MULTICULTURALISM AND THE DE-POLITICIZATION OF BLACKNESS IN CANADA: THE CASE OF FLOW 93.5 FM

by

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This thesis presents a case study of Canada’s first Black owned radio station, FLOW 93.5 FM, to demonstrate how official multiculturalism, in its formulation and implementation, negates Canada’s history of slavery and racial inequality. As a response to diversity, multiculturalism shifts the focus away from racial inequality to cultural difference. Consequently, Black self-determination is unauthorized. By investigating FLOW’s radio license applications, programming and advertisements, this thesis reveals just how the vision of a Black focus radio station dissolved in order to fit the practical and ideological framework of multiculturalism so that Blackness could be easily commodified. This thesis concludes that FLOW is not a Black radio station but instead is a multicultural radio station – one that specifically markets a de-politicized Blackness. As a result, multiculturalism poses serious consequences for imagining and engaging with Blackness as a politics that may address the needs of Black communities in Canada.
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“I can’t say the word white?”

On August 16, 2005, during a live interview on FLOW 93.5 FM’s radio show the “Urban Suite”, hosted by DJ “Hollywood” Rich Fagon, rapper Kanye West attempted to address their censorship of the word White in the final verse of his popular single “Golddigger”.¹ In this particular verse of the song, West raps about a relationship between a working class Black man and woman. The song concludes with West stating that the Black man challenges his ascribed status when he “make it into a Benz out of that Datsun” and (in reference to his loyal Black woman), “leave yo’ ass for a white girl”. West’s social observation indicates the lived realities that Black people experience in a society that is stratified by race, class and gender.² In trying to push the issue to the forefront, West declared to Fagon:

…FLOW, I’m a tell you like this…I’m never coming up to this station again unless you unbleep “leave yo’…” The word ass I can understand you take that out…but white girl? I can’t say the word white?³

Throughout the interview, West struggled to interject race into the discussion even as Fagon constantly shifted the discussion away from race by requesting that he freestyle.⁴ Despite Fagon’s interruptions, West asserted his racial location and social consciousness by responding:

¹ From the album Late Registration (2005).
² bell hooks (1992) and Toni Morrison (1997) provide some insight into this sentiment that many have in the Black community with respect to the relationship practices of heterosexual working class Black males. It is the view within much of the Black community that once upwardly mobile, Black males frequently select White women as partners. In other words, Black males in their improved socio-economic circumstances deliberately re-positioned White women in their lives for reasons that include the privileged status these women carry and the fact that more White women are in the social spaces they begin to occupy.
³ I obtained a leaked video footage of this interview off the website of the weekly entertainment news magazine DOSE (www.dose.ca/kanye, August 18th, 2005). Currently, a copy can be viewed on YouTube, titled “Kanye walks off Canadian urban radio station”, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GVNwt037Ki0&feature=related.
⁴ Freestyle is improvised rap lyrics which is said to demonstrate a rap artist’s real skill and creativity.
…No, no, I’m not giving this station no more freestyle. I freestyle last
time I was here with Jay… I turn around and you bleep out “leave yo’…”
for a white girl”? It’s nothing… even like racial about that line. It’s a
observation about a social issue. And it’s really, if anything, it’s more
offensive to…black people. It’s not an offensive line. People shouldn’t
feel a way about it. It’s like; this is the real world… as long as there are
racists, there will be racism and I’m not a racist.  

West, in frustration with how Fagon was handling the interview, walked out.  

The dramatic irony that is contained in this incident is that FLOW is a Black radio
station that is refusing to name the issues of race and racism. This refusal by a Black
radio station to discuss race is the point of entry into the questions that this thesis seeks to
answer. FLOW’s censorship of the word “White” is reflective of the macro social,
political and cultural context of Canada in which discussions about race and racism are
considered impolite and most often relegated to the periphery of social discussions and
interactions. West’s legitimate inquires into the politics of race in Canada that went
unanswered is an example among many in which FLOW was limited in engaging their
invited guests and general listeners in critical discussions about social and political issues
that affect the Black community. At its inception, FLOW’s parent company, Milestone
Radio Inc., identified its goal as being transformative – a radio station that would add
diversity to a White dominated radio network. FLOW would specifically “provide

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6 West is known for being a very outspoken artist, especially on social and political issues. Following his
visit to FLOW, West made another, although more public address about the issue of race and racism. On
September 2, 2005 at a live televised fundraiser on NBC for the victims of Hurricane Katrina, West, while
co-hosting with actor/comedian Mike Myers, uttered these now famous words, “George Bush doesn’t care
about black people” to express his outrage for how the US government was handling the disaster. For more
info visit http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/09/03/AR2005090300165.html,
and for a video clip, visit http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I1UzLpO1kxI.
7 I understand and use the term Black community in a pluralized sense to mean the diverse identities,
histories and communities among peoples of African descent in Canada. In addition, Milestone
conceptualized the Black community throughout their applications as including people from the African
diaspora originating in Canada, the U.S., the Caribbean, Africa, Europe and South America.
8 Milestone Radio Inc. is a company that was founded by prominent business leaders, activists and
philanthropists from within the Black community. It includes, the President and Chief Executive Officer
(CEO) Denham Jolly, Vice President (the late) Carl J. Redhead, Treasurer Tony Davy, and Directors
Reynold Austin and Zanana Akande (see Milestone’s 1996 application for more details on their bio).
members of the Black community with their own voice in the Canadian broadcasting system” (Milestone Radio Inc.1999, Schedule 16, p. 17, emphasis my own). However, there appears to be a dissonance between the articulated goal and the actualization of FLOW. So why did Milestone’s original vision for FLOW’s programming, content and format change? The following section describes the background from which these issues came to fruition.

**Background: the case of FLOW 93.5 FM**

On February 9, 2001, right in the heart of Black History Month, FLOW 93.5 FM, Canada’s first Black owned, Black music format radio station was launched. Milestone, together with the Black community in Toronto, vigorously lobbied for a radio license for over a period of twelve years before they were granted one by the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC). Milestone applied for their first radio license in 1989. The CRCT denied this application in favour of Rawlco Communications’ proposed country-western format. Milestone made a subsequent bid in 1996 that was once again denied. Instead the license was awarded to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) for the movement of their news talk radio station, CBC Radio 1, from an AM to an FM frequency.

Milestone, in their final application, appealed to the Black community that their proposed radio station would be one that centers on their social and cultural realities. Milestone proposed that their radio station would regularly play music that was representative of the African diaspora, ranging from rhythm and blues (R&B), soul, jazz hip-hop, gospel, reggae, calypso, soca, Latin and world (Milestone Radio Inc.1999,
Schedule 16, p. 11). In addition, Milestone proposed to broadcast spoken word programming that would give the Black community a platform to discuss and reflect their views on topics that were socially, culturally and politically relevant. In their final application, these interrogative programs included:

**Urban Forum.** a talk show designed to provide members of the Black community with an opportunity to discuss issues and concerns that directly affect them…**Exposure,** a talk feature that provide an in-depth focus on issues, events and personalities of general interest to members of the Caribbean community in Toronto (ibid., 19, original emphasis).

After several appeals, a market study, letters and support from the public, including an Order in Council by the federal government, the CRTC granted Milestone a license on June 6, 2000. Consequently, Milestone at this specific juncture achieved an historical landmark by becoming Canada’s first Black radio broadcaster.\(^\text{10}\)

It is 2009 and Milestone has yet to fully realize their original vision for FLOW. Instead of the wide variety of music that was promised, hip-hop, R&B and (and occasionally) pop are regularly played by FLOW.\(^\text{11}\) Furthermore, the proposed talk shows Urban Forum and Exposure and other programs that invite responses from the Black community have not yet been realized. In fact, the following criticism from a letter that was written to NOW magazine documents the sense of betrayal that many feel within the Black community:

> There have been numerous killings, Caribana’s going to hell in a hand basket, there’s the upcoming UN conference tackling racism – and no response from this station…I am saddened and disappointed (cited by Onstad, 78).

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\(^9\)Milestone made public announcements of their proposed format and music choices as well in the community newspaper Share.

\(^{10}\) However, the simple and difficult question as to why it took more than a decade to see the realization of a Black radio station in Canada remains disconcerting for many within the Black community about what such a lengthy and difficult lobby says about their position and citizenship in an official multicultural nation.

\(^{11}\) FLOW’s music format is noted by their first (2001) slogan “Toronto’s Hip-Hop and R&B” and now their current (2009) slogan, “The Hits that Move you” (which represents both the hip-hop, R&B and pop music genres).

\(^{12}\) A Toronto weekly alternative news and entertainment magazine.
In addition, FLOW has employed White staff\textsuperscript{13} in notable positions, such as DJs and show hosts, in order to maximize its listening market shares from the White population. Marketing appears to be geared towards a White audience such as the “Anybody can FLOW” billboard advertisements.\textsuperscript{14} In 2007 after the renewal of their radio license with the CRTC, Milestone changed FLOW’s originally exclusive Urban Contemporary format it had since 2001, to the more hits oriented, Rhythmic Contemporary Hit Radio (Rhythmic CHR) format which is promoted by their current slogan the “hits that move you”.\textsuperscript{15} This format change has led many within the Black community to believe that FLOW would eventually have a Contemporary Hit Radio (CHR) format like the other mainstream White owned radio stations in Toronto.

This thesis compares Milestone’s original goal for their proposed radio station with FLOW’s current format and attempts to critically explore the social, political and economic impetus for its divergence. Thus the questions asked are: Why did FLOW’s format change? How should FLOW be defined as a radio station? Is it a Black radio station? FLOW emerged not only because of the Black community’s support but also because Milestone had to lobby outside the Black community.\textsuperscript{16} This included their financial partnership with Standard Broadcasting (Standard)\textsuperscript{17} – a prominent White

\textsuperscript{13} Notable criticisms have gone towards the previous Program Director, David Marsden, current music director, Justin Dummont, hosts Melanie and Ruby Jones, and “DJ Staring from Scratch” (who has earned most of the criticism after being named “Canada’s best DJ” by music industry professionals but criticized by many within the Black community as potentially taking the place of more talented Black DJs). In Chapter 3 I discuss the role White people play in defining multicultural spaces as inclusive.

\textsuperscript{14} See Chapter 3 to view these ads.

\textsuperscript{15} A definition of the different types of radio formats is provided in Chapter 3.

\textsuperscript{16} The issue here is not the support from outside the Black community, but that this support had more to do with economic and other interests that were not aligned with the social, political and economic concerns of the Black community.

\textsuperscript{17} In 2007, Standard sold all its television and radio broadcasting assets to Astral Media (Canadian Communications Foundation).
company that owned many radio stations throughout Canada, including the popular Toronto stations Mix 99.9 (now Virgin Radio), EZ Rock 97.3 and CFRB 1010 (Canadian Communications Foundation). This partnership, including the above mentioned changes (and not excluding the market related changes and mainstreaming of Black music and culture), had a significant impact on the vision of a Black conscious radio station.

However, answers to the above questions require an exploration of Milestone’s twelve year struggle and the social, political and economic maneuvering that was required to legitimize FLOW. These are situated within the context of Canada’s Multiculturalism Act (1988). The Act further legitimized its earlier 1971 policy format in response to the conservative government’s move to make Canada more competitive in the global economy – a move which scholars have elsewhere described as a form of corporate multiculturalism (Ahmed 2000, Gilroy 2000, Abu-Laban and Gabri, 2002; Mackey 2002).\(^\text{18}\) Coinciding with this legislation of multiculturalism was the formation of Milestone as a company which gained its legitimacy from the increased politicization of the Black community.

To better understand this divergence between Milestone’s original goal and the current delivery of music and programming of its radio station, two factors are important: the purpose and intent of a commercial radio station and an official multiculturalism that speaks of racial and cultural tolerance. FLOW is a commercial radio station within the specific social, economic, cultural and political context of an officially multicultural society. Exploring FLOW within the context of multiculturalism allows for a critical analysis of how the market economy influences the implementation of an official state policy. For Milestone’s final application, the CRTC expected that all the proposed radio

\(^{18}\) See Chapter 1 for a more detailed discussion of multiculturalism and its origins.
stations meet the objectives of the Broadcasting Act by specifically “reflect[ing] the multicultural and multiracial nature of Canadian society” (Public Notice CRTC 1998-85). Multiculturalism as a state policy was utilized and defined the terms and conditions in which Milestone articulated a Black format radio station.

This thesis explores Blackness\(^{19}\) and multiculturalism as they operate in the history of FLOW. One of the major contentions of this thesis is that multiculturalism limits racial minority rights to self-determination. I argue that multiculturalism dissolved the notion of a Black focused radio station.

**Research Design**

*The Data*

This thesis employs a qualitative research method. Data collection was conducted under two different phases: the application phase and the radio phase. Data collected under the application phase consist of Milestone’s 1989, 1996, and 1999 radio license applications, as well as CRTC public notices and decisions for that period. Under the radio phase, the data include FLOW’s live radio shows, program schedules, billboard advertisements and other media content available from their website. In addition, the data includes responses from members of the Black community obtained from popular magazines and alternative media. Thus data was obtained from multiple sources including but not limited to CRTC public archives and documents, newspapers, magazines, radio, podcasts,\(^{20}\) websites, Facebook\(^ {21}\) and YouTube.\(^{22}\) Both Milestone’s

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\(^{19}\) I use the term Blackness generally to refer to the identities, experiences and cultural politics of peoples of African decent which are situated within a particular social, economic and historical context. I will provide a more detailed explanation and discussion of this term in Chapter 1.

\(^{20}\) Podcasts are on-line based radio (and sometimes video) broadcast programs that are pre-recorded for download on your computer or portable media device such as an iPod (from which it derives its name). FLOW has several podcasts available for download from their website of artists they have interviewed and special programs like daily entertainment news or the latest movie reviews. For more information about podcasts visit, [www.apple.com/itunes/store/podcasts.html](http://www.apple.com/itunes/store/podcasts.html)
1996 and 1999 applications are available from the CRTC’s public archive. However, their 1989 application which is no longer available with the CRTC’s archive was provided to me by Milestone’s President, Denham Jolly.

My thesis offers a chronological account of the changes Milestone experienced in their applications to the CRTC and the changes FLOW experienced over the eight years they have been on the air from 2001 to present. As a result the data available is quite extensive and varied. Furthermore, the fact that FLOW’s format is a radio station poses additional challenges. FLOW’s content changes frequently and new information is added daily. FLOW archives a limited number of their radio shows and other content such as interviews with guests, billboard advertisements and commercials, which are available on their website, Facebook and YouTube pages. For this reason, I had to rely as well on secondary sources such as newspapers, magazines and other on-line material. These issues therefore pose several limitations to the methods I employed in my data collection and application, particularly as it applied to my analysis of FLOW’s content. In order to provide a comparative analysis of the changes FLOW experienced over the last eight years since they have been on air, my content analysis had to be very selective. I conducted an in-depth content analysis of their live radio shows from August 2007 to February 2009 by tuning in, paying attention to their announcements and reading

21 Facebook is a social networking website that connects people with friends, family, co-workers, classmates and others who have similar interests or relations. With a valid email address anyone can join for free and create a personal profile to upload their own photos, share videos, send messages, post comments, create discussion topics or provide other information. Users can access the profile of only those within their networks. Otherwise users can invite other users to join their network, group or become “friends” if they would like those users to gain access to their profile. Besides individual users, there are many company, school and community groups and networks on Facebook. Visit www.facebook.com for more information.

22 YouTube is an on-line video based website that allows users to upload and share their own videos or view videos from other users. Comments and ratings can be posted on the videos by users. With a valid email address anyone can join to post videos or comments. Visit www.youtube.com for more information.
comments from other listeners in the community posted on Facebook.\footnote{I chose to do a content analysis of Facebook pages that discussed FLOW because it is a very popular social networking website that has the most concentrated opinions from FLOW’s audience in a single forum. This provided me with a wealth of very detailed opinions and information that people had about FLOW. It is also archival because it provides member postings over time.} I selected this specific time period to conduct my content analysis for several reasons. August 2007 marked FLOW’s official format change to Rhythmic CHR, their name change to the NEW FLOW and the renewal of their radio license. In addition, the Black community in Toronto was given the opportunity to participate in dialogue with the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) on the Black focused schooling debate and had witnessed the high profiled campaign and election of the first Black president of the United States, Barack Obama. These were popular topics that were being discussed throughout the Black community and most media outlets. Key programs I tuned into were “JJ and Melanie in the Morning” and “OTA Live”. These shows encourage interaction with listeners on a variety of topics and interview music artists and other prominent people. This provided me with an opportunity to assess how they covered issues such as these that were relevant to the Black community.

It is important to point out that prior to beginning this project I was regularly tuned in to FLOW. In addition, I was already familiar with Milestone at the community level. I was familiar with Milestone as early as 1996 when they strengthened their very public lobby for a radio license in the press and Black community. During that time requests for letters of support and petitions went around my neighbourhood for Milestone’s proposed Black radio station. My interest in pursuing this as a research topic was sparked primarily by FLOW’s format and program changes that I witnessed as a
listener which lead to my concern that it was no longer what had been originally envisioned by Milestone and the Black community.

Additional challenges posed by the methods under which I collected the data require careful thinking about its application. This is most important when exploring how market considerations shape FLOW’s radio format. The market is often used to justify the ideological shifts in their format, programming and content. For example, in the Black community newspaper *Share*, Milestone’s President Denham Jolly was quoted responding to the criticisms about FLOW’s format change:

…”the reality is that in radio, what you plan to do and what is dictated by the marketplace are two different things...Formats are not mandated. They can be changed at any time. The stark economic reality of FLOW is what has been referred to as ‘stand-alone radio’. It (FLOW) has no sister AM station and no stable of two AMs and FMs to benefit from the economies of scale. FLOW has to grind it out day to day for survival in the fiercest radio market in Canada and the fifth largest in North America (Fanfair, 1).

While I acknowledge that the commercial basis of FLOW has to be taken into account when explaining their format change, FLOW nonetheless is a product of official multiculturalism that Milestone had to use and not market considerations in order to legitimize their application for a commercial radio license. This is the argument that I present in the thesis.

**Methodology**

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is the methodology utilized in this thesis.

While traditional discourse analysis in the social sciences considers how language embodies meanings that constitute our social actions, CDA is a more politically oriented methodology that is anti-oppressive in its positioning. CDA understands discourse as a form of social practice that can reproduce domination and social inequality through the everyday conversations and written texts by institutions, the media, and by people or groups in positions of power.
Critical discourse analyst, Teun Van Dijk (2001) in his essay “Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis”, defines domination as “the exercise of social power by elites, institutions or groups, that results in social inequality, including political, cultural, class, ethnic, racial, and gender inequality” (300). Van Dijk utilizes CDA to reveal specifically how racism is reproduced, often through seemingly benign discourse. Using CDA as an anti-racist methodology, Van Dijk reveals the relationship between racist discourse, power and social inequality by theorizing the interconnection between macro forces such as institutional power and micro forces such as discourse. This perspective enables social researchers to see not only how dominant subjects operate within discourse but also how they create and sustain discursive power structures that reproduce racism.

In the following, Van Dijk describes the mechanisms within discourse that can be interpreted for their racist effects:

This reproduction process may involve such different ‘modes’ of discourse – power relations as the more or less direct or overt support, enactment, representation, legitimation, denial, mitigation or concealment of dominance, among others. More specifically critical discourse analysts want to know what structures, strategies or other properties of text, talk, verbal interaction or communicative events play a role in these modes of reproduction (301).

These discursive modes of reproduction represent what Van Dijk calls “symbolic reproduction of dominance” (303) since they support existing social, political and institutional powers which sustain racial domination and inequality. This means that social actors in positions of power have both the symbolic and material means to dominate and sustain inequality.

Racism that emanates from discourse become evident through a social researcher’s careful analysis of what Van Dijk (1993) calls “text and talk”. In Elite Discourse and Racism, Van Dijk argues that social researchers using CDA as an anti-
racist method would have to pay special attention to the role of text and talk in the
discursive reproduction of racism (28). Van Dijk warns, however, that social researchers
must be vigilant in their analyses of racist discourse because such discourse is often
presented in ways that take the structure of formal speech. Van Dijk explains this further:

It should be emphasized again that formal structures of discourse are
seldom specific for racist talk and text: Syntactic forms, lexical style,
rhetorical operations, text schemata, and conversational strategies may
have many functions in communication and interactions and are of course
not exclusively used in the reproduction of racism. If we observe typical
forms or strategies in prejudiced discourse, such as the *semantic moves*
of positive self-presentation (“I am not a racist, but…”), they derive their
special role or function only in combination with the semantics of meaning
and reference, that is, with what the discourse is about, and in a particular
context (that is, specific participants and their goals) (29, emphasis my own).

Therefore, it is important when applying an anti-racist CDA of text and talk that social
researchers pay attention to the semantic moves employed by those in positions of power
because these mechanisms allow people, institutions or groups to disassociate themselves
from racism. Since racist discourse is often disguised, social researchers must analyze
text and talk not only for what it says but also for what it does not say. In other words, to
successfully uncover racist discourse, social researchers must read for what the discourse
conceals.

Using CDA, I will read the data specifically for the discursive mechanisms
through which Milestone conceptualized their proposed Black focus radio station. I will
also read for the discursive mechanisms in which the CRTC both denied and accepted
Milestone’s proposal. Finally, I will read for the discursive mechanisms through which
FLOW sells Blackness. Combining CDA with my theoretical framework will reveal just
how these discursive mechanisms subscribe to official multiculturalism and thereby
reproduce racist exclusion and inequality.
Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 is a review of literature by key scholars who have written extensively on multiculturalism in Canada. It begins with an analysis of liberal discourses on official multiculturalism and moves on to critical discussions about multiculturalism that describe specifically the racialized relations of power that structure belonging in Canada. Overall, the chapter identifies the limited terms and conditions of inclusion for racial minorities under official multiculturalism and demonstrates how it fails to address the claims made by Blackness. The chapter ends with an in-depth discussion of post-colonial feminist Sara Ahmed’s concept “stranger fetishism” and concludes briefly with Paul Gilroy’s concept “corporate multicultural blackness” which both develop the theoretical framework of this thesis. Drawing as well on key concepts that emerge within the literature review, this framework is based on the idea that official multiculturalism legitimizes the commodification of Blackness so that it can be sold to meet the interests of a global capitalist marketplace. The Blackness that is sold, however, is necessarily de-politicized.

Chapter 2 provides an analysis of Milestone’s radio license applications, the resulting CRTC decisions and considers the social and political climate in which they were developed. It is evident at each level of their applications that Milestone struggled to articulate their proposed Black radio station to the CRTC. To get their application approved, Milestone increasingly structured the format of their proposed Black radio station to an Urban format by using the legal and discursive framework of multiculturalism so that it would fit the market setting of commercial radio.
Chapter 3 concludes this thesis by presenting FLOW’s first and subsequent years in operation. It provides an analysis of FLOW’s format, programming and advertisement campaigns. From the analysis of the data, it is evident that Blackness loses over time as FLOW succumbs to a corporate defined multiculturalism. This chapter then concludes this thesis with the argument that FLOW is not a Black radio station but instead is a multicultural radio station – one that specifically markets a de-politicized Blackness. As a result, multiculturalism poses serious consequences for imagining and engaging with Blackness as a politics that may address the needs of Black communities in Canada.
CHAPTER 1: DISCOURSES OF OFFICIAL MULTICULTURALISM

Though originally a policy in 1971, official multiculturalism emerged out of Book IV of (then) Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson’s Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (Day 2000, Mackey 2002). The Commission was established in 1963 to strengthen post-war Canada’s national unity and identity in response to what was viewed as a dangerous political situation whereby Quebec demanded independence and Aboriginal and other minority communities demanded equal rights and opportunities (ibid.). The Commission’s mandate was to:

…report on the existing state of bilingualism and biculturalism in Canada and recommend what steps should be taken to develop the Canadian confederation on the basis of an equal partnership between the two founding races…[and to consider] the contribution made by the other ethnic groups in the cultural enrichment of Canada (cited by Day, 180).

It is apparent from this mandate that the Commission merely gave token recognition of the existence and contributions of “other ethnic groups” and strengthened only the power and position of the British and French in federal institutions. For these reasons, protests emerged from racial and ethnic minorities (particularly Aboriginals and Ukrainians) who were against the Commission’s dualistic representation of Canadian identity, as they felt that they were not symbolically valued and given power equivalent to the so-called founding races. In his attempt to address these concerns while at the same time prioritizing the interests of the founding races, in 1971, Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau argued for a policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework (ibid.). This policy entrenched multiculturalism within the Official Languages Act (1969) in order to ensure that Canada would remain officially British and French through the institutionalization of their language and culture, while attempting to accommodate “the
contribution made by the other ethnic groups in the cultural enrichment of Canada” (ibid.).

Various scholars have written about the limitations of multiculturalism from liberal and critical perspectives that offer insight into just how it is practiced and understood as a legal, discursive and social reality.

**Liberal Discourses**

Prominent Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor provides a liberal critique of multiculturalism in his famous essay, “The Politics of Recognition” (1994). In this essay, Taylor tries to determine whether a democratic society can treat all cultures equally and still recognize specific cultural identities. Taylor proposes that this could be done by replacing official multiculturalism with a voluntary politics of equal recognition of and between cultures because this would free the state from having to interfere in what he sees are merely cultural matters. Thus, Taylor views culture a-politically, as a matter of taste, which should not be influenced by political persuasion (Bannerji 2000).

To support his position in favour of a voluntary politics of recognition, Taylor makes the argument that multiculturalism has created a crisis of demands upon the state by “minorities”. His fear is that multiculturalism will produce cultural relativism because ultimately “all societies are becoming increasingly multicultural, while at the same time becoming more porous” (Taylor, 63). To support the urgency of this crisis Taylor says in reference to the Salman Rushdie controversy that “one either forbids

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24 Taylor identifies minorities as namely women and (ethno) cultural groups. However (as I will demonstrate) Taylor is referring specifically to racial minorities by making clear juxtapositions between Europeans and non-Europeans, Christian and non-Christian and genders and cultures. In fact in Canada, the term “minorities” is often used as a “politically correct” term when referring to non-White people.

25 The controversy surrounding to the publication of Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* (1988) centered around issues of representation and freedom of speech. Muslim communities around the world were offended by the novel’s portrayal of Islam and the prophet Muhammad, which resulted in a banning of the book in
murder or allows it” (ibid.) as an example of the limits of tolerance Canada should have towards ethnic and racial minorities. He suggests that “this is how we do things here” (ibid.) is a “reasonable” response that “Canadians” should have towards the demands that minorities make.

Perhaps this is what is most problematic about “The Politics of Recognition” – Taylor positions “minorities” and “cultures” in relationship to his dominant “we” by using a language of cultural difference to depict specifically non-White people as potentially dangerous outsiders who are a threat to “Canadian” values. This is most evident when he compares Christian-European values (and its role in the development of liberalism and democracy in the West) against Islam. For example, Taylor says that the lines between “mainstream” (secular) Islam and “non-mainstream” (traditional) Islam have become blurred, especially on “…issues such as the right to life and to freedom of speech” (63) and that liberal values may be a contradiction to Islam since after all “the very term secular was originally part of the Christian vocabulary” (62). So for Taylor, what is Canadian is fundamentally Christian and European, whereas all other non-White, non-European religions and cultures are “un-Canadian”, too traditional and uncivilized.

Taylor’s narrative is representative of what some scholars have called the “new racism” in which a language of cultural difference is used to mark racial difference and inferiority (Gilroy 1991; Razack 2001, Mackey 2002). This new racism relies on a binary construction between what is civilized and uncivilized, European and non-European – a binary that is characteristic of what Edward Said (2003) has called

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26 It is important to note that such demands are at once cultural, political and social. At differing times, these demands may be competing or contradictory.
Orientalism. As a discourse, Orientalism constructs an us/them dichotomy to represent non-White people as having cultures that are homogenous, traditional and uncivilized, and therefore racially inferior to White people. This dichotomy allows Taylor to characterize the demands made by non-White people in the nation as unreasonable and threatening to the very principles upon which Canada was built. By failing to acknowledge the social, historical and political basis of the demands non-White people make, Taylor misreads their claims and erases the histories of racial oppression; namely genocide, slavery, indentured labour and a tired immigration system that reproduces their marginalization in Canada. In other words, Taylor’s “Politics of Recognition” de-politicizes the demands non-White people make as one entirely about worth – that they are purely seeking recognition for their differences from the state instead of viewing it as a legitimate grievance for the social inequalities they face.

Overall, Taylor’s misreading of the politics of difference not only displaces the histories and contributions of non-White people, it reproduces the ideology of Canada as a White nation. In his historical account of the development of liberalism during the Enlightenment, Taylor provides an extensive discussion about its influence on the development of the dominant culture of Canada. So this discussion of European history must be understood as Canada’s history which according to Taylor’s narrative is originally a White nation. Canada is understood here as an ideological extension of Europe which invites another imagery of Europeans building Canada physically (such as settling the land). All other historical, social, ideological, physical and emotional

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27 Orientalism is a discourse that otherizes people from (namely) the Middle East, North Africa and Asia, as opposite to everything that is European, Western (and in Taylor’s case Canadian). See Said (2003) for more details.

28 See the section of this chapter titled “White Settler Nationalism” for more details.
connections can be made that allows White people (regardless of their ancestry or status as either ethnic minority, immigrant or of British and French origins) to lay claim to belonging to this nation. This understanding erases Aboriginal peoples in the dominant national narratives to make, instead, Europeans Canada’s original people. As a result, Whites can claim that Canada is their country because it is their laws, their culture, their civilization, and so forth. Thus the true labour in building Canada espoused by this narrative is the one of ideology – that European Enlightenment thought created Canada. Here Bannerji describes the metaphoric “moves” that are used to represent Canada as a White nation – the same metaphoric moves Taylor makes in his discourse on Canadian multiculturalism:

“Canada” then cannot be taken as given. It is obviously a construction, a set of representations, embodying certain types of political and cultural communities and their operations. These communities were themselves constructed in agreement with certain ideas regarding skin color, history, language (English/French), and other cultural signifiers – all of which may be subsumed under the ideological category “White.” A “Canada” constructed on this basis contains certain notions of nation, state formation, and economy. European-ness as “Whiteness” this translates into “Canada” and provides it with its “imagined community.” (64)

“Unlike Taylor’s conservative critique of official multiculturalism, which rejects the state’s involvement in cultural politics, Will Kymlicka, another prominent Canadian political philosopher most famous for his writing on minority and group rights, provides a liberal criticism that agrees the state should intervene. In Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights (1995), Kymlicka offers a liberal theory on minority rights in response to the fact that Western countries like Canada are increasingly being confronted with demands by minority groups for collective rights as citizenship rights, which he says are “often phrased as the challenge of multiculturalism” (10). He
addresses the question of whether or not group rights are possible within liberal theory and a liberal democratic nation:

A liberal theory of minority rights, therefore, must explain how minority rights coexist with human rights, and how minority rights are limited by principles of individual liberty, democracy, and social justice (Kymlicka, 6).

