gender & ethnic studies

Versace's Native American

A Colonized Body in the Name of Aesthetic and Dynastic Glory

Felicia Bartley

The following is an excerpt from a longer piece. For full text, please visit www.honorsjournal.com.

IN THIS CONTEMPORARY moment fashion designers have the means to collaborate with Native American fashion designers. However, there is still a flourishing fashion market that refuses to recognize Native American tribes as owners of intellectual property.[1] While some brands may initially start on the right track via collaboration with Native artists, it may not always end in success.[2] Most recently, Versace has included Native American designs in their ready-to-wear fashion for the 2018 Spring-Summer season. This component of the collection belongs to a tribute honoring Gianni Versace and his original *FW '92 Native American* print.[3] I will be discussing the implications of the revived Native American print and how it affects Native North American men and women. In this essay, I will look at Versace's legacy and his original print; the new Native American Tribute Collection by Donatella Versace; and Donna Karan's collaboration with Pueblo artist, Virgil Ortiz. I argue that respectful recognition of Native North American property is thrown aside for aesthetic and dynastic glory, which in turn, allows non-Native designers to colonize the 'exotic' Native woman's body by denying Native North American men and women the opportunity to represent themselves to the global fashion community. Virgil Ortiz's collaboration with Donna Karan illustrates how respectful collaboration can shape the dominant society's perception of Native North American women.

If we use Native North American fashion as a framework to understand how Native designers are working to dismantle mainstream stereotypes, it is imperative that global designers seek collaboration with Indigenous designers. As explained by Amanda J. Cobb in her essay "Understanding Tribal Sovereignty: Definitions, Conceptualizations, and Interpretations," sovereignty needs to be linked to all aspects of life, not just the political; to lose cultural identity is to sacrifice sovereignty.[4] My paper seeks to illuminate how cul-

1 "Navajo Nation Sues Urban Outfitters," *Business Law Daily*, March 18, 2012.

2 See Jessica R. Metcalfe, "Oh No, Valentino | Appropriation and the Case of the Stolen Beadwork," *Beyond Buckskin* (blog), April 25, 2017, http://www.beyondbuckskin.com/2017/04/oh-no-valentino-appropriation-and-case.html for a case in which Valentino collaborated with Metis artist, Christi Belcourt, to design gown but stole beadwork designs that did not apply to Copyright Law.

3 Sally Singer, "Versace Spring 2018 Ready-to-Wear Fashion Show," Vogue, September 22, 2017, https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/spring-2018-ready-to-wear/versace.

4 Amanda J. Cobb, "Understanding Tribal Sovereignty: Definitions, Conceptualizations, and Interpretations," *Mid-America American Studies Association*, American Studies, 46, no. 3/4 (October 2005): 121–22.

tural identity, vis-a-vis sovereignty, is put at stake when global European designers perceive North Native American identities as a resource to improve aesthetic and individualistic glory.

One exhibition, curated by Karen Kramer from the Peabody Essex Museum, to counter mainstream narratives imposed upon Native North American women is traveling exhibition *Native Fashion Now: North American Indian Style. Native Fashion Now* is argued by Kramer to be the first of its kind that displays a large scope of Native American fashion.[5] Kramer argues that our contemporary society is in the middle of a "Native American fashion renaissance."[6] She states that fashion designers are tapping into their own aesthetic creativity while negotiating cultural boundaries –imposed from within and the outside.[7] Kramer asserts that fashion is a reflection of society and its people, and that Native designers "speak with many voices," not just one.[8] As my essay suggests, Patricia Hill Collins' "controlling images" are used by Versace, and thus, have the ability to dehumanize and undermine Native North American self-worth.[9] However, as demonstrated in *Native Fashion Now*, Indigenous designers have the ability to transform the global fashion industry into one that fosters community, reciprocity, and healing.

Versace's introduction of *prostitute style* in the 1980s shook the fashion industry and contributed to "defining the character of the modern woman."[10] Versace's designs transcended boundaries that were interpreted as a means to reaffirm women's power…[11] The impacts are twofold: first, the imagery presented is the average American's understanding of Native Americans and homogenizes 567 Native nations into a singular, flattened plane;[12] and two, Native North American women are expected to accept this style of dress as a "modern" reaffirmation of power implying that Indigenous North American women are outdated and hold no authority in their respective communities.

