had promised their loyalty to the British army and received freedom and land grants from the Crown in return.[7] Subsequent waves of black migration to Nova Scotia occurred with the British deportation of Jamaican Maroons in 1796, the aftermath of the War of 1812, and the abolition of slavery in Canada in 1834.[8] By the mid-twentieth century, 37 percent of Canada's black population lived in Nova Scotia.[9]

At that time, the practice of racial segregation in Canadian public establishments was not enshrined in law, but existed nonetheless.[10] Lacking the "Jim Crow" ordinances that enforced segregation in the United States, other laws were manipulated to achieve similar effects – particularly in the provinces of Ontario and Nova Scotia, where the black population was most concentrated.[11] Whether or not relegation to balcony seating was a typical experience for black theatre patrons is difficult to determine, due to the unofficial nature of Canadian segregation. Also, it seems to have varied from theatre to theatre. When African-American entertainer Paul Robeson performed in a production of Othello at the *Royal Alexandra Theatre* in Toronto, he refused to appear unless black patrons were allowed seating in all sections – a statement that suggests segregation was in practice at that particular theatre at that time.[12] However, Desmond seemed to have been unfamiliar with the unwritten segregation policy at the *Roseland Theatre*.[13] The white theatre proprietor who ordered her removal framed the practice as a matter of preference rather than prejudice: "it is customary for [blacks] to sit together in the balcony […] there was no discrimination."[14]

No court in Nova Scotia had yet ruled on the legitimacy of racial segregation in public establishments.[15] Successful lawsuits involving black patrons forcibly removed from such establishments had never addressed the issue of racial equality. Instead, courts had found the defendant companies liable for breach of contract.[16] According to court records, Desmond was the first Canadian in history to launch a civil suit seeking justice for discriminatory treatment on the basis of race.

Part II: The Case and Public Image of Viola Desmond

Seeking public vindication for the discrimination she had suffered, Desmond sought support from both black and white members of the community. Such support was acquired through the publication of her story in local newspapers, which featured an image of Desmond

that buttressed her identity as an upstanding middle-class citizen with an image of feminine propriety. This image appeared in The Clarion, a black-owned New Glasgow bulletin that ran the story of Desmond's forcible ejection from the *Roseland Theatre* on its front page [fig. 1].[17] Denouncing the event as a "disgraceful incident," the article was placed next to an advertisement soliciting donations for the Viola Desmond Court Fund.[18] Juxtaposed with this condemnation of the event and call for community support was a large black-and-white headshot of Desmond. Desmond was often described by those who knew her as being "'elegantly coiffed," and "beautifully attired… [her] nails, makeup and hair done with great care."[19] These characteristics are all evident in the photograph, in which Desmond smiles sweetly, her luxurious dark hair swept back from her face in an elegant style complemented by fashionable earrings and neatly applied dark lipstick. In clear lettering, the caption of the photo reads, "Mrs. Viola Desmond."

The appearance of her hairstyle is of particular significance. Since the 1920's, the texture of straightened hair had signified middle-class status for black women in many parts of the west.[20] Accordingly, Desmond had grown up in a generation that was socialized with the idea that straightened hair was synonymous with refinement, since the natural texture of black hair was vilified as a marker of difference and inferiority.[21] The deliberate modification of her natural hair texture to adhere to a dominant (white) beauty standard was an assimilatory cultural practice intended to enhance her appearance of middle-class refinement.[22] Such conformity with customary gendered expectations of middle-class femininity may have endeared her to the white population. In addition to her tasteful style with jewelry and cosmetics, the prominent identification of her status as a married woman also contributed to the impression of Desmond as an attractive, refined and respectable middle-class black woman – an impression that would render Desmond a sympathetic figure to both the black and white communities.[23]

It is important to note that black women were generally denied the same claim to class and femininity as white women.[24] However, Desmond – who was a celebrated beautician in Halifax at the time – embodied a certain standard of middle-class feminine respectability.[25] The juxtaposition of a photograph depicting a "refined, demonstrably feminine woman" with a story of her being violently manhandled by two men was an affront to contemporary standards of appropriate gender relations, playing upon the sympathies of the 1940's white ideology of chivalry.[26] This act posed the question of whether or not this model of chivalry could be extended to a black woman injured by white men, allowing Desmond to be seen by the public as a wronged "lady." Perhaps it was successful, as the advertisement ultimately received strong financial support from across the province, with even more white donors than black.[27]

The fact that Desmond was the celebrated owner of a successful beauty parlour in Halifax at the time of her conviction was also an important variable in securing community support. Her status as a prosperous entrepreneur in her own right would have underscored the indignity of discriminatory treatment.[28] Her business – a beauty parlour named *Vi's Studio for Beauty Culture* (est. 1937) – had flourished in spite of the economic barriers that often precluded the success of such initiatives for black Canadians.[29] At the time, black women in Nova Scotia worked primarily as domestic servants or as schoolteachers in districts dependent on white-run school boards.[30] Beauty became one of the only lucrative industries in which black women exerted full control.[31] As described by Wanda Robson, Desmond's younger sister, "In those days, there wasn't a black woman working in a professional beauty shop in Halifax. If you went to a beauty parlour and you were black […] you'd be refused. Viola started her business, and the women came to her."[32] Providing a devoted clientele of both black and white women with services including hairdressing and wig styling, Desmond was able to establish a strong base of

connections.[33] Her reputation as a talented woman and role model who succeeded in spite of the "racial odds and the masculine rhetoric of business" in the 1940's underscored the affront of her case in the eyes of the community and supported her struggle against racial injustice.[34]

While Desmond's defiance of racial discrimination had successfully galvanized the community, her appeal to the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia was ultimately dismissed.[35] Bitterly disappointed, Desmond withdrew from the public eye. The entire ordeal had taken a significant toll on her personal life.[36] Her husband had not supported her lawsuit, fearing that it would exacerbate racial tensions in the community, and they eventually separated.[37] Desmond abandoned her dream of expanding her beauty business into a national franchise.[38] She closed shop altogether and began to invest in real estate, hoping it would bring "greater security in a racially torn society."[39] She died unexpectedly in 1965 at the age of fifty of a gastro-intestinal hemorrhage. Reflecting upon her sister's death, Wanda Robson opined, "I don't think the world knew how important a person had just been lost. I think her story was pretty much forgotten. The *Roseland Theatre* was not mentioned in the obituaries. Twenty years had passed."[40]

Part III: The Commemoration of Viola Desmond

In her lifetime, Viola Desmond never received public vindication of the discrimination she had endured. However, on 15 April 2010 – forty-five years after her death – Lieutenant-Governor Mayann Francis invoked the Royal Prerogative of Mercy to grant Desmond a formal apology and free pardon on behalf of the province of Nova Scotia, the first posthumously awarded pardon in Canadian history.[41] This official recognition of Desmond's innocence and wrongful conviction explicitly acknowledged the "racial discrimination she was subjected to by the justice system in November of 1946."[42] In order to preserve an image of Viola Desmond as an important figure in Canadian memory, two visual forms of commemoration accompanied the pardon. Like the pardon itself, these commemorations expose a previously-denied history of race-based discrimination in Canada – a denial that resulted in Desmond's conviction in the first place. Ideally, their public exhibition would compel Canadian viewers to confront the racist legacy of their national past and examine its persisting effects in the present.

The first visual form of commemoration issued to accompany the free pardon was a formal portrait of Desmond [fig. 2]. Commissioned in 2010 by the Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia and the Town of New Glasgow, the portrait was painted by local artist David MacIntosh, who is renowned for his historic scenes of the province. The portrait was installed as a "permanent fixture" in the ballroom of Government House in Halifax – the official residence of the Lieutenant Governor, and the royal residence of the Queen when she visits the province.[43] Its location in a historic building tied to the Canadian monarch suggests Desmond is an important figure in Canadian history, and signifies the honour bestowed on her personage by virtue of her nationally recognized pardon.

The portrait offers a close view of Desmond, ending just above her waist. Emerging from a dark, undefined background to face the viewer, she appears exactly as she did in the photograph published in <u>The Clarion</u>, rendered now in oil on canvas. Her rich brown hair is swept back from her face in its signature style, accentuating her high forehead and berry-coloured lipstick. In contrast to <u>The Clarion</u> headshot, the portrait depicts a longer view of Desmond, revealing her to be clad in a long-sleeved navy-blue gown with a white peter pan collar. The combination of her serene expression, elegantly styled hair, makeup and jewelry, and

Figure 2: David MacIntosh, <u>Viola Desmond</u> (2010),
oil on canvas, 78.7 cm x 91.4 cm, Government
House, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada.

the resemblance of her conservative dress to official robes further confer upon Desmond the dignified aura of an important and respected public figure in Canadian history.

Her portrait is exhibited in the ballroom of Government House, with a collection of neoclassical portraits painted in the nineteenth century by the renowned English artist Robert Field.[44] These portraits feature various past Lieutenant Governors of Nova Scotia, their political advisors, and wives: Sir John Wentworth (who served as the Lieutenant Governor after fulfilling a term as the British colonial governor of New Hampshire during the American Revolution); his wife, Lady Frances Wentworth; Matthew Richardson, a wealthy shareholder in the Bank of the Dominion of Canada; his wife, Louisa Ann Mackintosh; Andrew Belcher, prominent Halifax merchant and son of Jonathan Belcher, who served a term as the Chief Justice of Nova Scotia; and Lieutenant Governor MacCallum Grant, among others.[45] Having been painted by Field, who was widely considered to have been the most prominent artist in Canada at the time of his arrival in 1808, these portraits are incredibly valuable.[46]

The act of installing the portrait of Desmond within the aforementioned collection is striking. Painted nearly a century later by a relatively obscure Canadian artist, Desmond's appearance as the only woman of colour (not to mention the sole woman pictured in her own right since the other women included in the collection are the wives of politicians) and the only civil rights hero seems utterly incongruous with the ballroom's portrait collection. However, her inclusion in the group indicates the posthumous recognition conferred upon Desmond due both to her legal hardship and her character. The placement of her portrait within a gallery of important political portraits housed in a historic building was likely intended to accord Desmond her long-overdue vindication. However, public access to Government House is highly restricted.[47] The establishment is often closed to the public for months at a time, so the limited nature of the portrait's access restricts, by extension, its commemorative power.

The second visual commemoration issued in honour of Desmond was the release of a Canadian postage stamp bearing her image for the duration of Black History Month in February 2012 [fig. 3]. While the portrait in Government House depicts Desmond as an important figure in Nova Scotian history, the postage stamp retells the story of the incident that brought Viola Desmond and anti-segregationist fervour into the public eye. <u>The Clarion</u> photograph of Desmond appears, superimposed over an illustration of the *Roseland Theatre*, whose marquee

bears the title of the movie Desmond attempted to see (The Dark Mirror, starring Olivia de Havilland and Lew Ayres.)[48] Three empty rows of theatre seats and a thirty-cent movie ticket are pictured below the marquee. A watermark of the official document of her free pardon completes the image.

The postage stamp has always existed as an element of nationalistic visual culture.[49] The act of printing Viola Desmond's story on a Canadian stamp thus purports to represent an important event in Canada's *nation-specific* history. In addition, it has the power to advertise Desmond's struggle and Canada's history of racial exclusion to the global community. At the time of the stamp's release, Wanda Robson expressed hope that the stamp would "prompt those outside the province to ask who [Desmond] was and what she did."[50] Free from the confines of a stationary and exclusive art gallery, the stamp's portable quality allows it to literally carry Desmond's story across provincial and international borders. Unfortunately, the production of the Viola Desmond stamp was temporary. The stamps were only available for purchase from Canada Post in 2012 and are currently not for sale. While the stamp accomplished the critical task of representing Desmond's struggle and explicitly referred to the nation's history of racial bias, the brevity of its production period – not to mention the ephemeral quality of individual stamps themselves – undercuts its commemorative power.

Figure 3: Lara Minja (designer), Canada Post (distributor), Canadian stamp featuring Viola Desmond, 32 mm x 40 mm, © 2012 Canada Post. Reprinted with permission.