So for Kymlicka, minority group rights are compatible with liberal political theory, but only when limited to the principle of individual freedom. However, this premise of grounding minority rights within a liberal framework is flawed. By claiming to bring minorities into liberalism, Kymlicka positions minorities as already being outside of liberalism to portray it as universal. In fact, this is the foundation of liberal philosophy – it depends on a construction of the other as different up against itself as an idealized norm in order to appear universal. But liberalism is not universal because it is based on a Eurocentric model of morality. The universalism that liberalism lays claim to rests on a belief that people are merely autonomous individuals who are unconnected to communities and social relations of power (Razack 1998, 38). This forecloses any discussion about domination and masks the hierarchal relations of power that make the freedom that liberalism professes possible (31). In liberalism, individuals enter into a social contract to live together in society and experience their personal freedoms (like freedom from harm) (17). But this ideal imagines people as free and equal subjects in the first place (since for the contract to work it must be agreed upon between equal parties) and is constructed outside of the social, political, economic and historical relations of power that constitute their lives. In this view there are no oppressed people such that when a question of domination is raised it is denied in order to maintain the ideal of liberalism’s universality because such a question unsettles this ideal by implicating the
dominant group (33). Razack argues that liberalism cannot be imagined without the existence of domination and oppressed groups:

In the abstraction of contract theory, it is difficult to imagine the figure who can pursue his or her own interests, given the hierarchical relations that have ensured that, in the Western world, it is poorly paid women of colour who support the freedom of mostly White middle-class men and women to participate in the paid labour force (30).

Thus, liberalism’s projected image of the free, moral and autonomous individual produces another figure, one who is not free, unjust and dependent. These two highly juxtaposed figures (and other subsequent embedded binaries under liberalism) are needed to conveniently mediate and mask the power of the dominant group. So when, for example, White middle-class Canadians represent themselves as free and righteous, a figure of an un-free, immoral, non-White other is produced. However, this image of the non-White other is then hidden from view when the privilege and power of the White middle class is called into question.

These dichotomies of domination/subordination that are embedded in liberal ideology allow Kymlicka to conceptualize minority rights in very restrictive ways. Producing a liberal theory on minority rights only maintains differences because it limits rights based on specific ideals of who and what a minority group should be. This ideal, for example, places non-White people in a homogenized category by differentiating their rights from the majority which further differentiates them as a group.

Therefore, Kymlicka’s liberal theory on minority rights (the special rights he assigns minorities) undermines the claims they make since, according to him, they are

29 This latter figure of the one who is un-free is at differing times and contexts foregrounded to make the dominant group appear free and righteous and then backgrounded or hidden from view in order to mask relations of power between dominant and subordinate groups. The idea here is that to imagine oneself as free and righteous in the first place relies on imagining oneself is opposition to those who are not. In other words, self-identity is created in relation to others. See Toni Morrison’s (1993) Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination for more details.
only entitled to make specific claims based on their relationship to the nation as either a national minority or an ethnic minority – the former he assigns group rights and the latter he assigns individual rights. This distinction between nationals and ethnics is very much a part of how multiculturalism policy was constructed and legitimized. In fact, Kymlicka’s justification stays true to the justifications embedded in the official policy of multiculturalism in terms of the hierarchies of rights and entitlements it assigns. Thus all non-Whites come to be grouped under the category immigrants who (it is believed) chose to come to an already established nation, which is another way of saying they have no real claims or entitlements in Canada.

Kymlicka assigns minorities differing rights based on their relationship to how they became incorporated into key political communities in Canada as either based on those descending from conquest or colonization and those descending from (voluntary) immigration. As a result, he makes sharp distinctions between national minorities and ethnic minorities. He defines ethnic minorities as immigrants – those who “in deciding to uproot themselves…voluntarily relinquish some of the rights that go along with their original national membership” (Kymlicka, 96). However, by saying that ethnic minorities are immigrants who come voluntarily ignores the push and pull factors of globalization and Canada’s role as a Western nation in the economic oppression of the Third World. As Razack argues:

…it is often argued that immigrant groups are not entitled to the same rights as the French and the English collectivities in Canada. Co-existing with official state policy of multiculturalism is the paradoxical assumption that, in choosing to come here, immigrants relinquish their right to the conditions under which their cultural identities might flourish. Such an argument denies the conditions under which most of us become immigrants, and it sidesteps the point that immigrants seek protection from oppression, a protection that can come from maintaining their own cultural practices. How much of choice is it to flee poverty and starvation in lands ravaged by a global economy dominated by the First World? Who is ultimately
Furthermore, saying that immigrants have choice allows Kymlicka to rationalize limiting ethnic minority rights to individual rights rather than the group rights he affords national minorities, which he defines as those that come from:

> the incorporation of previously self-governing, territorially concentrated cultures into a larger State. These incorporated cultures, which I call national minorities', typically wish to maintain themselves as distinct societies alongside the majority culture, and demand various forms of autonomy or self-government to ensure their survival as distinct societies (10).

Kymlicka identifies the Aboriginal and French as those who fall under this category. But this categorization is problematic since it masks the hierarchies of power based on race, gender and class between national minorities. For example, the French domination of Aboriginal peoples. Moreover, the French have more power constitutionally, as well as institutionally and economically than Aboriginal peoples. However, Kymlicka makes a rather problematic assumption that the nations he refers to do not represent races:

> In talking about national minorities, therefore, I am not talking about racial or decent groups, but about cultural groups... There have also been high rates of intermarriage between the indigenous peoples of North America and the English, French, and Spanish populations. As a result, all of these national groups are racially and ethnically mixed. The number of French Canadians who are of solely Indian descent, is also consistently shrinking, and will soon be a minority in each case (23, emphasis my own).

By refusing to name racial difference and inequality between and among national and ethnic minorities, Kymlicka cannot tell the whole story of White domination in Canada.

In fact, masking racial difference in cultural terms is the foundation of systematic racism in Canada – such as Canada’s immigration policies that have historically held a preference for Whites but used a language of culture or national origin to both attract and restrict its sources.\(^{30}\) This is how the British and French as well as other Europeans come

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\(^{30}\) See Li and Bolaria (1988), Henry et. al. (2000) and Jakubowski (1997) for more on this discussion about the overt and covert forms of racism underlying Canada’s immigration policies.
to assume White racial privilege – through the discourse of culture (that they are civilized, have a language, and so forth).

One of the major preconditions for establishing minority rights, according to Kymlicka, includes having a linguistic cultural heritage. However, this limits the group claims of those minorities who cannot readily establish a common language. For example, Kymlicka describes the case of African-Americans in the United States. He argues that African-Americans “do not fit the voluntary immigration pattern” (Kymlicka, 24) and neither do they fit the “national minority pattern, since they do not have a homeland in America or a common historical language” (ibid., emphasis my own). It is evident from Kymlicka’s perspective that language sets the precondition for establishing that one belongs to a culture and therefore have an identity. So according to this logic, those with a history of slavery have no “real” culture, no “real” identity and therefore have no “real” claims in the nation. If Kymlicka were to consider the history of slavery in Canada he would have likely asked the same question of whether or not Black Canadians should be given the status of a national minority – the implications for which are far more reaching because it would give Black Canadians the kind of response their claims for social justice deserves so urgently.

Augie Fleras, another prominent scholar who has written extensively on multiculturalism in Canada, presents the debates on official multiculturalism, in Engaging Diversity: Multiculturalism in Canada (2002). He argues that despite its flaws, multiculturalism is an exceptional model for living together with difference and diversity (Fleras, 11). Despite its inherent contradictions, Fleras believes that multiculturalism nonetheless, is a “workable social experiment” and therefore is a
powerful ideology that has the potential to transform regressive thinking and solutions to difference. What is most problematic about *Engaging Diversity* is that Fleras, like Taylor, homogenizes non-Whites by constructing them as entirely different to what he views as Canadian – namely liberal values. Fleras begins by asking a question that has racist overtones:

> Should minority groups be permitted to "import" into Canada violent animosities originating in their homeland? A good example of this problem is that Muslims are reluctant to embrace broadly accepted precepts of liberal-pluralist society when those are at odds with Islam, and prefer to follow practices that fall outside an openly secular and only nominally religious society. *In fairness to Muslims, there are fundamentalist Christian sects…that have taken steps to protect their interests* (10, emphasis my own).

In the above example, Fleras stereotypes Muslims as both violent and fundamentalist. By saying they *bring into* Canada “violent animosities that originate in their homeland”, Fleras seriously displaces Muslims as not truly a part of the Canadian nation.

Furthermore, he displaces the so-called animosities outside of Canada which erases the social relations and hierarchies of power that exist in Canada that may fuel “animosities” in the first place. Fleras’ sentiments makes Canada appear innocent by failing to discuss its role in the reproduction of the marginalization of the Muslim community. Again like Taylor, Fleras essentializes Muslims and misrepresents the religion of Islam by describing the controversial “female genital mutilation” (FGM) as an example of “cultural customs…that are at odds with Canadian laws and values” (10). It could be speculated that Fleras makes this connection between FGM and Islam to appease support

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31 It appears that Islam is used as the universal example of non-White people’s supposed barbarity because both Taylor and Kymlicka made similar references.

32 How and why FGM came to be associated with Islam is unknown. Specifically in the practicing African nations it has more to do with long standing cultural belief systems and practices than religion. In fact many argue that Islam is used to justify its continuation, but in Muslim countries outside of Africa, this practice is almost non-existent. Westerners often make reference to FGM as a way to lament all of Islam barbaric when in actuality FGM has specific cultural, national and geographic contexts. See Razack (1998) for a more in-depth criticism of the uncritical views of FGM in the West.
(especially from liberal White-middle class feminists) for limiting the group rights of non-White people. Fleras says that “under official multiculturalism, tolerance is extended to only those cultural practices that do not break the law…” (24). This juxtaposition between what is Canadian values, behaviours and culture against what is not, only displaces non-Whites outside the nation such that all that is “different” is not truly Canadian (meaning White, European and Christian); thereby reproducing the ideal that Canada is a White nation.

This representation of Canada as a White nation is made apparent in Fleras’ rather linear description of immigration and settlement in Canada. Fleras constructs Canada as having primarily three successive phases of immigration whereby the initial phase he attributes to Aboriginal peoples, the second to Europeans and finally the third-wave of immigration he attributes to non-Whites. Of this final wave of immigration Fleras describes it as “the present one [which] consists of non-English and non-French speaking immigrants who arrived in Canada since the late 19th century” (32, emphasis my own). From this very problematic construction of immigration in Canada, everyone is collapsed into a state of “immigrant-ness”, thereby erasing the violent settlement of Canada upon Aboriginal peoples who are made by this discourse into immigrants within their

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33 Since “911” it has become a common practice for Westerners in the popular media, to describe how barbaric non-Western cultures are (and in particular to Arabs and Muslims) by making reference to cultural practices that specifically affect women. For example, White liberal feminist Susan Moller Okin (1999) in her famous and controversial essay “Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?” argues against minority group rights because (as she explains) women are often disadvantaged by their sex. Okin’s analysis is racially biased because she makes reference to cultural practices by specifically ethno-racial minority groups (she cites rape and honor killings in Pakistan and the Middle East and infanticide by Chinese and Japanese mothers) as examples to support her arguments against minority group rights. But Okin fails to make reference to Western cultural practices that oppress women such as breast implants. This orientalist discourse not only appeals to the sentiments and politics of the West in its condemnation of non-Western cultures, but it represents White Western women as the most liberated of women.
The logic here is that Canada is an immigrant nation which asserts the rightful place of Europeans who worked hard to develop the land and therefore most deserving of its fruits of citizenship. Positioning everyone in a relationship to immigration produces a hierarchy of entitlement to the land/nation. The violent erasure of Aboriginal peoples in Canada is made symbolically clear in Fleras’ depiction of what he calls “Old” and “New” Canada:

*Old Canada* is profoundly not multicultural – it is even antimulticultural. The Old Canada is *rural, homogenous, European White*, inward-looking, and opposed to change. In contrast, the *New Canada* is profoundly pro-multicultural in spirit and outlook. The New Canada is urban, and composed largely of *immigrants with little connection to Old Canada* (32, emphasis my own)

Not only are Aboriginals absent from “Old Canada”, they are made absent in “New Canada” since the “New Canada” is comprised of mainly non-White immigrants. Furthermore, by juxtaposing “Old” and “New” Canada whereby Old Canada is “rural homogenous European White,” positions non-Whites in the context of “New Canada” and thereby erases their early histories in Canada. This fictitious uniformity of early Canada as White laments non-Whites as *the* source of difference in the nation – meaning the impetus behind and the descriptive reality of multiculturalism in Canada. In fact, Fleras makes this rather problematic statement that is directly in line with much of the discourse of official multiculturalism:

Canada developed *nonviolently* from a predominantly White society to one of the worlds most diverse and tolerant (28, emphasis my own).

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34 This is what is most troubling about Fleras’ application of “first-wave” immigration to Aboriginals which defeats the whole idea that they are aboriginal means they are the original inhabitants and not immigrants. Fleras discusses Aboriginal peoples’ so-called migration to Canada over the Bering Strait (see page 31 of his text) which is still controversial because there are a variety of possibilities in which Aboriginals arrived in Canada. More importantly, Aboriginals have their own stories about their “beginning” which Fleras ignores.
This characterization of Canada’s history as nonviolent, predominantly White, with a late influx of mainly non-White people in the late 19th century is the discursive cornerstone of official multiculturalism. This White settler myth erases the histories of genocide, slavery, indentured labour and continued racial oppression of non-Whites in order to free the Canadian state and those in positions of power from being held accountable.

Ultimately, official multiculturalism is about managing people and managing difference so that those histories that implicate Canada in acts of injustice, as well as the unequal relations of power that exists between Whites and non-Whites, are not revealed. Official multiculturalism depends on the story of non-White people as late arrivals and the national myth of Canada as non-violent and benevolent – a view that is consistent within Taylor, Kymlicka and Fleras’ narratives. Like official multiculturalism, their narratives depict non-White people as homogenous, devoid of agency, pathological, traditional, and uncivilized by juxtaposing them to all that is White, Christian and European. Thus, a civilizing mission underscores the official policy of multiculturalism since in presenting non-Whites as different to Canadian civility, the goal is to “bring them into civilization” (meaning, assimilate them) so that the power structures that the White majority continues to benefit from remains. Within multicultural discourse, racial difference and inequality is constructed in cultural terms which makes the marginalization that non-Whites experience appear a product of their own doing – a product of their supposed backward cultural traditions that are considered contradictory to the Canadian way of life. Multiculturalism therefore fuels the production and

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35 The understanding here is that their cultural practices are inhibiting them from successfully integrating in Canadian society which is the reason they experience racism.
legitimization of racial minority difference and exclusion in the nation by presenting Canada as originally a White nation that is non-violent and benevolent.

**White Settler Nationalism**

Canada prides itself on being a nation that is tolerant, free and equal and that offers good-will towards immigrants and refugees. This is the narrative of White settler nationalism – a narrative that represents Canada as a host nation and underscores the official policy of multiculturalism. A multicultural Canada is imagined as founded by two nations (the English and the French) with racial minorities as late comers. Razack (2002) describes White settler nationalism as follows:

A White settler society is one established by Europeans on non-European soil. Its origins lie in the dispossession and near extermination of Indigenous populations by the conquering Europeans. As it evolves, a White settler society continues to be structured by a racial hierarchy. In the national mythologies, it is believed that White people came first and that it is they who principally developed the land; Aboriginal peoples are presumed to be mostly dead or assimilated. European settlers thus become the original inhabitants and the group most entitled to the fruits of citizenship. A quintessential feature of White settler mythologies is therefore, the disavowal of conquest, genocide, slavery and exploitation of the labor of people of colour (2).

Eve Haque (2005), Ghassan Hage (2000) and Eva Mackey (2002) are scholars whose work I review below. They describe just how this narrative of White settler nationalism embedded in the official policy of multiculturalism, perpetuates a racilized hierarchy of difference and belonging in Canada.

The most recent body of critical work on Canadian multiculturalism that highlights the role of White settler nationalism in its conception comes from Eve Haque’s (2005) doctoral thesis “Multiculturalism within a Bilingual Framework: Language and the Racial Ordering of Difference and Belonging in Canada”. Haque demonstrates just how language, as a means of identifying group rights under the policy of
multiculturalism, produced and structured a racial hierarchy of rights, entitlements and belonging in the nation. She argues that during the volatile period of the 1960s when Anglo-conformity was being challenged by Aboriginals and racial and ethnic minorities, the state responded with the creation of “multicultural policy within a bilingual framework” which, through a discourse of language and culture, cemented Canada’s White racial hegemony (ii). Thus, multiculturalism within a bilingual framework meant not only Canada’s production and denial of its racial exclusions, it also meant that “claims for substantive and collective forms of recognition from the State for other ethnic groups could be limited” (iii). Haque’s central thesis is “to determine how, in the present, language has come to be central in the articulation of White settler nation building while a racialized hierarchy of national belonging, although extant, is overtly proscribed” (38).

Overall the strength of Haque’s thesis is the articulation of how multiculturalism uses a discourse of language and cultural difference to structure racialized belonging in Canada.

Haque begins by theorizing how race enters the terrain of language in modern nation-states like Canada. Citing Haphrem’s\(^{36}\) concept of language as “a ‘critical fetish of modernity’; an ‘empty signifier’ for our displaced fears and anxieties…” (29), Haque says that his “insights about language provide a starting point for understanding how racial differentiation can move into the realm of language” (ibid.). Haque furthers this criticism by referencing Goldberg’s\(^{37}\) critique of the liberal paradox to show that race enters language through the modernist claim that language has universal properties (like equality and morality). But as Haque argues, such a universalism only masks the real process of racial differentiation that it is dependent upon; “therefore it is possible to make


a connection between the universalizing impetus projected onto language and modernity’s disavowed project of racialized differentiation” (30). Therefore, Haque’s thesis provides the trajectory from which the tensions evident within multiculturalism, from its response to racial minority claims for social justice and equality, may be understood.

Under multiculturalism, claims for racial equality are couched in a discourse of cultural difference – a discourse (evident within Taylor, Kymlicka and Fleras’ narratives) which says the social inequalities that racial minorities experience occurs because they are culturally deficient. In what Razack (1998) calls the “culturalization of differences”, such cultural diagnoses of social inequality does not lead to any true understanding of how White supremacy works to structure our lives and experiences because it masks relations of power which enables the dominant group to maintain their innocence (17-19). As a result, any real discussion of racial inequality is deflected from the start. When multiculturalism is organized around language and culture, racial minorities (and in particular Black Canadians) have no entry point for legal recourse. Multiculturalism within a bilingual framework presupposes this idea that one must have a “recognizable” common linguistic heritage to receive the group rights and privileges it offers. As I described above in my review of Kymlicka’s work, this limits the group claims of those minorities who cannot readily establish a common historical language which sets the precondition for establishing that one has a culture and therefore an identity.

It is upon this basis for which entitlements constructed through a language/culture terrain, that multiculturalism can exclude non-Whites and structure entitlements racially

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38 In the previous section I discussed how this concept of universality within liberalism both produces and then erases the figure of the other. This also works to mediate and mask the power of the dominant group to keep them from being implicated and to maintain the ideal of universalism.
without a single overt reference to race. As Razack explains, the rhetoric of cultural differences can be used as a covert mechanism for marking racial inferiority:

[They] perform the same function as a more biological notion of race (for example, the idea that Black people have smaller brains) once did: they mark inferiority. A message of racial inferiority is now more likely to be coded in the language of culture rather than biology (19).

Under White supremacy, Aboriginals are considered to be dead or dying, Black people are considered to have no language and therefore no culture, and Asians are considered to have inferior or underdeveloped cultures (Razack, 1998). The cultural differences rhetoric that both the Official Languages Act and multiculturalism policy operate, underscores this assumption, that in the first place, some of us have language and some of us do not (and as a result), some of us are civilized and some of us are not. Therefore, some of us have rights and some of us do not. This explains why Aboriginal language rights were never protected and why White ethnic minorities like the Ukrainians, during the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism’s public hearings, had a more vociferous claim to being included alongside the British and French as founding nations.

In fact, Aboriginal languages continue to be reduced to the status of non-languages, while British and French languages are given full status and recognition in government institutions such as schools where they remain the language of instruction: 39

[The] ‘dialecticalization’ of Aboriginal languages is not just a historical fact, but is in fact a history of the present where today the only two languages that can have the discursive force of being seen as viable national languages as English and French (Haque, 34).

The racial ordering of entitlement and belonging constructed through the rhetoric of linguistic and cultural rights under official multiculturalism in Canada is instructive for

39 For example, European languages such as Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, even German and Greek, dominate among the alternative language course offerings within our public high school curriculum and are often classified as “classical” languages. Visit www.tdsb.on.ca for more information and examples of high school language course offerings.
understanding why multiculturalism does not speak in particular to the Black experience – namely its diverse cultures, histories and experiences with racism in Canada. A reference to language under multiculturalism already excludes Blacks. Blacks cannot claim a space within multiculturalism because Blacks are not viewed as having any real languages and culture. This is important because historically and at present Black people are denied access to their own languages in order to suppress their identities and limit their rights claims. Blacks were not permitted to develop or retain their languages under slavery and colonialism and this history is reflected in our current education system which does not offer Black language and heritage courses. Black languages like Caribbean “patois” continue to be ostracized and dismissed in contemporary society.\(^{40}\) In addition, expanding global capitalism (like the related process of colonialism) ensures the death of Black languages by appropriating Black speech as a commodity in popular culture for market related consumption.\(^{41}\)

Nonetheless, the racialized belonging in Canada that Haque describes is a specific one – one that distinguishes between the kind of belonging White people have and the kind of belonging non-White people have in a multicultural nation. This is taken up by the following text.

Ghassan Hage’s *White Nation: Fantasies of White supremacy in a multicultural society* (2000) describes just how a racialized hierarchy of belonging is crucial to the production and maintenance of multiculturalism in a White settler nation such as

\(^{40}\) In my personal experience growing up in Jamaica I attended a primary school that like the majority of schools in the Caribbean, still had a British colonial model of education. I was discouraged from speaking the “patois” I was used to at home and told to speak “proper English”.

\(^{41}\) bell hooks (1994) in her essay “Language: Teaching New Worlds/ New Words” describes how the appropriation of Black vernacular speech in dominant mainstream American culture has trivialize it and its transformative potential undermined.
Australia. Although based on Australian multiculturalism policy, the historical, social, economic and political context of Australia as a White settler society makes *White Nation* most useful for understanding why a White racial hegemony continues under an official multiculturalism in Canada. Hage’s main argument is that

…both White racists and White multiculturalists share in a conception of themselves as nationalists and of the nation as a space structured around a White culture, where Aboriginal people and non-White ‘ethnics’ are merely national objects to be moved or removed according to a White national will. This White belief in one’s mastery over the nation, whether in the form of a White multiculturalism or in the form of a White racism, is what I have called the ‘White nation’ fantasy. It is a fantasy of a nation governed by White people, a fantasy of White supremacy (18).

Multiculturalism in a White settler society is constructed upon a White supremacist/

White nation fantasy – a fantasy that allows White people to believe they are in charge of the nation and the non-White people in it.\(^{42}\) This White nation fantasy of multiculturalism is a fantasy of order where non-White people are neatly positioned in their proscribed locales of difference (98). According to Hage, this fantasy of order is embedded in a fantasy of a “homely nation” which structures the sense of entitlement that White people have in the nation to feel “at home”; that the nation is theirs and therefore entitled to make decisions about the nation and those in it.\(^{43}\) White people then are put in the position as those who are in charge of protecting the national will against non-Whites whom the fantasy constructs as the threat – as those who stand in their way of achieving the homely nation.

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\(^{42}\) In fact it is the image of the racist in the multicultural society that allows the image of the tolerant White multicultural subject to emerge since racist as a term insights moral feelings about what is good and what is bad. The racist represents what White people either were or could become if non-White people are intolerable.

\(^{43}\) Hage explains that the fantasy of “home” that is embedded in nationalist discourses like multiculturalism exists to continue to make the nation a “homely nation” where White people are entitled to belong over others. This “homely” feeling induces feelings of anxiety that the nation/home is in threat and it is precisely this sentiment of “home” that makes the fantasy worth pursuing and defending. White people’s role then is to ensure that the fantasy of the homely nation is not destroyed. See pages 38-42 of Hage’s text for more details.
One of Hage’s important insights in *White Nation* is the idea that White tolerance is dependent upon White supremacy, which itself is dependent upon a marginalized and oppressed non-White population. Hage explains that progressive White liberals (who he calls multiculturalists or the “good guys”) and White racists are one and the same in that they share the same power to organize and manage the nation:

> Both the ‘racists’ and the ‘multiculturalists’ shared in the conviction that they were, in one way or another, masters of national space, and that it was up to them to decide who stayed in and who ought to be kept out of that space (17).

Therefore, the power that White multiculturalists and White racists share is precisely a nationalist form of power – the power to act in the name of the nation, whether it is good or bad, tolerant or intolerant. For this reason, Hage makes a correlation between racism and practices of nationalism to show that racism is fundamentally a nationalist practice. For example, when White people worry about the existence of too many non-White people in their neighbourhood or country then this worry is not just about their race but about the relationship between their race, territory and nation (32).“Such practices are better conceived as nationalist practices than as racist practices, even if racist modes of thinking are deployed within them” (ibid.) because “there is a dimension of territorial and, more generally, spatial power inherent in racist violence that the categories deriving from the concept of ‘race’ cannot by themselves encompass” (28). Therefore, Hage challenges traditional sociological analyses of racism for failing to theorize the connection between “what racists are thinking and what they are doing” (29) since

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44 This is a popular sentiment in many Western countries emanating largely from public debates on immigration and in academic spaces (like we have witnessed from Taylor, Fleras and Kymlicka), who worry about the increasingly diverse non-White population. Recently, the *Toronto Star* did a month long in-depth documentary styled news-piece on “The Changing Face of Canada”, coinciding with Canada’s 138th birthday. These rather obsessive discussions about the “changing face” of the city or nation, is embedded in what Hage calls “the discourse of White decline” (22). It is a discourse whereby White people express their anxiety over their sense of losing power or their centrality in the national space.
“racism on its own…does not carry within it an imperative for action” (32). He cautions us about the risk of always reading racism through the limited prejudice/power divide because it leads to a relativist mode of classifying racialized power relations whereby anyone can be racist regardless of their position within a racially dominant or racially subordinate group. But according to Hage:

\[ \text{[t]he importance of highlighting the nationalist dimension of such ‘racism’ is that it will allow us to demystify the exaggerated way in which the dominant culture tries to distance itself from it by obscuring the fundamental features they both share with a moralistic divide between ‘evil racism’ and ‘good tolerance’ (28).} \]

Therefore, understanding racism as a nationalist practice reveals the differential power that White and non-White people have in the nation.

Hage indicates that the power White people have translates to a nationalist practice of governmental belonging:

\[ \text{the belief that one has a right over the nation [which] involves the belief in one’s possession of the right to contribute…to its management such that it remains ‘one’s home’ (45).} \]

This notion of governmental belonging expresses just how White people identify with the nation’s will as their own and “to inhabit the nation this way is to inhabit the national will” (ibid.). This is different from the kind of belonging non-White people have in the nation which Hage calls passive belonging – a form belonging where those people who believe they belong in the nation “expects to have the right to benefit from the nation’s resources, to ‘fit into it, or ‘feel at home’ within it” (ibid.). The very fact that non-White people lack the ability to represent and inhabit the national will makes them a national object (ibid.).
The objectification of non-White people is most apparent in the discourse of White tolerance. According to Hage, tolerance is the principle through which White power is reproduced because:

\[
\ldots\text{the advocacy of tolerance never really challenged their capacity to exercise this power...those interpellated, by the discourse of tolerance see in the very address a confirmation of their power to be intolerant (87).}
\]

Therefore, advocacy of tolerance under multiculturalism not only confirms the power of those being asked to be tolerant, it also establishes control over the object of tolerance. This means that non-White people who are constructed as the object of multicultural tolerance must embody a difference that is acceptable within the limits of this discourse to allow White people who are the subjects of multicultural tolerance to exercise that power over them. According to Hage, this acceptance of difference establishes limits upon difference because “to tolerate is not just to accept, it is to accept and position the other within specific limits or boundaries.”(89) Thus, to be worthy of tolerance, non-White people must have a proscribed and therefore limited and manageable difference to be a part of the nation. The underlying expectation is that non-White people must become multicultural – meaning they must have a difference that is acceptable within the limits of the discourse of tolerance or they will experience intolerance.

As a process of containing difference, multiculturalism is meant to keep the White nation fantasy going – to keep White people in a position of racial power and privilege to manage the nation or keep them believing they have power to do so. Hage argues that multiculturalism is a White nation fantasy of tolerance that mystifies the fact that non-White people are increasingly asserting their power. It disguises the fact that multiculturalism is a product of the resistance and struggle of non-White people and is the government’s response to their demands (101). Thus the discourse of tolerance is a
discourse of denial of the increased empowerment of non-White people “because the White Nation fantasy is dependent on the staging of the ethnic other as object, it cannot help but mystify this element which would put it face to face with the will of the ethnic other” (ibid.).

Multiculturalism as a process of objectifying non-White people removes their power by making them passive recipients of White tolerance and benevolence. Therefore, the discourse of tolerance is a discourse of limits because the understanding is that the tolerant has the capacity to be intolerant if the tolerable crosses “the threshold of tolerance” (91). Tolerance puts White people at the centre to appreciate or value the tolerated difference in order to reproduce the ideal of the tolerant, benevolent, good White subject. This is why diversity under multiculturalism is always perceived as a diversity that is other to the White-self/nation. This allows White people to appreciate, tolerate and become enriched by difference. As a result, a hierarchy of power is established between those who can do the valuing (the White multicultural subject) and those who are valued (the non-White multicultural object). This is precisely what afflicted Taylor, Fleras and Kymlicka’s narratives. As multicultural subjects, they see diversity as external to themselves and the nation – a diversity that is foreign and not really a part of the nation. This view erases the possibility of a national ‘we’ that is diverse (Hage, 139). So diversity and difference is conceived of within multicultural discourse as something just merely “out there” so that White people can maintain their power to tolerate, value and accept. Therefore, the project of multiculturalism is defined

45 White people are the intended subject of official multiculturalism because its purpose is to transform them by making them accept “difference” in “their” nation.
46 This explains why they constructed binaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’ to represent the specific subjects and objects of their narratives.
by “the reduction of the other into a passive object of government” (17). Non-White people under multiculturalism are objectified in order to make the White nation fantasy possible.

Eva Mackey’s *The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada* (2002) supports Hage’s *White Nation* that multiculturalism does not disrupt White power but instead re-inscribes it through a White Nation fantasy of tolerance and benevolence. However, Mackey believes that although the White nation fantasy underlining multiculturalism places White people at the centre of national identity, it does not necessarily erase the non-White presence:

> ...although the official stories misrepresent the messy and controversial reality of history, they do not, at least overtly, erase the presence of Aboriginal people or deny the existence of cultural differences within the nation. Aboriginal people are necessary players in nationalist myths: they are the colourful recipients of benevolence, the necessary ‘others’ who reflect back white Canada’s self-image of tolerance (2).

For Mackey, this required yet disavowed non-White presence was needed in the early phases of Canada’s nation building project. In fact, Canada has always required the labour of non-White people to settle its physical landscape and develop its industries, economy and culture (Li and Bolaria 1988, Bannerji 2000, Henry et al. 2000). Therefore, the material needs of the nation are often in conflict with the national imagery (Mackey, 32). More specifically, it is Canada’s national image as a benevolent and tolerant nation that is in direct conflict with its histories of conquest, genocide, slavery, indentured labour and racial oppression.

According to Mackey, the Canadian state has always had to deal with these contradictions by managing its diverse populations through policies such as immigration.
and through national discourses and images. But this process became most prominent with the creation of the official policy of multiculturalism (63). Mackey uses the concept “house of difference” to describe this very process whereby the Canadian state institutionalized difference as a way to control access to power and further legitimize the state (50). However, this nonetheless maintains and empowers difference, such that minority groups are given some legitimate (although superficial) recognition to negotiate with the state (Abu-Laban and Stasiulis 1992). So for Mackey, non-White people are not merely passive objects of government – they are key players helping to shape national identity.