Gianni Versace frequented The Metropolitan Museum of Art, where exhibitions influenced his designs;[13] however, his original *FW '92 Native American* print disavows appropriate representation of Native North American men and women. In Nancy J. Parezo's articles…she discusses Federic H. Douglas's outreach program called "The Indian Fashion Show," which sought to dismantle the negative stereotypes of the "gendered Wild Savage."[14] Parezo argues that Douglas's show from the 1940s and 1950s holds the same relevance

5 Karen Kramer et al., eds., *Native Fashion Now: North American Indian Style* (Munich; London; New York: DelMonico Books/Prestel, 2015), 16.
6 Kramer et al., 15.
7 Kramer et al., 17.
8 Kramer et al., 16–21.
9 Kimberly R. Huyser, "A 'Real' American Indian," *Contexts: Understanding People in Their Social Worlds* 16, no. 1 (February 2017): 71.
10 Richard Martin and Gianni Versace, *Gianni Versace* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art : Distributed by H.N. Abrams, 1997), 12.
11 Martin and Versace, 13.
12 "Tribal Nations & the United States: An Introduction | NCAI," accessed April 16, 2018, http://www.ncai.org/about-tribes The number is growing. See: http://www.ncai.org/about-tribes.
13 Martin and Versace, *Gianni Versace*, 9.
14 Nancy J. Parezo, "The Indian Fashion Show: Fighting Cultural Stereotypes with Gender," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 69, no. 3 (2013): 318.

in contemporary society by actively engaging a "culturally blind" audience, challenging ethnocentrism, questioning definitions of modernity, and harkening to contemporary views of gender and women's bodies.[15] This show was seen as a success when it first toured; however, the show reinforced positive stereotypes, thus negating the effects of Douglas's original intent.[16] Despite Douglas's efforts to elevate Native women on the same sphere, with non-Native women, the appearance of Versace's *FW 1992* print comes as little to no surprise and adheres to Douglas's underlying tone that all women are the same and need to be represented by their male counterparts.[17]

While museums often praise Versace for his acute awareness for historical accuracy,[18] the 1992 print's execution creates a monotonous voice that is far from acceptable. In both advertisements the models are stoic, representing the Noble Savage… The print also fails to acknowledge historical truths, diversity, and gender equality. The Native American print features popular imagery that attempts to erase intellectual property by refusing to feature designs that resonate with Plain's Native North American culture. The advertised motifs are homogenized and make it impossible to accurately identify the depicted Nation.[19]

The generic approach to the FW '92 print highlights Versace's strive to promote his personal ambitions in the fashion industry as innovative, accurate, and a guardian to women. The artistic voice within the *FW '92 Native American* design is formal and individualistic. Modernity and traditionalism are contrasted by Versace's "Wild Baroque" design, which reminisces the "luxurious past." [20] The intricate baroque pattern contrasted by the generic Native North American iconography imply that Native North American tribes are of the past and contrary to European civilization…Versace's indifference to the Native American population he was representing is seen in the paternalistic design, which features Buffalo Bill and multiple non-identifiable Native men. The inclusion of Buffalo Bill, a time-specific identifiable male figure, who thrived off Native American cultural exploitation and oppression, and the exclusion of any woman figure contradict museum narratives that boast of Versace's advocacy for women.[21]

Static images feed into the mainstream, control the dominant narrative of how marginalized groups should feel, and dictate what is socially acceptable

Twenty years after Gianni Versace's murder, Donatella Versace

15 Nancy J. Parezo, "The Indian Fashion Show: Manipulating Representations of Native Attire in Museum Exhibits to Fight Stereotypes in 1942 and 1998," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 31, no. 3 (January 2007): 6, https://doi.org/10.17953/aicr.31.3.x6702023216019p8.

16 Parezo, "The Indian Fashion Show: Fighting Cultural Stereotypes with Gender," 322.

17 Parezo, 322.

18 Martin and Versace, *Gianni Versace*.

19 To see respectful recognition of intellectual property regarding Plain's Native culture, see Bethany Yellowtail's inclusion of Crow traditional designs superimposed on contemporary fashion pieces: byellowtail.com.

20 Claire Wilcox, Valerie D. Mendes, and Chiara Buss, *The Art and Craft of Gianni Versace* (London : New York: published by V&A Publications ; Distributed by Harry N. Abrams, 2002), 20.

21 Wilcox, Mendes, and Buss, *The Art and Craft of Gianni Versace*.

sought to honor her brother's artistic genius.[22] Donatella Versace's *Tribute* collection features Native American iconography that is directly based from Versace's 1992 collection . When the *Tribute* collection debuted on the runway, Donatella's voiceover encouraged the audience to "imagine a world without [Versace's] allegiance to women."[23] Versace's *prostitute style*, that reveals as much as it covers, contradicts the voiceover. Women's voices are claimed by Gianni Versace through swaddling fabrics that accentuate and fetishize women's skin.[24] Donatella's voiceover entertains the thought in which Versace "helped women reclaim their own voice to be themselves."[25] I argue, however, that Gianni Versace robbed women of a voice, and created them as objects subjected to the male gaze despite his lifelong commitment to women's "visual authority."[26]

Portraying Versace as historically accurate and culturally driven willfully ignores the effects of Versace's work in the mainstream American Imaginary.[27] Figures 6 and 7 are two of seven items that are direct reproductions of Gianni Versace's original print belonging to Donatella's *Tribute* collection. In these designs there are several motifs that promote "the world of the American West:"[28] feather staff; tipi; white stallion with headdress-wearing rider ; Natives on horseback with young child and colt; a non-identifiable Native American man with long unbraided hair, feather atop his head, peace pipe, moccasins, plains hide clothing, and beaded accessories; and most notably, Buffalo Bill . The static imagery represented on the *FW '92 Native American* print (both original and revived) imagines Native American identity as the United States of America's intellectual property — free to use, sell, and appropriate. The inclusion of Buffalo Bill therefore cements the United States of America as paternal, civilizing, and rightful owners of Native North American intellectual property.