In the words of Wanda Robson, "An apology is never enough. A free pardon is wonderful but it speaks of an event that should not have occurred."[51] Public acknowledgement of racial injustice puts this formal apology into practice. It forces a confrontation with the racist legacy of Canada's past and an examination of its persisting effects in the present. Initial acknowledgement of the indignity of Desmond's discriminatory treatment was achieved through the early construction of her public image as a prominent and refined member of the middle-class black community. Further acknowledgement was made through the visual culture of Desmond's posthumous commemoration, which offered a viable means of reversing the erasure and repression of racial bias in Canadian society. Despite the shortcomings of these commemorative forms – the restricted exhibition of the portrait to the public and the ephemeral nature of the stamp – the portrait will endure as a permanent reminder of racial segregation in Canada. Ultimately, the visual commemoration of Desmond's challenge to racial segregation in Canada is a project of critical importance, especially given the untold number of cases that, unlike hers, are left camouflaged in legal records. As Nelson argues, the failure to commemorate such events is to

"remain complicit in their forgetting," and ultimately to perpetuate the legacy of denial of racial bias in Canadian society.[52] To create tangible modes of remembrance is to refuse to let these instances of discrimination fall victim to obscurity and denial.

ENDNOTES

[1] Constance Backhouse, Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950 (Toronto: Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History by University of Toronto Press, 1999), p. 230.

[2] Backhouse, Colour-Coded, pp. 250-251; Wanda Robson, Sister to Courage: Stories from the World of Viola Desmond, Canada's Rosa Parks (Cape Breton: Breton Books, 2010), pp. 98-99, 105. Desmond attempted to resist being carried out of the theatre but, measuring only four foot eleven and ninety-six pounds, she was easily overpowered. She sustained several bruises from the incident and later sought medical treatment for her injuries.

[3] Merna Forster, 100 More Canadian Heroines: Famous and Forgotten Faces (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2011), p. 121.

[4] Backhouse, Colour-Coded, p. 409.

[5] Jennifer J. Nelson, Razing Africville: A Geography of Racism (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), p. 7.

[6] The existing black population would have been comprised of both enslaved and free people. The first recorded instance of a black person living in Nova Scotia dates back to the early seventeenth century.

[7] Backhouse, Colour-Coded, p. 235.

[8] Nelson, Razing Africville, p. 7.

[9] Les Perreaux, "Racism's Long History in Quiet East Coast Towns," The Globe and Mail, http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/racisms-long-history-in-quiet-east-coast-towns/article1241300/?page=all (date of last access 20 November 2014)

[10] Backhouse, Colour-Coded, pp. 250-51. Such discrimination was extended to access to employment, land grants, housing, education, and medical care. When Desmond sought medical treatment for the injuries she had suffered in the theatre incident, she was tended to by a black physician who, due to racial bias, was denied access to city hospitals and had to perform all procedures in his office.

[11] "Prejudice and Discrimination: The Canadian Encyclopedia," Historica Canada, http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/prejudice-and-discrimination/ (date of last access 1 December 2014)

[12] Backhouse, Colour-Coded, p. 411.

[13] A Halifax resident, Desmond was only a visitor to New Glasgow. On the night of the incident, she had been driving to Sydney. Her car just so happened to break down in New Glasgow, and she went to the *Roseland Theatre* to pass the time while waiting for it to be repaired.

[14] Backhouse, Colour-Coded, p. 232.

[15] Backhouse, Colour-Coded, p. 257.

[16] Backhouse, Colour-Coded, pp. 253-54. Backhouse cites the case of *Johnson* v *Sparrow* (1899), in which a black couple was awarded fifty dollars in damages for breach of contract after being barred from the orchestra section of the Montreal Academy of Music despite having purchased tickets. The trial judge reasoned, "Any regulation which deprived negroes … privileges which all other members of the community had a right to demand, was not only unreasonable but entirely incompatible with our free democratic institutions." As Backhouse

notes, the ruling was affirmed by the Quebec Court of Queen's Bench on appeal, but exclusively focused on the breach of contract, holding that the issue of racial equality did not merit direct address.

[17] Founded by social justice advocate Carrie Best, The Clarion was the first black-owned, black-published newspaper in Nova Scotia.

[18] "The Clarion: Viola Desmond Edition," Carrie M. Best: A Digital Archive, http://www.parl.ns.ca/carriebest/clarionpage.html (date of last access 1 December 2014)

[19] Brian Murray, A Long Road to Justice: The Viola Desmond Story (2012), film, 44 minutes, Communications Nova Scotia, Canada.

[20] Noliwe Rooks, Hair Raising: Beauty, Culture, and African American Women (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996), p. 75. Cited by Cheryl Thompson, "Black Women, Beauty, and Hair as a Matter of Being," Women's Studies: An Inter-Disciplinary Journal, vol. 38, no. 8 (October 2009), p. 835.

[21] Tiffany M. Gill, Beauty Shop Politics: African-American Women's Activism in the Beauty Industry (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), p. 3.

[22] Thompson, "Black Women," p. 832.

[23] Initial support for Desmond's case in the black community was not unified. Some were reluctant to exacerbate existing racial tensions in Nova Scotia, and others expressed concerns about the futility of using the law to confront racial segregation. Ultimately, those who did not support her case feared it might do more harm than good to the black community.

[24] Backhouse, Colour-Coded, p. 244; Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race," Signs, vol. 17, no. 2 (Winter, 1992), p. 261. In her discussion of racial configurations of gender and class in nineteenth-century America, Higginbotham remarks, "segregation's meaning for gender was exemplified in the trope of 'lady.' Ladies were not merely women; they represented a class, a differentiated status within the generic category of 'women'… No black woman, regardless of income, education, refinement, or character, enjoyed the status of lady."

[25] Backhouse, Colour-Coded, p. 244.

[26] Backhouse, Colour-Coded, p. 243.

[27] Backhouse, Colour-Coded, p. 411. This was an especially noteworthy achievement because The Clarion was a publication intended for New Glasgow's black population.

[28] Backhouse, Colour-Coded, p. 243.

[29] Colin McFarquhar, "The Black Occupational Structure in Late-Nineteenth Century Ontario: Evidence from the Census," Racism Eh?: A Critical Inter-Disciplinary Anthology of Race and Racism in Canada, eds. Camille A. Nelson and Charmaine A. Nelson (Concord, Ontario: Captus Press, 2004), pp. 53-60. Discussing the racial forces that shaped the occupational structure of nineteenth-century Ontario, McFarquhar notes that black workers were systematically relegated to low-paying, blue collar professions. Their overrepresentation in service jobs, barbering and hairdressing especially, was influenced by the white refusal to hire, train or work alongside black employees. The conflation of race with a lower-class status created the perception of black entry into higher-skilled professions as "overreaching". There was also a long history of black labour accruing wealth for a dominant white population that resulted in the idea that blacks were naturally suited to jobs in service. Wanda Robson's observation that black women were typically excluded even from employment in Halifax's beauty service industry, constitutes a departure from the data collected by McFarquhar on Ontario and emphasizes the fact that Viola Desmond,

as the owner of a beauty parlour in her own right, may have been seen as uniquely impressive and successful.

[30] Gill, Beauty Shop Politics, p. 120.

[31] Gill, Beauty Shop Politics, pp. 3, 120.

[32] Wanda Robson, Sister to Courage, p. 40.

[33] Robson, Sister to Courage, p. 40.

[34] Gill, Beauty Shop Politics, p. 22.

[35] Ultimately, Desmond's appeal was dismissed on technical grounds rather than on the merits of her case. According to Wanda Robson, Desmond's lawyer "made choices that gave the judge an opportunity to quickly deny the case." Robson, Sister to Courage, p. 110. In lieu of a formal appeal, he attempted to submit a writ of certiorari to the Supreme Court – an action deemed inappropriate and rejected by Justice Maynard Brown Archibald. As Constance Backhouse notes, the lawsuit was ultimately framed in such a way that the real issues of racism were "shrouded in procedural technicalities." Backhouse, Colour-Coded, p. 270.

[36] Forster, 100 More Canadian Heroines, pp. 122-123.

[37] Robson, Sister to Courage, p. 110-111, Backhouse, Colour-Coded, p. 264.

[38] Ironically, on the fateful night of Desmond's arrest, she had been on her way to a business meeting in Sydney to discuss these plans. Her trip was interrupted when her car broke down in New Glasgow. She went to the *Roseland Theatre* on a whim while waiting for it to be repaired.

[39] Backhouse, Colour-Coded, p. 270.

[40] Robson, Sister to Courage, p. 161.

[41] Robson, Sister to Courage, p. 165. The idea for a free pardon arose following the production of various cultural forms that retold Desmond's story. As Wanda Robson put it, there were "always people who wanted to keep the 1946 events alive." While writing a legal history of racism in Canada, lawyer Constance Backhouse included a chapter analyzing Desmond's case (a chapter that has proved invaluable for the writing of this essay). Also, Canada's *National Film Board* created a documentary film about Desmond entitled Journey to Justice (2000). After seeing this documentary, CBC journalist Adrian Harewood interviewed Wanda Robson, and the two discussed the idea of a memorial for Desmond. Initially, the idea of a plaque at the *Roseland Theatre* was proposed – a possibility precluded by the fact that the theatre had since been converted into a grill pub. Robson contacted the mayor of New Glasgow to discuss alternative memorial plans. The mayor tabled the discussion with the rest of Town Council. Justice Minister Ross Landry contacted the Premier of Nova Scotia about the idea, and the Premier proposed the idea of an official free pardon extended on behalf of the provincial government.

[42] Robson, Sister to Courage, p. 165. Here, Robson is quoting the text of the pardon itself.

[43] Peter Clarke, "A Day of Recognition for Civil Rights Hero," The New Glasgow News, 16 August 2010, http://www.ngnews.ca/News/Local/2010-08-16/article-1673553/A-day-of-recognition-for-civil-rights-hero/1 (date of last access 25 November 2014)

[44] E-mail correspondence with a representative from Government House, December 8, 2014.

[45] E-mail correspondence with a representative from Government House, December 8, 2014.

[46] E-mail correspondence with a representative from Government House, December 8, 2014. The portrait of Lady Frances Wentworth was not painted by Field, but by the renowned colonial American portraitist John Singleton Copley, and is currently valued at approximately three million dollars.

[47] "Visiting Government House," <u>Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia,</u>
http://lt.gov.ns.ca/government-house/visiting-government-house (date of last access 10
December 2014)

[48] Robson, <u>Sister to Courage</u>, p. 95.

[49] Its low price point and high circulation render the stamp an accessible form of popular visual
culture as well.

[50] "Viola Desmond To Be Featured on Stamp," <u>CBC News</u>,
http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/viola-desmond-to-be-featured-on-stamp-1.1149417
(date of last access 10 December 2014)

[51] Robson, <u>Sister to Courage</u>, p. 167.

[52] Nelson, <u>Razing Africville</u>, p. 5.

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Figure 1: Anonymous, "Mrs. Viola Desmond," (1946), print, <u>The Clarion</u>, p.1, newspaper microfilm 4350, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada.

Figure 2: David MacIntosh, <u>Viola Desmond</u> (2010), oil on canvas, 78.7 cm x 91.4 cm, Government House, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada.

Figure 3: Lara Minja (designer), Canada Post (distributor), Canadian stamp featuring Viola Desmond, 32 mm x 40 mm, © 2012 Canada Post. Reprinted with permission.

DIVYA MEHRA AND THE ART OF FAILURE: ARTICULATING INDIAN IDENTITY IN POST 9/11 CANADA
Saad Rajper

In the last decade, the South Asian diaspora has acquired a strange position within the racial discourse of North America.[1] Heralded as "The new model minority," the disproportionate socioeconomic success of the population has created an image of the Indian American or Canadian as being highly educated and upwardly mobile.[2] As Susan Koshy states, the exceptionalism assigned to Indians in North America "emphasizes the anomalous status of South Asian Americans among racial minorities and embraces the rhetoric of color-blind meritocracy."[3] Yet, this discourse is also in tension with emerging post 9/11 counterterrorist policies which surveil and racially profile South Asian communities, othering brown bodies and rendering them as threats to the nation. The pervasiveness of the terrorist discourse disrupts the articulation of the model minority identity because it foregrounds difference in any understanding of South Asians and ultimately results in an increase of racism against South Asian communities. It is in this historical context that the art of contemporary multimedia artist Divya Mehra emerges.