Mackey argues that while multiculturalism and other national policies and discourses existed to manage Canada’s internal others, it also existed to manage Canada’s external others, namely Britain and the United States and develop a distinct Canadian national identity. More specifically, Mackey argues that Canada’s national identity as a kinder, gentler, tolerant and more welcoming nation than the United States is particularly made possible through the representation of Aboriginal peoples:

…Canada’s mythologised kindness to Aboriginal people was an important element in developing a national identity based on the notion of difference from the USA – a difference that was tied to the idea of Canadian tolerance (14).

While I agree with Mackey that Aboriginal peoples are major figures in the creation of Canadian national identity, Black people were also central to this because slavery provided Canada with the justification to be characterized as distinct from the United

47 Aside from Aboriginal peoples, Canada’s African, Chinese, South Asian and Japanese populations were here long before the Canadian Confederation of 1867 and the subsequent erection of racist immigration policies to limit and exclude their emigration to Canada under White nationalist agendas. In order for such racist policies to be enacted in the first place suggests that they must have had a presence in Canada that somehow needed to be controlled to secure the national White settler mythologies. In other words, a present and growing non-White population posed a threat to early Canadian national discourses. See Li and Bolaria (1988), Das Gupta (1999), Dua (1999) and Henry et. al (2000) for more details about this history.
States – it allowed Canada to portray the U.S. as unkind, unwelcoming and most of all intolerant. For this reason, Black people were important figures in the production of national representations of Canadian freedom, justice and tolerance.

“Soon after Confederation a search began for a Canadian national identity, resulting in an increase in the production of literature and painting…and the formation of the Canada First Movement” (29). This group specifically employed discourses of biological racism against Black people to characterize the United States as a nation of “impure” southern races and thereby link Canada racially and culturally to Britain, northern Europe and “pure” northern White races (42). According to the Canada First Movement:

The northern winters ensured that Canada would have no Negro problem, ‘which weighs like a troublesome nightmare upon the civilization of the United States’ (Berger 9, emphasis my own).

This so called “Negro problem” that the Canada First Movement refers to is American slavery which specifically allows Canada to differentiate itself from the United States (since it had abolished slavery long before the U.S. in 1793). By distancing the Canadian nation from its history of Black enslavement, the Canada First Movement and others involved in Canadian nationalist efforts could characterize Canada as a welcoming nation and a place of refuge for fugitive American slaves. But Mackey fails to take advantage of the Canada First Movement’s anti-Black rhetoric (vis-à-vis its anti-Americanism) in her discussion about the origins of Canadian “icy white nationalism”. Since Aboriginals

48 This was the case, particularly at the height of the nationalist movement following Confederation in 1867.
49 Similarly, the Group of Seven artists and even contemporary writers like Margaret Atwood and Northrop Frye use a “Northern wilderness” aesthetic in their works to invoke a sense of Canadian moral and racial character. According to Mackey, their highly racialized and gendered representations of the Canadian landscape constructed the “wilderness [as] unpeopled and savage”, which produces the notion that Aboriginal people, like nature, are “ignoble savages” difficult to civilized (45).
are racialized differently from Black people, they play a different role in Canadian national narratives. According to Mackey, Aboriginal people “represent Canada’s heritage and past, providing a link between the settlers and the land and helping to negotiate the rocky terrain of creating Canada as ‘Native land’ to settlers” (39). If this is the case, then it could be said that Aboriginals are more or less “important supporting actors in a story which reaffirms settler progress” (ibid.) than they are the necessary others “who reflect back white Canada’s self-image of tolerance” (2). On the other hand, Black people are represented in Canadian national discourses as displaced peoples who have origins somewhere else outside of Canada. This disavowed Black presence and the representation of Blacks as refugees and victims in need of White charity and protection is used to deny Canada’s involvement in slavery and Black oppression. In fact, it is only the story of the Underground Railroad that is recognized as the early Black history in Canada within the official national discourse because it allows Canada to deny its history of slavery and to be considered a welcoming and tolerant nation for refugees. Thus, the preservation of the White nation fantasy of “two founding races” relies on Black erasure which allows Canada to construct itself in opposition to the United States as a freer, gentler, kinder and more tolerant nation.

According to George Elliott Clarke (2005), early African-Canadian slave and settler narratives influenced Canadian nationalism; particularly its ideals of freedom, survival, hard work, industriousness, generosity and refuge. Clarke cites early White

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50 What I am considering here is the difference between Aboriginality and Blackness whereby the native body carries with it different discursive, social, historical and political connotations and claims to the nation than the black body which is constructed by dominant discourses as a slave body (meaning it does not have any claims to nation).
51 The Underground Railroad was an informal system of networks of people, routes and safe houses that abolitionists used to bring American slaves to freedom in free American states and to Canada during the mid to late 19th century with the passage of the American Fugitive Slave Act in 1850 (Library and Achieves Canada).
Canadian Victorian writer Susanna Moodie’s autobiography of settler life in Ontario, *Roughing It in the Bush or Life in Canada* (1852),\(^{52}\) as an example of early Canadian White settler narratives that were influenced by slave narratives. He argues that “it may be possible to read *Roughing It*…as a displaced ‘slave narrative’ of a genteel, pioneer English woman toiling in the bush country of Upper Canada” (Clarke, 13). In fact, prior to writing *Roughing It*, Moodie was already familiar with slave narratives, having edited as many as three.\(^{53}\) According to Clarke, slave narratives of freedom, survival and hard work helped to fuel the abolitionist movement and its popularity as a major genre of literature in 19\(^{th}\) century Canada and the United States (ibid.).\(^{54}\) Slave narratives particularly narrated praises of Canadian British style justice and liberty while linking this to Canada’s northern geography and climate (as “the true north strong and free”). However, in his introduction to Benjamin Drew’s (2008) *The Refugee: Narrative of Fugitive Slaves in Canada*, Clarke reveals some of the major contradictions that were evident within Black Canadian slave narratives:

> ...Drew’s exiled African-Americans/ proto-African Canadian denounce American slavery; yet, these very denunciations underwrote the creation of a Canadian nationalist, anti-Americanism that still shapes our racial discourse. Indeed, by excoriating, righteously the sanguine evils of the Republic, Drew’s speakers helped to obscure European-Canadian racism and, worse, uphold Anglo Canadian (British) imperialism. Their reports supported white Canadian paternalism and sentimentiality regarding African-Americans, attitude still extant today (12-13, original emphasis).

\(^{52}\) This book is recognized as a major part of Canadian literary history and has influenced the work of prominent Canadian authors Margaret Atwood and Northrop Frye (Library and Archives Canada).

\(^{53}\) These include, Mary Prince’s, *The History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave*, Ashton Warner’s, *Ashton Warner, A Native of St. Vinents* (1831) and *Negro Slavery Described by the Negro: Being the Narrative of Ashton Warner, a Native of St. Vincent* (1831). See Clarke (2005) for more details.

\(^{54}\) This includes the formation of the Anti-Slavery Society of Canada that was founded in 1851, which played a major role in the Underground Railroad. And most notably, Black Canadian abolitionist Mary Ann Shadd Cary who was the first woman (and Black woman) to publish her own newspaper called the Provincial Freeman. In 1852 she published *A Pleas for Emigration: or Notes from Canada West* which championed Canada as a major refuge (Library and Archives Canada).
So while promoting anti-slavery alongside Canadian anti-Americanism and pro-British Imperialism, these slave narratives fueled Canada’s imagined moral superiority to the United States and masked racism in Canada – prevalent themes in contemporary Canadian national discourses.

Despite the omission of early African-Canadian influence on Canadian White settler nationalism, Mackey’s *House of Difference* makes an important revelation that non-White people are not erased in national narratives like multiculturalism because they are the foundation upon which Canada can remain White and benevolent in its national image. The following section discusses just how a negated, although present Blackness, is central to Canada’s construction of its national identity. From the perspectives of the Black Canadian authors reviewed below, attempts to erase historical Black evidences through Canadian national discourses like multiculturalism, do not (and cannot) negate Black narratives of citizenship and belonging in Canada. Black Canadian narratives are self-assured and self-determined in origin and disrupt the discourse of official multiculturalism for its representation of Canada as a tolerant nation.

**Blackness in Canada: Narratives on Belonging in a Multicultural Nation**

The term blackness has been used in many literary and scholarly writings – its most notable use is in Frantz Fanon’s (1967) “The Fact of Blackness”. In this essay, Fanon describes blackness as a negation that is constituted through the White gaze, which is captured so clearly in the now famous encounter he had with the White child who cried: “Look, a Negro!”(111) Therefore, Fanon experiences his blackness physically

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55 The term “blackness” has its literal origins in the English language as a negative connotation in contrast to whiteness. Standard English dictionaries often describe “blackness” as dishonourable, melancholic, dirty, angry, evil and unfortunate. For this reason I make a clear distinction between its negative literal origins by writing it in a lower case format (“blackness”) and its re-conceptualized form for positive Black identity by writing it in the uppercase format (“Blackness”).

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through this violent encounter that although verbal, he nonetheless experiences it as an
“external stimulus” (111) which fragments him into a “triple person” (112) – alienating
his subjectivity from his physical body. This encounter represents for Fanon the ultimate
state of objectification of the other. So the fact of blackness is the fact of its constitution
– that there is nothing “natural” or essential about being Black.

However, it was the famous Afro-Martinican poet Aimé Césaire who, having
been influenced by the Harlem Renaissance, re-conceptualized the term Blackness\(^ {56} \) as a
counter-identity to overcome the negative representation of Black people in Western
culture (Césaire, 88). Blackness then became a literary and political movement of the
African Diaspora beginning in the 1930s which, as an anti-colonial struggle, sought to
challenge Eurocentrism and White supremacy and reclaim African aesthetics and values
(Green 2000). Many Black consciousness movements were influenced by this
perspective to reclaim Blackness as a positive connotation for Black identity and
empowerment to resist White racial domination. Early Black activists and scholars such
as Frederic Douglas, Marcus Garvey and W.E. B. Du Bois and other prominent historical
Black figures, were important to redefining Blackness.

According to bell hooks (1992) in her essay “Loving Blackness as Political
Resistance”:

...blackness as political resistance transforms our ways of looking and
being, and thus creates the conditions necessary for us to move against
the forces of domination and death and reclaim black life (20)

So in its contemporary usage, Blackness can be described as an identity that expresses the
political and cultural resistance of Black people who stand in opposition to White
supremacy and Western cultural imperialism. In Canada, Black scholars and writers who

\(^ {56} \) Although, Césaire called it Négritude.
take up this position with Blackness, do so from various different perspectives, experiences and locations. I have chosen to review the work of two prominent Black-Canadian scholars, George Elliott Clarke and Rinaldo Walcott whose texts narrate the kinds of belonging that Black people have in Canada that are not singular but multiple and diverse. Generally, Clarke’s writing can be described as nationalist in origin while Walcott’s writing can be described as diasporic.

Poet and scholar, George Elliott Clarke provides an historical account of African-Canadian life in the Maritimes during the early 1900s in his recent novel *George and Rue* (2005). Although a work of fiction, it is based on a true story of two Black Nova Scotian brothers, George and Rufus Hamilton, who were executed by hanging in the province of New Brunswick in 1949 for the robbery and murder of a White taxi-cab driver. In describing the circumstances that ultimately lead the Hamilton brothers to commit this brutal crime, Clarke says (of George and Rue’s parents):

> What neither Asa nor Cynth knew was how much their personal destinies were rooted in ancestral history – troubles. Their own dreams and choices were the passed-down desolations of slavery. African Nova Scotia and, specifically, Three Mile Plains, were the results of slave trade and slave escape (14).

Therefore, Clarke uses this tragedy as a basis to narrate the legacy of slavery, the injustices of racism and poverty which he identifies as the historical roots of Black oppression in Canada. More specifically the novel serves as a reminder that slavery existed in Canada and was practiced officially in the provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec and Ontario.

Through the Hamilton brothers’ tragedy, Clarke is able to provide vivid detail of the social and historical conditions of racism, poverty, unemployment and marginalization that Black people endured in 19th and early 20th Century Canada. After
the American Revolution, Black Loyalists who came to Canada were given land that was not farmable and many, especially children, died of starvation:

The Negro – Coloured – people come from black slaves freed by redcoats down in Maryland and Virginia, then transported like convicts …during the War of 1812…They arrived just like two thousand black others who came with nothing to nowhere, were landed with indifference and plunked on rocky, thorny land (soon laced with infant’s skeletons), and told to grow potatoes and work for ale (Clarke, 14).

As a result, in order to survive, early Black settlers had to work cheap wages for white employers; often in laborious menial jobs such as in textile mills, on farms, as domestic servants in White homes and as porters on what Clarke calls “the Canadian Negro Railway” and the “Coloured Peoples Railway” (36). In the gypsum pits, many were “axidentally dynamited – arms, legs, flying through the air, or dropping dead of lung cave-ins, their breaths whitened by gypsum that blackened their guts” (ibid.). In what Clarke calls “a hillbilly Hell” (17), Black Maritimers had to live in substandard housing that offered no protection such as heat and insulation from the harsh winter and consequently, many died of hypothermia and other curable diseases. Clarke’s emphasis on “hell” challenges the misconception that Canada was the “heaven” of the North as promised to fugitive American slaves – that instead, their condition upon arrival was harsh and unwelcoming.

Through George and Rue, Clark shows that Black people were forced into destitution and the most menial labour. When describing George’s experience after he joined World War II, Clarke explains that he was not made into a “notched-gun-hero” but a toilet scrubber and potato peeler (75). What the Hamilton brothers wanted most was to be a provider for their families and be respected as men. But cheap wages and menial jobs robbed them of the opportunity and a life of crime seemed a logical way out to resist
the harsh life that was proscribed to Black people. The Hamilton brothers felt that their only option was to take what they wanted and felt was rightfully theirs.

With the Hamilton brothers’ experience with chronic poverty, unemployment, isolation and desperation, there is a sense that two crimes were committed and connected in specific ways. In describing the murder of the White taxi-cab driver, Clarke says “[t]he bond between [them] and the snoozing man was a wound” (xii). The understanding here is that the cab driver’s death is very much related to the Hamilton brothers’ suffering and the legacy of slavery. Much of the novel speaks to the very ways in which the lives of White people are connected to the lives of Black people through pain. Not only were the conditions in which Black people faced a result of deliberate policies of racism that forced them into a perpetual under-class, these conditions were also necessary to the privileges White people earned. In other words, White people benefitted from Black oppression. The laws of racial segregation and discrimination reinforced the view of Black people as dangerous outsiders and in turn, White people’s sense of superiority and entitlement. So for Clarke, Blackness is born out of the oppressive forces of whiteness.

Clarke creatively uses black and white colour imagery to depict this relationship between Black oppression and White privilege. According to Clarke, the Hamilton brothers were “black boys blackened further by the Depression” (37, emphasis my own). When describing the climate in which the cab driver was murdered, Clarke begins the novel with the phrase, “A white devil moon haunts the black 1949 Ford sedan” (xi). He describes Fredericton as a “cold, colorless city” where “the moon’s whiteness was cold – some pure hydrochloric acid blackening pines and spruce” (i, emphasis my own).
Furthermore, Clarke characterized Rue as “a black knife thrusting into a penal landscape of white” (115) and as someone who dreamt of turning “hard sober whiteness, to make it darker, softer” (68). Therefore, Clarke’s use of the counter-narrative approach to depict whiteness negatively, serves to challenge the grounds and entitlements upon which it stands. On the other hand, Clarke’s positive depiction of Blackness challenges the very ways in which Black people have been deliberately misrepresented and written out of the official history of Canada. Clarke’s discussion of Africville and other historical Black settlements, challenges this erasure by identifying Black claims on the Canadian nation as claims that are fundamentally about land and place:

though its denizens had land titles granted by Victoria herself, the city council considered the seaside village a shantytown fit only for a slaughterhouse, railway tracks, a tuberculosis and polio hospital, and the city jail (64, emphasis my own).

Therefore, to acknowledge Africville as a place in which official agreements between the Canadian government and the Black community were not honoured, is to acknowledge the legitimate place of Black people in the early formation of the Canadian state.

In Black Like Who?: Writing Black Canada, scholar and cultural critic Rinaldo Walcott (2003) offers a conceptual framework for thinking about the place of Blackness in Canada and more specifically for “suggesting ways to read or interpret forms of black Canadian expressive culture” (13). According to Walcott, academics, journalists and cultural critics have failed to account for “what is imaginatively Canadian” (ibid.) about the cultural productions of Black Canadian artists, as well as the lived realities and experiences of Black Canadians. So what Walcott’s text offers are “strategic interventions” (15) for thinking about Blackness in Canada and to challenge how it has been taken-for-granted. Walcott describes Blackness as follows:
...when I use the term blackness, I mean to signal blackness as a sign, one that carries with it particular histories of resistance and domination. But blackness is also a sign which is never closed and always under contestation. Blackness for me, like black Canadian, allows for a certain kind of malleability and open-endedness which means that questions of blackness far exceed the categories of the biological and the ethnic. I deploy blackness as a discourse, but that discourse is embedded in a history or a set of histories which are messy and contested (28).

For this reason, Walcott conceptualizes Blackness through what he calls “diasporic sensibilities” (22) to show the limitations embedded in national and racial articulations of belonging which alone cannot account for the many ways that Blackness positions itself both inside and outside the Canadian nation.

Walcott draws from a range of artistic works by Black Canadian musicians, writers, poets, directors and performers to demonstrate the diversities within Blackness and its connectedness with Black people elsewhere. Walcott believes that the five-hundred year long presence of Black people in Canada through their multiple histories of migration, settlement and border crossings between Canada and the United States, has created a unique space for a “diasporic theorizing” of Blackness in Canada (40). Therefore, Black experiences in Canada cannot be understood as isolated and disconnected from other places and spaces because the political identifications of Black people are important to forming resistance (45). But while the local (and nationalist) grounds of Black claims in Canada must be situated within the context of other global claims by Black people Walcott warns:

it is crucial that recent black migrants not imagine themselves situated in a discourse that denies a longer existence of blackness in this country. Such a position is an ethical one whereby the recent black migrant must refuse the seductiveness of a multicultural discourse, which strategically denies a longer black presence in this country (14).

According to Walcott, “official multiculturalism both inaugurates the demolition of black evidences and simultaneously allows for imagining blackness in Canada as a
recent phenomenon” (136). Multiculturalism maintains the denial of an historical Black presence in Canada because the nation would be forced to contend with its history of Black enslavement and oppression which goes against its discourse of tolerance and benevolence. The destruction of historical Black evidences that Walcott highlights such as Africville, Hogan’s Alley, the slave cemetery in St. Armand Quebec and Negro Creek Road, are examples of literal and symbolic manifestations of “the desire to render black peoples and blackness an absented presence in Canada” (44). These historical Black evidences point to the existence of historical Black communities which in turn point to the history of slavery in Canada. Black communities were settled and sustained by Black people after slavery had ended. The devastating consequences that slavery produced for Black people forced them to become self-reliant and develop their own communities. Yet these self-reliant and self-determined Black communities were not allowed to exist. For example, Jennifer Nelson’s (2008) Razing Africville: A Geography of Racism, reveals just how the destruction of Africville during the 1960s in Halifax, Nova Scotia, was facilitated by White academics, journalists, government officials and residents through discourses of urban renewal and humanitarianism that pathologized Black communities as underdeveloped and lawless. The belief was that Black communities could not progress without White assistance and integration into White society (109). The eventual isolation of Africville from being denied basic services necessary for the community’s growth and sustenance, allowed it to deteriorate until it became a slum which justified its intense regulation and subsequent razing (52).
Africville remains a prime example of the inconceivability of Black autonomy in Canada. Nelson (2002) states that the notion of a united black community, which exists on its own terms and is subject to the same rights and freedoms as the greater white community, was and remains inconceivable (212).

A self-sufficient and self-determined Black community particularly threatens White subjectivity – a White subjectivity that could only exist in the presence of Black victimization and dependence. Thus, White people come to know themselves through the regulation of Black bodies around space and place (Nelson 2008, 5). The idea of autonomous Black communities challenges Canada’s official national discourse where Black history is imagined as beginning with the Underground Railroad. Black autonomy is therefore intolerable in Canada because it specifically disrupts the White supremacist

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57 It is important to note here that only certain kinds of Black communities are destroyed while others are permitted to exist. Africville gets destroyed but not Jane and Finch, for example. The destruction of Africville represents the very ways in which Black autonomy is not allowed to exist. Africville was destroyed not simply because it was a Black community – it was destroyed specifically because it was an autonomous Black community which meant it did not rely on White assistance and control and particularly challenged White benevolence. But if Black autonomy exists, then what happens to White subjectivity? How then do White people imagine themselves in the presence of autonomous Blackness? Since White subjectivity relies on a dependent blackness, Africville had to be destroyed to disempower Africville residents and make them dependent. Nelson (2008) notes that one of the first things that the government did to the relocated Africville residents was to put them on welfare so that they would no longer be self-sufficient through their traditional reliance on extended families and community support. It is for this reason that White people will tolerate Jane and Finch and not Africville because Jane and Finch is not a self-reliant and self-determined Black community. Jane and Finch is a place that permits the reproduction and legitimacy of White subjectivities and authorities such as social workers, police, teachers and academics. Jane and Finch has not only been over policed but over studied through numerous projects and partnerships produced by York University. The close proximity of Jane and Finch to York University offers it this very function as a degenerate Black space in need of rescue, research, and assistance. Jane and Finch must remain a disempowered and dependent Black community in order for White people to know themselves and for academics, social workers, the police and teachers to continue doing the work they do. It also maintains the legitimacy of York University as an academic institution. Therefore, in order for White identity to exist, autonomous Black communities must be destroyed and erased from history. Similarly, only a certain historical Black presence is tolerated in Canada – one in which Black people are dependent on White charity and benevolence like the official story of the Underground Railroad suggests. We will learn in official Canadian history how Canada help save fugitive American slaves but we will not learn about how self-sufficient they were in creating and sustaining their own communities without White assistance. Benjamin Drew’s (2008) *The Refugee: Narrative of Fugitive Slaves in Canada* demonstrates that fugitive slaves were self-sufficient upon their arrival in Canada. They narrated primarily their hard work in producing their self-sufficiency and expressed their concern to never be a burden or charity case; showing that they were just as capable as White people to produce and sustain their own communities.
project underlying national discourses like multiculturalism in which Black people can only exist with White control, influence, benevolence and charity. As a result, Black claims on the Canadian nation must be tied to land and place because these are often the basis for denying Black autonomy. Nonetheless, as Walcott reveals, Blackness in Canada remains contradictory. On the one hand it articulates its position in the nation and on the other hand it positions itself in opposition to nation. Therefore, “to be black and at home in Canada is both to belong and not belong” (147).

**Stranger Fetishism**

Sara Ahmed’s *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (2000) provides a very useful concept for the project of this thesis by demonstrating just how knowledge is produced about the other in an official multicultural nation. Using post-colonial feminism, Ahmed theorizes the “the stranger” as an identity-making process to demonstrate how subjects, nations and spaces are created. This concept allows us to consider how histories such as colonialism inform but does not fully determine our racialized, gendered and classed encounters. The goal then is to imagine a new encounter between subjects so we may transform our lives.

Ahmed defines the stranger as a marginalized subject in the nation who is characterized as “a body out of place” (55). Contrary to popular belief, the stranger is someone we know rather than someone we do not know since we already recognize strangers based on knowledge that allows us to identify them in the first place (ibid.).

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58 Post-colonial feminism is a theory that critiques Western systems of knowledge, particularly about third world and women of colour, as being rooted in the patriarchy and colonialism. Post-colonial feminists challenge Western feminism for universalizing the concept of woman and the female experience and for representing non-Western women as passive victims of a traditional, uncivilized and oppressive culture, while representing Western women as free, modern and civilized. It is also a critique of post-colonial theory for failing to recognize gendered nature of colonialism. See the works of Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), Gayatri Spivak (1988), Tinh T. Minh-ha (1989), Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1991) and Anne McClintock (1995) for more details.
This means that the encounter between subjects has already occurred given that the very predication of knowing that the stranger is someone we do not know has already been determined by the ‘social, historical and material relations of production’ (5). So not knowing, as it is framed here, is the same as knowing since it allows us to recognize strangers.

By challenging our knowledge of strangers, Ahmed demonstrates that taking for granted the stranger’s status as a figure not only conceals the social, historical and material relations of production but the multiple differences and hierarchies of power that exist among strangers (3):

The recognition of strangers brings into play relations of social and political antagonism that mark some others as stranger than other others (25, original emphasis).

From this position we can begin to understand the contradictory dominant and subordinate positions strangers may occupy at different times and spaces within the nation. The stranger is therefore a contradictory internal/external other that is not monolithic but differentiated, multiple and contextual.

Understanding the stranger as a differentiated subject allows us to consider the two figures the stranger is given in the nation where there is a simultaneous inclusion of some strangers and the exclusion of other strangers within the nation. One figure of the stranger is rendered familiar and is (marginally) included in the body of the nation. The other figure of the stranger is rendered unfamiliar since the stranger is considered to pose a threat to the nation and is excluded (100). These two figures of the stranger are needed to define the boundaries of the nation and the limits of inclusion (such as how tolerable

59 In this phrase I have combined what Ahmed describes as “the social and material relations” and “the histories of determination” to describe the conditions that are responsible for producing the idea of the stranger in the first place. The point Ahmed is making here is that the stranger is not a natural fact of being strange but instead their “strangeness” is created by these relations.
the nation can be or which differences can be included) because the nation requires strangers (assimilable or not) in order to define what it is and what it is not. As Ahmed explains:

…the definition of the nation as a space, body, or house requires the proximity of ‘strangers’ within that space, whether or not that proximity is deemed threatening (monoculturalism) or is welcomed (multiculturalism) (ibid., original emphasis)

According to Ahmed “the stranger is always in proximity; a body that is out of place because it has come too close” (49). And it is this closeness of the stranger’s body in the nation space that “allow the question of what it means to be a nation to be posed” (100):

…the stranger’s proximity is required if the stranger is to be known as the limit of ‘the nation’. National identity emerges as a site of social conflict: there is a constant redefinition of who ‘we’ are through the very necessity of encountering strangers within the nation space (101).

For this reason the stranger is needed inside the nation space to mark out the borders of the nation and to define what is acceptable and what is not acceptable within because the stranger is the external mark of what the nation is not to become. Thus it is through the stranger’s proximity to the nation that dominant subjects come to know themselves as belonging in the nation in ways that entitle them to be in charge of the nation (like the ability to welcome “others” or be enriched by cultural difference). The stranger’s proximity therefore demarcates the boundaries and limits of the self, body and nation (ibid.).

Official multiculturalism provides the very context in which the proximity of strangers becomes integral to the definition of the nation space (95). It mobilizes difference for the project of nation building by “welcoming the stranger as the origin of

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60 This cultural enrichment is meant only to expand domination over cultural minorities through the appropriation of their cultural knowledge.
"difference" (4, original emphasis). Here, under multiculturalism, the stranger is no longer construed as a threat but instead is welcomed and included as part of the nation because their difference allows the nation to be itself by not threatening what the nation imagines itself to be. However, this gesture of welcoming makes the stranger appear internal to the nation so that the nation can be imagined as one that “accepts” or “takes in” difference and is therefore tolerant. Multiculturalism thus involves “a double and contradictory process of incorporation and expulsion” of the stranger whereby their “being out-of-place would become its own place” (97). This means that the stranger has a place in the multicultural nation in which they belong as not belonging. So the very inclusion of difference in the multicultural nation is an actual exclusion because difference is confined to specific spaces and only in specific ways. Under multiculturalism, the stranger (as familiar and assimilable) is given a space in the nation as long as the stranger *comes into* knowledge as the one who can be “taken in” (ibid.). This act of bringing the stranger into knowledge (in other words making them knowable) so they can be tolerated in the multicultural nation, is a process of concealing what Ahmed calls the histories of determination\footnote{Ahmed proposes the term “histories of determination” to represent the partiality of history – the hidden histories we do not read or hear about. In other words, history is not fully determined. Histories of determination therefore de-centers history by challenging how it has been taken for granted as a dominant discourse through claims to universal truth (history as singular rather than multiple). What is foreclosed by the dominant discourse of history are its complexities and multiplicities. According to Ahmed: “history is not the continuous line of the emergence of a people, but a series of discontinuous encounters between nations, cultures, others and other others. History can no longer be understood as that which determines each encounter. Rather, historicity involves the history of such encounters that are unavailable in the form of totality” (11). So rather than view history as determining the encounter between subjects, Ahmed says we should instead pose the question of how that encounter or relationship between subjects was determined in the first place because “encounters are always mediated and partial” (15).} so that difference can be seen as originating *in* strangers and not in the nation.
Constructing the stranger as the origin of difference in the multicultural nation makes the stranger “appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own” (Ahmed, 5) – what Ahmed defines as stranger fetishism: \(^\text{62}\)

Stranger fetishism is a fetishism of figures: it invests the figure of the stranger with a life of its own insofar as it cuts ‘the stranger’ off from the histories of determination (5, original emphasis).

Stranger fetishism is central to the creation and maintenance of a multicultural nation because it construes all differences (such as race, gender, sexuality, and class) as cultural differences. The stranger, then, is transformed by multiculturalism into a cultural object so that the social inequalities strangers experience are seen as a private matter (of their own creation). As a result, the nation can avoid the social, economic and political dimensions of strangers’ cultural productions which cannot be reduced to mere cultural aesthetics (95). Multiculturalism therefore reproduces stranger fetishism because it conceals differences among strangers so that it can avoid revealing the histories of determination that are responsible for constituting those differences in the first place. In Canada, multiculturalism constructs all differences as cultural differences so that the nation can conceal its histories of conquest, genocide, slavery, indentured labour and racial oppression. In this way, the Canadian nation can maintain its image as non-violent, benevolent, and tolerant up against the figure of the racialized other as the origin of difference. The very production and disavowal of racialized difference is the

\(^{62}\) Ahmed derives this concept mainly from Marxist theory of objectification. For example, from Marx’s perspective, labour under capitalism is transformed into a commodity fetish because it becomes a substitution for (and therefore conceals) the social relations of labour invested in producing the commodity in the first place (4). This means that in a capitalist society there are complex unequal relations of power and difference that is used to transform labour into a commodity. However, these relations are hidden from view to give the illusion of a fair labour market where people are participating and selling their labour at their own free will. This way the capitalists’ power over labourers is concealed so that labourers in turn will not resist. In addition to Marxist theory, Ahmed considers Freudian psychoanalysis in which fantasies are transformed into figures to help theorize the relationship between object fetishism and the fetishism of figures (5).
quintessential feature of liberal discourses like multiculturalism. It works to reduce all differences to mere appearances so that the nation does not have to deal with real differences such as racial inequality that it cannot hide.

Racial differences construed as cultural differences within the official discourse of multiculturalism are “restricted to the privatised and the expressive domain of ‘style’” (Ahmed, 116). This reduction of racial (and cultural) difference to a matter of appearance becomes further exacerbated by the reality of global capitalism. Under capitalism, “differences become immediately defined in terms of ‘lifestyles’, ways of being in the world that find easy commodification in terms of an aesthetic of appearance” (Ahmed, 96). According to Yasmeen Abu-Laban and Christina Gabriel (2002) in Selling Diversity: Immigration, Multiculturalism, Employment Equity, and Globalization, “current incarnations of multiculturalism which increasingly emphasize the commodification of ‘minorities’ and ‘minority culture’”(30) have serious consequences for non-White people because the priority is placed on efficiency and competitiveness in the global marketplace as opposed to equality and social justice. Here they describe just how difference is utilized by official multiculturalism to support the market economy:

…globalization has resulted in a selling of diversity, whereby the skills, talents, and ethnic backgrounds of men and women are commodified, marketed, and billed as trade-enhancing. In this context, certain notions of “diversity” – those which pertain to competitiveness – are viewed favourably…” (12).