The absence of women in this design silences those who are respected and integral members of their respective Native communities.[29] That no additional print has been created to honor the women of the depicted community reinforces the mindless appraisal of Versace's original designs. It is through Donatella's *Tribute* collection that Versace is elevated and perceived as genius and icon.[30] Rather than question the designs and rhetoric of the original Native American print, it is reimagined on new silhouettes that achieve the same effects as when it first debuted.

22 Singer, "Versace Spring 2018 Ready-to-Wear Fashion Show."
23 *The Versace Tribute Collection - Spring Summer 2018*, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QoiLg-fgNbE.
24 Wilcox, Mendes, and Buss, *The Art and Craft of Gianni Versace*, 13 uses "second skin" to refer to Versace's bodysuits.
25 The Versace Tribute Collection.
26 Martin and Versace, *Gianni Versace*, 13.
27 Philip Joseph Deloria, *Playing Indian*, Yale Historical Publications (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).
28 "The Gianni Versace Tribute Collection - New Arrivals | US Online Store," Versace, accessed March 13, 2018, https://www.versace.com/us/en-us/the-versace-tribute-collection/.
29 Rauna Kuokkanen, "Indigenous Economies, Theories of Subsistence, and Women: Exploring the Social Economy Model for Indigenous Governance," *American Indian Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (2011): 215–40, https://doi.org/10.5250/amerindiquar.35.2.0215.
30 The Versace Tribute Collection.

*Figure SEQ Figure * ARABIC 10*. Spring 2003. DKNY x VO. Courtesy: virgilortiz.com

*Figure SEQ Figure * ARABIC 11*. Bi-Furcation. Virgil Ortiz. Cochiti red clay, white clay slip, red clay slip, black (wild spinach) paint. 12" x 9". Courtesy: virgilortiz.com.

Where are the women? Where are the people? These designs portray fictional characters, Buffalo Bill, ethnographic zooscapes , and an idealized past. There is no truth to these images except Buffalo Bill's likeness. The only true image in this print is Versace's attitude towards the Other: part of the past, only to be romanticized via clothing.[31] The juxtaposed "Wild Baroque" pattern demonstrates Versace's love for the idealized past, a past that never existed and continues to circulate today and renders Native North American voices as incomplete (lacking women). The juxtaposition portrays Native North Americans as vanished, only to be viewed in photographs or prints recovered from World's Fairs and ethnographic studies . As a fresh breath of air, these aforementioned designs and approach differ from that of Donna Karan New York back in 2002.

Non-Native fashion designers can maintain prestige while advocating for Native North American artistic expression. A few years back the New York designer, Donna Karan (DKNY), attended Santa Fe Indian Market, met Virgil Ortiz and asked to collaborate with the Cochiti artist.[32] In 2002, Ortiz and Karan joined forces to create a clothing line that included Ortiz's fabrics adorned with Puebloan motifs sewn into Karan silhouettes (Figure 10).[33] The resulting pieces are versatile, sophisticated,

31 Martin and Versace, *Gianni Versace*, 27.
32 James Servin, "The Art and Times of Santa Fe Artist," Virgil Ortiz | VOxDKNY, accessed April 5, 2018, https://www.virgilortiz.com/portfolio_page/voxdkny/.
33 Jessica R. Metcalfe, "Reclaiming the Body: Strategies of Resistance in Virgil Ortiz's Fashion Designs," *Settler Colonial Studies* 3, no. 2 (April 1, 2013): 172–78, https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2013.781929.

and elegant. The dresses speak to all audiences, Native and non-Native, and are specific to an identifiable nation: The Pueblo of Cochiti.

Dr. Jessica R. Metcalfe writes a compelling article, "Reclaiming the Body: Strategies of Resistance in Virgil Ortiz's Fashion Designs" where she argues the collaboration between Ortiz and Donna Karan was an act of reclamation for Native representation in fashion, and by doing so, he defied the expectations of Native American art.[34] Having continued a family tradition of muños pottery (figurative pottery), Ortiz uses the same techniques to create social commentary regarding non-Native societies (Figure 11).[35] For Ortiz, reclaiming the representation of Native peoples lies within decoration, both on pottery and the body via fashion.[36] The designs Ortiz uses "have belonged to his family for hundreds of years";[37] Donna Karan's acknowledgement of Ortiz's creative familial lineage and authority allows future Native artists to gain recognition for their respective nation's intellectual property.