Mehra's multimedia work, which includes text pieces, installation, and video art, brings together different forms of popular culture to create a humorous critique of race relations in Canada. Playing with the audience's expectations of her identity as a South Asian artist, Mehra's pieces successfully fail at producing a coherent sense of Indian identity, forcing the viewer to address their own ideas about what it means to be Indian-Canadian in the contemporary world. As Mehra herself describes it, "a general read across my work has to do with failure, it's a sentiment that a lot of people can relate to."[4] By analyzing Mehra's works in a post 9/11 Canadian landscape, I will address how this driving motif of failure which is embodied in the failure to assimilate, the failure to be anti-racist, and the failure to be understood, is used to parody the failure of Canadian multiculturalism. However, this failure does not merely serve as metaphor or parody, it also serves as a new body of knowledge through which to escape, "the punishing norms that discipline behavior."[5] Using the framework provided by Jack Halberstam in his book The Queer Art of Failure (2011), I also want to read Mehra's use of failure as the embrace of a new framework to understand the failing body of knowledge known as multiculturalism in order to envision new ways of existing in Canada's racial climate that do not reiterate capitalist, sexist, and racist ideas of success.

Divya Mehra was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba in 1981 to first generation Indian immigrants. As of 2011, South Asians are the third largest population group in Winnipeg, making up 3.5% of the city's population and comprising almost 22,940 of the 663,617 inhabitants.[6] The Winnipeg of the 1980s, in which Mehra grew up, had a very different racial landscape. According to the 1986 census, there were about 7,250 Manitobans of Indian origin in Winnipeg.[7] The Indian population represented a sizably smaller amount of the population in the 1980s than it does now. A study done by Vanaja Dhruvarajan documents the community's account of racial cohesion in the city. The study found that many perceive at least some prejudice and discrimination towards their ethnic group in all aspects of social life. The general opinion seems to be that it is due to ignorance and that making people aware of the details of Indian culture will solve the problem. It is believed that the initiative to do this should come from Asian Indians themselves, with assistance from the Canadian government. It is in this context

that many of them are very much in favour of multicultural policies that are adopted by the government.[8]

This study demonstrates that Mehra comes from a historical context in which South Asians bought heavily into the promise of the multiculturalism. Interestingly, the community also felt that it should be the initiative of Asian Indians themselves to make people aware of their culture, a claim that downplayed the structural level of racism in favor of a neoliberal model in which racism exists purely in the mind of the individual.

Many writers have written about the various ways in which these multiculturalist policies have failed. The post 9/11 era complicated the ways these policies effect the lives of South Asian communities because suddenly the population was seen as oppositional to the well-being of the state, and thus became difficult to incorporate into any understanding of Canadian cultural unity. Assimilation and economic success become the response to being seen as threatening, but Mehra disrupts this binary through rethinking the role of failure in her work. Halberstam looks for the "alternative to cynical resignation and naïve optimism on the other hand,"[9] suggesting that alternatives "dwell in the murky waters of a counterintuitive, often impossibly dark and negative realm of critique and refusal."[10] He locates this realm within the idea of failure, because for Halberstam, "under certain circumstances failing, losing, forgetting, unmaking, undoing, unbecoming, not knowing may in fact offer more creative, more cooperative, more surprising ways of being in the world."[11] Mehra's engagement with the concept of failure in her work allows for her to play with the binary oppositions of good vs. bad Indian in order to carve out a space for herself within the contentious moniker of Indian identity.

For Mehra, "the concept comes before the medium," [12] thus her art practice is less concerned with exploring a specific medium, but rather using a variety of mediums to explore herself. To begin understanding her work, I would like to look at a solo exhibition Mehra put on in 2012 for *La Maison Des Artistes* in Winnipeg titled, "You Have to tell Them, i'm not a Racist." The exhibition was staged in a gallery lined with what appears to be blank white walls against brown hardwood floors. All the windows were covered with white curtains and heavy overhead lighting hung above the audience, almost blinding the viewer with an overwhelming sense of whiteness. As one walked towards the white walls, they revealed to be large text pieces made out of white vinyl but were almost invisible until the viewer came right up to the piece. Even then, the viewing experience was uncomfortable and strained because the words remain difficult to decipher due to the physical conditions of the space. There were seven text pieces in the exhibition, but I will focus on one specific work to demonstrate how Mehra used the space of the gallery to facilitate a difficult and potentially failed experience of spectatorship, one that forces the audience into a relationship with the art that mirrors Mehra's relationship to the white dominated art world.

The first of the three text pieces I will look at is titled A sense of belonging to a Community is thus seen as a resource, like Capital (2012) [fig. 1]. The 297 cm (117") by 237.5 cm (93.5") piece reads, "i don't know any brown empowered," and in the bottom right corner stands alone the word "people." All of the text pieces in the exhibition are intertextual references to other aspects of culture (from comedy shows to academic texts) tied together by their relation to race. It would be difficult, probably impossible, for any one viewer to have knowledge of all the references, and the piece relies on this discrepancy in translation. Although I was unable to find an origin for the phrase "i don't know any brown empowered...people," the title of the piece is a sentence from noted Indian economist Amartya Sen's book Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny (2006).

To contextualize the quote, Sen discusses the way in which belonging to a certain identity group can be a form of social capital, but that this relies on the exclusion of others.[13] Titling a piece that says "i don't know any brown empowered...people" after a book which argues against a "solitarist" approach to identity and calls for a more intersectional look at identity, is a playful choice. By stopping at the word "brown," as opposed to browns or brown and another identity marker, and separating the majority of the sentence from the word "people," the sentence reduces the identity of the subject to their race, and the grammatical structure leaves the sentence feeling incomplete. The citation of Sen, a successful Indian academic who is considered empowering by many, is also an interesting choice because it creates a tension between what the sentence says and what the artist wants us to think about that sentence.

This reading of her piece assumes knowledge that would not be afforded to the average viewer. Viewers would not necessarily know the origin of the quote, or perhaps have familiarity with Amartya Sen. They would just see, or attempt to see, the words "i don't know any brown empowered...people" paired with a quote about identity and capital. In this way, Mehra is speaking to two levels of failure. The first is the failure of identity as a marker through which to understand one's self. The statement almost sounds racist, but coming from an Indian artist it becomes recontextualized as a statement about brown as an identity group as opposed to individual subjectivity. The other level of failure that the piece operates through is the failure to be understood, existing between artist and viewer, between artist and art world, and between white and brown. Mehra stages the work so the literal whiteness of the space makes it difficult for a potentially white
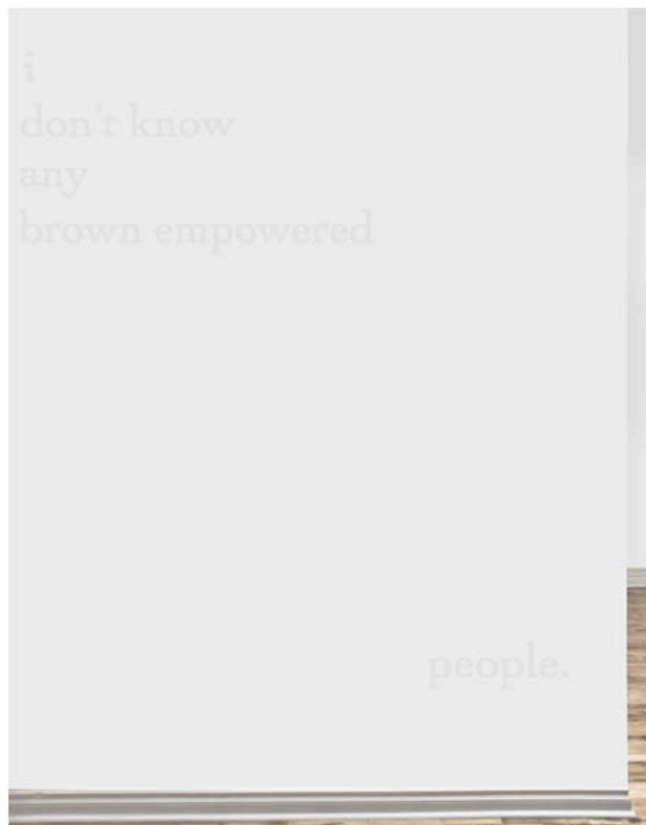
Figure 1: Divya Mehra, <u>A sense of belonging to a Community is thus seen as a resource, like Capital</u> (2012), acrylic vinyl and acrylic latex deep base paint, 117" x 93.5", La Maison Des Artistes, Winnipeg, Canada.

subject to navigate. She makes tangible the systemic presence of whiteness by creating a viewing space in which the colour becomes an obstacle for the white viewer who is otherwise able to ignore the dominance of whiteness.

This exhibition illustrates how Mehra is both informed by and rejects her parent's ideas about multiculturalism. Art is often considered a space of unity, an alternative utopian space in which the ideals of multiculturalism can be articulated without the realities of the everyday. By foregrounding whiteness in the space, she is disrupting the notion that such a space exists, instead of forcing viewers to see the ways in which the art world is implicated and complicit in racial hierarchies. Her emphasis on the systematic nature of racism counters her parent's neoliberal perceptions of racism as individually based. She rejects the idea that she should teach

white people about her culture and instead forces them to feel the discomfort she feels existing under the white supremacy of Canadian society.

Mehra continues to interrogate the role of the white spectator in her other works, specifically in her video piece The Importance of Being Earnest (2009). The two minute forty-one-second video shows Mehra in front of a green screen lip-synching to the song "A Whole New World" from the Disney film Aladdin (1992). Her performance, which mixes together elements of camp and humour, is projected over images of pastoral landscapes from India. As the video progresses, the projections behind her turn into images of violence and riots yet her performance remains the same, ultimately disrupting the affective nature of the song. In this video, Mehra takes an Orientalist text and interrupts its apolitical narrative by historicizing it through the inclusion of violent images that tell a counter history to the one provided by the child-friendly Disney soundtrack.

Mehra uses humour to draw the viewer in and then uses this same humour to implicate the viewer within the conflict of the video. The video is split into two parts; the first part includes her standing in front of the images as the male vocals are singing and the lyrics are shown beneath her. During this part of the video, her performance reads comically, her over exaggerated gestures and the wind blowing in her hair match the absurdity of the saccharine images in the background such as scenic rivers and mountains. There is an under pinning of discomfort that is derived from Mehra's acting which makes it seem as if she is failing to realize the racist implications of the performance. This feeling is part of the idea that comedy is not an appropriate way for an artist to talk about an issue as serious as race and violence. Mehra appears to be conscious of these reactions and uses the second half of the video to force the spectator to interrogate their relationship to the video.

The second half of the video changes the affective register of the whole work by showcasing images of violence and riots from Kashmir, a province on the border of India and Pakistan currently being fought over by the two countries.[14] Suddenly Mehra begins to sing along to the female vocals and creates a further disjunction between her performance and the images in the background. With the inclusion of these images, the song gets recontextualized from being about a magic carpet ride to being about the violence occurring in Kashmir. The lyrics "indescribable feelings" change from feelings of love to feelings of grief when the images in the background begin to depict people hysterically crying. Mehra's cheerful and dramatic acting begins to read sinisterly, making the viewer's potential laughter seem inappropriate.

Mehra refuses the audience's desire to engage in a static relationship with the work by always changing the context of the video and forcing the viewer to think about their role as the viewer for the duration of the video. She sets herself up as a symbol of failure in the video by performing in a style that elicits laughter and pity in viewers but then turns this feeling of pity around on the viewer to make this laughter uneasy by changing the subject from a joke to a conflict.[15] Halberstam suggests that, "While failure certainly comes accompanied by a host of negative affects, such as disappointment, disillusionment, and despair, it also provides the opportunity to use these negative affects to poke holes in the toxic positivity of contemporary life."[16] It is the humour present in Mehra's performance that allows her to turn failure into a form of criticism against the toxic positivity provided by Orientalist narratives about places like India. The use of this specific song also addresses the way that discourses like Orientalism read all brown bodies the same way; even though the Middle East and South Asia are completely different continents, they are homogenized. Through lyrics like "shining, shimmering, splendid," the song creates an empty signifier about a supposed place in the East. She uses her performance

in front of the image to form a connection between the images of India and the viewer, allowing her body to be read as a reminder of the histories of Orientalism and colonialism.