Abu-Laban and Gabriel argue that during the 1980s the Canadian government shifted the focus away from the social justice measures underlying the original policy format of multiculturalism to one that focused on meeting the needs of global capitalism. The Canadian government made multiculturalism attractive to businesses and to the entrepreneurial segment of ethnocultural minorities by valuing diversity as something
potentially profit-enhancing (106-110). It is evident in the following excerpt from section 3(1) of the Multiculturalism Act just how it expresses these goals:

> It is hereby declared to be the policy of the Government of Canada to (a) recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism reflects the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society and acknowledges the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage; (b) recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism is a fundamental characteristic of the Canadian heritage and identity and that it provides an invaluable resource in the shaping of Canada's future… (Federal Department of Canadian Heritage, emphasis my own)

Therefore, racial and cultural difference as a matter of style and appearance becomes more pervasive to meet capitalist agendas and the body becomes the site on which this is played out. Within consumer culture, racial and cultural difference is located on the bodies of strangers so that it comes to be seen as an outward appearance that consumers can take on (105).63

> Consumer culture provides consumers with the fantasy that they can become the stranger, however temporarily, or that they can be like the stranger, by using certain products or by eating their food (119).

But this fantasy of becoming like the stranger that is increasingly being offered to White Western subjects through consumer culture and multiculturalism, is not the same thing as just being strange since dominant subjects are never strangers. The mere act of becoming only exists to sustain the proximity of strangers and therefore the power of the dominant subject to engage in the becoming. By becoming strange, dominant subjects can get close enough to strangers without threatening (by way of crossing) the boundary that the stranger represents.

> Multiculturalism thus provides the very context in which stranger fetishism becomes a vehicle for the expansion of global capitalism because there is a direct

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63 Within consumer culture, difference is represented as “a commercial symbol for what is youthfully chic, hip and fashionable” (cited by Ahmed, 116).
relationship between commodity fetishism and stranger fetishism. Through representations of difference within consumer culture, the stranger is produced as a commodity fetish (116). The commodity is therefore assumed to ‘contain’ the difference that the consumer desires to ‘have’ (168). In other words, the commodity is viewed as the stranger. The stranger then becomes a fetish by helping to define the value of the commodity which is precisely the strange and the exotic that consumers desire to purchase and take on.

**Corporate Multicultural Blackness**

Paul Gilroy’s (2000) *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture beyond the Color Line*, provides an opportunity to further Ahmed’s concept stranger fetishism in assessing the very ways in which Blackness might be transformed by multiculturalism in the interest of global capitalism. In *Against Race*, Gilroy challenges the construction of political communities around race by demonstrating how such an ideal is connected to fascism. He proposes the possibility of a future oriented towards “a post-anthropological understanding of the human condition” (278) so that a post-racial political culture can emerge for the betterment of humanity.  

64 In his chapter “All about the Benjamins”: Multicultural Blackness – Corporate, Commercial, and Oppositional”, Gilroy directs his criticism against race-based identity politics towards what he calls “black Atlantic cultures” and in particular to the Black middle class for embracing essentialized notions of race for their own personal advancement which he argues only further marginalizes the vast majority of poor and disenfranchised Blacks. Gilroy argues that multiculturalism in

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64 However, my position differs from Gilroy on this issue. I do not believe that a post-racial political culture is necessary to end racism. I believe that the focus should be on a post-racist political culture instead. People cannot be denied the opportunity to be self-determined and form their own political communities around racial identifications, since identity politics is context specific, always evolving and not static.
its corporate and institutionalized form has legitimized the emergence of cultural brokers in the business of difference among the entrepreneurial segment of the Black middle class. Gilroy explains this further:

Multiculturalism has been turned into a businessperson’s handbook… with the demise of mass marketing it has certainly become a dominant commercial consideration. Its corporate life has been fueled by the fact that in the era of targeted precision marketing, the appeal of black faces and styles need no longer be restricted to black consumers. These profound changes have stimulated demands for exotica and authentic inside information that have been met enthusiastically by a new contingent of cultural brokers: a hip vanguard in the business of difference (242).

So through corporate multicultural initiatives that fall under the guise of targeting the “urban consumer” and “urban market” we witness just how Blackness has taken on a life of its own in consumer culture, particularly when sold to ‘audiences that are far removed from the locations in which it emerged’ (270). African-American film director Spike Lee in his corporate merger with the major advertising giant DDB Needham and African-American clothing designer Carl Williams who designs the label Karl Kani (and I would add Black Entertainment Television (B.E.T.)), are examples of such cultural brokers Gilroy discuss who benefit from selling essentialist notions of Blackness to the mainstream. Gilroy believes that perhaps the declining significance of race after de-industrialization which fostered the proliferation of other hierarchies (such as class) among Black people has influenced the desire of the Black elite to hold onto race as a means to maintain their connection with Black proletarian life and culture that they are increasingly distanced from (ibid.). Gilroy warns that in the face of no other political and cultural alternative, Blackness sold as strength, youthfulness, in the form of fashion or as physical superiority and other forms of materiality, pose some danger to especially the most marginalized and oppressed Blacks who begin to live their lives through these
Gilroy then evaluates the extent to which Black political and popular cultures (such as hip-hop) can remain subversive under such conditions. In response Gilroy says:

…The older, ethnically charged communication pattern they consolidated was born from the hidden public spaces of black Protestantism and then systematically adapted. It has been gradually crushed by new commodities, technologies, and desires. It is now being replaced by a culture of simulation that changes the value of blackness in the globalized business of information, entertainment, and telecommunication. The supercession of the analog by the digital is an appropriate symbol and symptom of these developments (242).

In closing, corporate multicultural Blackness is a useful concept that expresses just how stranger fetishism under multiculturalism legitimizes selling Blackness to meet the interests of the market economy under global capitalism. Official multiculturalism has therefore given the corporate world the language and tools in which to utilize Blackness as a means to make profit at the expense of its revolutionary potential.
CHAPTER 2: PURSUING BLACKNESS

The Birth of FLOW

When the CRTC called for radio broadcasting applications on July 31, 1989 to operate 92.5 FM in Toronto, it required that all proposed radio stations meet the following:

1. The contribution that the new service will make to the achievement of the objectives of the Broadcasting Act, particularly the programming diversity in the market and the development of locally and regionally oriented programs. 2. The anticipated audience reach of the new service having regard to the impact on the audience of existing radio/television stations. 3. The proposed expenditures and the method by which the applicant will foster and develop Canadian talent, including local and regional talent. 4. An indication of possible shared investment or co-operative program buying arrangements with Canadian or foreign broadcasters. 5. An analysis of the markets and potential advertising revenues, taking into account the results of any surveys conducted that substantiate the projections; and the effect on the advertising revenues of existing radio stations. 6. A marketing plan, if any for the development and distribution of the new service taking into account any potential for satellite distribution. 7. A clear demonstration of financial viability consistent with the requirements indicated by the applicant's financial projections, including demonstrated availability of supplementary financing in the event that projected revenues are not realized. 8. A clear demonstration of the financial viability of the principals (Public Notice CRTC 1989-93).

Aware of a demographic and market largely ignored by mainstream radio in Toronto that would meet these key objectives, Milestone responded with a proposal for a “Black Urban Contemporary format” radio station with a “Black/Caribbean/African” primary target audience (Milestone Radio Inc. 1989, cover letter to the CRTC and Schedule 22, p. 0). Milestone believed that in particular, the Black community would display “a very strong sense of loyalty to the station, because of its ownership structure and programming content” (ibid.). In addition, this was a very lucrative venture. To quote FLOW’s current program director Wayne Williams, owning your own radio station is a license to print money (Onstad, 76). A radio license would prove not only financially gainful for Milestone, but it would create many job opportunities for those in the Black community.
to use their talents and skills relevant to the music and broadcasting industry; whether as DJs, broadcast journalists, recording engineers, managers, and so forth.

Milestone’s bid for a Black focus radio station developed in part on a community level in which the Black community was being organized for something rather historic. Milestone describes what their lobby for a radio license meant to the Black community:

this listenership will accrue not only from the standpoint of the format which will play all of their favourite music, but also from a sense of community loyalty to a cause; to an ideal; to a concept, ‘that has been a long time coming’, as many have described it (Milestone Radio Inc. 1989, Schedule 25, p. 7).

Milestone’s application for a radio license was therefore necessitated not only by economic needs but also the social and political needs of the Black community in Toronto to have access to mainstream radio. For members of the Black community, to own a significant part of a highly profitable market (that being commercial radio in Toronto) meant that ownership, music and programming would reflect their cultural tastes and address other needs that was not being met by White dominated commercial radio. Milestone hired the consulting firm, Angus Reid Group to conduct a market research study on the demand and economic viability of a Black radio station and the results were highly favourable (ibid., E5). The study also surveyed the Black community and found that the majority in favour of a Black format radio station were at the time being served primarily by the Buffalo, New York station WBLK which was similar to the format Milestone was proposing (ibid., M5). Milestone had made clear in their application about their intent to repatriate those Toronto listeners and Canadian advertisers (ibid., Schedule 25, p. 11).

While there were other applicants proposing a similar format, Milestone’s was more unique in terms of its specific address to the Black community. Milestone had
further politicized their bid for a radio license by specifically naming their radio format Black while the other applicants named their format “dance”. Milestone made it clear that they would promote their radio station to the Black community as “a Black music format” (ibid., Schedule 22, p. 0). According to Tator, Henry and Mattis (1988) the term “Black” was symbolic in that “it served to highlight the authenticity of the music that would be played on the station” (131). For Milestone, this authenticity would be reflected “in its music programming” and by “present[ing] a ‘black’ sound with at least 95% being ‘black’ performers…includ[ing] the full range of Black styles” (ibid., Section C, p. C8).

The social and political climate in which Milestone lobbied necessitated this very politicization of their radio license. High profiled police shootings of unarmed Black

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65 Tator et al. provide an analysis of the lobby for a Black radio station in a chapter from their text, *Challenging Racism in the Arts*. In their chapter they provide some facts related to Milestone’s (and another applicant, Robert Wood) 1989 and 1996 application for a Black format radio station. In their analysis of the consistent rejection of a Black format radio station, they argue that the CRTC engaged in a “politics of avoidance” so that they did not have to address the issue of race and racism surrounding particularly Milestone’s bid. Furthermore, Tator et al. analyze the CRTC decisions broadly as economic, political and cultural. For example, they argue that: “[t]he political nature of Decision 90-693 has three dimensions: the politics of diversity, national and regional politics, and cultural politics and the politics of identity” (Tator et al. 129). While I agree that decision 90-693 was in fact a political one, Tator et al. do not connect it to the politics of official multiculturalism for its role in framing the judgments that would ultimately lead to the denial of a Black radio station. This is where my analysis diverts from Tator et al.’s; my analysis focuses on just how the discourse of official multiculturalism can work to exclude the Black community. Tator et al. had many opportunities to investigate what role, if any, multiculturalism played in the CRTC decisions, as well as the applicants’ radio license applications, but did not consider its impact. While Tator et al. acknowledge systematic racism in the Canadian broadcasting system, they do not explain why or how this racist exclusion can occur in the context of official multiculturalism. Tator et al. claim that it was politically significant that the Chairman of the CRTC had given multiculturalism some consideration in a previous report prior to the decision. However, they do not explain why this was politically significant not only for the decision in general but the Black community in their lobby for a Black radio station. Tator et al. also discuss the Broadcasting Act’s concept of diversity on the radio but fail to go in-depth to understand its relationship to multiculturalism policy. In fact, Tator et al. too engage in conflating Black music with dance music (which I will discuss further on in this chapter) and do not critically interrogate this move on their part and on the part of the Commissioners as a move that is embedded in the larger framework of multiculturalism whereby Black must be called something else to mask the specificities of Black claims and the realities of Black oppression in Canada.
men, the controversial ‘Into the heart of Africa’ ROM exhibit, and apartheid South Africa were among many of the major injustices that the Black community was protesting (Nourbese Phillip 1992, Mackey 1995, Henry et al. 2000, Walcott 2003). A majority of the Black community agreed along with Milestone that a radio station would give the community the opportunity to address these issues, represent themselves positively and challenge the racially biased media that either misrepresented or neglected these issues. During the CRTC public hearing on their application, Milestone’s Vice President, Carl J. Redhead, said that their proposed radio station would provide “an opportunity to reach out to the mainstream and let the mainstream see the talent, the profiles of people, the contribution that they are making to Canadian society” (cited in Decision CRTC 90-693). Milestone also discussed the stereotyping of the Black community saying “most of the news that is heard about our Community are negative. It does not help to build pride, self-esteem and self-worth” (ibid.). Historically, radio (and in particular, Black radio) has played an important role in the social, political and cultural movements for change within the Black community (Savage 1999, Jackson 2004, Squires 2004, Alexander 2005). Essentially, radio is the voice of a community and therefore important to its survival by transmitting its beliefs, values and cultural standards.

66 This includes the 17 year old victim Michael Wade Lawson who was shot to death by a single bullet to the back of his head by Peel region police officers in 1989. While Lawson was accused of driving a stolen car, he was unarmed. After an investigation, one of the officers was charged with second degree murder and the other with aggravated assault. But in April 1992, they were acquitted by an all-white jury. This acquittal and the subsequent shooting death of another unarmed Black male, Raymond Lawrence, set the Black community in motion for protest. The Black Action Defense Committee, which was formed by Black activist Dudley Laws in support of Lawson’s case, planned the protest. But the protest escalated to create what we now call the Yonge Street riots; when frustrated youth joined in solidarity with the protesters against the police, turned to rioting after a similar acquittal of LA police officers by an all-white jury for the beating of Rodney King. At least 8 out of 9 people shot by Ontario police officers between 1988 and 1992 were Black. See the following newspaper articles by Donovan and Brazao (1988), Crook and Mitchell (1992), Sarick (1992) and “protest against acquittals” for more details on this case.
In the description of their programming, Milestone proposed socially and politically relevant programs such as “The Black World News Report” in which they described the aim was “to keep the target audience provided with a good balance of information relative to the social, economic, political and environmental factors of their lives in Metro” (ibid., Section B, p. C4). Milestone also proposed: a “Black/Caribbean Public affairs magazine” which would “analyze issues relevant to and of the interest of the community”; “City Talk” and “Straight Talk” which include dialogue between Milestone radio and the public; “Woman’s Viewpoint” which would be “provided and presented by women only…their views on matters of public interest”; and “Traditions” which they said “will deal with a wide range of subjects, including history, cultures, the arts and music” (ibid., C4-C5).

The growing popularity of Black music both in Canada and internationally, was not being addressed by the mainstream radio stations in Toronto. This produced major obstacles for Canadian reggae, hip-hop and R&B artists because the majority of the mainstream radio stations in Toronto did not play their music so they had to rely on college, university and community radio (such as CKLN and CIUT). This meant that a host of Black musicians were being kept from achieving mainstream success and further development of Black music in Canada. For this reason, many Black artists at the time, such as Deborah Cox and Glen Lewis, eventually went to the U.S. to develop their careers.\(^{67}\) Milestone wanted to specifically address this by developing a Black Canadian music industry. In their application they claimed that their radio station would “foster the continuing development of ‘black’ Canadian musical and other talent” (ibid., Schedule 25, p. 2). Milestone said one of their main goals was “to help maximize Canadian talent

\(^{67}\) see Walcott 2003.
development across the broad range of the Black/Caribbean/African community and would act as a catalyst to the continued development of a black music recording industry, home grown in Canada” (ibid., 8). In the following, Milestone describes their plans to utilize the talents of those within the Black community that were otherwise being underused by mainstream radio and the Canadian music industry:

the training of performing talent will also be conducted in order to augment the professional skills already available. There are numerous hopeful broadcasters in the Black community who have taken various broadcasting courses and ended up as dance party deejays instead. After selection, some of these persons will be re-trained for the particular needs of the station. There are also a number of immigrants with broadcast career experience who work in other fields due to the lack of opportunity. Milestone Radio will also be a potential employee for their skills…(ibid., Section B, C6)

In this example, Milestone notes the difficulties Black people experience trying to gain employment in the broadcasting industry even though they have the skills and talent. But despite Milestone’s bid to the CRTC about the necessity of their proposed Black radio format, they encountered difficulties and their application was denied in favour of a White, Calgary based broadcaster, Rawlco Communications, for their proposed country-western format.

The CRTC tried to justify their licensing of a country-western radio station over a Black radio station on several grounds. In awarding Rawlco the license, the majority of the Commission noted in particular that “given the complete absence from the Toronto FM spectrum of both a country station and country music, a country musical format will contribute the most to programming diversity, to the development of Canadian talent and to the Canadian broadcasting system as a whole” (90-693). But as Commissioner Beverly J. Oda notes in her dissenting opinion, the majority of the Toronto population does not favour country music, but favours “dance” music instead:
Historically, Toronto audiences have not strongly supported country format radio stations. Audience surveys undertaken for applicants in these proceedings, including applicants for a country music station, indicate that dance music is preferred over country music by the overall Toronto population.\(^{(90\text{-}693)}\)

Since country-western music is not the preferred format, why would the CRTC award Rawlco a Toronto radio license anyway?\(^{(68)}\) The majority of the Commissioners agreed with Rawlco’s application that “country was the preferred radio format for listeners over 35 years of age” \((90\text{-}693)\). Nonetheless, music played on mainstream radio stations already catered overwhelmingly to this age group such as “album-oriented rock, middle-of-the-road, adult contemporary, easy listening and classical music” \((90\text{-}693)\).

Furthermore, as the Chairman of the CRTC, Keith Spicer noted in his dissenting opinion, “the choice of a country music format in this case merely adds to Toronto’s audio spectrum another form of ‘traditional North American’ music – already massively represented by Pop, Rock and Easy Listening stations” \((90\text{-}693)\). There were at the time 74 full country music stations already operating throughout Canada \((90\text{-}693)\).\(^{(69)}\) It appears that in the majority of the Commissioners’ view, it was not that country music was not available on mainstream radio but that it was not enough and that this age group

\(^{(68)}\) It is important to note the following details about Rawlco after their license approval. In 1992, Rawlco made a subsequent application for use of another FM frequency (99.1) which had a stronger frequency than their recently approved license for 92.5 FM, which would allow them to reach to areas outside of Toronto throughout most of Ontario so they could increase their audience. They even acknowledged in this application that “rural populations traditionally include a higher proportion of those interested in listening to country music than do urban populations” \((cited \text{ in Decision CRTC 92-543})\). This is proven by the fact that once Rawlco’s station went on the air, it continued to struggle over the years with poor audience levels that it prompted several format changes. In 1999 due to declining audience shares for Rawlco’s country station, Rogers Communications took over the license from Rawlco and flipped its format to Contemporary Hit Radio (CHR) \((which \text{ plays only the top 40 popular songs off the Billboard charts})\) and the station became known as “Kiss 92”. Then in 2003 due to a declining audience \((and \text{ what I believe was tough competition from FLOW with their exclusive Urban radio format})\) Rogers again flipped the station to a rock oriented format and the station became known as “Jack FM” \((which, \text{ to attract their audience, offered an exclusive DJ free station that left room for more music play})\. Now recently in June 2009, Rogers flipped the station back to the CHR format bringing back Kiss 92 \((Canadian \text{ Communications Foundation})\).

\(^{(69)}\) There was only 10 “dance” music stations licensed in Canada at the time – nine of which were in Quebec because they played French-language recordings which satisfied a significant part of the required Canadian content ratio stipulated by the Broadcasting Act – the other station was licensed in Vancouver \((90\text{-}963)\).
needed more diversity of listening choice between stations; especially one that would have a full country-western format rather than a mix of formats being offered on the mainstream stations in Toronto. However, the majority Commissioners failed to acknowledge that the under 35 age group was not being served by mainstream radio – an age group where the overwhelming majority preferred Black and dance music (90-693). Milestone also made note of this in their application, planning to specifically market their radio station to the 18-34 age group (Milestone Radio Inc., Schedule 22, p A154). The majority of the Commissioners therefore used age among other things to avoid addressing the issue of racial inequality in access to mainstream radio in Canada. Age as well as a series of other words and phrases, namely references to music that were repeated throughout decision 90-693, was one way in which the CRTC Commissioners could covertly talk about race. Music, just like this CRTC decision, is not a-political. The common understanding that people share within North American culture is that country-western music is White music. The a-politicization of country music is just another way that Whiteness goes unseen. By pretending that country music does not refer to White people and culture or that it is not racialized like Black music, the CRTC maintains White hegemony.

The majority Commissioners also believed that “the absence of a county-oriented FM in Canada’s largest radio market has impeded the growth of country music in Canada and the recognition and development of Canadian country music artists” (90-693). This reasoning is rather problematic given that there is major support and an industry that already exists for country music and country music artists in Canada (Commissioner

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70 For example, the famous blues singer B.B King said that “country is white man’s blues music” (cited by Milestone Radio Inc. 1996, p. 328).
Gower, 90-693). It is for this same reason that Rawlco had proposed a higher Canadian content ratio\textsuperscript{71} for the selection music their radio station would play. Rawlco proposed to play approximately 32% Canadian content in their first year of operation and increasing to 40% in their fifth year compared to the recommended 30% ratio (90-693). Milestone could not propose such a high ratio of Canadian content given that the Black music industry in Canada had not had similar opportunities to grow. The CRTC’s decision seems contradictory to the objectives in the call for applications which emphasized the development of Canadian talent. Since a Black music industry was underdeveloped or almost non-existent, would it have not made sense to develop Black music artists than country music artists who already receive major support from the music industry in Canada? Commissioner Rosalie Gower noted the following in her dissenting opinion which directly challenges that a country format radio station would be financially viable in Toronto:

> there were, at the time of the hearing, two AM Country stations providing this format to Toronto with good signals (one of these stations has since changed its format to contemporary hit radio (CHR) which in itself could be an indication of the lack of enthusiasm for more Country in the Toronto market) (90-693).

Financial viability was one of the major grounds upon which the majority Commissioners tried to justify Rawlco’s radio license which was also one of the key objectives stipulated in the call for applications. The majority of the Commissioners noted that Rawlco was a successful broadcaster and had major support from the Canadian Country Music Association (CCMA), one of the largest music associations in Canada (90-963):

\textsuperscript{71} Canadian content ratio is defined by Canadian broadcasting policies which specify how much Canadian content should make up the broadcast media such as television and radio. According to the CRTC’s FM policy, at least 30% of music played on FM stations must be by Canadian artists (Public Notice CRTC 1990-111).
The Commission has also taken into account Rawlco’s extensive broadcasting experience, its performance record in the industry, and the solid financial foundation upon which it will build its new Toronto FM operation (90-693).

Rawlco’s reputation as well as their organizational and financial backing made their application more favourable. So it would appear that the majority Commissioners believed that a Black radio station was not capable of successfully taking on the largest commercial radio market in Canada. The CRTC made it clear from the outset in the call for applications that it was mainly concerned with the financial capacity of applicants:

In light of rapidly evolving industry conditions, the Commission will be concerned with the financial capability of the applicants and the viability of the proposed service. Applicants will be required to provide evidence which clearly demonstrates the demand and market for the proposed station or service (1989-93).

But this argument concerning financial viability is a contentious one given that Milestone’s consultant, the Angus Reid Group, made it clear that their survey indicated a Black radio station would be financially viable given that over 60% of potential advertisers were interested in advertising on Milestone’s proposed radio station (Milestone Radio Inc. 1989, E5). What this issue really speaks to is that the CRTC was forced to contend with the fact that Milestone was asserting a self-sufficient and self-determined Black subjectivity as entrepreneurs representing the interests of the Black community. This relationship between financial viability and Black self-determination is crucial to how Milestone as members of the Black community was perceived. Black people are often perceived in a racist society as being in need of White charity and assistance to assert their subjectivity. Milestone having no White investors meant that they would be entirely self-sufficient members of the Black community who would be able to make their own decisions about their radio station without White money and control. Milestone’s approach challenged the racist stereotype that the Black community
is incapable of being self-sufficient without White assistance. The CRTC therefore was left to deal with the question of what possible consequences such a self-sufficient and self-determined Black broadcaster and radio station would produce for White benevolent subjectivities and for Canada’s national image as non-violent and benevolent.

The CRTC specifically tried to avoid the racial tensions in this bid for radio licenses in Toronto by de-politicizing references to music and culture by replacing or at times conflating references to Black music with dance music. The label “dance music” particularly de-politicizes the relationship between Black people and Black music. For example, the majority Commissioners in favour of Rawlco noted in their decision that:

many of the plans proposed by the Black or the Dance applicants, particularly with respect to the musical programming, may be accommodated by existing Toronto radio stations. The Commission notes that Dance music is currently available through a number of Toronto stations (90-693, emphasis my own).

By conflating Black music with dance music, the Commission was able to avoid dealing with the fact that it was specifically the Black community that was not being served beyond the issue of musical choice. Failing to acknowledge the social and political significance of the term Black in the radio format Milestone proposed, the CRTC ignored the racial hierarchy that exists in the Canadian broadcasting system and music industry in general where White people continue to profit from the appropriation and control of Black music and Black musicians in the entertainment industry. In the following example, Tator et al. describe White appropriation of Black culture:

From the very beginning, the appropriation, consumption and production of Black music by White entertainers has been the site of complex power relations linking both Black and White musicians to the entertainment industry. These relations turned on the contradiction inherent in Whites’ use of Black musical forms, which had been forged out of the experience of racial oppression, as sources of meaning and pleasure. There is a fundamental tension between White musicians and consumers, who struggle for more responsive and articulate modes of cultural expression, and Black musicians who struggle against Whites’ cultural and economic power to redefine their music…a unique cultural dialectic
between White appropriation and Black innovation that has long been central to the evolution of popular music (134).

Milestone particularly emphasized in their application the contribution of Black music to the development of American and mainstream world culture (Milestone Radio Inc. 1989, Schedule 25, p 2). Furthermore, there is a general understanding that Black music is at the core of much popular music such as the blues, rock, pop and dance music which all have its roots in Black music and culture (Tator et al., 131). So even though the Commissioners said dance, they implied Black. This is evident in the following where the majority Commissioners make specific references to the “Black population” in their discussion of dance music and what they term are requests from “multicultural groups”:

The Commission, nonetheless, appreciates and acknowledges the views expressed at the hearing and in the written interventions from members of Toronto’s multicultural community, including representatives of the city’s Black population, and their strong support for the applicants proposing either a Black or Dance musical format. The Commission is sensitive to the wishes of these multicultural groups which constitute a growing segment of the city’s population, and has considered seriously the request for a radio service that would reflect the specific needs and interests of the ethno-cultural communities, including the Black listening audience (90-693, emphasis my own).

In this example, the majority Commissioners avoided naming the Black community by describing them in non-racialized terms like “ethnocultural communities”, “multicultural community”; even reducing them to a mere “population” and “listening audience” rather than a community. This was also evident in the opinions of the Commissioners who supported the idea of a Black format radio station. For example, Commissioner Beverly J. Oda in her dissenting opinion wrote that:

One audience study submitted provides evidence that those of minority ethnic background and heritage have a stronger than average preference for dance music over country music. Presently 56% of the population in the city are of non-English, non-French origin and this proportion is projected to increase even further in the future (90-693, emphasis my own).
Here the reference to ethnicity and language in place of race is in direct line with the discourse of official multiculturalism where a language of culture is used to mask the realities of race and racism in Canada. Calling Black music dance music was one way in which this was specifically achieved.

The discourse of multiculturalism was invoked and utilized to deny the licensing of a Black radio station. In their decision in favour of Rawlco, the majority of the Commission said that they were “convinced that a country and county-oriented station would at this time best add to the diversity and provide Toronto FM radio listeners with a true musical alternative” (90-693, emphasis my own). But Commissioner Spicer noted that this use and understanding of diversity is contradictory to the principles of the Broadcasting Act and the policy of multiculturalism. According to Commissioner Spicer in his dissenting opinion “this decision…ignores the principle of broadcasting diversity at its most fundamental: the need to serve today’s multicultural, multiracial Toronto” (90-693). But if diversity is one of the fundamental concepts of the CRTC’s broadcasting policies, then how was the licensing of a country-western station more representative of this diversity – in terms of ownership, music and programming, as well as development of Canadian talent that is representative of the cultural and racial diversity of Toronto that their policies call for – than the licensing of a Black radio station? If this was not the case then what understanding of diversity were the CRTC Commissioners using when they decided in favour of a country format radio station? According to the majority Commissioners in their support for Rawlco’s license, “the introduction of an FM country voice in this city, which is also the heart of the English-language music industry, will foster interest and in turn, increase the listening audience for this distinct type of music”
Here it appears that the majority Commissioners interpreted diversity in the context of music so that voice represented a musical voice. But what is a country voice after all? What community of people does this voice belong to? What does this voice say? What are its social, political and cultural messages? This move entirely erases the connection that voice has to a people to make it one merely about music or sound. Tator et al. noted that the CRTC shifted the meaning of diversity in the previous years they called for radio license applications from one that meant racial and cultural diversity to one that meant musical diversity following the 1989 applications (128). They point out that both in October 1984 and July 1987, a White businessman named Robert Wood applied to the CRTC for a radio license to operate “a Black/ dance music radio station that would serve the needs of the African-Canadian community in Metropolitan Toronto” (Tator et al. 111). Both times Wood’s applications were denied. The CRTC questioned whether Wood’s proposed radio station would be “capable of providing significant opportunities for the increased exposure of Canadian visible minority talent or of consistently offering a substantial degree of musical diversity” (Decision CRTC 88-293).72

According to Tator et al., the CRTC’s decision to license a country music station implies that the mainstream is something other than Black; that mainstream radio cannot be Black radio. But was the debate really one about whether Black was mainstream or was it about whether Black was diverse? Milestone repeatedly described the mainstream appeal of their proposed Black format radio station; that it would not only address the needs of the Black community but that of the non-Black population who enjoy Black

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72 It is possible that the CRTC employed a language of social justice when invoking multiculturalism in previous decisions because the Employment Equity Act was implemented in 1986.
music. Milestone said that their format would “be delivered in a mainstream style of presentation, not an ethnic style of presentation” (Milestone Radio Inc. 1989, E42).

Regardless of which side of the debate this fell under, the fear seemed to be that licensing a Black radio station would politicize mainstream radio along racial lines (Tator et al., 130). But since mainstream stations are predominantly White anyway, does this not mean that radio is already racially segmented? The fact is, the bid for radio licenses was politicized by the politics of whiteness long before the desire or bid for a Black radio station emerged. This sentiment that Black is not diverse and mainstream was expressed by Commissioner Gower in her dissenting opinion:

The especially attractive feature of at least two of the Dance applicants was that members of the ethnic community were not to be just passive recipients of the music, but active participants as shareholders with a voice in the station policy and direction…(90-693)

On the one hand Commissioner Gower acknowledges the need for racial minorities to be active rather than passive recipients in the broadcasting system. But on the other hand, Commissioner Gower contradicts this perspective when she concluded her opinion in favour of Milestone’s White competing applicant Robert Wood, saying: “In my view it was also the best reflection of the wide ethnic diversity of the Toronto population…”(90-693, emphasis my own). This shows that Commissioner Gower felt that Milestone’s proposed Black radio station was not diverse or multicultural enough; rather it was too Black with an all Black ownership, proposed music format and hired talent.