Ortiz uses his stardom to promote Native well-being, rather than promote himself. Metcalfe describes in her article Ortiz's *Le Sauvage Primitif* collection from 2007 where the catwalk performance juxtaposed the wild savage and civilized man.[38] While this pairing sounds familiar to Versace's juxtaposition described earlier, Virgil Ortiz's fashion show blurred the lines between savage and civilized to critique stereotypes afflicting Native people today.[39] Rather than perpetuate notions of the "vanishing Indian" Ortiz uses the catwalk to question mainstream representations of Native North Americans. With his personal income and public visibility Ortiz "creates access to arts and culture for the youth of the pueblo and to preserve the Keres language."[40]

So, the question: why does this matter? Indigenous self-representation is limited when global designers profit from centuries of Native American misrepresentation. Static images feed into the mainstream, control the dominant narrative of how marginalized groups should feel, and dictate what is socially acceptable. In the case of Gianni Versace, *prostitute style* is highly prized as modern, glamorous, and seductive.[41] The perception of the "modern woman" as sexually "liberated" is marketed to women of all classes through magazines, social media, advertisements, and, *yes*, it seeps into Native communities.[42] With an ever-increasing acceptance of Gianni Versace's *prostitute style,* Native woman are encouraged to welcome sex into fashion and thus transform their bodies into "teasing veils."[43] By encouraging this mindset, clothing becomes second skin to be fetishized and only worn to reveal what lies beneath (Figure 8), thereby inviting negative stereotypes of Native American women promiscuity.

The way Native North American men and women are represented in the fashion industry is an im-

34 Metcalfe, "Reclaiming the Body," 172.
35 Servin, "The Art and Times of Santa Fe Artist." Around the 1800's Puebloan potters used muños to parody outsiders living in or visiting traditional and contemporary Pueblo spaces.
36 Metcalfe, "Reclaiming the Body," 174.
37 Servin, "The Art and Times of Santa Fe Artist."
38 Metcalfe, 176–77.
39 Metcalfe, 177.
40 Metcalfe, 178.
41 Martin and Versace, *Gianni Versace*, 12–13.
42 Martin and Versace, 12–13.
43 Martin and Versace, 13.

age that mediates the consumption of American society. Versace's *FW '92 Native American* dismisses women as absent, non-essential members of Native communities, whereas men are unworthy of descriptive information to distinctly identify an individual. Versace's *Tribute* collection is a result of the dominant social and economic formations within Western society that commodifies Native American artistic expression. Aspects of dominant American culture thrive off images that exploit Native North American motifs as exotic and obtainable via clothing and accessories. Stereotypes created by the fashion industry transform and exoticize both Native men and women into non-existent peoples living in the periphery of American popular culture.

Virgil Ortiz is not the only artist who is using his commercial platform to benefit his community, there are other designers such as Bethany Yellowtail. Jared Yazzie, Patricia Michaels, and Loren Aragon. Virgil Ortiz and Donna Karan set a hopeful precedent for other global designers to give back to the communities they work with. Rather than use Ortiz's designs for her own aesthetic glory, Donna Karan was mindful to refer to Virgil Ortiz as an artist, "whose work *directly* influenced my spring designs."[44] In comparison, Versace, both Donatella and Gianni, appropriate Native American identity to build a legacy that silences Native women and restricts Native North Americans to the "world of the American west."[45]

44 Servin, "The Art and Times of Santa Fe Artist." Emphasis added.

45 "The Gianni Versace Tribute Collection - New Arrivals | US Online Store."

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ed racist attitudes against themselves and other women of color. Consequently, racially oppressive beauty standards were upheld by men and women of color and not just by white people.

From the 1970s to the 1990s… the Black is Beautiful social movement strove to expand beauty ideals and gave rise to small, independent companies that produced makeup for women of color. Some mainstream makeup companies like Covergirl and L'Oreal followed suit and made attempts at racial inclusivity with their makeup products; however, racial equity was, and continues to be, lacking. The historical development of beauty standards and the continuation of upholding white beauty standards has allowed for the reproduction of whiteness on an institutional level. The commercialization of white beauty has contributed to the cultural representation of women of color as "negative, out-of-place, or disturbing" because they are at the bottom of the socially constructed beauty hierarchy (Hall, 1997, p. 236). The cosmetic industry contributes to racial formation that ascribes meaning to different bodies, such that white women are valued over black/brown women (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 4). These racially defined appraisals of women's worth, maintained by the beauty industry, are definitive forms of institutional racism.