Playing with the audience's expectations of her identity is a theme that is consistent through Mehra's work. It is perhaps most present in her installation piece made in 2012 for her exhibition at *Georgia Scherman Projects* in Toronto, titled Contemporary South Asian Art (Conflicts of Perceptions | Oh hey she's just too mainstream!) [fig. 2]. The piece is a large paper scroll of black and white digitally printed carpets laid out on the floor. From afar, the piece is supposed to mimic real carpets, with the digital pattern representing intricate embroidery. Up close, the carpets are revealed to be made out of cheap paper, black and white material, which is meant to reflect the "reproduction of stale concepts of culture."[17]

The title of the piece points to the conflict between the perceptions and lived experiences of racial identity, and the ways in which these categories are in constant tension for artists of colour. By titling her piece Contemporary South Asian Art, Mehra is engaging with the potential reception of the piece before it occurs. She anticipates the art world's desire to label her art as merely a South Asian artist and gives them exactly what they want by creating something that is recognizable in the popular vocabulary of South Asian art: a beautifully designed carpet.[18] However, by using digital printing instead of real cloth she rejects their demands for authenticity and produces a cheap watered down version of what they are expecting. By making the piece black and white as opposed to the colourful works usually associated with South Asian art, she withholds the promise of a certain level of authenticity and luxury provided from the symbol of the carpet. In this act of failure, she turns the art worlds' expectations upside down and forces viewers to interrogate the genre of South Asian art.

Mehra fails to produce the art world's expectations of her native culture and forces them

Figure 2: Divya Mehra, Contemporary South Asian Art (Conflicts of Perceptions | Oh hey she's just too mainstream!) (2014), 36" x 3000", offset BW printing on paper, Georgia Scherman Projects, Toronto, Canada.

to address their own racist expectations. Speaking of failure, Halberstam states, "it also leads to a kind of ecstatic exposure of the contradictions of a society obsessed with meaningless competition. By implication, it also reveals the precarious models of success by which American families live and die." [19] Through this piece, Mehra distances herself from two forms of meaningless competition: first, the competition to try to fit her art into the mold of South Asian contemporary art in order to be understood by the art world. The second has to do with the other half of her title, "oh hey she's just too mainstream." Mehra is also speaking to the competition to prove one's authenticity as an artist by refusing to conform to mainstream ideas of art production. For artists of colour, these two points are in conflict with each other. On the one hand, she is expected in an essential way to be able to produce South Asian art, but on the other hand, this art cannot be too mainstream, ultimately tied down by the expectations of a white dominated art world.

Mehra's use of failure does not exist in a vacuum; it is a historically and politically loaded mode of understanding the contemporary world. Her work largely engages with the expectations of Indian Canadians to conform to the model minority identity through the embrace of success, which for her is embodied through success in the art world. For Mehra, this success is not possible because assimilation cannot happen while brown bodies continue to be othered. Rather than choosing to fully embrace or reject the system, she disrupts this binary by showing how the system itself is broken. She performs a critique of one system of understanding that is already in place –Multiculturalism – and shows that racism is not only experienced in the realm of the individual, but also systematically, and thus the onus cannot be on the person of colour to change perceptions of a culture.

ENDNOTES

[1] I am using Rogers Brubaker's definition of diaspora as, "any and every nameable population category that is to some extent dispersed in space." Rogers Brubaker, "The 'diaspora' Diaspora," Ethnic and Racial Studies, vol. 28, no. 1 (2005), p. 3.

[2] "Indian Americans: The New Model Minority," Forbes, http://www.forbes.com/2009/02/24/bobby-jindal-indian-americans-opinions-contributors_immigrants_minority.html (date of last access 7 December 2014)

[3] Susan Koshy, "Category Crisis: South Asian Americans and Questions of Race and Ethnicity," Diaspora, vol. 7 no. 3 (1998), p. 285.

[4] "The Success of Failure: Divya Mehra," Border Crossings, http://bordercrossingsmag.com/article/the-success-of-failure-divya-mehra (date of last access 7 December 2014)

[5] Jack Halberstam, The Queer Art of Failure (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 3.

[6] "NHS Profile, Winnipeg, CY, Manitoba, 2011," Statistics Canada, http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=4611040&Data=Count&SearchText=Winnipeg&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&A1=All&B1=All&Custom=&TABID=1 (date of last access 7 December 2014)

[7] Vanaja Dhruvarajan, "Ethnic Cultural Retention and Transmission among First Generation Hindu Asian Indians in a Canadian Prairie City," Journal of Comparative Family Studies, vol. 24, no. 1 (Spring 1993), p. 65.

[8] Dhruvarajan, "Ethnic Cultural Retention," p. 66.

[9] Halberstam, "Queer Art of Failure," p. 1.

[10] Halberstam, "Queer Art of Failure," p. 2.

[11] Halberstam, "Queer Art of Failure," pp. 2-3.

[12] "The Success of Failure," (date of last access 7 December 2014)

[13] Amartya Sen, <u>Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny</u> (USA: W.W Norton, 2006) p. 2.

[14] After the 1947 Partition of India and Pakistan, 650 states, which were ruled by princes, were left to decide which side to join. Unable to decide because the population was mostly Muslim while the rulers were Indian, Kashmir chose to remain neutral. Ignoring UN ceasefires, India and Pakistan have continued to fight for the land ever since, making Kashmir one of the most heavily militarized places on earth.

[15] Shawna Dempsey, "The Importance of being Divya Mehra," <u>NoMorePotlucks,</u> http://nomorepotlucks.org/site/the-importance-of-being-divya-2/ (date of last access 7 December 2014)

[16] Halberstam,"Queer Art of Failure," p. 3.

[17] Leah Sandals, "Divya Mehra Troubles Stereotypes in Toronto," <u>Canadian Art,</u> http://canadianart.ca/reviews/2014/03/27/divya-mehra-georgia-scherman/ (date of last access 7 December 2014)

[18] In Pennina Barnett's text "Rugs Я Us (and them): The oriental carpet as sign and text," she describes Brian Spooner's argument on the myths surrounding the Oriental carpets, stating: "Oriental carpet operates primarily as a sign of authenticity: we value it as an object produced within cultures whose traditions we imagine as pure, discrete and intact. Like Orientalism and Primitivism - to which it is closely related - Ruggism is part of the western romantic tradition." Pennina Barnett, "Rugs Я Us (and them): The oriental carpet as sign and text," <u>Third Text</u>, no. 30 (1995), p. 14.

[19] Halberstam, "Queer Art of Failure," p. 5.

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PLATE LIST

Figure 1: Divya Mehra, <u>A sense of belonging to a Community is thus seen as a resource, like Capital</u> (2012), acrylic vinyl and acrylic latex deep base paint, 117" x 93.5", La Maison Des Artistes, Winnipeg, Canada.

Figure 2: Divya Mehra, <u>Contemporary South Asian Art (Conflicts of Perceptions | Oh hey she's just too mainstream!)</u> (2014), 36" x 3000", offset BW printing on paper, Georgia Scherman Projects, Toronto, Canada.

THE ERASURE OF HOGAN'S ALLEY – A VISUAL ANALYSIS OF THE DEMOLITION OF VANCOUVER'S BLACK COMMUNITY
Rhiannon Seath

Without knowing it was there, any passerby could carry on continuing to be ignorant of its existence. The only evidence that a neighbourhood called Hogan's Alley ever existed is a small plaque on Union Street between Gore and Main Street. It reads:

> "Hogan's Alley was part of the ethnically diverse East End, centred between Prior and Union and Main and Jackson. It was home to much of Vancouver's Black community and included businesses such as Vie's Chicken and Steak House on Union and the Pullman Porters' Club on Main. The neighbourhood was a popular cultural hub before mid-twentieth century urban renewal schemes and the Georgia Viaduct Replacement Project demolished many of its buildings."[1]

This plaque is one of the only sites of recognition that there was ever a concentrated black population in Vancouver. The black population that remains in the city is easily and frequently overlooked, perhaps due to its dispersion and size. Census data from 2011 tells us that there are approximately 20, 670 black people occupying the greater Vancouver area.[2] This is a significant rise from the mid twentieth century, which saw black population figures fluctuating between 400 and 500. However, it is still only a small percentage of the entire Vancouver population.[3]

Was it the perceived insignificance of their numbers that allowed the City of Vancouver to commission the demolition of this neighbourhood in favour of a viaduct? Many scholars would argue that it was a combination of several factors that allowed for this destruction. A part of any understanding of such active marginalization involves an analysis of how the government was able to justify their actions through a discourse of "urban renewal" and visual representation. Using legislation, photographic evidence, maps, and media outlets, the City of Vancouver actively worked to exert their power over this area in a way that legitimized the erasure of the black presence in Vancouver. Today, many residents of Vancouver are ignorant of the fact that there ever was a concentrated black population and it is thanks to the strategically racist actions of the government of Vancouver from the late nineteenth century to the late twentieth century.

The black presence in Vancouver can be dated back to the mid nineteenth century. Due to its location on the West coast, Vancouver's ports were not used for the facilitation of the transatlantic slave trade (i.e. the transfer of enslaved people or good related to the slave trade, like sugar). This means that, unlike most of the United States and the eastern regions of Canada, the black population of British Columbia arrived through migration streams unrelated to the slave trade.

Scholars have placed the first instances of black migration to the West coast in 1858. The migration stemmed from San Francisco, California by way of steam ship and was caused by two main factors. The first was participation in the gold rush of the 1800's. The second, and more relevant, was escaping racial tension. The United States was fraught with discrimination at this time, as emancipation had not yet been ratified. In San Francisco, for example, in 1850, black people were legislatively disqualified from testifying against whites.[4] For many, this was the tipping point and with invitations coming from Vancouver trying to recruit people to populate the area, Vancouver seemed like the right choice.[5]

The other group of black migrants coming from the United States came from Oklahoma and travelled through Alberta to settle in British Columbia.[6] This wave of migration was slightly

later than that from San Francisco, with their arrival in Alberta being early twentieth century (1907-1911). Those from Oklahoma were motivated by advertisements put out by the Canadian government to attract farmers, but the main factor, as in the San Franciscan case, was the racism that was becoming unbearable.[7]

Once in B.C., most settled in Victoria, opened businesses[8] and purchased lots that were being sold by the *Hudson's Bay Company* and private owners at high prices.[9] This information is important in establishing the types of people that were migrating to the province. Not only did they have enough money to pay for travel but also to pay for land, which one can assume, was being sold for higher than normal rates as a type of race-based premium since there was opposition to the black presence after their initial arrival. The racism continued for decades and is perhaps one of the reasons the new black citizens sought out spaces in the community where they could feel more at ease.[10]

These black pioneers, as Killian calls them, mostly remained in Victoria, but by the late 1860's, migration continued toward the interior of the province. Two of the first black residents of the area that would be known as Vancouver – Seraphim "Joe" Fortes and Philip Sullivan – arrived between 1876 and 1885. Those choosing to settle in Vancouver tended to congregate in one area in the East End/Strathcona neighbourhood, which would later grow into Hogan's Alley. Wayde Compton, an important scholar in the field of black histories in Canada, states that there were three main reasons for the localization of the black community in this area: it was near the railway terminus and many of the black men living in the area were employed as porters,[11] the area was traditionally inhabited by non-white groups that faced housing discrimination elsewhere,[12] and the housing prices tended to be lower in these areas. While many could afford to live elsewhere, it was clear that their presence was unwelcome elsewhere in the city.[13] As the community developed, it became more appealing to more black people entering the province, as it was an area to escape the racism of the rest of the city.[14] The population remained relatively low, as migration to British Columbia became more difficult once exclusionary migration practices were legislated in 1910 allowing for the "prohibition of entry of any 'nationality or race' deemed 'unsuitable because of probable inability to become readily assimilated.' "[15] As the population of the area settled, with the establishment of the *African Methodist Episcopal Fountain Church* in 1923, a vibrant community began to form.[16] Unfortunately, the white population of Vancouver did not see it as the safe haven that it was. In the next few decades, the depth of the disdain for Hogan's Alley would surface in public discussion, newspaper articles, and government decisions.