The discourse of official multiculturalism was utilized as a means to conceal the fact that Black people belong to a community and have the capacity to be self-sufficient and self-determined. The most salient way in which the CRTC denied Milestone’s application for a Black radio station was to imply that there was no Black community and
that they were not capable of being self-sufficient. Milestone repeatedly invoked a self-sufficient and self-determined Blackness throughout their application and appealed specifically to the Black community through Black newspapers like *CONTRAST* and *Share*. In these newspapers, Milestone was vocal in pitching their radio station that they would represent the interests of the Black community. For example, Milestone’s Vice President Carl J. Redhead was quoted with the following in *Share*:

> The United States is way ahead of Canada, in ensuring that minority groups especially blacks own and operate an increasing number of stations...In Canada no public administrator has dreamed of such a plan. *We need to do it ourselves, and create, for ourselves the kind of programming that matches our needs and tastes* (“Black radio station proposed”, emphasis my own).

However, under official multiculturalism, the idea of autonomous Black communities is not tolerated because it raises questions about why Black people would need their own communities and their own radio station. This in turn raises questions about how and why Black communities developed. Essentially, to acknowledge self-determined Black communities in Canada is to force the nation to contend with its history of slavery and Black oppression which directly challenges the discourse of official multiculturalism. Furthermore, to acknowledge their capacity for self-sufficiency specifically challenges benevolent White subjects who come to know themselves through a dependent and victimized Blackness. In this way, by not acknowledging the self-determination of the Black community in Toronto to have its own radio station, the CRTC was able to turn the quest for racial and cultural justice in access to mainstream radio in Canada into a quest for music diversity.

> It is quite possible that the CRTC may have found the sense of community that Milestone was invoking contradictory to the multicultural model of community.

According to Tator et al., “in the view of most of the Commissioners, the current
multicultural model, CHIN Radio, was sufficient to accommodate culturally specific programming” (130). But nonetheless, could the multicultural model work on mainstream commercial radio? What would have to happen to “culturally specific programming” to make it mainstream or commercial? This was Milestone’s dilemma – they were forced to turn Black into a specific set of cultural characteristics suitable for commercial radio and the (multicultural) mainstream. The multicultural model of community is one in which racial and ethnic minority communities have origins outside the nation and their culture is disconnected from the social, historical, economic and political contexts in which they emerged. This means that in order to fit this model, Milestone would have to de-emphasize the social and political context of their proposed Black radio station.

The CRTC’s decision to award Rawlco a country radio license over a Black radio license is an indication of how the discourse of official multiculturalism is used to keep the mainstream White. The discursive moves by the CRTC to avoid Black music and call it specifically dance music demonstrates how official multiculturalism reduces Blackness to a specific set of cultural characteristics so that it reflects something other than its connection to the social and the political. In fact, the stage was already set for multiculturalism to dissolve the idea of a Black focus radio station. Multiculturalism entered the debate for a Black radio station beginning with Commissioner Spicer after multiculturalism was considered in a previous report he conducted on the constitutional consultations right before decision 90-693 was made (Tator et al., 129). For these reasons, the Commissioners invoked the discourse of official multiculturalism to mask issues of racial inequality in the bid for radio licenses in Toronto which was clearly
racialized from the start. This use of official multiculturalism to frame the bid for a Black radio station influenced Milestone’s turn towards multiculturalism for their second application (since the expectation was that applicants would take into consideration the directions of CRTC decisions made on their past applications).

**The Turn Towards Multiculturalism**

Milestone along with four other applicants made an appeal to the Federal Cabinet regarding decision 90-693 (Tator et al., 118). Milestone appealed to the Cabinet on the grounds that a Black radio station, and not country, would add to true diversity in the radio market through “ownership, management, target audience, access for visible minority talent, representation of minority groups on the staff, and the composition of the board of directors and community advisory committee” (ibid.). Milestone emphasized to the Cabinet that the CRTC failed to recognize the specific tenets of section 3(1)(d) of the Broadcasting Act with respect to diverse groups of people in Canadian society being given a choice of radio programming that reflect their specific views, interests, needs and concerns (ibid.). Section 3(1)(d) subparagraph (iii) of the Broadcasting Act states:

> through its programming and the employment opportunities arising out of its operations, serve the needs and interests, and reflect the circumstances and aspirations, of Canadian men, women and children, including equal rights, the linguistic duality and multicultural and multiracial nature of Canadian society and the special place of aboriginal peoples within that society (Department of Justice Canada).

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73 Many individuals, organizations and artists from the Black community helped to lobby the appeal of the decision. Many letters from the Black community were sent to the Cabinet requesting an appeal (which appeared in the August and September 1990 issues of CONTRAST). The appeal was also promoted by the group Dance Appeal, a makeshift band created by the Dance Music Radio Committee. This band included artists such as Maestro Fresh Wes, Michee Mee, B-Kool, Lillian Allen, Leroy Sibbles and Lorraine Scott who recorded and performed the protest song “CRTC” (Can’t Repress The Cause) which is directed at its namesake. In 1991, the song went on to receive a Much Music Video Award for the Best Dance Music Video of the Year and was nominated for a Juno award for Best R&B/Soul Recording (see “Amberlight Productions” and Harris 1990).
Multiculturalism is the foundation of the Broadcasting Act’s conception of diversity. The implementation of multiculturalism policy in 1975 meant that Canadian public institutions and media outlets like radio were redefined as officially multicultural to reflect Canada’s racial and cultural diversity. However, the Cabinet upheld the CRTC’s decision in favour of Rawlco:

...[Cabinet] indicated its sympathy with the desire many Toronto residents were expressing for greater diversity in musical formats and urged the CRTC to hold hearings as soon as possible for the allocation of the former CKO frequency, which had since become available. Cabinet apparently hoped that the CRTC would grant the former CKO frequency to a Black/dance music applicant (Tator et al., 119).

According to Tator et al., the Cabinet could only intervene in matters on political grounds (133). This means that since the CRTC’s decision to license Rawlco’s country station was couched in technical terms, the Cabinet had limited options in terms of a legal basis to conclude that the decision was racially discriminatory towards Milestone and the Black community by failing to recognize section 3(1)(d)(iii) of the Broadcasting Act. The Cabinet rarely intervenes in the operations of administrative units like the CRTC (Tator et al., 132). This allows the Cabinet to maintain the appearance of a fair and democratic public system with little government influence.

After the licenses of CKO’s AM and FM all-news radio stations was revoked, the CRTC issued a call for comments from the public about the potential uses of these radio frequencies (Public Notice CRTC 1990-80). About more than two-thirds of the responses from the public advised that specifically the 99.1 FM frequency be used “for a Dance or Black Music format station” (Public Notice CRTC 1991-75). The 99.1 FM frequency generated most of the public interest because it had the strongest frequency of about 35,200 watts of radiated power which means that it could reach audiences beyond
Toronto, throughout most of the Ontario region.\textsuperscript{74} The CRTC then invited those interested in applying for a radio license to operate on this frequency and only three applicants including Rawlco responded (Decision CRTC 92-543). The CRTC denied all the applicants because they were not satisfied that their radio proposals represented the best possible use of the frequency (92-543). In addition, the CRTC had received many interventions, including one submitted by Milestone that was opposed to the approval of the three applicants. Milestone objected specifically Rawlco’s application on the grounds that upgrading their current license without first going on air “was an embarrassment to the fundamental principle of even appearance of due process” (cited by Tator et al., 120, original emphasis). Milestone was not so much concerned about utilizing the 99.1 FM frequency as they were with the principle (ibid.). Subsequently the CRTC issued a public notice about their intention to re-open the call for applications to operate the 99.1 FM frequency, once they receive the results of an independent radio market study they planned to initiate (Public Notice CRTC 1992-50). The goal of the study was to determine the most effective use of the frequency and whether the Toronto radio market could sustain another commercial radio station (1992-50).

Following the radio market study, the CRTC issued a public notice with the results of the study and the availability of the frequency, after which the CBC filed an application to convert their radio station CBL from its AM spot to the 99.1 FM frequency. This application by the CBC prompted the CRTC to issue a public notice calling for applications from those interested to compete for the license (Public Notice CRTC 1996-73). In this call, the CRTC emphasized that applicants should demonstrate primarily their financial capability and the viability of their proposed service (1996-73).

\textsuperscript{74} see Decision CRTC 97-362 for facts about this frequency.
This time Milestone submitted an application. However, about six weeks into the application process, the Department of Canadian Heritage advised the CRTC about their intention to reserve the 99.1 FM frequency for the CBC through a Governor in Council approval which stopped the public competition for the license (Public Notice CRTC 1996-73-2). This was the last remaining FM frequency in Canada’s largest market.

Furthermore, radio frequencies are scarce, especially strong frequencies. Knowing this would again end the chance for a Black radio station, many within the Black community responded with outrage and wrote letters challenging the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Sheila Copps and the CRTC in Ottawa to re-open the public application process. One letter written by Denny Hunte that was addressed to the attention of the Minister appeared in Share; it said the following:

This is the third or fourth letter I have written over the years in support of an African Canadian radio station. I immigrated to Canada, at age 12, in 1967. Given the many radio stations on the dial, I was still forced to the back three or four pages of Hit parade magazine to keep abreast with the current Black American hits (then referred to as Race Records). A few years later, I found out that I could attach a clothes hanger to my stereo after midnight, and if the time was right, and the weather was right and the street cars didn’t drive by my house, and my Mom didn’t complain that I was going to burn down the apartment, I could pick up Buffalo FM station WBLK – 93.7, in order to hear the type of music that was of interest to me….Ms Copps, please help me save my life…All I am asking for, at this moment, is an African Canadian radio station (“Save a life”).

In response to the complaints, the Minister advised the CRTC that the Department of Canadian Heritage would no longer be reserving the frequency for the CBC’s use and the public process re-opened (Public Notice CRTC 1996-73-3).

It is here in Milestone’s second application that we first witness their attempt to appropriate the language of official multiculturalism in framing their bid for a Black radio station. Milestone proposed the following format:

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75 Some of these letters appeared in several issues of Share during August 1996.
World Urban Contemporary. It’s not rock. The music industry calls it “Black music”. Its foundation is Rhythm & Blues (R&B) and it reaches out to embrace a broad range of music from “world beat” – reggae, soca, Latin, calypso, jazz – to R&B derivatives such as funk, quiet storm, gospel, rap and club. World Urban Contemporary. It’s a rhythm based music which has entertained and pleased the world even before the Fisk Jubilee Singers of Nashville, Tennessee thrilled audiences in England, Scotland, Wales, Switzerland, Holland, France and Russia on their historic tour in 1873 (Milestone Radio Inc. 1996, Schedule 27, p. 277).

Milestone’s general shift from a Black Urban Contemporary format in their first radio license application to a World Urban Contemporary format in their second application allowed them to appeal to audiences outside the Black community. This is noted in their emphasis above on Black music’s European appeal, as far back as the 19th century.

Milestone not only moves away from the popular label “Black music” that most people understand, but away from industry standards in order to emphasize the mainstream appeal of Black music and their radio format. The symbolic value that Blackness provided Milestone within their first application was no longer useful to their bid for a radio license. Not only was Black no longer being used to define their radio station, but neither was it being used to define their audience. For this application, Milestone focused primarily on the age demographic in constructing their target audience. Their primary target audience would be the 18-34 age group and their secondary target audience, the 35-54 age group (an age group already being served by mainstream radio) (ibid, Schedule 25, p. 164). Furthermore, Milestone said that their proposed format “appeals to a broad, mainstream audience in terms of ethnic diversity” (ibid., 168, emphasis my own) and “a mainstream, multicultural audience” (ibid., Schedule 27, p. 281, emphasis my own).

Milestone provided a breakdown of their audience as follows: “49% of European extraction, 32% Caribbean/African, 7% Asian and 12% other” (ibid.). This is a major shift from their first application where they identified the Black community as their
primary target audience. Milestone’s shift away from Black to a mainstream, predominantly White audience demonstrates their overall shift away from the social and political significance of their bid for a radio license. This shift also disguised the Black community’s struggle to hear their own voice and music on mainstream radio, as well as their loyal support for Milestone over the years. Yet one fact remained which this general shift could not disguise; Milestone was a Black company that was attempting to gain access to a radio broadcasting system dominated by White broadcasters.

The general disconnection of Blackness from the social and the political is also noted in Milestone’s description of the music their proposed station would offer. While their music selections remained largely Black, Milestone proposed to play a broader selection to include Club, Pop and Jazz music. Their proposed music profile included 50% R&B, 25% Club (which they include hip-hop, dance and pop), 15% World (African, Caribbean, and Latin sounds) and 10% Jazz (including Soul and Funk music) (ibid., Schedule 25, p. 168). What is problematic about this proposal is that club music (with the exception of hip-hop) was already being served at the time overwhelmingly by dance format stations in Toronto such as Energy 108. Furthermore there was a station already devoted entirely to Jazz music called Jazz FM 91.1 which served all of Ontario. Jazz music was also available on classical and easy listening stations. So did Toronto listeners really need more Jazz music? Furthermore, if Milestone’s proposal was to provide a unique sound and offer exposure for those Canadian artists who were largely ignored by mainstream radio then why propose to offer music already being served? One reason may be that since Jazz music has major support from the Canadian music industry and a large White following, Milestone could gain further support from the White population.
for their radio station. There are politics of race associated with the mainstreaming of Jazz music in Canada. Popular White Canadian Jazz musicians like Diana Krall and Michael Buble who have gained international success, are among the trend that Jazz has come to identify with White audiences. The de-emphasizing of race is even allowed to affect Milestone’s description of the origins of Jazz. Milestone says:

We go back to the turn of the century when New Orleans was a 
multicultural meeting place. It was here that the West African and the French 
melded their cultural talents that crafted itself into what has 
become known as Jazz (ibid., Schedule 27, p. 329, emphasis my own).

What is omitted here is that this so called “multicultural meeting place” especially at the turn of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, was rooted in a history of racist violence against Black people since slavery. Whites and Blacks did not live side by side in these multicultural spaces without racial tensions. This meeting place came together or became multicultural through this violent history in which Blacks were forced to the margins of American society and barred from social interaction with White people. Blacks who tried to challenge the social norm of White superiority and privilege faced serious consequences.

Milestone’s appeal to a broader audience outside the Black community compromised their focus on particularly Urban music and Black artists that were underrepresented and underserved by mainstream radio and the Canadian music industry. Milestone described that their “music mix reflects a wide range of sound from around the world which share a common platform: the influence of ‘Black’ or ‘rhythm’ based music” (ibid., Schedule 25, p. 168). While they acknowledge the influence of Black music on world music, Black is being used here superficially by its reduction to a mere rhythm or sound. Throughout their application, Milestone repeatedly described Black
music with words like “vibe”, “beat”, “mix”, “sound”, “tune” and “rhythm”. This is the context in which Milestone uses Blackness in their second application – a specific characteristic of the music they propose to offer. For example, Milestone said that their radio station “will provide Toronto with a sound that is artistically unique and relevant to the diverse profile and musical tastes of Canada’s largest city” (ibid., 164, emphasis my own). Therefore, Black music is de-politicized by its reduction to sound rather than its connection to a people or community.

This reduction of Black music to sound which disconnects it from the Black community does not allow Milestone to tell the story of Black oppression in their discussion of Black music history:

The term Black Music is a universally recognized identification for a style of popular music which created a rhythmic musical underpinning to what was once standard, smooth, popular music. The style is heralded and sung by numerous white performers as well, so much so that Black Music has been recognized as being the music style that has influenced the birth of rock music...Ancestrally, black Music has its roots in African rhythms. As every musicologist knows, wherever slavery of old transported Africans to a new land, there eventually developed such rhythms as the Jazz of America, the Samba of Brazil, the Calypso of the Caribbean, Blues and the Rhythm and Blues of Black America, numerous Latin rhythms such as Bossa Nova and the Merengue: although these last mentioned, were hybridized with European elements such as Spanish and Portuguese influences (ibid., Schedule 27, p. 321, emphasis my own).

Milestone does not explain why Black musical rhythms developed by African slaves in the “new world”. Suggesting that it just happened, or as they put it, “eventually developed”, makes it appear as if this development came naturally – that this is just something Black people do anyway irrespective of their social, historical, political, economic and geographic context. By not giving the full history of the impact of slavery on Black people and their use and development of a distinct musical form, hides the connection that Black music has with Black people and the Black community. It also

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76 For examples, see pages 170, 277, 278, 279, 281 of their application.
hides the necessity of a Black format radio station in Canada. Black music represents a long history of struggle for Black people where they had to challenge White control over their cultural productions. For Black people, Black music was and continues to be a source of resistance against oppression and White cultural definitions and standards. Milestone’s bid for a radio license as Canada’s would-be-first Black broadcaster is connected very much to this history of White appropriation of Black music. Milestone’s hope was that as a Black broadcaster, they would be able to have control over the development and popularization of Black music in Canada, rather than let the opportunity go to a White broadcaster – such as their competing applicant Robert Wood. For example, Milestone’s Vice President Carl J. Redhead was quoted in Share reacting to what I believe is Wood’s application:

There is no need for others to intervene on behalf of Blacks. A station cannot purport to be seeking the interest of Blacks when Black people are not the licensees and have no corporate clout to direct and call the shots (“Black radio station proposed”, 18).

Milestone, throughout their discussion of Black music history (like much of their application) made repeated mention of White people’s support for Black music and to a lesser extent, Black people’s support, even though it was the Black community who was behind much of the lobby for Canada’s first Black radio station. Milestone said that it was “during the 1960’s that a large white audience discovered the Blues when musicians such as The Rolling Stones and Cream performed Blues renditions” (Milestone Radio Inc. 1996, Appendix F to Schedule 27, p. 2, emphasis my own). As this understanding goes, Black music is just waiting to be discovered by White people because only they can know what counts as good music. This sentiment reproduces the dominant view that Black people need White validation – a view that is rooted in colonial discourses that
suggest non-White people do not know the value of their own cultural productions. Here, Milestone describes the role of White performers and music companies in popularizing Black music:

Blue-eyed Soul is an expression that refers to the role played by White performers in the musical expression of Soul music. This has been so profound that it cannot be ignored. But Black musicians also approved the incursion of Whites into the field…Tom Jones and Dusty Springfield, although they plagiarized the music immensely it helped to grow the audience for Soul. The owners of White record companies were called on in certain cases to help the smaller labels like Black owned Motown counting on their expertise to help make them more competitive from the business and marketing standpoint (ibid., 8).

In Milestone’s view, the plagiarism of Black music by White musicians was nonetheless helpful for making it popular. What they do not explain is that this plagiarism also helped to marginalize Black musicians, where some have never been given the recognition for their hard work and talent. Furthermore, Black people did not approve of White incursion – they had no choice. Black music companies had to accept the “help” of White record companies because they had industry clout and major financial backing.

Although in their first application, Milestone described White people in the make-up of their audience and those who were growing supporters in favour of Black music, they were mostly described in supporting roles as listeners. But in their second application, White people are placed in a more active position as integral to the production of Black music itself as innovators and performers and not just passive listeners— that it is their support for Black music that made it popular or what it is today. For example, Milestone credits White people for their role in developing the Brazilian style Bossa Nova:

Rio’s other great contribution to the World Music was the Bossa Nova. It began in the chic beach neighbourhood of Ipanema by day and moved to the Copacabana clubs by night before being discovered by American jazz musicians. Who created the Bossa Nova? Tom (Antonio Carlos) Jobim, single-handedly. He is a classically trained conservatory musician who incepted the “beat” from hanging around the bars at night. This was the origin of “Desafinado” first sung by Joao Gilberto in 1957, and “The girl
from Ipanema”, (1959) a sophisticated urban sound that’s more lounge-bar music than dance floor disco, a slowing down and breaking up of what was still Samba rhythm (ibid., 3, emphasis my own).

This description de-politicizes and de-historicizes the development of this particular Black musical form that originates with Samba music. What Milestone’s historical account conceals is the hierarchy of race and racial inequality in Brazil where Black people remain marginalized from the mainstream White society. This racial inequality lies behind White appropriation of Black musical forms like Samba to erase its identifiable Black sound. By not explaining this history, Tom Jobim and other White musicians (like Elvis Presley) who are said to just be “hanging around” bars at night listening to Black musicians play, are viewed as innocent. On the contrary, they were very much a part of the politics of White denial of the continued appropriation of Black music. White musicians are not innocent in their so-called quests to find creative “inspiration” from Black music because there is a long history to this which continues today. Many within the music industry continue to pretend as if this history did not happen and does not continue to influence the tensions Black people have with White people who perform or listen to Black music.

Milestone’s proposed radio format significantly impacted their proposal for the development of Canadian talent and the content of their programming. Nowhere in Milestone’s application are they specific about the development of specifically Black Canadian talent as they proposed in their first application. Milestone said that their proposed radio station “would create diversity, fill a void on the dial and create opportunities for Canadian artists” (ibid., Schedule 25, p. 165). What Milestone does not

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77 The Samba rhythm was viewed as too loud and too fast for lounge-bars and exclusive rich White tourist spots like the Copacabana during the 50s so it was slowed down to create Bossa Nova.
emphasize here it that it is Black Canadian artists in particular who produce Urban music who are in need of the opportunities that commercial radio could offer – that it is Black musicians who are marginalized in the Canadian music industry. The void on mainstream radio could have best been filled specifically by Black music. Milestone continues:

Music labels are currently encouraging Canadian subsidiaries to develop “Black” or “rhythm based” divisions to accommodate domestic, “urban sound”. These Canadian artists usually have to pursue their careers outside Canada to gain exposure and audience recognition in North America and worldwide (ibid., 170).

In this example, Black is used in the context of a type of music rather than focus on the artists. Yet, it is specifically Black Canadian music artists that have to leave Canada to get recognition. Milestone also noted that “the station anticipates its investments will help establish a Canadian R&B industry” (ibid., Schedule 27, p. 282) while in their first application they made it specific about the development of a Black music industry in Canada, focusing on Black musicians and their use of skills and talent available in the Black community. For example, Milestone proposed the following in their first application:

(a) A yearly contribution to FACTOR/CTL to encourage the continuing development of more recordings by Black groups, (b) A contribution to the Harry Jerome Awards Committee for cash awards in respect to outstanding achievers in the performing arts, and (c) A grant to 5 clubs/associations for prizes to be awarded to winners of contests to promote new talent in the specific music styles of Calypso, Gospel, Steelband, African and a new non-black group producing a black music style (ibid., Schedule 25, p. 8).

While Milestone was very specific about the contribution of the FACTOR grant to Black musicians in their first application, Milestone was rather vague in their second application about the specific talent that needed the financial support:

Grant Factor – Milestone radio endorses the new approach to fostering Canadian talent which the CRTC and CAB developed and will provide the recommended sum of $27,000 to FACTOR annually. Milestone FM requests
this sum be directed to the Rhythm and Blues categories of Canadian music development for Toronto and regional artists (ibid., 173).

Therefore, money that Milestone intended to reserve for the development of Canadian talent became too dispersed so that the opportunity for Black music artists to get funding for their work was further limited to accommodate other talent that already had support.

For their programming, Milestone proposed several spoken-word shows. One of these shows was “Toast’n Jam” which Milestone described as “a show designed to keep audiences on the move. They’ll listen to their favourite beats, discover what happened in Toronto and elsewhere when the lights were out, be entertained with humor, opinions, interviews and lively talk…” (ibid., Schedule 27, p. 278). Another show, “Street level”, Milestone described as “a quick paced, interactive magazine program that has the audacity to talk about whatever is topical and gives the audience the opportunity to add their two cents too” (ibid.). Milestone also proposed “Call N’ Shouts” which they said “offers listeners the chance to meet, chat, joke and play on the air waves. Anything goes. The audience rules” (ibid). Finally, Milestone proposed the show “Watz Up” which they described as “an open line talk show from 11:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m. allows callers to talk with hosts and in studio guests on a variety of topical or not so topical issues” (ibid.).

These programs are largely entertainment-based which means that there would be no room for the Black community to engage in dialogue on issues relevant to their social, political and economic circumstances like they offered in their first application. Milestone claimed that the content of their spoken-word programs would “encourage social responsibility, community spirit and emphasize positive social values” (ibid., 282), yet their emphasis on community is meant generally and not specific to the Black community. For example, they proposed a spoken-word program called “Access” which
they described “offers the community at large a chance to produce and air their own show in a commercial free half hour. At the time of writing this submission Native groups have already expressed interest in this opportunity” (ibid., 279, emphasis my own).

Furthermore, Milestone described that their programming was responsible to the CRTC rules and guidelines but no mention of their responsibility to the Black community:

Program content, both musical and spoken word, will honour the regulations and policies of the CRTC…Milestone Radio will also develop written guidelines to cover any sensitive issue which may require addressing (ibid., Schedule 25, p. 177).

This rather cautious description of their program content in their commitment to the CRTC guidelines suggests that Milestone would not be able to address “sensitive issues” such as the social and political concerns of the Black community.

Milestone’s commitment extends beyond the CRTC to the government’s Employment Equity Act (EEA). Here Milestone discusses this commitment in their recruitment of staff:

The employee profile will reflect Toronto’s rich and diverse cultural background. Milestone Radio will adhere to all aspects of the CRTC’s employment policy and will develop proactive hiring guidelines to ensure the station fairly attracts, engages and retains members of the designated groups” (ibid., emphasis my own).

In fact, Milestone volunteers their commitment – as a private broadcaster they are not subjected to government policies like EEA. Their application made this clear where it asked: “If a license were to be issued, would the licensee be part of a larger corporate group and thus subject to the Employment Equity Act?” and Milestone responded “no” (ibid., 649). Furthermore they were asked in their application: “to what extent will the proposed station address the equitable representation of the four designated groups…?”

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78 It is important to note that I make a clear distinction between this government sanctioned employment equity policy, that I denote EEA, and the struggles and visions for true employment equity by marginalized groups.
Milestone responded with the following: “Milestone envisages a staffing component made up of the following: Women 10-12%, Aboriginal Persons 1%, Disabled persons 1% and Visible Minorities 20-25%” (ibid.). A serious implication of Milestone’s commitment to the EEA is that there could be no outright progressive recruitment and hiring of Black people who are underrepresented in the broadcasting industry. There is no provision within the EEA or Milestone’s proposed hiring plan to designate a substantial amount of their job positions to Black people as they did in their first application. The only provisions that exist are for hiring the four designated groups – Women, Aboriginal peoples, Disabled persons and Visible Minorities. Yet, despite Milestone’s commitments and general appeal to a White mainstream audience, they were denied in favour of the CBC’s proposal for a license.

The CRTC denied Milestone’s second application for the 99.1 FM frequency in favour of the CBC on several grounds; as a technical, legal, business, national and public matter. The majority Commissioners stated the following:

Since the competing applications heard were from both the public and private sectors, the Commission had to reconcile the interests of all parties involved, in the public interest, in accordance with the general mandate conferred on the Commission by the Broadcasting Act (the Act) to regulate all aspects of the Canadian broadcasting system, and in light of the particular mandate conferred on the CBC by the Act. The Commission’s decision also had to be made in the specific context of the Toronto market, the largest in Canada. It is a market where a significant population lives and works in a congested urban core, where AM signals can be subject to particularly severe limitations. It is also a market which is already served by a number of diverse radio voices, including ten FM

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79 What I am concerned with here is that since Black people already constitute a “designated group” in need of employment equity, Milestone would be achieving equity in the workforce if they only hired Black people. It is not necessary for Milestone to propose a hiring plan that satisfy’s employment equity through a workforce that is representative of every other EEA defined designated group. EEA was specifically designed by the government as an institutional response to the systematic barriers to employment that marginalized groups experience, especially in government and education institutions where the barriers are greatest. So it’s the government’s way to remain accountable. But for a Black company, such accountability that was meant for white and male dominated workplaces would be unfair. It is for this reason that I make clear distinctions between the government sanctioned employment equity policy, that I denote EEA, and true employment equity envisioned by marginalized groups.
and ten AM commercial radio stations (Decision CRTC 97-362, par. 14, emphasis my own).

Two key issues that stand out in this decision are worth noting: how the notion of public interest and the market were being utilized to deny a Black radio station. First off it would appear that the majority Commissioners awarded the CBC a license on the basis that the CRTC was legally bound by the Broadcasting Act to prioritize the needs of the CBC as Canada’s public broadcaster over the needs of private broadcasters. However, Commissioner William Callahan challenged this view in his dissenting opinion:

…the public interest and the desires of the Corporation’s Board of Directors are not necessarily or always identical. Otherwise both the public call for applications, and the public hearing process respecting this matter have been a waste of time and of substantial public and private resources (97-362).

If the CRTC was trying to weigh which applicant was proposing a format that would best fit the public’s needs at the time, then clearly Milestone’s application was best suited given that they received nearly 12,000 letters of support for their application while the CBC only received 4,000 (Donkoh, 8). The public was largely in favour of Milestone’s application and the idea of a radio station that focused on Black music. So how could the CRTC justify that awarding the CBC a license was in the public interest? Public interest is a very loaded term that can be used to suit the interests of those in power. Furthermore, Milestone did not fit the CRTC’s idea of a private broadcaster operating in the public interest because the public is viewed a-politically; not as racialized. By referring to the public in a general sense, the CRTC reconciled the notion of public interest.

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80 Within popular government, national and media discourses, the public is often referred to in a generic sense.
81 Although Milestone disguised their Black radio station as something else in order to get mainstream White support, the CRTC nonetheless conceived of their radio station as offering mainly a Black voice or Black sound through its music and ownership, even if the audience was predominantly White.
interest as primarily serving a national in order to avoid addressing the racial inequality that exists in gaining access to mainstream radio.

The CRTC’s move towards the market appeal of radio license applications is evident in the call for applications. Of the six conditions the CRTC asked applicants to consider, five focused on market related interests such as expected audience, proposed expenditures, analysis of markets involved and potential advertising revenues, evidence of financial viability and capability of applicants and their investors (1996-73). This was one way in which the CRTC could shift focus away from addressing the necessity of achieving racial and cultural diversity on mainstream radio. But since the CBC is not-for-profit, would not the licensing of such a lucrative frequency to the CBC be a waste of potential advertising revenue had a commercial license been granted? It is in fact a condition of their license that the CBC not broadcast any commercial messages related to advertising except during sponsored programs, those pertaining to elections or for communities where there is no other broadcasting in their language (97-362, par. 46). So how could the CBC be more financially viable than a commercial broadcaster, when financial viability was one of the major requirements set out in the call for applications? As I discussed previously in my analysis of Milestone’s 1989 application, financial viability and discussions about the market are ways in which the CRTC tried to trump Black self-sufficiency and self-determination.

While considering the market in their decision, the majority Commissioners stated that:

…the CBC noted in particular that…the Act requires that ‘the programming provided by the Corporation should be made available throughout Canada by the most appropriate and efficient means and as resources become available for the purpose.’ The CBC argued essentially that, given the technical difficulties and listening trends discussed above,
use of the AM band is no longer the most appropriate or efficient means of delivering its public broadcasting service to Toronto, and that, especially the most populous and competitive radio market in the country, it was increasingly difficult for the CBC’s AM service to compete for listeners (97-362, par. 34).