Despite increasing criticism, popular makeup brands… have received from consumers more recently, their efforts at racial inclusion have been surface-level at best. To address the issue of racial exclusivity, beauty companies have tried to include more than just a few shades of brown or other pigments for women of color. However, the proportion of makeup for white skin tones continues to exceed those produced for black and brown skin tones…Aside from the quantitative inequity of shades available for women of color, other attempts at racial inclusion in makeup lines have been accused of cultural appropriation, tokenism, and whitewashing models of color. A pertinent example of how cultural appropriation permeated efforts at racial inclusion in cosmetics can be seen in MAC's *Vibe Tribe* makeup line (MAC Cosmetics, 2016). The company refuted accusations of cultural appropriation by claiming the makeup line was created with music festival culture in mind; though it's clear that the makeup line is not coincidentally reminiscent of Native American culture (BuzzfeedYellow, 2016). The advertisements feature clothing and product packaging that include patterns reminiscent of Native American culture…The names of products are appropriative of sacred Navajo Nation Lands, such as "Painted Canyon" lipstick bringing to mind the Navajo Nation's Painted Desert land (Buzzfeed Yellow, 2016).

A notorious example of whitewashing celebrities of color was seen in one of L'Oreal's 2008 advertisements featuring Beyoncé (L'Oreal Paris, 2008). While the advertisement may seem benign on its own, when compared to pictures of Beyoncé outside of advertising, there are observable differences. L'Oreal clearly altered Beyoncé's appearance to more closely align with white beauty ideals… This advertisement is also a marked example of intertextuality, for it can be traced back to the skin-lightening advertisements that permeated the 1940's. The skin-bleaching advertisements set the precedent that women of color need to make their

skin as white as possible in order to be considered beautiful, and it seems that Photoshop has taken the place of skin-lightening products. The racialized message portrayed through this modern advertisement is fairly similar to what was illustrated: the closer to whiteness Beyoncé gets, the more beautiful and advertisement worthy she is. Consequently, the whitewashing of Beyoncé reveals that L'Oreal's attempt at racial inclusion, by featuring a woman of color in their advertisements, is more accurately a form of tokenism. These failed attempts at racial inclusivity and representations of diversity are indicative of the cosmetic industry's concern with maintaining their reputation. They do this by creating the impression that they care about inclusion, but in reality this amounts to blatant efforts at projecting a spirit of inclusion while masking a reality of racial exclusion. Sarah Ahmed claims that prioritizing the maintenance of organizational pride, companies can ignore and refute accusations of racism (Ahmed, 2012). The cosmetic industry generally believes that if they have black celebrities as the faces of their advertisements and if they release lines of makeup exclusively for women of color, that they could not possibly be racist. As a consequence, these forms of shallow racial inclusion make it so these companies can remain ignorant of what are actually practices rooted in institutional racism (i.e. whitewashing, tokenism, and cultural appropriation).

It is important to analyze the roles of power structures and economic interests when considering why cosmetic companies continue to be racially exclusive today. White men serve as the CEOs of major companies like MAC, L'Oreal, and Maybelline…They make decisions about what images of beauty to promote, which affords them the power to organize the social hierarchy of beauty. This relates back to the idea that the beauty standards in this country are predicated on Eurocentric *masculine*-driven beauty ideals, which clearly play off of the larger racial, sexual hierarchy in the United States…These companies generally put forth arguments about their lack of racial inclusiveness that are from economic and capitalist perspectives. Often times these mainstream companies will claim that it is too difficult and costly to create products that are compatible with darker skin tones (Barton, 2017). Additionally, they will argue that the market for women of color is not as large or lucrative as the market for white women. However, both of these claims are inaccurate. Not only do African-American women alone spend 7.5 billion annually on beauty products (which is 80% more than white women spend), makeup pigments for darker skin simply require different chemical combinations (Hope, 2016). Considering that the economic arguments against racial inclusion in beauty products are not sound, then it follows that the reasons behind racial exclusivity are based on social aspects…Overall, these cosmetic companies are giving economically backed excuses for racially exclusive practices, which stem from deeper values around racism and bodily prejudice. It seems that the primary motivation for upholding institutional racism then, is to maintain whiteness and white power and not strictly to increase profits.

While there has been minimal progress in dismantling institutional racism in the cosmetic industry, not all hope is lost. There have been valu-

able gains on smaller scales within the beauty industry that have empowered women of color and provided them with avenues to resist racial oppression. Over the last few decades, small, independent beauty brands have emerged. Women of color founded brands such as Koyvoca, Cocotique, and Lipbar over the last few decades in order to fill the gaps left by mainstream brands. These brands focus on creating products for women of color, and have been met with gratitude by women of color seeking more makeup options (Hope, 2016). While they may not have the same amount of popularity as hallmark beauty brands, they model racial inclusivity that mainstream brands should adopt. In the last year, Rihanna has founded and launched her own beauty line, Fenty. Fenty's mission statement is to be inclusive of everyone while at the same time focusing on a wide range of hard-to-match skin tones, creating formulas that work for all skin types, and pinpointing universal shades (Mueller, 2017). Since launching in late 2017, the company has experienced large success in fulfilling this mission statement, and six of the darkest foundation shades sold out in the first two weeks (Mueller, 2017). Perhaps of most importance to Fenty's success is that Rihanna advocates for inclusivity of all skin colors, including lighter and darker shades together. Fenty can serve as an example to the dominant beauty brands that being racially inclusive doesn't mean that they have to eliminate whiteness—instead, equity is key.