The 1950s would bring sweeping changes to this area of Vancouver. Planners for the City of Vancouver were inspired by the work of Le Corbusier in Paris and Richard Moses in New York who became famous for their "top-down city restructuring."[17] By mid-century, the interests of the white middle class were focused on "oil, automobiles and old fashioned racism," as Compton puts it.[18] The manifestations of these interests were the plans to destroy the Hogan's Alley and Chinatown areas in order to build an eight-lane freeway, an addition that would modernize the city. Modernization at the expense of "blighted" neighbourhoods was a rational plan in the eyes of the government and the population at large that, as newspaper titles betrayed, felt that Hogan's Alley was the centre of "immorality, squalor and crime."[19] In 1967, it was revealed that the area within which Hogan's Alley was contained would be razed and the viaducts, the first phase of the freeway, would be constructed in its place.[20]

Houses were demolished, homeowners were summarily compensated, and the viaducts were completed in 1971 [fig. 1].[21] Fortunately for the population of Chinatown, a group known

Figure 1: <u>Vancouver Photographs series</u>, Old Georgia Viaduct (creation) (7 September 1971), photograph; 35 mm, #AM1551-S2-: 2010-006.199, City of Vancouver Archives, Vancouver, Canada.

as the *Strathcona Property Owners and Tenants Association* (SPOTA) were able to prevent the construction of phase two of the project, the freeway that would have absolutely destroyed the entire area.[22] However, the viaducts were enough to eradicate Hogan's Alley. Housing blocks were constructed to accommodate the displacement of the residents of the area. The more economically successful sought residence in other areas of Vancouver, as the racial climate had shifted sufficiently to be more accepting, while the "underclass population" had no choice but to remain in the tower blocks.[23] The condition of the high-rise projects began to decline, past the state of disrepair that had stigmatized Hogan's Alley, and soon these buildings were worse than the initial neighbourhood.[24] The black population of Vancouver remained small and dispersed throughout the city, with little left to identify that there had ever been a concentrated black presence in the Strathcona area.

Why was this destruction allowed? The targeting of this neighbourhood is part of a larger trend of government attempts to maintain and legitimize their power through the regulation of space. Closely examining the government measures that preceded the construction of the viaducts reveals the steps that were taken to categorize the Hogan's Alley neighbourhood as a stain on the Vancouver landscape. The denunciation of the area came long before the decision was made to destroy it. In 1929, the planning commissions for Vancouver began to pick up steam. The first governmental act that led to the downfall of this area was in 1931 when a zoning bylaw was passed to classify this area as industrial, rather than residential.[25] The impact of this was that the area was no longer treated as a legitimate investment and money lending institutions were reluctant to invest money in such a risky area. Mortgages and financing for home improvements became near impossible to obtain.[26] As one could guess, the state of housing in

the area began to slowly decline. The first of many negative classifications of the area, this zoning bylaw contributed to the justification that the City of Vancouver would later use to demolish the area.

Once it had been established that this area was not to be seen as a suitable location for residence, planning its destruction became all too easy for the City. This is the area in which the visual analysis of the area, through maps and photographs, acted as further justification. As previously stated, the 1950s was the beginning of large scale planning efforts to rebuild the area. Under the guidance of the *Non-Partisan Association* (NPA), the city council confirmed the freeway plans. Project 200, as it would be called, was the freeway plan that would run through Hogan's Alley and Chinatown. The planning of the project was done mostly in secret so as to minimize the chance of community backlash.[27] Excluding the community from this discussion of their own livelihood effectively robbed them of a social voice, which is a tactic used to keep disenfranchised groups in a state of marginalization.

Using the 1931 bylaw to assist their efforts, the NPA "ceased granting building and development permits in the area," "stopped funding improvements to the roads," and continued to discourage homeowners from putting any money into their properties, as property values were soon to be frozen.[28] These developments alone illustrate the efforts taken by the government to seal the fate of Hogan's Alley. Rather than attempting to assist the neighbourhood with improvement plans, the government decided from the beginning that it was not an area worth saving. These actions show a complete disregard for the value of the neighbourhood in cultural and historical terms. This is where archival photographs become important.

Figure 2: Director of Planning's General Files – Urban renewal – Strathcona – general, [Buildings at] 886-898 Union Street (1973) photograph; 5 x 8 cm, #COV-S648---: CVA 808-25, Vancouver (B.C.) Planning Department, City of Vancouver Archives, Vancouver, Canada.

A series of images in the Vancouver Archives entitled "Urban renewal – Strathcona" represent properties in the Hogan's Alley area (Union and Prior Street) with the purpose of showcasing the state of disrepair. The description for the file is as follows: "These property photographs are attached with reports recommending acquisition and demolition because these properties were believed to be in a poor state of repair."[29] As can be seen in Figure 2, it is true

that the condition of these houses was not excellent [fig. 2]. However, as can be seen by evidence already stated, these conditions were largely due to government practices. The existence of this file shows that the City of Vancouver was actively ensuring that those involved would be convinced that these houses could not be salvaged and that a freeway was a better use of space for this area. Not only were photographs used to this end, but also a series of maps were employed to qualify the status of the area [fig. 3]. On one particular map, the area of Hogan's Alley can be found in the bottom right corner, and is represented by colours that categorize the area as "poor" and "very poor," referring to the condition of the neighbourhood, which can be interpreted in both economic and structural terms (much like the photographs, establishing that this area was in disrepair). Not only was the City using visual evidence to demonstrate the poor condition, but media outlets were also actively involved in perpetuating this idea.

Newspapers such as the <u>Vancouver Sun</u> and the <u>Province</u> were complicit in designating this area as a slum – a categorization couched in historical and racial significance. It was not uncommon for a paper to publish articles describing the state of the area and how it was a "black" mark on "Vancouver's beauty as a city." Wayde Compton compiled a list of titles that appeared in both newspapers and mentioned the black presence in Vancouver, most of which refer to the area as a slum. [30] Not only was the wording harmful to the reputation of the neighbourhood, but the images included, along with the captions, served to enforce this Hogan's-Alley-as-slum discourse. A photograph of <u>Hogan's Alley between Prior and Union Street</u> appeared in the <u>Province</u> in May of 1947 with the caption: But Vancouver is not so eager to show the front doors in the lower picture – the front doors of Hogan's Alley. This description betrays the opinion towards Hogan's Alley – an area that Vancouver would have rather kept hidden. The photo replicated the ideology of the archival shots of the houses, positioning the alley as a crumbling site of poverty.

Several problems arise when examining these government practices of classification and visual representation. The first is the question surrounding the creation and purpose of maps. One
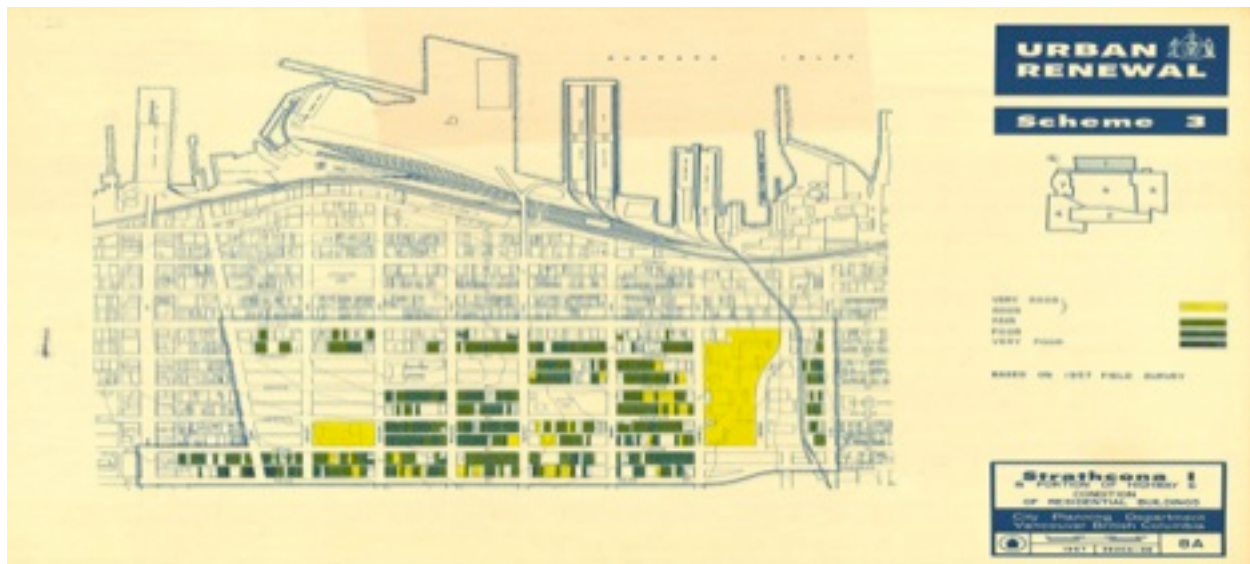

Figure 3: <u>Planning Department maps, plans and drawings</u> LEG37.26 Urban renewal scheme 3: Strathcona I & portion of Highway 6: condition of residential buildings (1967) 1 map: white print, hand col.; 76 x 101 cm, #COV-S445-3-: LEG37.26, Vancouver (B.C.) Planning Department, City of Vancouver Archives, Vancouver, Canada.

must consider the historical and social implications of the practice of mapping in order to accurately discern the ways in which the government asserted its power over this area. Scholars such as J.B. Harley would argue that the creation of a map is "an act of control over the image of the world."[31] The legacy of maps in a colonial context is that they were used to demonstrate the legitimacy of conquest and empire.[32] As Harley puts it, they gave "imperial users an arbitrary power that was easily divorced from the social responsibilities and consequences of its exercise."[33] In other words, mapping was, and is, an autocratic institutionalized practice of dividing land in ways that benefit the colonial powers. In the Hogan's Alley context, the assertion of power through maps was not the arbitrary decisions regarding boundaries and borders, but rather the state manifesting its power in visual terms so as to further legitimize the statements it was making about the quality of the neighbourhood and its inhabitants.

Saying that a neighbourhood is destitute is one thing, but inscribing it on a map, a category of diagram that, throughout history, has been given political and cultural authority assures that that statement holds as much power as possible. The practice of cartography is a form of state authorized power and control, meaning that the power of a map, by nature of it being instilled by that state, is symbolic. What is not symbolic, however, is the ways in which maps have been used in order to assert real power. Harley gives the example of how landlords used maps to "more effectively control a tenant or peasant population."[34] The City of Vancouver exerted their control over the inhabitants of Hogan's Alley by solidifying their social condition through the zoning maps from the 1930s to the 1970s. Not only this, but the secrecy of these discussions and plans ensured that the communities, both Hogan's Alley and Chinatown, would be excluded from the decision of their own fate, another governmental tactic of keeping "undesirable" populations in a state of disenfranchisement.[35]

One of the other glaring problems that arise when examining the history of this neighbourhood is the narrative that came along with classifying it as a slum in need of "urban renewal." Both of these terms have a history, much like cartography, of being used by state powers to justify actions of "modernization."[36] They are also terms heavily imbued with racial connotations, especially the categorization of a community as a slum. The plans and measures of urban renewal strategies have traditionally targeted racialized areas such as Chinatowns and black neighbourhoods in North America. There is power that comes with declaring an area as a slum. It is a classification that comes from above, a label imposed on an area by the state or wider public opinion, both of which in the case of Hogan's Alley were predominantly white. Much like the other methods of justification by the state (the maps and archival photos), declaring that an area is a slum gives a body of power the authority to intervene in that area. Unfortunately for Hogan's Alley, rather than investing in redevelopment programs that would aid the residents, the City of Vancouver felt the space was better used as the grounds for a "modern" freeway system. The racist strategies of "urban renewal" that translated to black removal are part of a legacy of racist attitudes held by the governments of Vancouver and British Columbia in general. The effects of this legacy are felt in the Chinese and Japanese communities (a struggle that is still ongoing) and within the black community.[37]

With the multicultural policies that came about in the 1980s, there were efforts across Canada to make amends for past racist practices. The Japanese community achieving redress in 1988 for internment during World War II is an example of such measures. However, what actions were taken to recognize the black population of the province? Recognition of this area by the city has been extremely scant. The efforts of organizations such as the *Hogan's Alley Memorial Project* (HAMP)[38] have been crucial in drawing attention to the history of the area.