Although the majority Commissioners agreed with the CBC that attracting a new market through an FM frequency in Toronto would be one way of diverting the problem of decreased listenership, an intervention put forward against the CBC’s application suggested that another technical alternative existed where they could use a different FM frequency (the 93.5 FM signal) (97-362, pars. 18-19). But the CRTC was not convinced it would also solve the problem of their declining audiences since the 93.5 frequency was very weak. The CBC then needed, in the CRTC’s view, a stronger frequency like 99.1 FM which would allow them to reach a larger audience. This means that applicants would have had to consider in addition to Toronto, the interests of audiences outside Toronto. This is where concern over regional programming that best suit the needs of local audiences collude with concerns over the market. In the CRTC’s call for applications, one of the six conditions it asked applicants to consider focused on the objectives of the Broadcasting Act with respect to “the production of local and regional programming” (1996-73). How Toronto was being constructed in relation to the areas outside its borders was significant for considering what it would mean to have a Black radio station broadcast throughout the Ontario region. It is possible that the CRTC did not believe a Black voice was important to the areas outside Toronto where the demographics change in favour of predominantly rural White audiences. Black is confined to specific spaces and places like Toronto because Toronto is considered a transient city where people have no established historical roots. By locating Blackness specifically within the boundaries of Toronto reproduces the dominant national discourse.
in which Black people are imagined to be recent arrivals. However the history of Black people settling and developing their communities in Toronto dates as far back as the early 19th century. Furthermore, the urban and financial image of Toronto as a major market for Canada strictly covers up this history of Black settlement in Toronto. So while Back people are imagined as belonging only in Toronto, both their long history of settlement in Toronto and areas outside to the rest of Canada are erased by this contention.

The 3-2 split among the Commissioners between the CBC and Milestone’s application further fueled the controversy surrounding the decision. Both dissenting Commissioners believed that specifically Milestone should have been awarded the license over the CBC. Commissioner Callahan noted in his support for Milestone’s application that:

An appropriate and efficient use of the frequency 99.1 MHz in the sense of the Broadcasting Act is proposed in the application of B. Denham Jolly, OBCI (the Milestone group). It would provide the opportunity for members of a large and diverse segment of the Toronto multicultural community to reflect their cultures on their own terms and in their own way, and a particular voice for Toronto’s black music, artistic and business communities (97-362, emphasis my own).

Yet, despite Commissioner Callahan’s support for Milestone, he addresses the Black community as only a music, art and business community. The implications of this reference are significant to how Milestone would later conceptualize their radio station and their appeal to the Black community. For their final application, the particular voice of the Black community that Milestone proposed their radio station would offer would specifically be a music voice.

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82 See the City of Toronto Archives on Black History.
Becoming Multicultural

Milestone appealed to the Federal Cabinet contesting the CRTC’s decision for awarding the CBC a license (Donkoh, 8). In addition to the appeal, Milestone lobbied the Cabinet for changes to the CRTC’s mandate on broadcasting so it would be more inclusive to reflect Canada’s racial and cultural diversity (Onstad, 77). While the Cabinet did not agree with Milestone’s request for an appeal of the CRTC’s decision, they did agree that more diversity was needed in broadcasting and passed an Order in Council advising the CRTC to reserve the next available commercial frequency (93.5 FM) serving the Toronto market that would specifically meet the objectives of section 3(1)(d)(iii) of the Broadcasting Act (Public Notice CRTC 1998-85). The CRTC noted in response to the Order that it would not issue a call for applications for the new frequency until it had reviewed a number of its radio policies such as campus and community radio and its policy on ethnic broadcasting (1998-85). Yet, campus and community radio as well as ethnic broadcasting does not offer the same opportunities as commercial radio that Black music artists need to gain mainstream success. In the absence of a Black format commercial radio station, Black artists had to rely on campus and community radio. As Ivan Berry, president of Beat Factory noted: “It’s hard to build an [R&B music industry] infrastructure without a commercial [R&B] station being in Toronto. Much-Music and college and university radio has supported [Canadian R&B] as much as they can” (cited by LeBlanc, 6). By offering Milestone and other potential applicants for the reserved frequency the alternative to consider college and community radio, the CRTC ignored the fact that Black music was marginalized on mainstream commercial radio and that their actions for the past several years of denying Milestone a commercial radio license
reproduced systematic racism against the Black community in their attempts to gain equal access to mainstream radio. For these reasons, Milestone was determined for a commercial license but after being denied repeatedly they decided to get the Cabinet to intervene.

Following its radio policy amendments, the CRTC issued a call for applications for the Cabinet reserved 93.5 FM frequency as specified in the Order (Public Notice CRTC 1999-119). Applicants were expected first and foremost to demonstrate how their proposed radio station would meet the specific objectives of section 3(1)(d)(iii) of the Broadcasting Act. The CRTC advised that applicants address the following:

1. The contribution that the proposed service will make to achieving the objectives established in the Broadcasting Act and in particular, to those set out in subparagraph 3(1)(d)(iii), and the production of local and regional programming. 2. The expected audience of the proposed service. 3. The means by which the applicant will promote the development of Canadian talent, including local and regional talent. 4. An analysis of the markets involved and potential advertising revenues, taking into account the results of any survey undertaken supporting the estimates. 5. Evidence as to the availability of financial resources consistent with the requirements established in the financial projections of the applicant’s business plan (1999-119).

Again, like the previous call with Milestone’s 1996 application, the Commission redirected attention away from the issue specified in the Order with respect to increasing racial and cultural diversity on mainstream radio by focusing instead on the market appeal of the applicants’ proposed radio station. Here the Commission enforces its position in the call:

Notwithstanding the demand for additional service noted in the order, applicants will be required to provide evidence giving clear indication that there is a demand and a market for the station and the proposed service (1999-119).

The CRTC’s expectation then was that the racial and cultural diversity that applicants propose to serve would have to represent a potential market. However, the CRTC’s focus
on the market does not necessarily contradict the Order but rather complements it.

Market interests and multiculturalism collude since multiculturalism under late capitalism is about the maximization of profit (Ahmed, 108). This means that racial and cultural diversity would have to be transformed into a specific set of cultural characteristics (in other words, commodified) to meet the market interests of commercial radio.

For their third and final application, Milestone proposed an Urban format radio station which they defined as “a diverse, cosmopolitan music format based on *Rhythm and Blues* (R&B) music and related genres...the modern-day reflection of the rich musical traditions of Black musicians and Black-influenced music over at least the past century” (Milestone Radio Inc. 1999, Schedule 16, p. 9, original emphasis). However, it appears that Milestone, in keeping with the discourse of official multiculturalism, describes the Urban format as “diverse” and “cosmopolitan” to specifically appeal to the demographic make-up of their target audience which would constitute the market they would eventually “sell” the Urban format to. While I do not deny the fact that the character of Black music is diverse and cosmopolitan since it draws from a range of cultural influences, my point here is to highlight just how this very quality can be appropriated to serve market interests that ultimately undermine the diverse and inclusive nature of Black music and culture, as well as its social and political subtexts. In the following, Milestone explains the connection between their proposed Urban format and their prospective audience:

Milestone is proposing to introduce a unique Canadian variation of the Urban format that specifically takes into account the demographic and cultural characteristics of the potential audience and artists in Canada. It will borrow from the existing Urban format concepts described earlier and will expand on them. It will be *authentic, cosmopolitan* and more *inclusive* (ibid., 11, emphasis my own).
So in order to achieve the policy objectives set out in section 3(1)(d)(iii) of the Broadcasting Act to specifically address the “multicultural and multiracial nature of Canadian society”, Milestone had to emphasize the very tenets of diversity espoused by official multiculturalism. In this example we see Milestone appropriating the available and acceptable language of difference under multiculturalism where difference is understood to have a certain “characteristic” that can be valued in the market as potentially profitable to businesses. Therefore, in context an Urban format, the diversity and cosmopolitanism that Milestone proposed their radio station would represent is rather contentious given that the term “urban” has been appropriated to meet commercial interests that are in tune with music industry standards and labels. While urban refers to densely populated areas within cities, in this context of a commercial setting, such diversity is only valued for its market potential. In other words, urban is a space that brings diverse consumers together. Consequently, Milestone is offering a superficial diversity – a diversity that is attached to the market where diverse consumers who are interested in buying Blackness would be brought together through Milestone’s radio station. Calling Black “Urban” allows Milestone to de-politicize and thereby disconnect their proposed Black radio station from its social and political origins so that Blackness can be successfully commodified to appeal to market interests that are represented by “diverse” audiences outside the Black community. The movement from Black to Urban represents the commercialization of Milestone’s final application in their appeal to the mainstream.83

83 I provide a more detailed analysis of the term urban in Chapter 3.
The evolution of the format of Milestone’s proposed radio station over the period of their three applications from Black to World and finally to Urban reflects their changing target audience from Black to mainstream White. In their final application, Milestone described their prospective audience as follows:

…this proposed new radio station will have a broad-based appeal across the market, attracting a substantial percentage of listeners from all major enthocultural groups…57% of the potential listeners report European origins, 21% Afro-Caribbean origins, and 16% report South and Southeast Asian origins (ibid., 16, emphasis my own).

To reflect this changing, diverse and predominantly White audience, we witness over the course of Milestone’s three applications the increasing commercial appeal of their proposed Black radio station. Milestone went from focusing on the community appeal of their first application to a mainstream appeal in their second application and finally to a commercial appeal for their third application to specifically meet the market interests of a commercial radio license that would essentially serve a White audience. In the following, Milestone explains just how they reshaped their original radio concept over the course of their applications to meet primarily the interests of the market:

The programming and business plans included in this application reflect the extensive knowledge of, and familiarity with, the Toronto radio market that Milestone has developed over the past decade. These plans have been carefully assessed and refined since the concept was first proposed in 1989 to take into account changes in the structure and performance of the Toronto radio market (ibid., 8, emphasis my own).

But to meet these market interests, Milestone’s proposed Black radio station would have to be redefined in terms of its economic efficiency to deliver to this market, music and programming that reflected the needs and desires of a mainstream White audience. As Milestone claimed, their proposed radio station would “respond to the tastes of the broader potential listening audience” (ibid., 11). This goal is most noted in the four key Urban music streams that Milestone proposed their radio station would play: New/Latest
R&B, Hip Hop and Dance, Reggae/World and Latin, Old School Soul/R&B (ibid., 11). The very context in which these types of Black music would be played undermined its social, political and cultural relevance for the Black community. Such a context included Milestone’s proposed use of day-parting\(^{84}\) as an “effective means” to achieve optimum coverage of the four main types of Urban music they proposed to play. The result is that only certain types of music that are more in tune with the interests of a mainstream White audience would take priority since as Milestone pointed out, their intention is “to respond to the listening preferences of the full spectrum of potential audience” (ibid., 12) – a potential audience that would ultimately drive the direction of their music programming. For example, Milestone proposed to feature primarily the New/Latest R&B, both Canadian and International with some Reggae and Latin music during the morning and evening weekday hours (ibid., 18). Milestone also claimed that they would feature Old School Soul and R&B and New R&B, again with some Reggae and World Rhythms, during the mid-morning and mid-afternoon (ibid.).\(^{85}\) These two time periods constitute “at work” and “drive” hours that major advertisers tend to invest in. For this reason, Milestone’s proposed music streams during these times are mainly contemporary (and “old”) hit versions of Urban music that is popular on billboard charts and most familiar

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\(^{84}\) Day-parting can be described as a radio station’s selection of music and programming to meet the preferences of different audiences at different times.

\(^{85}\) It is important that we be mindful of how Milestone represented these Urban genres of music. Milestone proposed to play reggae and calypso music because they are the more commercial variants of Caribbean music. The mainstream may be unfamiliar with their sub-genres like dancehall and soca respectively which represent the more contemporary sound of Caribbean club music that are popular in the Caribbean, North America and the UK. Milestone did not disclose these subgenres and particularly dancehall because of its more “uptempo” sound and for (what many upper class Jamaicans have called) its “slackness”. In their music program description Milestone said they would play reggae artists such as Bob Marley, Carla Marshall and Shabba Ranks (the latter two are actually dancehall artists) that are more mainstream and had billboard hits. Milestone provided Arrow’s famous song “Hot Hot Hot” as an example in their music programming of “calypso” music their proposed radio station would play. But this song is actually a soca song that was recorded in the 80s and is so mainstream that it has become the poster song for “Island music” played at popular White tourist spots in the Caribbean and featured in many Hollywood movies, television shows and commercials. It was also the theme song for Miss Universe in 1989.
with White audiences. Therefore, the more hit oriented Urban music would be featured during the main morning shows, meanwhile the hip hop, dance and the least popular forms of reggae and calypso (like dancehall, soca and rapso) options, what they called “uptempo” music, would be played during the evenings and weekends to appeal to a “younger” audience. This proposed day-parting was encouraged by the Commission while awarding Milestone their radio license:

The station will adjust its music programming to appeal to different audiences during different time periods. For example, evening hours will target a younger demographic with more hip-hop and more new R&B than will be heard during daytime (Decision CRTC 2000-203, par. 4, emphasis my own).

Therefore day-parting became an important means through which Milestone could maintain its appeal to a mainstream White (and older) audience who tend to be more familiar with the hits oriented Urban music. This would further marginalize the younger Black audience who identify with a wider range of Urban music.

In their description of the mainstream appeal of Black music, Milestone said the following:

Music in the Urban format has been, and continues to be, defined by Black musicians, but it does not consist exclusively of music performed by Black people. A number of prominent non-Black artists, such as Mariah Carey, George Michael and Madonna have contributed to the genre in recent years, incorporating both the sound and the cultural context into their work” (ibid., 9, emphasis my own).

However, this description misrepresents Mariah Carey – who is of both African and European decent and who is considered by many within the Black community to be a Black artist – as a “non-Black” artist under Milestone’s efforts to secure the multicultural and commercial terms of their application by appealing to their potential mainstream White audience. This was specifically achieved by de-politicizing Black music and

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86 Currently this is what is happening on FLOW where reggae, calypso and other non-mainstream Black music are relegated to the evening and late or very early mornings. I will discuss this issue about “effective day-parting” in Chapter 3.
reducing it to a mere “sound” that Milestone said has been produced by White artists (which they termed “non-Black” to avoid saying White). Multiculturalism, as it guides the Broadcasting Act’s conception of diversity, is predicated on superficial representations of difference. Milestone’s proposed Black radio station becomes a matter of specific cultural characteristics that must be disconnected from their social, political, economic and cultural contexts to further consolidate the capitalist-driven needs of the commercial radio market setting. Therefore, Milestone’s specific address to the Black community would no longer reflect their social and political interests but instead commercial interests. While Milestone proposed in their application that their radio station would specifically “give a voice to the Black community”, it is rather a de-politicized Black voice that would be commodified as an “urban sound” to appeal to the interests of their mainstream audience and the market. The following example demonstrates the very context in which Milestone conceptualized the “voice” that their proposed Black radio station would offer:

This application reflects the continuing efforts of the five founding members of Milestone over the past decade to achieve their shared vision of a new radio station that fills an important musical niche in the Toronto radio market, that provides a showcase for the unique and innovative music that is being created and performed by Canadian musical artists in clubs and concert halls throughout the city, and which gives members of the Black community their own voice in the Canadian broadcasting system (ibid., 2, emphasis my own).

So in this context, the very voice that Milestone proposed to offer the Black community would be a music voice to appeal to those outside the Black community and meet the commercial interests of radio.

This de-politicized and commodified voice is apparent in the spoken-word programming that Milestone proposed their radio station would offer and that would be of “direct and particular relevance to the [Black] community” (ibid., 17). For example,
Milestone proposed three very important and politically interrogative programs that would be beneficial to the Black and Caribbean Community in Toronto: Winning Streak, Urban Forum and Exposure. They described Winning Streak as follows:

A youth oriented radio magazine. Items selected for airing tend to encourage aspirations for achievement, thus fostering pride of excellence. The Winning Streak focuses on academic achievements, athletics, creativity in the Arts, illustrious social/community service, and such like. Contributions from a range of visible minority groups will feature interviews with achievers, role models and youth leaders. Today’s youth are more apt to be racially integrated in their outlook. You can count on this radio magazine in helping to nurture this “cool” attitude (ibid., Appendix D to Schedule 16, p. 3, original emphasis).

These empowering features that Winning Streak would offer racial minority youth would be undermined by the very context of the magazine style delivery of this program.

Winning Streak would not be given the opportunity to effectively deal with “uncool” “attitudes” like that of racial minority youth who want to voice their frustrations about their experiences with racial injustice in the education system, employment, the police and other places – it certainly would not fit well with the laid back tone of this program and the “cool attitude” Milestone hoped that it would nurture. The same could be said for the other politically interrogative programs Milestone proposed. This is especially true for Urban Form which is the only spoken-word programming Milestone proposed that would invite the opinions, feelings and concerns of the Black community on a variety of issues that directly affect them. Milestone describes Urban Forum in detail as follows:

Members of the Black Community collectively discuss issues and concerns that directly affect them. They speak to the mainstream; and the mainstream responds by sharing ideas, feelings, values and understanding. Milestone FM becomes the living room where healthy dialogue takes place in a neighbourly fashion. The impartial Milestone microphone symbolizes goodwill by its implicit silence; while the host of the show seeks to always reinforce the sometimes delicate bridge of understanding. An excellent vehicle for establishing better intercultural understanding while often showcasing the positive values and contributions which have contributed to a rich and vibrant mainstream within a multicultural, world-class, city (ibid., emphasis my own).
By presenting Urban Forum in the context of a cross-cultural\textsuperscript{87} dialogue where the mainstream is invited to respond, undermines its capacity to be an empowering space for the Black community to speak inwardly and reflect on themselves. What exactly would constitute a “healthy” dialogue between the Black community and the predominantly White mainstream is left open. Milestone and the potential host of Urban Forum, having to distance themselves from the audience and the issues to give the feel of impartiality, already set this dialogue up for failure. Would the show’s host be expected to remain impartial or silent if the White audience chooses to assert their power and voice over that of the Black audience? Or are they expected to remain silent when the Black audience tries to address racism and White privilege? What Milestone fails to address in the description of this program is that a power imbalance exists between White and Black people where White people continue to benefit from Black oppression and contribute to some of the very concerns, feelings and opinions Black people may hold. Many times Black people are not given a fair opportunity to speak to the mainstream without interruption from White people’s expressions of incapacitating guilt or denial. Such expressions displace the responsibility away from White people and onto Black people who are then made to feel guilty for wanting to speak about their experiences with racial injustice. Given all the mainstream White radio stations in Toronto and this seemingly dismal opportunity for a \textit{single} Black radio station, Urban Forum should not be a platform for White people to voice anything. To foster true cross-cultural (and I would add anti-racist) understanding would be to allow White people the opportunity for once to

\textsuperscript{87} Also called intercultural.
sit and listen without reply to what Black people have to say.\textsuperscript{88} The fact that Urban Forum is couched in terms of cross-cultural communication makes the issues that Black people experience appear to be a result of their cultural difference from White people. It also makes White people’s apparent ignorance of Black oppression a result of their cultural difference from Black people. Cross-cultural communication is an ideology that is born out of the discourse of official multiculturalism in that it mischaracterizes the social, economic, cultural and political differences and inequalities between racial and ethnic groups in Canada as merely the result of cultural misunderstanding or miscommunication that could somehow be solved by dialogue that is effectively mediated by impartiality and silence. Disassociated from race, and in the context of a commercial market setting, the empowering potential that Urban Forum and all other politically interrogative programs, that would serve as a platform for the Black community to voice both their struggles and their achievements, would be undermined.

Milestone’s proposed Black radio station was reconstituted through the discourse of official multiculturalism in ways that would make it tolerable for a mainstream White audience and profitable for the market – it would become a usable difference that could be converted into a commodity. With the commercial appeal of their proposed radio station, Milestone then would be able to offer their potential advertisers the opportunity to take advantage of the Black community as another potential market given their significant and growing population in Toronto. In the following example, Milestone

\textsuperscript{88} bell hooks (1994), in her essay “Language: Teaching New Worlds/ New Words”, advocates this methodology in her racially diverse university classrooms where White students are given opportunities to learn by being in a position of not knowing. White students are given the chance to sit and listen to non-White students express themselves in their own language and on their own terms. It is all too familiar in my own experience where non-White students in university classrooms that are White dominated space, experience the pain of self-expression in their language or cultural style when they are made to feel that they are biased or that their experiences are not relevant to classroom discussion or worthy of scholarly attention.
explains just how they reconstituted the Black community as a market through their proposed radio station:

Retail advertisers also indicate strong interest. For example, they believe that the proposed new Milestone radio station would provide them, for the first time, with an opportunity to effectively reach the large and growing West Indian, Afro-Caribbean and African-Canadian market in Toronto through the radio medium (ibid., 22, emphasis my own)

Milestone’s proposed Black radio station, as a medium through which advertisers, White people and Black people would be brought together, suggests that its focus would be shifted towards successfully maintaining the business of selling Blackness. However, only certain kinds of subjectivities can emerge from such an arrangement – subjectivities that would be limited to market interests and therefore disempowering for Black people. In other words, through Milestone’s proposed Black radio station, White people would be able to encounter Blackness in the form of a commodity which would reproduce a racial hierarchy where White people are positioned as the consumer. Although the subject positions are different in this racial hierarchy, Black people too would be in the position as consumers to buy Blackness since they are constituted as a new market that advertisers have yet to make use of. The Black community, through Milestone’s proposed Black radio station, has for the first time (as Milestone indicated) been legitimately reconstituted as a business community who are valuable investors (and I would add producers) in the business of Blackness. Therefore, one of the major ways in which

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89 It is also the case that White people’s subjectivity is limited by this arrangement in that this is the only way they can be in relation to Black people.
90 Similarly, official multiculturalism has created subject positions for other racial minority communities such as the Chinese Community and the South Asian Community who have been constituted as business communities. Through immigration policies which are already structured by official multiculturalism, immigrants are accepted on the basis of what economic value they could bring to Canada. The Black community prior to Milestone’s application for a radio station, had never seriously been considered a major market and business community that is worthy of attention from businesses and advertisers. Recently, in 2009, the Bank of Nova Scotia (Scotiabank) became the official title sponsor for Caribana (a Caribbean-Canadian parade that takes place every year in Toronto during the month of August) which has been
Black people have come to assert their subjectivity in a global capitalist society is through commerce. But it is a particularly disempowered subjectivity that relies on the market to determine its form and relevance. Kanye West (2004), in his hit single “All Falls Down”, describes the growing materialism among Black people who, in order to survive and gain any meaningful status in a racist-capitalist society, have to subject themselves to rampant consumerism. West raps:

Man I promise, I’m so self conscious
That’s why you always see me with at least one of my watches…
Then I spent 400 bucks on this
Just to be like nigga you ain’t up on this!
And I can’t even go to the grocery store
Without some ones that’s clean and a shirt with a team
It seems we livin’ the American dream
But the people highest up got the lowest self esteem
The prettiest people do the ugliest things
For road to riches and diamond rings
We shine because they hate us, floss cause they degrade us
We tryin’ to buy back our 40 acres
And for that paper, look how low we a’stoop
Even if you in a Benz, you still a nigga in a coop/coupe…
We buy our way out of jail, but we can’t buy freedom
We'll buy a lot of clothes when we don’t really need em
Things we buy to cover up what’s inside
Cause they make us hate ourself and love they wealth
That’s why shortys hollerin’ “where the ballas at?”
Drug dealer buy Jordans, crackhead buy crack
And a white man get paid off of all of that…

West’s lyrics are instructive for understanding the limited subjectivities that are made possible for Black people in consumer culture which are based on the commodities they own and can afford to purchase to define their self-worth.

Taking advantage of this newly constituted Black subjectivity and the business of Blackness in consumer culture which have been further legitimized by official

renamed officially “Scotiabank Caribana”. This has increased the access for many advertisers, businesses, investors and other stake holders to utilize Caribana and the Caribbean and Black community as a means to expand their markets (BlackBerry, State Farm Insurance and Breyers are some other known sponsors). Scotiabank has given Caribana the corporate backing that others, who are interested in the business of selling difference, were looking for. See “the official guide of the 2009 Scotiabank Caribana festival” for more details.
multiculturalism, Milestone could successfully pitch their proposal for a Black format radio station to the CRTC. This market appeal of Milestone’s proposed radio station is the basis upon which the CRTC would finally grant Milestone a radio license because it provided the very means through which their financial viability (that was primarily established by their partnership with Standard) could be realized. However, Milestone’s partnership with Standard and the market appeal of their proposed Black radio station would ultimately undermine both their attempt to be self-sufficient and self-determined in the lobby for Canada’s first Black format commercial radio station. It would also undermine the social, cultural and political visions of the Black community for a radio station that would truly reflect their needs and interests. As the arguments that follow reveal, all the conditions upon which the CRTC awarded Milestone a radio license was based entirely on financial viability which (as I have argued elsewhere) is a means through which Black autonomy could be defeated.

When awarding Milestone a radio license, the Commissioners commented about their ownership structure with respect to their partnership with Standard:

> Standard Radio Inc. (Standard) is a minority shareholder in Milestone (29.9%), and has the right to appoint one member to Milestone’s board of directors. Standard owns and operates a number of radio stations in Quebec, Ontario, Alberta, Manitoba and British Columbia, and will provide a significant portion of capital funding for Milestone, in exchange for its voting interest (2000-203, par. 7, emphasis my own).

In the CRTC’s view, Standard, as a major Canadian Broadcasting company, added credibility to Milestone’s financial capacity to take on a commercial radio license in Toronto for a Black format radio station. Moreover, the substantial capital investment that Standard provided Milestone was almost 70% of the startup cost for Milestone’s radio station which made their application more favourable to the CRTC (Kari, 50). But despite their minority position in Milestone’s company, such a major corporate backing
and financial investment raised fears within much of the Black community that Standard would be in a position to control the operation of Milestone’s radio station. In other words, the belief was that Standard would drive the station to adopt a much more hit oriented format in order to compete with KISS 92.5 FM’s CHR format. An intervention by another applicant raised this concern – suggesting that Standard’s involvement with Milestone would eventually result in “a local management agreement (LMA)” (200-203, par. 8). But these fears were adequate given that Standard would have a voting interest in Milestone and, as a result, the idea of a Black radio station defined entirely on the terms of the Black community would be limited. In a White dominated broadcasting system in which there would be a sole Black broadcaster and radio station, a single vote from Standard would be one vote too many. While Standard’s involvement with Milestone played a pivotal role in the approval of their radio license, it nonetheless reproduced the means through which the Black community would be kept from achieving self-sufficiency and self-determination.

Milestone – a major Black company that was composed of prominent business people who had substantial earnings that they invested in the formation of their own company and all three of their radio license applications – was already financially capable of taking on a major commercial radio license without Standard. Milestone provided the CRTC with substantial amounts of evidence to prove that they were financially capable on their own and that their proposed Black radio station would be financially viable. From the extensive radio market surveys they commissioned for each application; to the elaborate profiles of each of their board members; to the financial

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91 For example, in their profile, Milestone noted Denham Jolly’s extensive entrepreneurial resume: “Since 1968, Mr. Jolly has been President and principal shareholder of Denham Corporation Ltd. and Tyndall...
projections they provided for their proposed radio station; and finally, to the thousands of letters of support from mainly the Black community; Milestone was financially capable. Milestone spent almost half a million dollars of their own money on research alone for their first application (Onstad 77). That means, with additional costs resulting from administrative, legal and other fees, it could be estimated that Milestone would have spent nearly (or just over) 1 million dollars on processing an entire application to the CRTC. And over the course of three years, this would mean that Milestone may have spent about 3 million dollars or more to get the CRTC to finally approve them for a radio license. Therefore, radio license applications are not affordable or accessible to the vast majority of people. Radio license applications are very expensive because it is a time consuming process that involves extensive research and planning.

An intervention that was submitted to the CRTC by “All Toronto Intervention” (All Toronto) which challenged Milestone’s second application, offers some further insight into Milestone’s financial capacity. All Toronto made the argument that Milestone (and in particular Denham Jolly) had many opportunities to purchase any of the radio licenses that were up for sale in Toronto between 1990 and 1996 because they were financially capable and as well, could have saved hundreds of thousands of dollars rather than go through the lengthy and financially burdensome process of CRTC radio

Nursing Home Limited which owns and operates the Tyndall Nursing Home in Mississauga, Ontario. He is also the principal shareholder of B.D. Jolly Holdings which owns and operates real estate properties in the Metropolitan Toronto and Mississauga areas. From 1982 to 1985, Mr. Jolly was publisher of CONTRAST, Toronto’s weekly Black community newspaper and was founder and first President of the Black Business and Professional Association of Toronto” (Milestone Radio Inc., 1999, Schedule 16, pp. 4-5, original emphasis).
license applications. In the following, All Toronto makes the point that Milestone’s financial capability was indisputable:

Milestone is presenting a commercial application with funding totaling $6 million. Therefore, access to capital does not appear to be a barrier to ownership. Since 1990, when Mr. Jolly was declined for a new FM, four Toronto stations were sold. Mr. Jolly could have purchased any of those licenses. In fact, 1430 recently sold for $1.8M, an amount $400,000 less than Milestone’s planned capital expenditures for 99.1 (“All Toronto Intervention”, April 14, 1997, Toronto, emphasis my own).93

But Milestone was not primarily concerned with the costs incurred for a CRTC granted radio license – they were concerned with achieving racial justice and equality for the Black community in their fight for self-determination. It is for this reason that Milestone continued to file applications even after they were rejected on the last two occasions. It is important to note that All Toronto, while challenging Milestone’s application, made the mistake of claiming that a Black format station is more ethnic than commercial. They argued that the Black community is no exception when compared to the situation of other ethnic minority groups who are not served by their own radio station, saying that “Toronto’s Afro Caribbean Community is [not] the only ethnic group without a station to call their own” (“All Toronto Intervention”, April 14, 1997, Toronto, emphasis my own). What All Toronto failed to realize is that Black culture can be easily translated into a commercial radio setting because the mainstream music industry is largely composed of Black and Black derived music. From jazz to rock and roll, rhythm and blues, pop, reggae, dance music and more; these have been commercially viable Black cultural productions that have been easily commodified for the mainstream. While I agree that the culture of other ethnic minority groups can also (and have) commercial appeal by selling the exotic, this, however, most often takes the form of specific cultural products like food and other tangible products that are a part of mainstream Western culture. For example, Italian Pizza, Mexican Tacos, “Chinese Food”, Japanese sushi, Greek and other Mediterranean cuisine, have become part of the mainstream Western diet primarily because these food s are portable, can be easily “packaged”, mass produced and “milder” for Western tastes. To some exception, one “exotic” type of Black food to have reached mainstream status like these ethnic foods are Jamaican patties which can be found almost anywhere, from the convenience store to major grocery stores. Black culture has been one of the most influential ethnic minority cultures to have formed a substantial part of popular culture in the West and now, because of globalization, around the world. Hip hop culture is a prime example of this; from the merchandising of hip hop clothing to less tangible products that define it as an entire lifestyle (hip hop mogul P Diddy through his brand name Sean John is a prime example of the commodification of hip hop as a lifestyle that is not defined just by material products but products that allow you to attain a particular attitude and lifestyle). This also includes the appropriation of Black vernacular speech (such as “my bad” and “bling”) which have become part of mainstream vocabulary. So what All Toronto needed to consider specifically was how the music of other ethnic groups can be transferred to a commercial radio setting that the mainstream predominantly White audience would be willing to consume. It is for this very reason that multiculturalism was able to legitimize selling Blackness and therefore the transferability of Black music and culture into a commercial radio setting. bell hooks (1992), in her essay “Eating the Other”, argues that this relationship between Black culture and consumer culture emanates from the fact that Blackness continues to be a medium through which White people communicate their anxieties about life, death, danger and sexuality. Therefore, Black music has primarily been desired as a commodity through which these anxieties are expressed.