Lastly, important gains have also been made in production side of the makeup industry. Balanda Atis, a black female chemist, pioneered the Women of Color Lab for the popular cosmetic company L'Oreal…Unsatisfied with the inferior quality of the makeup L'Oreal had for darker skin tones, Atis embarked on a research project where she collected over 20,000 individual skin tone samples in order to determine a new chemical compound for darker makeup (People in America, 2016). Atis discovered that the compound "ultramarine blue" greatly improved the texture of makeup for darker skin tones, and petitioned to increase its usage in makeup for all L'Oreal products made for women of color (People in America, 2016). Overall, these examples highlight how women of color are striving for visibility and inclusion in the beauty industry by speaking out against racist beauty ideals and practices. It should be noted however that issues remain with how the burden of solving racial exclusion in the beauty industry continues to fall on women of color; though it is a problem of the industry and of society as a whole that promotes racist beauty standards, as it's portrayed as their problem alone.

The racist practices that plague the cosmetic industry today have clear ties to both historical and modern conceptions of racial difference that privilege whiteness and reinforce white dominance… The institutional racism found in the cosmetic industry points to larger issues of race and racism in society at large that are hundreds of years in the making. While the systemic issue of racism that permeates the cosmetic industry may seem discouraging, there are counter-representations that are actively working to challenge racial exclusivity and oppression. However, in order for progress to be made, society as a whole needs to challenge structures of white domination that

Hey Grandma

Matthew Perez Jones

LOOK AT ME, I hold the world in my heart
Through me, I bring together those who are apart. Look at me, I am brown, I am black
Raise me, I carry my family on my back
Hear me, I speak life into your world
Feel me, I whisper the air that fill your lungs.

Hear me, for my rhythm moves your soul.
I have so much soul, so much soul in my voice, in my heart, my music, and my shoe.
Remember me, because bringing warmth to your life is my role.
Nobody's hands are warmer than mine, child stop your fretting, listen to Kendrick, "we gon' be alright," boy you know we'll be just fine
Reward me, for my efforts raised your child.
Remember how they called us wild, uncivilized? Dirty and violent, then why they have us clean they houses, why they have us raise their child?
You know we didn't have much money, boy that how it goes is
You like that Kanye, how that song go? "Cause with my family we know we know where home is. And so instead of sendin' flowers, we the roses."
He talked about roses, black roses, roses is so beautiful, because we is those. We is black. We is strong, you can't tell me where I can grow.
The petals, black petals, so soft and beautiful, but you know they sharp too. My nails are the thorns on the stem.
You know if they put their hands too low, they get cut, see what these thorns do to them. Tongue sharper than the knife, the knife, the knife they held at our throats when we said no.

Tell them to give me back my life, for it went to making theirs.

Look at me, for I hold the world in my heart.
You know, I am the world. They use me, they hurt me, they kill me, they don't love me.
My heart beats the waves on the shore of the beaches I can't go too
My heart pumps life into our world, my blood the oil in their cars

I'm trying to bring those together who are apart
That truce between red and blue, what did it really do?
Ice Cube and Eazy the only one the kids looked up to
Raise me, for I carry our family on my back
My back, strong, so strong, black strong. How that Chance song go?
I sing in church, "you singing too but yo grandma ain't my grandma. Mine's is handmade," but we hear hand maid, he said his is "pan-fried, sun-dried," remember how great granddaddy died? Rope-tied, tree-high, fire fried? Don't forget what happened back in the south side.
Hear me for I speak life into your world.

Exploring Water Shutoffs in Detroit

Racism, Neoliberalism, and Alternative Paradigms

Meredith Nass

The following is an excerpt from a longer piece. For full text, please visit www.honorsjournal.com.

[…]

IN THE SPRING of 2014, Detroit's Water and Sewerage Department (DWSD) shut water off from thousands of homes (Mitchell). Media officials say the water shutoff program occurred in response to a polar vortex storm that hit Detroit in the winter between 2013 and 2014. After the difficult winter, keeping people warm most residents of Detroit "faced skyrocketing" electricity and water bills (Filson). Supposedly, DWSD targeted homes that had a sixty-day overdue bill or owed one-hundred and fifty or more dollars in utility bills. In reality, the water shutoffs took place across the city despite overdue bills or not…Qualitative and quantitative research show that the shutoffs continually affect more than one in five people in Detroit today (Spring 2018) while disproportionately affecting Detroit's black community.