The most recent formal recognition of the area coming from the government was in 2014 with the issuing of a commemorative stamp for the celebration of Black History Month. The stamp for Hogan's Alley was released alongside one remembering the Halifax community of Africville, another site of black erasure.[39] The stamp featured Fielding Spotts, previously mentioned as one of the area's first inhabitants, and Nora Hendrix, the paternal grandmother of the famous American musician, Jimi Hendrix. Though this was undoubtedly an important step, a step that many, including Wayde Compton, were very pleased with, one cannot help but wonder if it is enough.[40]

The story of Hogan's Alley is one that seems to be all too familiar in Canadian history. Our history as a nation is full of attempts to control the rights and property of marginalized groups. The state has manufactured methods of ensuring that these minority groups stay in a state of disenfranchisement. This has been achieved through a system of justification – by claiming that there are better uses for the land occupied by these people and "proving" it through methods of visual representation and discourse that have been given social power, partially by the state and partially by those that accept their authority. The control of these communities has then been successfully legitimized.

A plaque has been posted and a stamp has been issued, but the reality is that this community has been erased from the public consciousness of Vancouver. It will be interesting to see how the City of Vancouver reacts to the motions of groups such as the *Hogan's Alley Memorial Project* who have been making gains in terms of drawing attention to the issue. It is clear that they can no longer ignore the importance of the history of this area. Unfortunately, the damage has been done and although the City may make efforts to reinstate this area as a relevant site, the black population at large has long abandoned their claim to these grounds.

ENDNOTES

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[2] Wayde Compton, After Canaan: Essays on Race, Writing and Region (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2010), p. 104.

[3] Kevin Griffin, Vancouver's Many Faces: Passport to the Cultures of a City (Vancouver: Whitecap Books, 1993), p. 23.

[4] Compton, After Canaan, p. 87.

[5] Crawford Killian, Go Do Some Great Thing: The Black Pioneers of British Columbia (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre Ltd, 1978), pp. 11-37.

[6] Killian, Go Do Some Great Thing, p. 45.

[7] Dan Cui and Jennifer R. Kelley, "'Our Negro Citizens:' An Example of Everyday Citizenship Practices," The West and Beyond: New Perspectives on an Imagined Region, eds. Alvin Finkel, Sarah Carter and Peter Fortna (Edmonton, Alberta: Athabasca University (AU) Press, 2010), p. 254.

[8] The types of businesses that these people opened were restaurants, carpentry, tailoring, seamstress shops, and barbering, the last being, as Colin McFarquhar states in his chapter "The Black Occupational Structure in Late-Nineteenth-Century Ontario: Evidence from the Census," an occupation monopolized by the black population at this time. See: Colin McFarquhar, "The Black Occupational Structure in Late-Nineteenth-Century Ontario: Evidence from the Census,"

Racism, Eh?: A Critical Inter-Disciplinary Anthology of Race and Racism in Canada, eds. Camille A. Nelson and Charmaine A. Nelson (Concord: Captus Press Inc., 2004)

[9] Killian, Go Do Some Great Thing, p. 45.

[10] Killian, Go Do Some Great Thing, p. 60.

[11] Portering was an important career available to the black population of Canada. However, the preference for black employees and their treatment by mainly white passengers marks another site of racist interaction. See: Selwyn Jacob, The Road Taken (1996), film, 52 minutes 2 seconds, The National Film Board of Canada, Canada.

[12] The Chinese and First Nations populations of Vancouver were subject to legislated housing exclusion. Other groups, such as Italians, faced the same kind of discrimination as the black population – it was not written in law that they could be excluded from specific regions but the public opinion was enough to keep them from living in many areas of the city. See: Wayde Compton, After Canaan: Essays on Race, Writing and Region (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2010), p. 89, and Jennifer Holness and David Sutherland, Speakers for the Dead (2000), film, 49 minutes 47 seconds, National Film Board of Canada, Canada.

[13] Compton, After Canaan, p. 87.

[14] Killian, Go Do Some Great Thing, p. 159.

[15] Griffin, Vancouver's Many Faces, p. 23.

[16] Wayde Compton, "Hogan's Alley," The Canadian Encyclopedia (Historica Canada) http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/hogans-alley/ (date of last access 29 November 2014)

[17] Compton, After Canaan, p. 93.

[18] Compton, After Canaan, p. 93.

[19] Compton, After Canaan, p. 91-94.

[20] The mayor of Vancouver at the time of this decision was Thomas J. Campbell who actively promoted the construction of the freeway. See: "Chronology 1967," The History of Metropolitan Vancouver, http://www.vancouverhistory.ca/chronology1967.htm (date of last access 20 March 2015)

[21] Compton, "Hogan's Alley" (date of last access 29 November 2014)

[22] Unfortunately, due to a lack of documentation on the topic, the ways in which this association was able to stop the freeway from being built are unclear. What we do know is that many of those involved were of university age and protests were carried out. One of the leaders associated with SPOTA was Mary Chan who helped to spark the first stages of the fight. "Freeways and Chinatowns," Price Tags: Perspectives from Vancouver https://pricetags.wordpress.com/2011/01/20/freeways-and-chinatowns/ (date of last access 28 November 2014)

[23] The tower blocks constructed were part of the MacLean Park and Raymur-Campbell Social Housing Project to absorb the residents displaced from both Chinatown and Hogan's Alley. These blocks are located in the Strathcona neighbourhood, just north of the Hogan's Alley district. See: Wayde Compton, "Hogan's Alley," The Canadian Encyclopedia (Historica Canada) http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/hogans-alley/ (date of last access 29 November 2014)

[24] Compton, After Canaan, p. 94.

[25] Compton, After Canaan, p. 90.

[26] Compton, After Canaan, p. 90.

[27] Compton, <u>After Canaan</u>, p. 94.

[28] Compton, <u>After Canaan</u>, p. 95.

[29] <u>Director of Planning's general files</u>, File, Urban renewal, Strathcona, general, Vancouver (B.C.) Planning Department, September – December 1973, City of Vancouver Archives, Vancouver, Canada http://searcharchives.vancouver.ca/urban-renewal-strathcona-general-6 (date of last access 25 November 2014)

[30] Compton, <u>After Canaan</u>, pp. 134-140.

[31] J.B. Harley, <u>The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography</u> (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2001), p. 49.

[32] Harley, <u>The New Nature of Maps</u>, p. 57.

[33] Harley, <u>The New Nature of Maps</u>, p. 59.

[34] Harley, <u>The New Nature of Maps</u>, p. 60.

[35] J. Rigg, "The Experience of Exclusion," <u>Southeast Asia: The Human Landscape of Modernization and Development</u>, ed. J. Rigg (London: Routledge, 2003) pp. 136-89.

[36] James Q. Wilson, "Planning and Politics: Citizen Participation in Urban Renewal," <u>Journal of the American Institute Planners</u>, vol. 29, no. 4 (1963), pp. 242-43.

[37] See: Roy Miki, <u>Redress: Inside the Japanese Canadian Call for Justice</u> (Vancouver: Raincoast Books, 2004) and Arlene Chan, <u>Righting Canada's Wrongs: The Chinese Head Tax and Anti-Chinese Immigration Policies in the Twentieth Century</u> (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 2014)

[38] This organization, largely under the leadership of Wayde Compton, has been involved in several projects that investigate the histories of the area and its former residents as well as educating the larger Vancouver area of its existence and importance. They have participated in talks, art installations, and campaigns, all with the goal of sharing this important piece of Canadian history. "Hogan's Alley Memorial Project," <u>Hogan's Alley Memorial Project: Memorializing Vancouver's Historic Black Neighbourhood and the Wider Vancouver Black Experience</u>, http://www.hogansalleyproject.blogspot.ca/ (date of last access 1 December 2014)

[39] Africville was a small black settlement in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Established by former enslaved people, the neighbourhood functioned independently from the city. In the 1960s, the residents were forced out of their homes as the entire area was demolished. This demolition was part of an "urban renewal" and "integration" program. See: Jennifer J. Nelson, <u>Razing Africville: A Geography of Racism</u> (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008) and Shelagh Mackenzie, <u>Remember Africville</u> (1991), 35 minutes, National Film Board of Canada, Canada.

[40] It is interesting to note that there is a stark absence of black subjects depicted on Canadian stamps except for February, as commemorative Black History Month stamps. "Black History Month stamp celebrates Vancouver's Hogan's Alley," <u>CBC News</u>, http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/black-history-month-stamp-celebrates-vancouver-s-hogan-s-alley-1.2516741 (date of last access 30 November 2014)

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Figure 1: <u>Vancouver Photographs series</u>, Old Georgia Viaduct (creation) (7 September 1971), photograph; 35 mm, #AM1551-S2-: 2010-006.199, City of Vancouver Archives, Vancouver, Canada.

Figure 2: <u>Director of Planning's General Files – Urban renewal – Strathcona – general</u>, [Buildings at] 886-898 Union Street (1973) photograph; 5 x 8 cm, #COV-S648---: CVA 808-25, Vancouver (B.C.) Planning Department, City of Vancouver Archives, Vancouver, Canada.

Figure 3: <u>Planning Department maps, plans and drawings</u> LEG37.26 Urban renewal scheme 3: Strathcona I & portion of Highway 6: condition of residential buildings (1967) 1 map: white print, hand col.; 76 x 101 cm, #COV-S445-3-: LEG37.26, Vancouver (B.C.) Planning Department, City of Vancouver Archives, Vancouver, Canada.

HELEN BANNERMAN AND LITTLE BLACK SAMBO (1899): A LEGACY OF OTHERING AND THE DEHUMANIZATION OF THE BLACK SUBJECT IN CANADA THROUGH CHILDREN'S LITERATURE
Marilou Trahan-Thomassin

Children's literature has the power to leave readers with either a positive or negative impression. Helen Bannerman is one of many children's authors that shapes these impressions by using stereotypes to propagate ideologies through her books. Bannerman lived in India for several years, during which time she wrote the popular book Little Black Sambo (1899) as entertainment for her own children.[1] The book was first published by Grant Richards in England in 1899.[2] Its popularity was impressive and as Phyllis J. Yuill explains, "[...] there were at least twenty-seven different English-language versions published between 1905 and 1953,"[3] including French, Spanish, Dutch, German, Hebrew and Arabic.[4] According to Daniel Braithwaite, in Canada as much as in the United States, Little Black Sambo "was deeply rooted and entrenched in the society, and loved by parents, educators, librarians [and] the mass media."[5] Although Bannerman died in 1976, her book is, to this day, still much loved, but also deeply criticized.

In this following article, I will demonstrate how Little Black Sambo should be interpreted as a racist depiction

Figure 1: Helen Bannerman, "Little Black Sambo," (197-?), illustration, Little Black Sambo (Philadelphia, New York: J.B. Lippincott Co., 197-?)

of unfavourable stereotypes that dehumanize and "other" black identity.[6] In order to support my claim, I will begin with a textual analysis of the issues surrounding the name Sambo. The visual representations of the character will then be analyzed to reveal how the author depicts the black child as a pickaninny. The book's relationship to racist practices such as blackface minstrel shows will then be introduced as a reflection of white ideologies imposed on children reading the text. Finally, I will examine both the controversies surrounding the book with its removal from Canadian schools and the legacy of Helen Bannerman.

Little Black Sambo is the story of a little black boy [fig. 1] who decides to take a walk in the forest with the new clothes his mother, Black Mumbo [fig. 2], made him, and the umbrella his father, Black Jumbo [fig. 3], bought at the bazaar. As Sambo is walking, he meets four cruel tigers. The little boy has no choice but to give away his clothes to the animals to avoid being eaten. As he is crying, wearing nothing but a towel around his waist, Sambo hears the tigers and runs to a palm-tree to see what is happening. Sambo sees his clothes on the ground and the tigers

Figure 2: Helen Bannerman, "Black Mumbo," (197-?), illustration, Little Black Sambo (Philadelphia, New York: J.B. Lippincott Co., 197-?)

Figure 3: Helen Bannerman, "Black Jumbo," (197-?), illustration, Little Black Sambo (Philadelphia, New York: J.B. Lippincott Co., 197-?)

chasing each other around a tree. Therefore, Sambo decides to put his clothes back on and to run home. Meanwhile, the tigers are running so fast around the tree that they melt away and turn into melted butter. Black Jumbo then collects the butter and brings it home to Black Mumbo for her to cook pancakes.