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93 This intervention was filed with Milestone’s 1996 application at the CRTC.
also the reason why Milestone’s applications took the form of grass roots organizing with the Black community. Therefore, Milestone was already financial capable of taking on a commercial radio license since the beginning of their first application and did not need Standard’s investment. However, the Commission was still unconvinced of Milestone’s financial capacity despite their elaborate financial resume. Milestone then, came to the conclusion that it was necessary to acquire White validation for their radio license application which they indicate:

The participation of Standard as a minority shareholder further strengthens the financial base for the proposed new Milestone radio station, an ensured that it will have access to the extensive sales, marketing and research of a larger, major market radio broadcasting company. The decision by Standard to acquire a minority ownership position reflects that company’s firm belief in the relevance and financial viability of the new FM radio station that Milestone is proposing to establish (Milestone Radio Inc., 1999, Schedule 16, p. 8, emphasis my own).

So, what Standard provided Milestone with was credibility and not financial assistance.

Given that this was one of the first times that the Black community presented themselves as a collective in such prominent entrepreneurialism without White assistance, the Commission may have found Milestone’s financial capability threatening because that would guarantee the Black community’s self-sufficiency and self-determination and thereby challenge Canada’s national image as non-violent and benevolent. For this reason, the CRTC maintained that the position of Standard was necessary to Milestone’s ability to successfully take on a radio license of this magnitude – that being commercial radio in Toronto. Therefore, through Standard’s involvement with Milestone, the Black community would not be able to have a radio station built entirely on their own terms and money.

Other conditions that relate to financial viability that the Commission considered when awarding Milestone a radio license included repatriating the Canadian audience and
advertisers from WBLK. When awarding them a radio license the Commission “consider[ed] Milestone to have a well-funded business plan predicated on repatriating audience from a foreign source” (2000-203, pars. 15-16). Additional considerations included the substantial financial investment that Milestone proposed they would provide towards Canadian Talent Development (CTD) initiatives for Urban music in the amount of $272,800 per year (200-203, par. 23). This would be over and above the yearly financial contributions of $27,000 to Milestone’s CTD initiatives from the Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) which would arise from Milestone’s membership to CAB (ibid.). These examples of the role that financial viability and market considerations played in the CRTC’s approval of Milestone’s radio license were based primarily on creating the mainstream appeal of their proposed Black radio station.

While considering Milestone’s business plan, the Commission said the following about its appeal to the mainstream audience:

The Milestone business plan is based on the use of an “Urban” musical format. The application presented a convincing argument to the effect that such a format will appeal to a significant population from all backgrounds, in addition to a core audience from the Black community (2000-203, par. 14, emphasis my own).

The Black community, while considered a core audience, would not be the main audience of Milestone’s radio station because they do not represent the “significant population from all backgrounds” which the Commission felt was one of the strengths of their application. Since a mainstream audience would be most valuable to the potential advertisers of Milestone’s radio station, its Urban format would have to be mainstream enough so that Blackness would be no more than just a commodity. With all these conditions under which the CRTC awarded Milestone their radio license, their proposed radio station would not be able to truly reflect the Black community by addressing issues
specific to their needs and interests because as the Commission recommended, such
issues would have to have a broader appeal to the mainstream:

The new station will reflect the community through the use of a significant
amount of spoken-word and open-line programming. Milestone stated that the
spoken word content would be of particular interest to the Black community,
but often with broad general appeal to the whole community as well. Open line
programs will at times deal with topics of particular interest to the Black
community, as well as address topics of general interest (2000-203, par. 18,
emphasis my own).

But what makes this expectation even more distressing is that the radio frequency 93.5
FM which Milestone was awarded a license for, had a very low radiated power of only
298 watts. The low power output of Milestone’s radio station would limit its capacity
to reach a substantial amount of the station’s potential listening audience in Toronto and
surrounding areas. Such a low frequency further fuels the controversy surrounding the
conditions under which Milestone was awarded the license because this was an extensive
and costly application that got subjected to intense scrutiny by the CRTC and given the
unfair expectation that a sole Black radio station must have an inclusiveness defined by
official multiculturalism – all this struggle for a low frequency radio station that would be
useless to the market levels Milestone wanted to reach.

The Commission’s praise of Milestone’s inclusiveness shows the extent to which
non-White people are expected to confirm the Canadian nation as tolerant and inclusive.
For this reason, Milestone structured their radio license application to fit the state

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94 See 2000-203, par. 31.
95 However, in 2001, Milestone filed an application with the CRTC for a technical amendment to increase
the power of their radio license to 1,430 watts; arguing that the current power of their radio station
“represents the lowest power output (ERP) of any commercial broadcaster in Toronto” (Milestone Radio
Inc. 2001, Schedule 4, p. 1, par. 13). The CRTC approved Milestone’s application on July19, 2002 to
increase the power output of their radio station (Decision CRTC 2002-201, par. 1). Later in the year,
Milestone applied for a digital radio license that would enable their radio station to provide an ERP of
5,084 watts which would enable them to reach a broader audience and with a clearer sound that standard
radio did not offer (Decision CRTC 2002-433, par. 4). This application was approved by the CRTC on
December 11, 2002.
narrative of multiculturalism. Milestone made repeated appeals in their final application about how their proposed radio station would meet the objectives of section 3(1)(d)(iii) of the Broadcasting Act to the point that the concept of their radio station got so convoluted with terms defined by multiculturalism that Black barely stood out as a point of focus. Ambiguous words and phrases are evident throughout their application, like “cosmopolitan population”, “cosmopolitan selection of music”, “multiracial in character”, “culturally diverse programming”, “serving the local community”, “programming diversity”, “diversity of ownership and programming”, and “visible minority and ethno-cultural groups”. They go on to describe the “cosmopolitan nature of the Black community” by detailing the “cosmopolitan selection of music in the increasingly popular urban format and the “more diverse, richer and more cosmopolitan sound, such as Caribbean-based musical styles” in order to appeal to the “growing, more cosmopolitan population [that] sets the stage for more diverse radio formats” (Milestone Radio Inc., 1999, Schedule 16, p. 11 and p. 31). This demonstrates that Milestone had encountered a conceptual problem from the start in articulating their proposed Black radio station under the conditions of multiculturalism. Under official multiculturalism Black must become something else – something that specifically would not challenge White benevolent subjectivities and Canada’s national image of tolerance. In other words, Black must become multicultural to become a subject of official multiculturalism. Multiculturalism requires non-White people to be certain subjects – subjects who must be transformed into a set of cultural characteristics that meet the proscribed definitions of difference under multiculturalism to be tolerated. Milestone, in order to get their proposed Black radio station recognized legitimately by the CRTC (in appealing to the
mainstream predominantly White audience), had to de-politicize and de-historicize their references to Black music and thereby shift their focus away from the Black community. Official multiculturalism, made it possible for Milestone to de-politicize Blackness and turn it into a commodity suitable enough for commercial radio. It was for this very reason that Milestone was initially unsuccessful with their first and second applications because it was not until their final application that they were able to successfully demonstrate the marketability of their Black radio station by using the language and tools of official multiculturalism to legitimize selling Blackness. Therefore, Milestone was able to get their application approved by the CRTC by becoming multicultural.

Milestone and their proposed Black radio station becomes a microcosm of the multicultural nation. As a result, Milestone is subjected to extended levels of accountability to prove its inclusiveness and, as a result, the articulation of a Black focus becomes more difficult. The extended levels of accountability to multiculturalism affects Milestone’s proposed hiring practice which, like their 1996 application, go a step further, and commit to the EEA – proposing to “achieve a representative work place made up with members of designated groups, proportional to their size in the general population” (ibid., Section 5.8, p. 9). As a result, hiring would not be specific to the Black community. However, Milestone made two excellent proposals in their application. Milestone proposed to invest money towards training and apprenticeship programs as part of this commitment to the EEA by offering “visible minority students an opportunity for hands-on experience in the broadcasting industry” (2000-203, par. 29). They also

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96 With their commitment to EEA, Milestone is required to report their hiring practices to Human Resources Canada. This makes them further accountable to achieving proportional representation of designated groups among the hired staff for their radio station. See Decision CRTC 2002-433, par. 13 for details on Milestone’s responsibilities to EEA.
proposed that their radio station would play “a substantial amount of non-hit music not played elsewhere in Toronto” (Milestone Radio Inc., 1999, Schedule 16, p. 12), which would give Urban artists in Canada an opportunity to get mainstream radio play and provide the Black community with more listening choice. However, these and other positive initiatives that Milestone proposed which would specifically benefit the Black community were undermined by the very nature in which this application was made in the context of multiculturalism where only a commodified Blackness is the only recognized form. This has particular consequences for what Milestone could broadcast. Milestone’s proposed radio station demonstrates that their ideal Black focus must become a multicultural defined Blackness that consequentially erases all the other possible ways that Blackness could be articulated and conceptualized in their radio format. In the next chapter, I will demonstrate how these very conditions under which Milestone was awarded their radio license had strong implications for what FLOW could broadcast – a broadcasting that would be selling Blackness through its music and programming.

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97 Since Toronto has a significant Caribbean population, FLOW has a unique Toronto Urban format that features some reggae and calypso hits that other mainstream stations who mix some Urban music in their playlists, do not play. This topic is discussed in Chapter 3.
CHAPTER 3: SELLING BLACKNESS

Format

The significant changes that Milestone’s proposed Black radio station underwent over the course of their three applications to the CRTC resulted specifically in the licensing of the *Urban* format of FLOW. This evolution from Black to Urban resulted in the commodification of Blackness (particularly as a “sound”) that FLOW would eventually deliver to its mainstream audience through its music and programming. When Milestone applied for a technical change to increase the power of their station’s frequency, an intervention was put forward against their application by a FLOW audience member who stated that “Milestone has made it public knowledge that Flow is definitely not a black radio station, it is an urban station” (Milestone Radio Inc. 2002). Milestone’s response to the intervention offers some insight into the evolution of FLOW:

…The term “Black Radio Station” reflects (a) the ownership and control structure of Milestone, which as stated in the application for license… among other attributes, contributes to broadcasting policy objectives of the Broadcasting Act, “by increasing ownership diversity in the Canadian broadcasting system.” (b) the music that is reflected through the Urban format has its roots in Black musical culture, and to again quote from the application: (Page 218 III) “Milestone is proposing to establish a new FM radio station with a diverse, cosmopolitan music format based on Rhythm and Blues (R&B) music and related genres. This *sound* is now referred to in the music and radio industries as the “Urban” format. This format is the modern day reflection of the rich musical traditions of Black musicians and Black-influenced music over the past century.” Contrary to the writer’s view, therefore, there has been no change in the above, since licensing and the establishment of the station. 4. The term “Urban”, or “urban station” is properly understood to describe the musical format (ibid., emphasis my own).

From the above example, it is evident that Black has been transformed into Urban to meet the needs of the commercial radio market which is in tune with the music industry’s standards. So what FLOW provides its audience is an Urban sound – a sound that is defined by Black music forms such as R&B and hip hop. But the implications of an Urban format go beyond the context of FLOW (such as the kind of things that it could
broadcast) in terms of how its audience may interpret and experience its underlying meanings. As I discussed briefly in Chapter 2, urban refers to major areas within cities where much of its economic, social, cultural and political activities take place. At the centre of economic activity, urban spaces produce particular relationships between people and commerce – but the association of Blackness with the urban is twofold. On the one hand, it describes a real connection because urban spaces are where Black people are mostly concentrated due to social, historical, economic and political conditions. It is also a fact that the conditions of urban life have fostered the production of Black popular culture. On the other hand, the association of Blackness with the urban has been produced by market interests that exploit Black cultural productions for profit. Like Blackness, “urbanness” has been disconnected from its social, historical and political contexts so that it could be commodified within mainstream consumer culture to sell everything including music, clothes, food, and even furniture.

Commodification of the urban allows consumers the ability to connect to the kind of subjectivities that have been linked to urban spaces and Black people such as youth identity and the ability to possess excess consumer goods which, in a capitalist society, is a marker for progress. These connections in turn make it easier for FLOW to sell Blackness through their Urban format. In the context of an Urban format radio station, FLOW is able to successfully link consumers, not only to Black people and culture but even more so (as the purpose serves), to consumer goods. For example, over the period

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98 Tricia Rose (1994), in her book, “Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America”, discusses the emergence of hip hop in the post-industrial context of inner city New York during the 70s. According to Rose, hip hop originated as a cultural response by mainly poor and working class Black youth who wanted to voice the conditions of poverty, unemployment and racial injustice that they experienced in the inner city due to de-industrialization; whereby many Blacks with skilled labour lost their jobs when the manufacturing industry was taken over by the service industry. This was met by an increase in concentration of wealth away from Black/urban spaces into White suburban areas.
of my content analysis of FLOW’s radio station and website, some of their major corporate advertisers included: iTunes, Dell, Kenneth Cole, Solo Mobile, Yack Cell, Heineken, Guinness, Coors Light, Crush, Trojan Condoms, McDonald’s, Pizza Pizza, Pizza Nova, Subway, Jack Astor’s, 7-Elven, Mike and Ike, Canadian Tire, Esso, Honda, MTV (“The Hills”) and Teletoon. These corporate advertisers sell to their consumers, goods and services that include clothing, cell phones, beer, fast food, cars, as well as television shows which are directly associated with an urban lifestyle that is already linked to youth culture. FLOW then is able to provide these corporate advertisers a young, urban market willing to consume their products. Such an urban market is primarily made up of people with disposable incomes99 such as women, youth, the working class and non-White people. For example, the Solo Mobile ad on FLOW marketed a “back to school phone sale” which is directed to their school age audience who are primarily teens and young adults attending high school, college and university. Ultimately, what FLOW offers their audience is a connection to consumer goods and the conditions of urban life that are being marketed through Black culture. Through its music and programming, FLOW is able to bring consumers closer to an urban lifestyle (as defined by consumer and popular culture) through Blackness in the form of a commodity. Therefore, FLOW’s Urban format represents a commodified Blackness that

99 According to Canadian Economy On-line, “disposable income is the amount of income individual Canadians… have left over after they have paid their income taxes” which they use towards spending or saving. Women, young people, and the working class, tend to have more disposable income because they are discouraged from saving whatever surplus money they earn for fear of losing financial benefits that they receive from their spouse/partner, parents or government (respectively). As a result, they spend their disposable incomes on personal goods such as clothes, food and entertainment. Since disposable income determines consumer spending, it is the most important factor driving the economy. It is for this reason that advertisers continue to market products and services (that are disguised as White middle and upper class values) mainly towards these socio-economic groups.
they “sell” to the mainstream so that they can in turn deliver urban consumers to their corporate advertisers.

Blackness, when sold as “Urbanness” produces a very tenuous situation for the already limited forms of Blackness that is present on FLOW. Like Milestone’s movement from a Black format to an Urban format, we now witness FLOW’s gradual movement from an Urban format towards a Hits format since their introduction of various non-Urban artists into their music playlist – Britney Spears (with her hit songs “Toxic” and “Circus”) and Coldplay (with their hit single “Viva la Vida”), to list some prominent examples, who are pop and alternative rock artists respectively.  

In the fall of 2007, following the renewal of their radio license earlier on that year, Milestone officially changed FLOW’s exclusively Urban format that was established in 2001 to a Rhythmic CHR format and was identified by its new tagline, “the hits that move you”. Milestone applied to the CRTC for a renewal of their radio license that was due to be expired on August 31, 2006 (Public Notice CRTC 2006-93, par. 2). The CRTC approved Milestone’s application on October 25, 2006 and granted them another 7 year radio license from January 1, 2007 to August 31, 2013 (Decision CRTC 2006-604, par. 1). The following is an excerpt from a press release by FLOW, dated August 21, 2007, which describes the launch of their new marketing campaign to promote FLOW’s format change and their name change to the NEW FLOW:

Always responsive to the demands of its listeners, the station has broadened its musical playlist by playing more hit artist like Fergie, Justin Timberlake, Timbaland, Rihanna, Nelly Furtado and Beyonce, thereby delivering more hits in its 45 Minute Non Stop Music Flows. The NEW FLOW is a closer reflection of radio listeners’ tastes. Nine of the Billboard Hot 100 top ten can currently be heard on the NEW FLOW 93.5 (The NEW FLOW 93.5

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100 I will discuss these artists and other music related changes on FLOW in the following section where I address their programming and content.
101 Rhythmic CHR can be described as a mixture of Urban and Hit music.
Press Release, 1, original emphasis).

But while this press release claims that FLOW’s format and name change is a result of needing to meet their audience’s music preferences, these changes were in fact meant to satisfy first and foremost the corporate advertisers and investors they sought. For example, the press release also reported that: “[t]he enhancements made seem to be the right move for FLOW. Market share is already up 27% over the same time last year” (ibid., 2). Therefore, FLOW’s focus on the needs of their corporate advertisers and investors reshaped their audience and as a result, their format and all other subsequent changes they underwent.

On Facebook, several pages protested FLOW’s format change. One of these pages, called “Petition for FLOW 93.5 to turn into a real Toronto Hip Hop station”, has the most members, wall posts and discussion board topics of any other page protesting FLOW. As of July 22, 2008, this network had 3,381 members, with 429 wall posts and 8 discussion boards by its members. One discussion board, titled “Why FLOW is playing more Top 40 and why you will never hear WBLK again in Toronto”, addressed FLOW’s new format. The following message was posted on that discussion board:

First, it all comes down to ratings and $$. Aster Flow came on the air in 2001 “urban” stations started popping up in other Canadian cities – 94.5 The Beat in Vancouver, Vibe 98.5 in Calgary…and 91.7 The Bounce in Edmonton. All three stations started playing Avril Lavigne within six months. Unfortunately in most markets in Canada there isn’t enough of an audience to make a 100% “urban” formatted station economically viable. Toronto is the only market that would be able to pull it off – but Flow’s ratings have been historically low…the highest ratings BEFORE the tagline became “Hits That Move You” were barely a 3% share…clearly the powers that be had to make a business decision…so they add Maroon 5 and Britney Spears to the playlist in order to get more of the market share…BUT it came at the expense of hip-hop, R&B, reggae and soca fans (Tyler Reid, January 11, 2008).

As this Facebook message indicates, some of FLOW’s audience have been alienated by the format change to Rhythmic CHR. Therefore, the marketing campaign for the NEW
FLOW has redefined FLOW’s audience through a Rhythmic CHR format which would ultimately deliver them to their corporate advertisers. Although FLOW’s Urban format represented a commodified Blackness, it was still able to articulate (however limited) some connection to Blackness that a Rhythmic CHR format does not completely offer. For example, on the Facebook page “Petition for FLOW 93.5 to turn into a real Toronto Hip Hop station”, one member posted: “nowhere on the site or in their station does it say [T]oronto’s Hip Hop station, [or that] it’s URBAN music…” (Dan Spinz Forrest, November 8, 2007). This demonstrates that people are no longer able to identify the Urban within the NEW FLOW.

A Rhythmic CHR format articulates a particular sound that is not entirely Urban but more hit oriented. This format primarily expresses the desires and tastes of a mainstream audience who are loyal only to the market and not the social, cultural and political interests of the Black community. This shows that FLOW’s previously exclusive Urban format was only fleeting because it can no longer articulate the kind of station FLOW is attempting to become. The market context in which Urbanness was being used by FLOW already facilitated its movement towards something else – something that allows the simultaneous location and then dislocation of Blackness from Urban and (eventually) from FLOW. A complete disappearance of Blackness from

102 I provide a more detailed discussion of this ad campaign for the NEW FLOW in the following section where I address FLOW’s advertisement campaigns.
103 My point here is that people who prefer hit music do so largely because they are following what is popular which is already defined by music industry and market interests.
104 The dislocation of Blackness from FLOW is aided by its increased commodification which eventually must serve new interests as defined by corporate advertisers. Corporate interests only use Blackness as a means to an end. In the case of FLOW, Blackness was de-politicized then commodified and then erased. This occurs because a commodity is an object (in this case FLOW) that stands in for something that represents the fetish (in this case Blackness) and in the context of the global-capitalist marketplace, commodities must be repeatedly reproduced. The commodity then evolves over time to meet new market interests where eventually the commodity will no longer contain the original fetish. Commodification is a
FLOW could be anticipated by these series of changes and movements that it has made away from Blackness towards an exclusive Hits (CHR) format. With the possibility of an exclusive CHR format, there will be no more attachment to Blackness; not even in the superficial sense that their Urban format offered. Since the purpose of FLOW’s Rhythmic CHR format is primarily to connect their corporate advertisers to their audience, FLOW can be disconnected from its social and political origins. FLOW’s press release (discussed above) about their format and name change offers a short description of their radio station: “About the NEW FLOW 93.5: FLOW 93.5 is owned and operated by Milestone Radio Inc. FLOW 93.5 has been on air since February 9th, 2001.” But this description mentions nothing about the 12 year struggle it took Milestone to get a radio license for FLOW because of the systematic racism they encountered in their attempts to access mainstream radio in Canada – it does not mention anything about the fact that Milestone is a Black owned company and Canada’s first Black broadcaster. Neither does it mention that FLOW is Canada’s first Black radio station. These omissions could be interpreted as Milestone’s attempt to distance FLOW from its past and this is expressed most clearly by their name change to the NEW FLOW.

process that involves a series of displacements of the fetish (so it could become a commodity in the first place and stay a commodity) as it is forced to take on or stand in for what it was meant to do which is to fulfill the purpose it was intended for and that is the desire of dominant subjects who use the commodity. As a commodity object, Blackness is used to fulfill the desires about who people believe they are or who they want to be in the space of FLOW. Since a commodity object is used to contain the fetish, it is therefore a vessel (like an empty container) that can be filled and emptied and refilled with other things. Therefore the original fetish that was used to create the commodity object disappears with little to no trace that it was ever there. It is for this reason that Blackness (the fetish) is no longer identifiable in FLOW (the commodity object). Commodity objects may even take on other fetishes. In this market context, Blackness as a commodity fetish is displaced many times (since a fetish requires a series of displacements to be a fetish), further and further away from the histories, people and processes from which it was created, to the point that the products of Black identity and culture are no longer Black. Therefore, there is a double erasure that happens at once with FLOW’s transformation for Black/Urban to a CHR format – one that is symbolic (such as Black identity) and the other is physical (the tangible erasures like the name change to the NEW FLOW).
The evolution of FLOW’s format from Urban to Rhythmic CHR has fostered the evolution of the station’s name from FLOW to the NEW FLOW. But this evolution was preceded by the evolution of Milestone’s proposed Black radio station over the course of their three radio license applications to the CRTC. While the name of their proposed radio station remained “Milestone Radio” consistently for all three applications, the tagline that followed evolved to meet the increasing commercialization of their proposed radio station. For example, in Milestone’s first radio license application, “Milestone Radio” was followed by the tagline “Black Music” (see figure 3.1). This logo is a visual representation of the type of station and music Milestone proposed to offer.


which was in line with the political connections they were making with the Black community in their lobby for a radio license. Then, for Milestone’s second radio license application, “Milestone Radio” was followed by a different tagline, “T.O’s Source for R&B” which expressed a more mainstream format that their target audience would identify with (see figure 3.2). But once Milestone got to their final application,
“Milestone Radio” had no tagline that defined the type of radio station it was (see figure 3.3). This reflected the commercialized Urban format of “Milestone Radio” which was distanced from the social and political origins of Black music, as well as their lobby for a radio license. The name “Milestone Radio” says something about the actual milestones that the Black community achieved in getting Canada’s first Black owned (and commercial) radio station. But after Milestone was awarded a radio license, the name of their proposed radio station changed from “Milestone Radio” to “FLOW” which does not come close to expressing what Milestone had achieved. The name “FLOW” particularly masks the identity, history and struggle of the Black community to have a Black radio station. FLOW is a name that is particularly devoid of context, not unlike the Urban sound it would offer. Flow is a word that describes a characteristic that one could get from just listening to music. Moreover, flow describes movement – but it is a movement with a particular direction, like the course that a stream, current or flood takes. Such a name fits the station well considering its evolution. FLOW’s audience then is expected to just “go with the flow” of changes to its format, music, programming and other content. Calling the station FLOW, allows it to be about something else and that something else must respond to market interests where Blackness must first be depoliticized, then commodified, and then erased. This is evident in the comparison of

FLOW’s logos (see figure 3.4, figure 3.5 and figure 3.6) over their first 7 years in operation.

There are two major shifts away from Blackness that are reflected in the appearance of FLOW logos which are a result of their increasing market appeal to specifically corporate advertisers, rather than their audience. For example, in their press release for the NEW FLOW, FLOW’s Vice President of Operations, Nicole Jolly, said the following:

…people knew that FLOW played a lot of hot music, but I don’t think they realized how much of our playlist is focused on hits. We wanted to grab the attention of people who thought they knew what FLOW was all about but didn’t. We were impressed by the talent at Lowe Roche and had admired some of the outstanding work they had done for their other clients. I really appreciate their strategic approach. I’m thrilled because the new campaign is an amazing representation of the direction in which we’ve taken the station” (The NEW FLOW 93.5 Press Release, 1, emphasis my own).

FLOW’s audience does not appear to be the subject of the above statement because Jolly refers to “people” in past tense as having known about FLOW. Furthermore, in the context of Jolly’s praise for FLOW’s new advertising agency Lowe Roche, such a statement appeals more directly to the very strategies FLOW needs to employ to get the business of corporate advertisers. Overall, the statement sounds much more like a sales pitch, not to their audience, but to their advertisers, intended to convince them about what FLOW really is and that it is the right brand to deliver them the audience (consumers) that they are looking for.

To communicate this appeal to corporate advertisers, FLOW went from having a logo with the black/brown colour lettering and a mustard colour background in 2001 (see figure 3.4) to a logo with blue/green colour lettering and a white colour background for
both their 2006 and 2007 logos (see figure 3.5 and figure 3.6). These subtle changes in the appearance of FLOW’s logos cannot be dismissed as purely aesthetic because they are a symbolic representation of the commodified Blackness that FLOW represents. FLOW’s gradual movement away from Blackness and their Black and Urban audience, towards a mainstream, predominantly White audience, in order to get corporate advertisers, is communicated well by the subtle aesthetic shifts in the colour of the logos because such aesthetic changes are accompanied by a shift away from Blackness.

To express FLOW’s new direction towards appealing to corporate advertisers, the NEW FLOW logo (see figure 3.6) that emerged in 2007 was more “sleek” in appearance
when compared with their two previous logos. This “sleekness” specifically speaks to
Milestone’s effort to re-brand and sell FLOW to corporate advertisers who might have
shied away from its more aesthetically Black logos and print advertisements of the past.
According to *Toronto Star* reporter Ashante Infantry (2008), “some advertisers were
leery of associating with a hip-hop based station.” FLOW’s Vice President of Sales,
Byron Garby, reported that:

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FLOW has landed nearly a dozen more blue-chip advertisers in the eight
months since its rebranding….Our buyers are feeling a little less reluctant.
The negative stigma that came with the music reflected on the audience
(cited by Infantry, emphasis my own).
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But what “negative stigma” associated with hip-hop is Garby referring to? Could the
stigma be about race, in terms of advertisers not wanting a Black market for their
products? According to marketing and radio consultant David Bray of Hennessey &
Bray Communications:

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Hip hop and some urban rhythmic music is most certainly associated
with younger people, who have lower discretionary income, and with
certain cultures, like the Caribbean community, where some suggest
households don’t index in the higher income brackets…but Toronto is
the most culturally diverse city in the world and to not want to address
that market is a big mistake (ibid.).
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This argument that advertisers usually do not target the Black community (which Bray
couches in multicultural rhetoric as “certain cultures” and the “Caribbean community”) because they tend to have lower incomes, is contentious, given that the marketing
practices of corporate advertisers are often directed towards people with higher
*disposable* incomes which (as I discussed previously) are made up of mostly women,
young people and the working class – socio-economic groups which are all reflected
among a significant portion of the Black population in Toronto. Black people belonging
to poor, working and middle classes, tend to spend a lot of money buying brand name
(and not so brand name) items through compulsive spending habits that lead to an accumulation of material goods which they use to define their self-worth. The final verse of Kanye West’s (2004) single “All Falls Down”, clearly articulates how compulsive spending habits by Black people has led many into financial debt, buying the material things that a racist-capitalist society says they should have to be successful and matter:

But I ain't even gon act holier than thou…
Cause fuck it, I went to Jacob with 25 thou
Before I had a house and I'd do it again
Cause I wanna be on 106 and Park pushing a Benz
I wanna act ballerific like it's all terrific
I got a couple past due bills, I won't get specific
I got a problem with spending before I get it
We all self conscious I'm just the first to admit it

This contradicts Bray’s perspective, given that such uncontrolled spending has gone on without corporate advertisers even targeting Black people. What if they did target them? Black people tend to buy more, not because they have higher incomes but because they have higher disposable incomes and experience racial oppression that suggests they need material things in order to matter. Many have a greater tendency to borrow money (through credit cards, bank loans and from friends) to accumulate the finances necessary to buy what they want. Wealthy people and White middle-class people do not tend to spend money in ways that would keep the consumer market economy afloat as poor,

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105 Numerous consumer market research studies have been conducted on Black consumers in the United States. Almost all of these studies demonstrate consistent details regarding Black consumer spending habits. For example, a 2007 research study that was featured in Magazine Publishers of America (MPA), detailed that Black teens: spend 20% more per month than the average U.S. teen; they have a major impact on mainstream culture in terms of music, fashion and sports, and therefore they spend more money yearly on items such as apparel and technology-related products; exert more influence on household purchases; and they tend to be more brand loyal to a variety of goods, including personal products, footwear and food (African-American/Black Market Profile). This study also indicated that Black consumers have a significant spending power, largely because of their heavy media consumption. An Arbitron Inc. research study (2002), “Tapping Blacks’ Spending Clout: The Arbitron Black Consumer Study”, argued that advertisers’ misconceptions about Black consumers have affected their ability to take advantage of these statistics and thereby further develop their markets.
working class and non-White people do. Wealthy people and White middle class people tend to save and invest their money over long periods or make “one-time” big purchases (on items such as houses, cars, boats, and investments in RRSPs, the stock market and other bonds and investment opportunities. If they are business people, they may reinvest their profits back into their companies to further expand it) rather than the daily or weekly purchases that poor, working class and non-White people make.\textsuperscript{106}

The NEW FLOW places the interests of corporate advertisers above the interests of their audience. It is not unfamiliar for corporations in the current new-media saturated, global-capitalist marketplace to put corporate advertisers first. Brands buy brands based on the companies they do business with – it is a string of brands associating with other brands to eventually get the business or market they are looking for. It is apparent then, that the current exchange (or trend) within our market economy is occurring, not between advertisers and consumers, but between advertisers and advertisers – major corporate buys in a marketplace where the consumer apparently finishes last. It is for these reasons that the NEW FLOW is no longer dictated by audience preference. FLOW’s relationship with their advertisers, is therefore an inverse of the past. During FLOW’s first 6 years on air, an Urban format was used to attract advertisers through their audience. Now a

\textsuperscript{106} If this is the case, then corporations who want to become more profitable may need to change their racially biased attitudes and marketing strategies by addressing consumers based on levels of disposable income and not on personal income or wealth. In a capitalist economy, wealth tends to trickle up to the wealthier segments of the class structure and not down because the labour and excess spending habits of poor and working class people continue to subsidize the wealth of the middle and upper classes. Many corporate advertisers continue to ignore the fact that it is poor and working class people who are consistent and compulsive spenders which keeps the economy going. This means that their spending habits are more predictable rather than wealthier people who have the choice to spend or save their money. Corporations spend a lot of money through advertising to convince people with higher incomes and wealth to spend and not save. What corporations do not want is for people to save so investing in a group that tends to save does not sound like good business.
Rhythmic CHR format is being used to attract an audience (after the fact) through their advertisers.\(^\text{107}\)

The transformation of Milestone’s Black format radio station, when it was first proposed in 1989 to its current format, is quite visible when looking at the evolution of their logos. The issue is not that FLOW experienced changes but that the kind of changes it underwent and in such a short period of time was owed to the interests of corporate advertisers. Format is the most important issue of any radio station since it defines everything else, such as music, programming, ads and content. Therefore, a Rhythmic CHR format has serious implications for what FLOW could broadcast and eventually become.