With the help of blues and black feminist geographical epistemologies we understand the water shutoffs as a violent, intentional attack on bodies of color. I utilize the framework of Blues Epistemologies and Black Feminist Geographies from Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods by placing emphasis on "black histories, bodies, and experiences" in hopes to "disrupt and underwrite" oppressive forms of human geographies (McKittrick 4). Through the logics of white supremacy, settler colonialism, and slavery, and within the historical context of Detroit, I argue that the Detroit water shutoffs are not only a racial project but a manifestation of historical power and continually lived oppression. We may look to blues and black feminist epistemologies to understand that the marginal and abandoned spaces of Detroit also appear as the places in which revival and solutions to the issue of systemic racism manifest.

…Revival, as Eli Day alludes to in his poem, "Detroit and the Obliteration of History" is a semantic device discussed in Andrea Smith's second logic of white supremacy—settler colonialism (Smith 53). Non-people of color (and people in power) tend to overlook and ignore the histories that create oppressive racial regimes. Day proclaims that the "cult of revival" is "cribbed from an old tradition" which "annihilates the past" in order to comfort the people in power today (Day 1). Feeling comfortable with the past means not changing the present. Revival, as semantic device in regards to Detroit, means continually keeping entire groups of people enslaved. Mainstream consciousness seeks "absolution" from history without deeply investigating

the lived impacts (1). In Detroit, for example, the "past atrocities" Day refers to may be the annihilation of indigenous people in what is now the United States and the enslavement of Africans. However, comfort for those in power is not the only function of this "willful amnesia" (1). For those in power, overlooking history is a way to stay in power; to continually gain wealth from the labor of black Americans. The revival rhetoric validates and secures non-people of color's "natural" ownership of potential capital of indigenous lands and colored bodies (Smith 74)…Accordingly, the rhetoric surrounding the water shutoffs in Detroit is not new, it is the same rhetoric used around the colonization of the America's. Making a land "better" by ignoring the people that live there and accordingly conquering it, is a device of settler colonialism.

In their book, *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place,* Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods situate the disappearance of peoples due to colonialism as a continuing and violent marginalization and engulfment of people, land, and culture (Woods 4). The colonial regime of central power in the United States recurrently incites this violence. The geographies of black and indigenous people in the U.S. are continually overlooked, unspoken about, or "relegated to the past" (Smith 72)… Before non-people of color committed genocide and conquered what is now Detroit, hundreds of indigenous tribes lived in the Great Lakes area including, but not limited to: the Anishinaabe, Wyandot, Iroquois, Fox, Miami, and Sauk (Herberg 1)… By naturalizing indigenous people's enslavement and violent assimilation (or extinction as some think), we assume the normality of the marginalization and enslavement of other groups, such as black Americans today (72). Newer systems, such as the tendency to deny the existence of peoples, keep the conquered and their spaces hidden from the consciousness of those benefiting from oppression…

The state and nation abandoned many people and parts of Detroit, those who survived this anomaly are largely still hidden from hegemonic sight. During the first waves of white flight in the 1950s, the large scale movement of non-people of color to the suburbs (and away from their black neighbors) resulted in unequal distribution of resources and opportunity for low income people and people of color. Although, the abandonment rhetoric utilized by mainstream media is problematic. It conflates those who have survived this abandonment—those still living in the city—to the status of empty lots. In her book, *DIY Detroit,* Kimberly Kinder contextualizes the way the geography of poverty is made invisible to those with hegemonic identities. The racial divide in Detroit allows for extreme income, health, and housing disparities…Internal class divisions further marginalize those who are already racially ostracized.

…Housing discrimination forces people into the margins of society, disappearing them from national attention, so that the land and people themselves can be taken again by non-people of color.

However, marginality does not mean disappearance or extinction…The social and geographical margins of Detroit are also spaces of resistance (McKittrick 56). From the landscape of the city, to community organizations, resistance is ev-

erywhere. Although one in five lots in Detroit is abandoned, there are more than two-thousand small farms and community gardens scattered throughout the city. Resistance is in entire abandoned blocks dedicated to displays of sculptures and art such as the Heidelberg Project depicted below.

Figure 1. Heidelberg Project art sculptures (Hardin).

[…]

Resistance is in the continued survival of more than forty-five percent of the black population living under the poverty line. Resistance is in the rigging of houses by water hoses to provide clean water to entire communities. Resistance is the survival of entire groups of people living in a country where they are not meant to survive. Indeed, the marginal spaces in Detroit are the spaces of unheard stories and possibilities. .