The title Bannerman chose for her book, Little Black Sambo, raises many concerns surrounding its racist implications. Sambo was a common name used in blackface minstrelsy, which was very popular and most likely accessible to Helen Bannerman when she wrote her book.[7] The author's title is therefore referring to the practice of white performers covering their faces in black makeup to make fun of so-called Negroes and to entertain the white public. Moreover, "the terms 'Black Sambo' and 'Sambo' are generally considered… on this continent [North America] to be despicable, derogatory epithets in the same category as 'darky', 'nigger', pickaninny'."[8] Although the term Sambo is referred to differently in dictionaries, depending on the edition selected, the definition remains pejorative in all cases: The Online Etymology Dictionary (1748) states: "person of mixed blood in America and Asia, [...] perhaps from Spanish zambo [...]. Used variously in different regions to indicate some mixture of African, European, and Indian blood; common senses were 'child of black and Indian parentage' and "offspring of a black and a mulatto."[9] More than a century later, The Oxford English Dictionary (1884) defines the term as "[a]pplied in America and Asia to persons of various degrees of mixed negro and Indian or European blood. [...] A nickname for a negro."[10] The Webster's New World Dictionary (1964) relates it to words such as: "Negro, Mulatto, Monkey."[11] The twenty-first century Oxford English Dictionary (2014) explains the term as: "Now depreciative and

offensive. In the form Sambo: a nickname for a black person. [...] with reference to the appearance or subservient attitude held to be typical of the black American slave."[12]

It is therefore clear that the term Sambo holds a negative connotation, and Bannerman offered it to white readers who would have easily associated it with a black little boy in a children's book. The author suggested to white readers that the term was acceptable and that it could be used to define black people. Considering its negative meanings, children, of all races, would have been affected by the racial stereotypes that the term implied: "apparently this story leaves an indelible impression upon children's minds that all black people are called 'Samboes', here name calling begins, and the evil roots of race prejudice grips the child's mind."[13] Bannerman, therefore, shaped children's minds to think that Sambo was an acceptable term.[14] Furthermore, the author pushed the boundary of racism even further with her use of "Black Jumbo" and "Black Mumbo" during "a time when blacks were routinely thought to be inherently dumb."[15] Sambo and his family are therefore denigrated through their blackness and racialized names.

According to Yuill, Sambo "marked the model stereotyped caricature of Negroes to white children for generations."[16] Bannerman and other illustrators provided an "'othering' of specific undesirable racial groups," by drawing offensive images of the stereotypical pickaninny. According to Robin Bernstein,

"The pickaninny was an imagined, subhuman black juvenile who was typically depicted outdoors, merrily accepting (or even inviting) violence. The word (alternatively spelled "picaninny" or "piccaninny") dates to the seventeenth century, at which time it described any child of African descent; in the nineteenth century, the word was used pejoratively and in reference mainly to black children in the United States and Britain, but also to aboriginal children of the Americas, Australia, and New Zealand (in this case, the black-white dyad erases the specificity of nonblack children of color by absorbing them into blackness). The word's origins are disputed, but the term may derive from the Portuguese word "pequenino," meaning a tiny child. Characteristics of the pickaninny include dark or sometimes jet-black skin, exaggerated eyes and mouth, the action of gorging (especially on watermelon), and the state of being threatened or attacked by animals (especially alligators, geese, dogs, pigs, or tigers). Pickaninnies often wear ragged clothes (which suggest parental neglect) and are sometimes partially or fully naked."[17]

Bannerman uses the pickaninny stereotype on numerous occasions in her book. She places Sambo alone outdoors and his parents' neglect is based on the typical idea that black people are negligent parents, incapable of caring for their children.[18] Moreover, the threat of the dangerous tigers refers directly to the idea of black bodies as insensitive to pain because of their history of enslavement. Sambo is therefore portrayed in a slave-like manner.[19] Depending on the edition, the facial characteristics and expressions may also be suggesting the pickaninny caricature, with very dark skin, large eyes, and large mouth [fig. 4] are quite typical of this stereotype. Creating one of "the most controversial picaninny image[s]," Bannerman used stereotypical ideals to portray her black subject and thus "epitomized a form of commodity that circulated for white consumption."[20]

When analyzing the visual components of Bannerman's book, it is important to consider that each edition had a different illustrator, which meant that the location and visual elements varied depending on the artist.[21] It is important to note that the environment in which Sambo lives and has his adventures is ambiguous. Bannerman wrote the story when she was in India, which would suggest that it was Sambo's original location. But many illustrators "changed the setting to Africa or the United States; in spite of the prominence in the story of tigers, which are native only to Asia.[22] Furthermore, in some editions, notably in Cupples and Leon (1917), the images greatly resemble performers in blackface minstrel shows, which would have allowed the white viewers to relate

Figure 4: Helen Bannerman, "Little Black Sambo," (197-?), illustration, Little Black Sambo (Philadelphia, New York: J.B. Lippincott Co., 197-?)

more easily to the book through their comfort with and enjoyment of the parallel popular culture form.[23] The racist depictions by different illustrators are also apparent in the portrayal of Black Mumbo as a "fat, barefoot 'Aunt Jemima' with polka-dot bandana."[24] These numerous references to demeaning black stereotypes allowed whites to use the book as an active tool to deem black people as "other".

Many illustrators have changed the images in the book over the years. Some tried to dehumanize the protagonist's appearance so that he would more closely resemble the pickaninny or blackface stereotype. Others transformed him into a white child and changed his social status, physical appearance and made him brave so that he would conform to white ideals.[25] Moreover, the transformation of Sambo into a white child who has a new social status, character and appearance, speaks about the historical conflation of blackness with a marginalized racial position. What illustrators and editors have not understood is that the controversy surrounding Little Black Sambo is not about artistic liberty or an illustrator's right to draw black subjects how they see fit, but rather a rejection and denial of the humanity of another race.[26] Bannerman's book along with many other editions challenges the humanity of black people through Sambo's representation as an "inferior savage."[27]

Children's literature must be taken seriously because it introduces, reinforces or breaks the preconceived ideas children have of their surroundings. As Augusta Baker and Barbara Rollock argue, "The black child who sees the picture which ridicules his race may be deeply hurt, feel defeated, or become resentful and rebellious. The white child who sees the stereotyped presentation of the black person begins to feel superior and to accept this distorted picture or 'type'."[28] The different illustrators for the story of Little Black Sambo therefore have the power

to damage a black child's self-image and to create a hierarchy between races, ultimately placing white people at the top.

According to May Hill Arbuthnot, the popularity of the book is justified by its "extreme simplicity of language, short, cadenced sentences with enough repetition to give the pleasant rhythm little children enjoy, a plot full of mild and funny surprises, considerable suspense, and complete satisfaction at the end."[29] When first published, Little Black Sambo was intended for white children under six, but children and adults of all ages found it amusing.[30] Considering the book was inexpensive, the general population was able to afford it, creating larger accessibility and a bigger audience.[31]

However, there are many reasons beyond its cost that may explain why the book was so popular. According to experts in children's literature, its original small, innovative size made it very approachable for young children.[32] The book also prevented white readers from feeling threatened by the black boy "from the primitive and faraway land of tigers" because they had control over him, as opposed to when they encountered a so-called Negro in the streets.[33] The white population was therefore able to consume images of stereotypical "primitive" black people without having to interact with them. We may relate this consumption of images in Canada to the "absence of instruction on the history of Canadian blacks," which leads white children to be instructed to "other" black people because they are supposedly "less valuable to society."[34] Overall, Little Black Sambo shaped white ideologies and negated the status of black people in society through shameful depictions of their race.

Little Black Sambo's integration into the educational curriculum in Canada was a display of white supremacy. According to a 1977 article in University of Toronto's publication Medium II, "The teacher's traditional role of helping children meet society's standards continues to reinforce the 'desirable standard' as male, white, non-handicapped and middle class."[35] Bannerman's book was therefore consumed and used in the Canadian school system to underline the hierarchy of races within the country. While Canada upholds a national story that "race is not a Canadian problem," the story of Sambo in Canadian schools, and the controversy it is associated with, contradicts this ideology, suggesting that racism is an important issue within the country.[36]

Although the book was beloved by white Canadians from the start, in the mid-1940s public objections began to appear in professional journals, raising issue with the book's racist depictions.[37] Daniel Braithwaite was the first to express great concern towards the presence and use of both the book Little Black Sambo and the movie in schools.[38] After numerous attempts to ban Sambo from Toronto public schools, it was not until 1944 that the concern was addressed.[39] More than a decade later, in 1956, the "Toronto (Canada) Board of Education honored the request of a group of black parents by voting to withdraw [the book] from the Toronto public schools. This action was taken in spite of opposition from the superintendent of schools and many leading libraries of the city, who felt that such a move was unwarranted censorship."[40]

The idea of "unwarranted censorship" reflects the ignorance on behalf of the white population to acknowledge "experiences of racism and issues of race [as] comprehensively addressed or documented within popular cultural discourse [and] academic practice in Canada."[41] The white population who wanted to preserve Bannerman's book assumed that by placing Little Black Sambo on shelves next to Peter Rabbit, all prejudice and forms of racism were eliminated from their home and schools.[42] Canadians were therefore ignoring the issues surrounding the stereotypical depictions of black people, while constantly "othering" them and dehumanizing their race through visual and textual representations present in children's

literature. Furthermore, it is critical to acknowledge that <u>Little Black Sambo</u> might have been many white children's first contact with a black character in Canada, which implies that Canada has the responsibility to eliminate the false representation of blacks from their educational institutions and to "instill in Canada's future citizens a real respect for the dignity of all human beings, regardless of nationality, race or religion. Stories such as <u>Little Black Sambo</u> can only detract from that effort."[43]

Following the great controversy over <u>Little Black Sambo</u> in public schools and libraries, one would think that the production and sales would have ceased. Unfortunately, that was not the case. In 1974, nearly twenty years after the book was banned from schools, sales remained constant.[44] Dorothy Briley, a children's book editor, justified the constant sales with the following: "the company subscribes to the theory that racism is 'in the eye of the beholder' and the book will be reprinted as long as the demand exists."[45] Briley is therefore suggesting that the issue of racism is not an issue as long as people buy racist literature. This lack of concern for races other than whites brings us directly back to the "issues of race [...] based on ignorance [and] the privilege of whiteness as the unquestioned normative Western and Canadian identity."[46] This ignorance has proven to be quite durable in the absence of efforts on behalf of both publishers and the general Canadian public to demonstrate their understanding of the numerous issues present in <u>Little Black Sambo</u>.

In 2000, black author Julius Lester wrote a modified version of the book titled <u>Sam and the Tigers</u>. Jerry Pinkney "revised" the images, but one could argue that they still portray the black child with pickaninny attributes.[47] Moreover, the original book was republished in 2003 with revised and sanitized illustrations by Christopher Bing, but the story remains controversial: the text remains unchanged, and the book reminds the reader of its link to the original racist edition, and its connection to the dehumanization of black people.[48]

This article has demonstrated that Helen Bannerman's <u>Little Black Sambo</u> worked to dehumanize black people through its textual and visual depictions, suggesting their inferiority to the white readers. The language used in the text was extremely offensive and supported the idea that people of colour were "primitive". Meanwhile, the author's use of the pickaninny stereotype insisted on "othering" black people, tactics which were common in white everyday activities such as blackface minstrel shows. The controversies surrounding the book and its banning from Canadian schools demonstrates that white Canadians did not see the ethical issues that the text and images offered.

Unfortunately, Bannerman left a legacy of racial prejudice, as her books continue to be sold and republished.[49] <u>Little Black Sambo</u> and nine other books written by Helen Bannerman are still easily available today at a low cost to anyone wanting to read them.[50] This demonstrates how little effort has been made by publishers to support racial equality among citizens. Furthermore, the pervasive success of Bannerman's book in Canada, its integration into national curriculum and the push back from school board officials and white parents against its removal, demonstrates the ongoing problem of racism as an issue within Canadian society.

ENDNOTES

[1] Phyllis J. Yuill, <u>Little Black Sambo: A Closer Look: A History of Helen Bannerman's The Story of Little Black Sambo and Its Popularity/Controversy in the United States</u> (New York: Racism and Sexism Resource Center for Educators, 1976), p. 2.

[2] Yuill, <u>Little Black Sambo: A Closer Look</u>, p. 3.

[3] Yuill, <u>Little Black Sambo: A Closer Look</u>, p. 3.

[4] Yuill, <u>Little Black Sambo: A Closer Look</u>, p. 3.

[5] Daniel Braithwaite, <u>The Banning of the Book "Little Black Sambo" From The Toronto Public Schools, 1956</u> (Toronto: Overnight Typing & Copy Co., 1978), p. 58.

[6] Eva Mackey proposes the terms "others" and "othering" to represent the action of marginalizing or excluding a group of people from the dominant population because of their race, culture, gender or class. Here, the term "othering" is used to separate races: the white dominant population is "othering" the blacks because they are considered inferior to whites. Eva Mackey, <u>The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada</u>, (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2002), p. 12.

[7] Yuill, <u>Little Black Sambo: A Closer Look</u>, p. 16.
According to Eric Lott (1992), blackface minstrel shows were popular in the American culture of the nineteenth century because it allowed for whites to create a boundary between their "racial purity" and the blacks' association to slavery. He goes on to argue that "while it was organized around the quite explicit 'borrowing' of black cultural materials for white dissemination (and profit), a borrowing that ultimately depended upon the material relations of slavery, the minstrel show obscured these relations by pretending that slavery was amusing, right, and natural." Moreover, "From a contemporary vantage point, the minstrel show does seem a transparently racist curiosity, a form of leisure that - in inventing and ridiculing the slow-witted-but-irrepressible 'plantation darky' and the foppish 'northern dandy negro'- conveniently rationalized racial oppression." Eric Lott, "'The Seeming Counterfeit': Racial Politics and Early Blackface Minstrelsy," <u>American Quarterly</u>, vol. 43, no. 2 (June 1991), p. 223.

[8] Braithwaite, <u>The Banning of the Book "Little Black Sambo"</u>, p. 14.

[9] "Sambo," <u>Online Etymology Dictionary</u>, http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=sambo (date of last access 29 November 2014)

[10] Elizabeth Hay, <u>Sambo Sahib: The Story of Little Black Sambo and Helen Bannerman</u> (Edinburgh: P. Harris Pub., 1981), p. vii.

[11] Hay, <u>Sambo Sahib</u>, p. vii.

[12] "Sambo," <u>Oxford English Dictionary</u>, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/170350?rskey=LWLDHY&result=1#eid (date of last access 29 November 2014)

[13] Braithwaite, <u>The Banning of the Book "Little Black Sambo"</u>, pp. 2-3.

[14] Hay suggests that Sambo, Golliwog and Darkie were terms commonly used to define non-white people in a pejorative manner. Hay, <u>Sambo Sahib</u>, p. 169.

[15] David Pilgrim, "Little Black Sambo," <u>Picaninny Caricature</u>, (Ferris State University: October 2012), http://www.ferris.edu/news/jimcrow/picaninny/ (date of last access 29 November 2014)

[16] Yuill, <u>Little Black Sambo: A Closer Look</u>, p. 19.
Camille A. Nelson and Charmaine A. Nelson, eds., <u>Racism, Eh?: A Critical Inter-Disciplinary Anthology of Race and Racism in Canada</u> (Concord, Ont.: Captus Press, 2004), p. 4.

[17] Robin Bernstein, <u>Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights</u> (New York, N.Y.: New York University Press, 2011), p. 34.
McFadden suggests that "the pickaninny is a derogatory, stereotypical term used throughout slavery and well into the twentieth-century to denote a child of African descent." Blair McFadden, "'Piccaninny Type': Reproducing Colonial Discourse, Black Children as Subjects in Canadian Painting," <u>Chrysalis: A Critical Student Journal of Transformative Art History</u>, vol.1, no.1 (Fall 2014), p. 45.

[18] It was common for white people to present blacks as parents who neglected their children. When looking at the history of slavery, we are able to prove that this stereotype was false. The black woman was the main caregiver for white children and often forced to act as a wet nurse. She breastfed the white infants as if they were her own. Any neglect of an enslaved mother's own children derived largely from the white owner's misdirection of her time and biological resources towards their own white children. Therefore, the generalization of so-called abandonment of black children on behalf of their parents is a constructed myth. Marcus Wood, Black Milk: Imagining Slavery in the Visual Cultures of Brazil and America (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 1-3.

[19] Wood, Black Milk, p. 73-74.
Marcus Wood, "Slavery and Romantic Poetry," Slavery, Empathy, and Pornography (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 244-54.

[20] McFadden, "'Piccaninny Type'," p. 45.

[21] Yuill, Little Black Sambo: A Closer Look, p. 3.

[22] Yuill, Little Black Sambo: A Closer Look, p. 15.
The illustrators' decision to keep the tigers even if the story is moved to Africa or the United States may imply that the tigers, as mentioned previously, provide a visual association between Sambo the black child, and the history of slavery.

[23] Yuill, Little Black Sambo: A Closer Look, p. 9. The image in figure 6 resembles that of a monkey, which connects the subject to the human science history of a so-called Negro as closer to simians.

[24] Yuill, Little Black Sambo: A Closer Look, p. 15.
According to Hay, " 'uncle' and 'aunt' were devices used by Old South whites to give a modicum of respect to older blacks without going to the unthinkable extreme of actually calling them 'Mr' or 'Mrs'." Hay, Sambo Sahib, p. 163.
When Sambo eats pancakes at the end of the book, Bannerman may have been referring to the pancake mix of Aunt Jemima (1889), which would have been available. "Our History," Aunt Jemima, http://www.auntjemima.com/aj_history/ (date of last access 29 November 2014)

[25] Sova uses the term "dehumanize" to emphasize that Little Black Sambo's features are reflecting unflattering stereotypical ideas of how black people were perceived. Sambo is therefore depicted with animalistic traits rather than a fully human figure. Dawn B. Sova, Banned Books: Literature Suppressed on Social Grounds, 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Facts On File, 2011), pp. 256-57.

[26] Hay, Sambo Sahib, p. 174.

[27] Hay, Sambo Sahib, p. 169.

[28] Augusta Baker and Barbara Rollock, The Black Experience in Children's Books (New York: New York Public Library, 1974), p. ii.
Yuill, Little Black Sambo: A Closer Look, p. 15.

[29] May Hill Arbuthnot, Children and Books, 3rd ed. (Chicago: Scoot, Foresman, 1964), p. 336; also cited in Yuill, Little Black Sambo: A Closer Look, p. 7.

[30] Yuill, Little Black Sambo: A Closer Look, p. 51.

[31] Yuill, Little Black Sambo: A Closer Look, p. 5.

[32] Yuill, Little Black Sambo: A Closer Look, p. 7.

[33] Yuill, Little Black Sambo: A Closer Look, p. 8.

[34] "Stereotypes still persist in Children's schooling," <u>Medium II (University of Toronto)</u>, no.19, 1 March 1977, p.7.

[35] "Stereotypes still persist in Children's schooling," <u>Medium II (University of Toronto)</u>, no.19, 1 March 1977, p.7.

[36] Anthony Stewart, "The professional sports shell game: A black Canadian's reflections on twentieth-century American sports history," <u>Dalhousie Review</u> (Autumn 1996), pp. 371-88; also cited in Nelson and Nelson, "Penn and Teller Magic: Self, Racial Devaluation and the Canadian Academy," <u>Racism, Eh?</u>, p. 40.

[37] Yuill, <u>Little Black Sambo: A Closer Look</u>, p. 13.

[38] An animated version of <u>Little Black Sambo</u> was produced and directed in 1935 by Ub Iwerks in the United States of America.
Daniel Braithwaite is a black man who worked extensively for the black population. His numerous contributions include Vice President of the Negro Youth Club (1937), Youth Men's Negro Association (1937) and membership in the Afro Community Church Youth Group (1936). He was the founding member of the: Joint Council of Negro Youth, (1944) Toronto Negro Young Men's Bible Class (1937), Toronto Negro Study Group (1948) and Canadian Negro Newspaper (1950). He was also a member of the Toronto Negro Citizenship Committee (1950) and a chartered member of the Library of Black People's Literature. In 1942 Braithwaite "was refused entry in the Canadian Air Force because of his colour." Braithwaite, <u>The Banning of the Book "Little Black Sambo"</u>, p. 61.

[39] Braithwaite, <u>The Banning of the Book "Little Black Sambo"</u>, p. 1.

[40] Yuill, <u>Little Black Sambo: A Closer Look</u>, p. 25.

[41] Nelson and Nelson "Introduction," <u>Racism, Eh?</u>, p. 2.

[42] Yuill, <u>Little Black Sambo: A Closer Look</u>, p. 1.; <u>Peter Rabbit</u> written by Beatrix Potter, is a 1902 book about a white rabbit who embodies white ideologies through his actions, dialect and nice clothing. By allowing <u>Little Black Sambo</u> to be placed next to <u>Peter Rabbit</u>, white Canadians felt that they were eliminating racism because they were consuming books with both white and black characters. The black character in the book was allowed to be in their homes and schools, which they thought was a proof of how they accepted blackness and therefore they were not being racist. Moreover, the idea of not being racist was emphasized by physically placing both books together, which meant they were equally important to the reader.

[43] Braithwaite, <u>The Banning of the Book "Little Black Sambo"</u>, p. 14.
It is important to note that it was not until January 1972 that the Montreal Canadian National Black Coalition was able to remove Bannerman's book from schools and libraries. Following that, the same year in Hamilton Ontario, teachers began to refuse to teach <u>Sambo</u> and decided to eliminate any content associated with it. Also, by the end of that spring in New Brunswick, the book was banned from the entire province. Sova, <u>Banned Book</u>, pp. 257-58.

[44] Yuill, <u>Little Black Sambo: A Closer Look</u>, p. 28.

[45] Yuill, <u>Little Black Sambo: A Closer Look</u>, p. 28.

[46] Nelson and Nelson, "Introduction," <u>Racism, Eh?</u>, p. 3.

[47] The pickaninny attributes such as the large mouth and teeth are still present in this book. Also, Sam is being neglected by his parents, and although he is chased by tigers, he is never afraid. A. John-Hall, "Revisiting <u>Little Black Sambo</u>: New Renditions of Children's Story Offer Positive Images," <u>The Spectator</u> (30 November 1996), np.

[48] There are many issues with this new edition of <u>Sambo</u>: the title of the book, the character's names, the text, story and the setting remain identical to Bannerman's original version. Bing has simply altered the images, giving Sambo a more human figure rather than depicting him using the pickaninny's physical characteristics. Moreover, the illustrator has made the book much larger, allowing for the images to be more detailed and elaborate.

[49] It is also important to note that the original book influenced the Santa Barbara Sambo's restaurant in California which is still functioning with its original 1957 name. Formerly an American restaurant chain, Sambo's restaurants were directly associated with Bannerman's book: the interior design of the restaurant features many images of the book itself. "A Brief History," <u>Sambo's,</u> <u>http://www.sambosrestaurant.com/</u> (date of last access 16 January 2015)

[50] Helen Bannerman wrote a total of ten books, only nine were published: <u>Little Black Sambo</u> (1899), <u>The Story of Little Black Mingo</u> (1902), <u>The Story of Little Black Quibba</u> (1902), <u>Little Degchie-Head: An Awful Warning to Bad Babas</u> (1903), <u>The Story of Little Kettle-Head</u> (1904), <u>Pat and the Spider</u> (1905), <u>The Story of the Teasing Monkey</u> (1907), <u>The Story of Little Black Quasha</u> (1908), <u>The Story of Little Black Bobtail</u> (1909), and <u>Sambo and the Twins</u> (1936). The only book that was not published is titled: <u>Little White Squibba</u> (1965).

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Figure 1: Helen Bannerman, "Little Black Sambo," (197-?), illustration, <u>Little Black Sambo</u> (Philadelphia, New York: J.B. Lippincott Co., 197-?)

Figure 2: Helen Bannerman, "Black Mumbo," (197-?), illustration, <u>Little Black Sambo</u> (Philadelphia, New York: J.B. Lippincott Co., 197-?)

Figure 3: Helen Bannerman, "Black Jumbo," (197-?), illustration, <u>Little Black Sambo</u> (Philadelphia, New York: J.B. Lippincott Co., 197-?)

Figure 4: Helen Bannerman, "Little Black Sambo," (197-?), illustration, <u>Little Black Sambo</u> (Philadelphia, New York: J.B. Lippincott Co., 197-?)