Blues Epistemology, according to Clyde Woods and Katherine McKittrick, is a "native" means of resistance composing of geographical, socio-economic, and political critiques similar to those in blues music and hip hop. The blues tradition is the antithesis of the plantation tradition and all of its manifestations. If neoliberalism serves to divide, then blues tradition serves to connect. Paralleling the neoliberal creation of a neo-plantation society, the blues tradition became a form of massive resistance…Blues epistemology also demands attention to "institutionalized spacial impoverishment," recognizing "plantation and state models" extending beyond slavery in agriculture and sharecropping. The "roll back" policies of the eighties which Peck and Tickell explain as the "shift in the pattern of deregulation and dismantlement," can be seen as part of this institutionalized spacial impoverishment, or as a function of neo-slavery. According to blues epistemologies, the shut offs may be understood as a part of neoliberal policies and practices that historically disenfranchised the established black middle class of Detroit. The shutoffs are in Detroit exemplar of Woods's understanding of a plantation society that extends far beyond agriculture-based slavery (Woods 58).

In Detroit, the roll back policies in the height of implementing neoliberalist policies targeted the bodies of black women (Peck and Tickell 386). Eli Day, as a resident of Detroit, knows well the intention and impact of sexist, racist policies. He recites that "there is nothing mysterious at play, the ghetto is a deliberate creation of public policy" (Day 1). The attack on black women and non-normative identities is part of the "neoliberal constitution of competitive relations" which serves to separate most people from the hegemonic elite, in order to always have a continual flow of disposable labourers (Peck and Tickell 386).

The Moynihan Report, created by the Secretary of Labor under

rather reproduction—of white supremacist systems throughout American history. They argue, "If privilege and racism are the symptoms, white supremacy is the defining logic of both racism and privilege as they are culturally and materially produced" (Bonds and Inwood 2015: 720). Today, these themes of white supremacy are manifested in the legal system's use and abuse of incarceration.

Almost immediately following the *official* end of slavery in America in 1865, criminal law was a way to continue slavery's mechanisms of control. Black codes were laws specifically designed to criminalize and penalize caricatured blackness (Demby 2016)… During Reconstruction, previously permissible activities were suddenly racialized and criminalized (McLeod 2015: 1188)… More recently, certain drug use has been heavily criminalized under tough on crime agendas. The starkest example is the differentiated criminalization of powder versus crack cocaine. President Ronald Reagan declared a war on drugs with the main focus on crack cocaine usage (Alexander 2012: 51). Perhaps shockingly, this declaration of war came a few years before crack cocaine even hit the streets and in the midst of a political climate where less than less than 2 percent of the American public viewed drugs as the most pressing concern in the United States (Alexander 2012: 49). Crack cocaine is stigmatized as a lower-class drug used by African Americans, whereas powder cocaine is seen as a party drug used by more affluent whites. As a result, the same sentence lengths are extended for conviction for the sale of five hundred grams of powder cocaine and a conviction for the sale of five grams of crack cocaine (Alexander 2012: 112).

This gross sentencing discrepancy allows for prisons to be filled with more black and brown individuals…Horrifyingly, however, Alexander cites a study published in 2000 from the National Institute on Drug Abuse, that reported "white students use cocaine at seven times the rate of black students, use crack cocaine at eight times the rate of black students, and use heroin at seven times the rate of black students" (Alexander 2012: 99). So not only are African Americans policed and penalized at a higher rate than whites, but whites…use both crack and powder cocaine at higher rates… The forms and spaces of punishment during slavery were translated into forms and spaces of penal punishment that are still used today…Contrary to progressive hopes, slavery—in name and practice—is still present today. Involuntary servitude is still legal in the case of those "duly convicted" (McLeod 2015: 1189). This—in the form of convict leasing or captive prison labor—is an exemption to the Thirteenth Amendment's end to slavery (McLeod 2015: 1189)…Thus, when slavery *ended*, its mechanisms and spaces of control were easily preserved and expanded through incarceration. The expansion was enabled through what Shabazz characterizes as a geography of confinement, policing, and surveillance which was "mapped onto" black communities (Shabazz 2015: 3)…

Beyond technologies and geographies of carceral control, many of the opportunities that African Americans were denied of under the systems of slavery and Jim Crow are still restricted as a result of criminalization… . President Bill Clinton only perpetuated this unduly punitive trend with his 1994 Crime Bill, which

Despite the limitations of this work, this thesis makes a valuable contribution in understanding the interconnectedness of media and public policy as it pertains to 21st century film and Television. This study contributes the area of media-based prejudice reduction literature and gives insight to new experimental evidence linking counter-stereotypical and racialized portrayals of drug users with drug attitudes in people. This research shows that some amount of brief exposure or personal history with drug users is critical in cultivating more lenient sentiments in the broader public towards acts of drug use. Increased positive portrayals to drug use may produce more lenient criminal laws against drug use and also increase funding to federal drug rehabilitative efforts.

Works Cited

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