**Programming and Content**

The first song that FLOW broadcasted when they made their debut on February 9, 2001, was Bob Marley and The Wailers’ (1976) “Roots, Rock, Reggae”. For Canada’s first Black music format radio station to choose “Roots, Rock, Reggae” as their first song, demonstrated the level of FLOW’s pride and commitment to its Caribbean roots and much of the Black community who identified with the station. “Roots, Rock, Reggae” is a celebratory and redemptive song which suits this moment well for the Black community in making Canadian history. The song specifically speaks to Black cultural empowerment and particularly the achievements reggae music has made in overcoming its marginalization in the music industry by earning status on Billboard (“Top 100”), just like R&B:

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\(^{107}\) For example, FLOW provided many contest opportunities with major product giveaways that entice people to tune in. So the logic is that people would first consider the opportunities that one of FLOW’s corporate advertisers may be offering and then tune in.
This song identifies the kinds of struggles that Milestone endured to get FLOW and the long overdue recognition that Black music is what people have been demanding. In doing so, the song specifically places the audience at the centre, to be the judge of what good music is and not the music establishment (or as the song calls, “Mister Music”). Perhaps this is FLOW’s message to their audience, that they (the audience) would determine the music to be heard on FLOW. Music journalist Susana Ferreira (2003) made the point that, “Roots, Rock, Reggae” was a striking choice “because by picking a reggae icon instead of a hip-hop one, Flow made a statement about its specific brand of urban radio” (exclaim.ca). “Roots, Rock, Reggae”, therefore, set the tone for the type of Urban music station FLOW would be – a specific Canadian brand of Urban that is connected to the diverse genres among Black music which represent the cultural diversity within the Black community in Toronto. But it is also the case that the various genres of music that reggae music crosses, including rock and R&B most notably (as the song indicates), made “Roots, Rock, Reggae” a strategic choice for FLOW because of its cross-over appeal to White audiences. Having been featured on the Billboard Hot 100, this song by Bob Marley and The Wailers was mainstream and therefore was a safe pick.
through which FLOW could address their audience both inside and outside the Black community. Overall, this song set the tone and direction for FLOW’s style of music delivery and the role of audience participation in their music programming and selection.

Prior to FLOW’s format change to Rhythmic CHR in September 2007, its music playlist was dominated by an exclusively Urban sound. Commercial American Urban artists dominated their music playlist such as Nelly, Ja Rule, Destiny’s Child, R. Kelly, Alicia Keys, Fat Joe, Missy Elliott, Ciara and Usher. Fortunately, due to Canadian content rules,108 FLOW is required by the CRTC to have a significant portion of their music playlist by Canadian artists. Some of the more popular Canadian Urban artists that were played regularly on FLOW include Jully Black, Kardinal Offishall, Keshia Chante, k-os, Belly, Saukrates and Divine Brown. On April 21, 2004, FLOW’s Top 10 Most Requested Songs were:

2. Avant, “Don’t Take Your Love Away”
4. Alicia Keys, “If I Ain’t Got You”
5. Usher featuring Ludacris and Lil’ Jon, “Yeah”
6. Mario Winans, “I Don’t Wanna Know”
7. Beyonce, “Naughty Girl”;
8. Joe featuring G-Unit, “Ride Wit U”;
9. Usher, “Burn”;

But after FLOW’s format change, their Top 10 list changed slightly to accommodate non-Urban artists. For example, in comparison to the list above, FLOW’s Top 10 Most Requested Songs four years later, on April 21, 2008 were:

1. Usher featuring Young Jeezy, “Love in this Club”
2. Lil Wayne featuring Static major, “Lollipop”
5. Madonna featuring Justin Timberlake and Timberland, “4 Minutes”

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108 See Chapter 2 for a definition of Canadian content.
Almost all of the songs (and artists) listed above are Urban except for song number 4 which is a dance song by Madonna who is a pop artist. This demonstrates a clear shift from its more exclusive Urban Top 10 Most Requested Songs from 2004. But for some time, FLOW had been experimenting with pop and dance music on their Urban format, leading up to the launch of the NEW FLOW, where a series of non-Urban artists increasingly made it onto their music playlist.¹⁰⁹

In the summer of 2004, Britney Spears’ single “Toxic” was played in regular rotation on FLOW. It could be argued that this was the first, most definitive and memorable, non-Urban song and artist to appear on FLOW, particularly because of who and what Britney Spears represents as a pop singer – a packaged White femininity that is specific to the social, historical and economic locations of White middle class heterosexual females. But the particular brand of White femininity that Britney Spears produces is one that is associated with an *innocent*, adolescent sexuality that is pure, sensual, free, experimental, playful and delicate (or in need of protection). These connotations associated with this type of White femininity are represented in the products that Britney Spears has endorsed such as her “Britney Spears Doll” (by Play Along Toys) and her Elizabeth Arden fragrance “Curious” and “Fantasy”.¹¹⁰ But despite the level of sexual maturity associated with Britney Spears, her audience remains, by and large,

¹⁰⁹ FLOW’s experimentation with non-Urban music coincided with their increased corporate appeal to get the type of mainstream audience corporate advertisers wanted.
¹¹⁰ This White femininity is also well represented in popular culture from Disney films to mainstream Western fashion.
White pre-teen girls because she embodies a rite of passage into adulthood that White heterosexual females are expected to make. Britney Spears does not speak to the subject positions of FLOW’s majority Black and Urban audience. Nonetheless, Britney Spears remained on FLOW’s music playlist because she was able to usher in its transition to a Rhythmic CHR format.

Following “Toxic”, Britney Spears appeared again on FLOW’s music playlist; not once but twice. In September 2007, after the launch of the NEW FLOW, Britney Spears’ dance single, “Gimmie More”, was played in regular rotation. This was followed by her other dance song, “Circus”, which appeared on February 2, 2009 as song number 20 on FLOW’s Top 20 Most Requested Songs. To hear Britney Spears being played on FLOW was shocking for some and was expressed on several Facebook pages, such as “why does the new flow 935 suck?” which, as of July 23, 2008, had 14 members and two discussion board topics titled, “Britney Spears on the top 20 list?” and “what is this poppy nonsense?”

After the launch of the NEW FLOW, consistently, at least one song on the Top 20 Most Requested Songs was by a non-Urban artist. For example, on July 23, 2008, almost all the songs featured on FLOW’s Top 20 Most Requested Songs were Urban except song number 20 which was Pussy Cat Dolls (PCD), “When I Grow UP”, which is a dance song. Although PCD have a variety of songs that can be classified as Urban, they are predominantly a dance and pop oriented group. Furthermore, on October 18, 2008, all the artists and songs on FLOW’s Top 20 Most Requested Songs were Urban except for two: song number 10 by Lady Gaga featuring Colby O’Donnis, “Just Dance”, which is a dance song, and song number 16 by Coldplay, “Viva La Vida”, which is an alternative
rock song. Since Britney Spears, Coldplay is the most striking non-Urban artist to have ever been featured on FLOW’s music playlist, given that “Viva La Vida” is far from an Urban and dance sound which means it does not even come close to the music identified by a Rhythmic CHR format whose focus may be hits, but hits that are mainly “rhythmic” or R&B based like hip-hop, reggae, dance, and house. What is more disconcerting about this choice is that FLOW’s music director would even consider playing this song for a radio station whose audience is predominantly those who listen to Urban music. It is also contradictory to Nicole Jolly’s statement describing FLOW’s new Rhythmic CHR format:

When we started out we were probably more urban, but the music has also changed. There used to be an urban chart and a Top 40 chart. Now you see a mom listening to Snoop beside her 14-year-old daughter. The music has come to the middle and we’re going along with the times. We’re playing rhythmic hits – the top of the charts, excluding rock-based music (cited by Infantry).

So if FLOW is willing to play rock-based music then it is clear about the direction they intend to take the station towards an exclusive CHR format. Suggesting that pop music and Urban music have crossed, and that there is little difference between them, ignores the hierarchies of race in the music industry where White artists, recording companies, managers, DJs and other entertainment personnel, continue to benefit from the appropriation of Black music and culture. It also allows FLOW to distance itself from the very fact that pop, dance and alternative-rock music on their playlist is alienating a significant portion of their audience who prefer Urban music and has produced the very context for the slow erasure of Blackness on FLOW.

In addition to Coldplay, FLOW has also played music by the alternative rock band, Maroon 5. My critique is not that people who enjoy Urban music, do not also enjoy other genres of music such as alternative rock and pop – it is the fact that these genres do not belong on an Urban based radio station, when the majority of the other commercial radio stations already cater overwhelmingly to rock and pop and not Urban music.
FLOW’s efforts to incorporate more dance and pop music into their ever-evolving music playlist has had a major impact on their Canadian Talent Development Initiatives, particularly for struggling Urban artists. On the Facebook page “Petition for FLOW 93.5 to turn into a real Toronto Hip Hop station”, one member, who is a local Toronto Urban music artist, posted a wall message, complaining:

Flow needs to play some Local Artists’ Joints, Like Unsigned Hypes within the area. Not some gay ass shit I always hear. I BARELY listen to Flow no more cuz of that shit. I’M AN ARTIST, MY SHIT SHOULD BE HEARD. NOT BRITNEY SPEARS (HeavySwag Xyst, November 25th, 2007, original emphasis).

But FLOW has managed to keep a significant number of Canadian Urban artists on their music playlist. For example, FLOW’s Top 20 Most Requested Songs for July 23, 2008, featured seven Urban Canadian artists: Kardinal Offishall, Kreesha Turner, Belly, Keshia Chante, Divine Brown, Art of Fresh and Jully Black. Then, on October 18, 2009, Danny Fernandes, Kim Davis, Deborah Cox, Kardinal Offishal and Eva Avila were Canadian artists featured on FLOW’s Top 20 Most Requested Songs. However, most of these artists are Urban except for Danny Fernandes and Eva Avila who are both pop artists – and pop artists who have had a lot of exposure and support from the Canadian music industry. While I do not dismiss the fact that the above mentioned Canadian Urban artists such as Kardinal Offishal and Jully Black have had more “success” than Danny Fernandes and Eva Avila, these two groups of artists, nonetheless, have had different experiences obtaining access to the Canadian music industry. For example, Danny Fernandes is the younger brother of Canadian R&B artist Shawn Desmond who won a Juno Award in 2006 for best “R&B/Soul Recording of the Year” and received numerous awards, endorsements, features in films and collaborations with top American music
producers. Therefore, Danny Fernandes has had more opportunities to access the music industry through his brother’s success. Similarly, Eva Avila entered the music industry after winning first place on the Canadian reality television program “Canadian Idol” in 2006. So both Danny Fernandes and Eva Avila had already received a lot of support from the Canadian music industry when they emerged as new music artists. On the other hand, Jully Black, for example, had a very different story, where she continued to struggle even after getting her first recording contract with the record label MCA. On November 13, 2008, in an interview on FLOW’s radio show OTA Live, Jully Black described how her first album that was due out in 2003 was never released by MCA because they had shelved it to push the release of other artists before her. Jully Black also explained that she was so frustrated and felt discouraged to the point that she had seriously considered getting a recording contract in the U.S. like other Urban artists before her (such as Deborah Cox) because of the lack of support she received in Canada. But Jully Black’s experience is not uncommon for many Urban artists because this issue of access to the music industry in Canada is not unconnected to artists’ social locations. Both Kardinal Offishall and Jully Black are Black Canadians who both came from a working-class background. Danny Fernandes, on the other hand, is a White Canadian (of Portuguese and Italian decent). And Eva Avila is of White and South American decent. Race does matter because it influences the willingness of White dominated record label companies to sign artists based on their marketability. Due to their more privileged racial location, both Danny Fernandes and Eva Avila are considered

112 http://www.vikrecordings.com/shawndesman/
113 On February 2, 2009, Danny Fernandes was again featured on FLOW’s Top 20 Most Requested Songs for his dance single “Fantasy”, which was song number 11.
more marketable, especially as pop artists to a predominately White audience from the perspective of the Canadian music industry. Furthermore, class also plays a factor in terms of a music artist’s ability to pay for the training necessary to successfully develop their talent. Without the finances and the opportunity of being connected to the right people, many Urban music artists will continue to struggle to develop their talents and obtain access to the music industry. Jully Black described in her interview with OTA Live, that as a teenager, she was fortunate to be a part of the Ontario summer youth job program, “Fresh Arts”, where she, along with other up-and-coming Urban artists such as Kardinal Offishall and Saukrates, were paid to make music (McNamara 2007).

Therefore, artists cannot be distanced from the politics of race and class in Canada because to do so would allow systematic racism and classism that persists in the Canadian music industry, to go unchallenged, and bar many aspiring music artists from entering.

Given that FLOW is the only predominantly Urban commercial radio station in Toronto, their primary focus should be on playing and helping to develop Canadian Urban artists. Canadian pop artists like Danny Fernandes and Eva Avila already receive a great deal of support and radio play on CHR stations like Kiss 92.5 FM and Z103.5 FM – stations that tend not to play Urban music unless they are Hits. Therefore, we do not need more pop music, especially on an Urban based station. Besides FLOW, there are no other options for local, especially unsigned Canadian Urban artists, to get their music on commercial radio. My critique here is not that FLOW should withdraw its support for Canadian pop artists, but they should reconsider the kind of support they lend to such

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115 This program was created through Jobs Ontario Youth (JOY) which was developed by the Ontario government following the Young Street Riots in 1992, as a response to the marginalization that primarily Black Youth expressed about their experience in employment and schooling (McNamara 2007).
artists. By including Canadian pop songs on FLOW’s main music playlists, in addition to American pop songs, means that Canadian Urban artists will have to compete with pop artists for radio play. Such a disparity of power may force some Urban artists to change their music and artistic style slightly towards a pop sound in order to get commercial radio play and mainstream recognition from the Canadian music industry. This poses serious challenges for Urban music artists who want to keep their artistic integrity to an exclusive Urban sound. As I have demonstrated in Chapter 2, Milestone’s mandate throughout the submission of their applications was to support and help develop Urban artists specifically; not pop artists. When FLOW was launched in 2001, they maintained their commitment to the development of Canadian Urban music artists by developing the program UrbanFLOWcase – a program that offered excellent assistance to help artists gain access to resources and most notably the music industry (see appendix A).

Milestone described UrbanFLOWcase as follows:

UrbanFLOWcase is FLOW 93.5 FM’s commitment to Canadian talent development. FLOW 93.5 FM is committed to fostering Canadian talent and artist who create music that reflects the station’s unique urban format. UrbanFLOWcase initiatives include: The annual Soul Search, an extensive talent competition to find and make new Canadian musical stars; an industry development workshop series; a series of Canadian urban music compilations; the FLOW 93.5 Milestone Award, an annual scholarship for visible minority youth interested in pursuing post-secondary studies in Broadcasting, Journalism or Music; support for artist performances at various events and concerts; sponsorship of various local industry talent and arts organizations. FLOW 93.5 FM has committed $2.1 million over the seven-year term of our current license to these and other Canadian Talent Development initiatives. We are committed to nurture and support Canadian artists, help establish a Canadian urban music industry and continue to the genre worldwide (“UrbanFLOWcase”).

UrbanFLOWcase provided emerging and struggling Canadian Urban artists with many opportunities to get exposure within the music industry. Past winners of UrbanFLOWcase’s Soul Search contest include: Rochester AKA Juice in 2003 (the first winner) and Skitz in 2004 (“Skitz, FLOW Soul Search Winner”, 6). For reasons
unknown, after the launch of the NEW FLOW, it seems that UrbanFLOWcase is no longer in operation.\textsuperscript{116}

With fewer accessible options for Canadian Talent Development Initiatives like UrbanFLOWcase, struggling Urban music artists who are expected to produce the kind of music that would grant them commercial radio play and further their music career, are left out. On the Facebook page, “Petition for FLOW 93.5 to turn into a real Toronto Hip Hop station”, one member by the name, Dylon DilliJent, posted a message on the discussion board, “Unsigned, and underrated – Also known as Artist not found on Flow’s playlist”, arguing that FLOW rarely shows support for up-and-coming Urban artists, especially local unsigned artists (which he lists, such as himself, Mayhem Moreart, Camoflauge, Rich Kidd Nemesis, Baby Grime, Richie Sosa, KJ, Caskit, BROthers Don Million and D Brown) (November 30, 2007). Dylon DilliJent believes that he and many local Urban music artists are overlooked by FLOW, not because they lack talent, but because of their inability to produce “high quality” music that meets FLOW’s standards.

A review of FLOW’s music submissions process below, may offer some perspective on some of the obstacles that Urban music artists, such as Dylon DilliJent, continue to experience in attempting to get their music on commercial radio:

Want to hear your music on The New FLOW. Well, here’s what you need to know: 1) All submissions must include the following: a radio edited, digitally mastered CD; a bio/press kit; composer, authorship and producer info; complete information on featured artists; label and management information (if applicable); accurate contact information 2) Material is assessed based on the following criteria: production quality as it applies to commercial radio airwaves; compatibility with the FLOW 93.5 FM sound (as defined by FLOW 93.5 FM) (“Music Submissions”, emphasis my own).

\textsuperscript{116} The website that hosted UrbanFLOWcase, \url{www.urbanflowcase.com}, returns with the message: “cannot locate the internet server or proxy server”. For this reason, I’ve provided a copy of the UrbanFLOWcase webpage for viewing, when it was operable in 2006, under appendix A.
However, this is a complicated process that is not accessible to the majority of Urban artists who face some of the challenges I addressed above. Its bureaucratic model is rather alienating when compared to the interactive platform of UrbanFLOWcase. For the music submissions process, the NEW FLOW places emphasis on the quality of an artist’s music production rather than talent and therefore continues to sustain the hierarchies of race and class in access to commercial radio. But underlying FLOW’s concern over the quality of music submissions is the pressure to meet American music recording standards on commercial radio. This standard is reflected in the sound of the Canadian Urban music that are played regularly on FLOW such as music by Kardinal Offishall (and more recently Drake), because they are artists that are either signed to American record labels or Canadian labels with American affiliates. This integration between Canadian and American recording companies also means that Canadian artists have to compete with American artists. This sentiment about meeting American recording standards colludes with issues of race and class to further maintain the marginalization of Urban music artists in the Canadian music industry.

On OTA Live, May 29, 2008, hosts Ty Harper and rez Digital interviewed local Urban Club DJ and FLOW’s “Traffic FLOW Mixshow” DJ, DJ Starting from Scratch, along with mixtape\textsuperscript{117} producer, DJ Wristpect, and Urban music artist and former FLOW Soul Search winner, Rochester, to get some perspective on types of problems that unsigned Canadian Urban music artists experience getting exposure in the music industry. They also discussed the role that DJs play in this process. Both DJ Scratch and

\textsuperscript{117} Mixtape refers to cassettes or CDs that have been created with a variety of songs that reflects the mood or tastes of the person who produced it such as the DJ. It came about as a response primarily by Black and working-class people to issues of access to music that was either not being played on the radio or from not being able to afford the latest album from their favourite artist.
DJ Wristpect complained that they could not play the majority of music submissions they received from unsigned Canadian Urban artists because of the quality of their music production. They both suggested that artists seek representation or management capable of producing quality music for them because no matter how good the artists are on the “streets”, DJs are professionals who must meet commercial standards. DJ Scratch explained this further:

….there’s two key elements to mine: the club scene is fine and I’m commercial radio…I’m a commercial radio DJ on my mix show. A lot of guys really don’t understand the goings on of commercial radio. I never did until I got here and I’m sure it was probably the same for both [DJ Wristpect and Rochester], you know what I mean? Actually, many conversations myself and Rochester have had and it’s come a long way…just like he said. But, a lot of artists, I mean, they’ll give me you know a CD with the “a-yo” talk: “yo yo my song…my boy thinks it’s wicked”. [But] it’s written in Sharpie…like there’s no style to their stuff…and the bottom line is…is the music dope?…that’s the bottom line. There’s crap music in New York, there’s crap music everywhere. I’m not sayin’ their music is crap…I’m just sayin’ there’s a couple of elements; it’s gotta be commercial friendly…for me. A lot of guys get mad “ah you not gone play my stuff”…I’m not, if I don’t personally dig it…It’s my mix show… I know it’s cool, I have some responsibility to get some music out, and I will…There’s nuff tracks that I’ve played that they got their break. I’m not sayin’ I broke them, but they got their break on my show…It’s a different element than what Wristpect is doing…he’s doing CDs. He can put anything he wants on them….I try to do it as much and ask Rochester, like there’s tuns of artists that always tell me the same thing Wristpect says when I see guys in the club – they’ll be like: “ay you don’t like my track!” I’m like: “you’re track’s not really for my shows, BUT, take this – pick the five biggest songs that are out there, give me a verse on it, say your name in it…” I always tell people the same thing. Nine out of ten won’t send me anything. There’s the odd…the odd people that do it all the time. It helps…it’s a sucky way to do things but you gotta do it. And I always tell them – I’m like, if Kanye can do it, if Jay-Z can still do it…they do it on every song. Like even today [Kardinal Offishall] was listening to my show and I played the new Cassie track. He text me right away, “send me the instrumental…I want to do something on it”. He’s busy promoting his album and he’s still doin it…he’s eager…he’s hittin me up. A lot of guys don’t do that and they don’t follow that lead and its frustrating! (OTA Live, May 2, 2008, emphasis my own).

As DJ Scratch describes, quality of music production is the bottom line for commercial radio. However, what DJ Scratch fails to contend with is that issues with quality are really issues of access that many Canadian Urban music artists are struggling with. DJ
Scratch complains about the CDs he is sent that are written with Sharpie brand markers. But many of the emerging Canadian Urban music artists cannot afford to purchase the materials necessary to produce “digitally mastered” CDs that FLOW’s music submissions call for. But being “Canada’s foremost urban and radio DJ,” DJ Scratch is in a highly influential position to define which Urban music or artists people will hear in the clubs and on commercial radio. Whatever song DJ Scratch plays, be it by signed or unsigned artists, music industry professionals will take notice. While he describes his frustration with the unsigned Canadian Urban music artists for not taking his professional advice about their music delivery, he does not put it into proper context. DJ Scratch who is White, distances himself from the politics of race and class in his articulation of his encounters with the (mostly Black) unsigned Urban music artists, which he mimics in his narration. Although DJ Scratch might be familiar with Black vernacular speech, he relays the artists’ expression without acknowledging the social, historical and cultural contexts in which such expressions emerged. The frustration that the artists express to DJ Scratch are in fact real grievances that they have with him for not playing their music and for not giving them the support and exposure they need to start their music careers. By mocking the artists’ expressions without understanding the social and cultural contexts in which they occur, DJ Scratch dismisses them as inarticulate, hostile, unprofessional and uneducated about the business of the music industry.

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DJ Scratch has an extensive resume that includes being the official tour DJ of Canadian, Sony BMG recording artist, Keshia Chante, and numerous awards including Canadian Urban Music Award (CUMA) for DJ of the year from 2002 to 2005. [http://www.flow935.com/newlayout/onair/mixshows/startingfromscratch/traffic_flow_mixshow.php](http://www.flow935.com/newlayout/onair/mixshows/startingfromscratch/traffic_flow_mixshow.php).
DJ Scratch ignores the racial and class hierarchy that exists between him and the Black Urban music artists he encounters. He also fails to contend with the fact that he represents, and continues to benefit from, the long history of White men in the music industry who try to take control of Black cultural productions and define popular tastes, like what type of music people should hear. Black people’s reaction to DJ Scratch with skepticism or hostility is not an illegitimate reaction – it is a natural response to this history which informs their encounter. DJ Scratch is a White person performing a Black cultural art form. For Black people, this can be problematic, especially when talented Black DJs are overlooked by the music industry. DJ Scratch is seen as a novelty because he is White and has, for this reason, received more opportunities and accolades from the Canadian music industry as the best Urban DJ. But what they in the music industry fail to acknowledge is that Scratch’s fame came about through the support and validation of his DJ skills from mainly the Black community. Having been given that title by music industry professionals, DJ Scratch is now placed at the forefront of Canadian Urban music as the arbiter for what type of music Black people will hear in the clubs and on the radio or which Black and Urban artists will be given their big break.

What is most unfortunate about this OTA Live interview is that the hosts, Ty Harper and rez Digital (who are not White) do not intervene by asking DJ Scratch more critical questions that would provide his narration more context and thereby, challenge the underlying racist discourse that perpetuate the marginalization of Black Canadian Urban music artists in the music industry. The role of radio show hosts is especially important to the content of the dialogue that emerges on FLOW.

For example, the White dominated music companies such as Sony BMG and Universal Music Group. This history also includes the role of White music artists who perform or are influenced by Black music such as Elvis Presley, Madonna, Eminem and Justin Timberlake.
For the first 6 years on air, FLOW went through a series of program changes, including show hosts. The biggest, most memorable program change was with the morning shows\textsuperscript{120} – from “The Morning Rush”, hosted by Jemini and Mark Strong (which aired from 2002 to 2006), to “JJ and Melanie in the Morning”, hosted by JJ and Melanie, with the launch of the NEW FLOW in 2007. While both morning shows are largely entertainment based that discuss, among other things, the latest Hollywood gossip, the hosts elicit a different kind of radio presence and connection to the audience, especially through the sound of their voices. Both Jemini and Mark Strong are Black and have a \textit{distinctly audible Black voice}\textsuperscript{121} on their radio program. They are also well known and well respected in the Black community.\textsuperscript{122} On the other hand JJ, who is either Black or West Indian and Melanie who is White, do not provide an audible Black voice on their radio show.\textsuperscript{123} Instead, JJ and Melanie deliver an audible White voice that is in line with the direction of the NEW FLOW to please corporate advertisers who prefer a sound that reflects their White target market. This shift from a distinctly audible Black voice to an audible White voice contradicts the statement that Milestone made to the Black community in \textit{Share} after winning their radio license:

\textsuperscript{120} Morning shows are prime radio shows that air during “drive to work/school hours” from Monday to Friday between 5:30 am and 10:00 am so they generate most of the listenership.
\textsuperscript{121} I emphasize “distinctly audible Black voice” to distinguish between the Black voice that emanates from White subjects who are versed in Black vernacular (such as DJ Scratch) and the Black voice that emanates from Black subjects, which is more than just sound, but other factors that allow them to connect more to the subject positions of Black people than White people who merely sound Black. I would argue that the reverse is not true, in the sense that there is no distinctly audible White voice that emanates only from White subjects because non-White people have been able to successfully produce a distinctly audible White voice as a way to survive racism, especially in school and the workplace that places a value on sounding White. This is not an essentialist claim that I am making here. My point is that the distinctiveness of Black voices among (most) Black people is not biological but social, historical and cultural, for which White people who sound Black do not have because of their different social, historical and cultural location.
\textsuperscript{122} For example, Jemini was a long time host of a hip hop show on Ryerson University’s radio station CKLN 88.1 FM.
\textsuperscript{123} For a profile of FLOW’s radio hosts, visit \texttt{http://www.flow935.com/newlayout/onair/shows/shows.php}.
We will keep our promise to bring a uniquely Canadian urban music mix to the Toronto airwaves and give a voice to the Black community. Milestone is committed to being Toronto’s radio station of choice for urban music lovers (“A Statement from Milestone”, 1).

Milestone’s vision then of a Black radio station, centered on “giving a voice to the Black community” was undermined by their shift to the interests of corporate advertisers as they transitioned to the NEW FLOW. Whatever audible Black voice is currently present on FLOW is, nonetheless, dissolving to accommodate the more prominent audible White voice since the introduction of JJ and Melanie in their flagship morning radio show. This transition has had a serious impact on the quality of dialogue on their morning show. For example, during the fall of 2007, Melanie and MoHit,\footnote{FLOW’s former movie and television review host, who is also White.} while discussing the highly anticipated premier of the “Beverly Hills 90210” television series spin-off “90210”, described how popular the show was, how much they loved it, and how excited they were that it was coming back. But JJ responded that he never watched “Beverly Hills 90210” and this was shocking to Melanie and MoHit. JJ explained to them that the show never appealed to him. But he failed to take the conversation further to explain to Melanie and MoHit that he, like the majority of non-White people, had difficulty connecting with the show’s all White cast and storyline which relates to a White, middle-class, subject position.

On November 29, 2007, during the highly publicized TDSB debate with the Black community on the topic of Black focus schools, FLOW, once again, failed to hold their White hosts accountable during the “JJ and Melanie in the Morning” show segment, \footnote{“Beverly Hills 90210” is an American television drama series that aired from 1990 to 2000. It featured an all white cast who played students attending a Beverly Hills high school; portraying the struggles of White middle-class teenage life. The series was later reformatted for a new generation of viewers in 2008. For more details visit \url{http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0098749/}.}
“Whatever!”, hosted by Ruby Jones. During this segment, Ruby Jones offered the following opinion on the Black focus schools debate:

Judging by your response yesterday to our conversation about a recent Toronto District School Board study, this topic is far from over. To bring you up to speed – the TDSB asked grade 7 to 12 students, questions about themselves and what they think of their schools and education system. On the positive side, most students said they feel safe in their schools. But with 7 in 10 students being non-white, they felt ethnically left out of the curriculum. Most of those students said if there was more cultural programming, they could identify with, they’d probably do better in school and like coming to class more. Now I haven’t been in high school for quite some time, so I’m not sure what’s going on these days. But I do remember history being quite generic and forgettable, even though I loved the topic. And talking with morning show super assistant Rene, who is only a few years removed from high school – she brought up an interesting point: the problem isn’t necessarily the curriculum, which I think we can all agree, needs an upgrade – but more so the teachers and how they present the topic. Some people naturally love and get math and science; while others get and love history and English. Being someone who never fully comprehend math, I found it incredibly frustrating and failed several times. That was until I went to summer school and found the best math teacher ever who presented all the equations and long divisions in a way I got. The same thing goes for history. If a teacher is just going to stand up at the front of the class and spew a bunch of dates without putting them into context of how they relate to us today; who cares! Students don’t get why it should mean anything to them. I firmly believe there is room in Canadian history lessons to include the many things immigrants have contributed to this country over generations. While I’m all for getting to know each other and everyone’s culture, the simple fact remains – we are in Canada and we need to know about this country before anyone else’s. But, whatever! (November 29, 2007).

Ruby completely distances her racial location as a White person in narrating her perspective on Black focused schooling and furthermore, distances the issue from racial inequality as it is experienced by Black students in the TDSB. Ruby unsuccessfully tried to empathize with the position of Black students by describing some of the problems she encountered while attending school. But Ruby places blame solely on the teachers’ ability to teach rather than institutionalized racism in the education system that continues to fail Black students through a standardized Eurocentric curriculum. Ruby also does not connect the very social locations of the teachers themselves (by failing to look at the role of racism on the part of the predominantly White teaching body) and their interaction.
with Black students. To say some people naturally get and love a subject, makes it about ability. However, Black students are disengaged, not because of their ability or interest in a subject, but rather because of race and class oppression (Dei et. al 1997). By suggesting “we can all agree” that the curriculum needs to be upgraded, places everyone on an equal playing field and erases the power differences between White students and Black students who experience the education system differently. Overall Ruby’s statement is racist, for specifically representing Black people as not truly Canadian because in her words “we are in Canada and we need to know about this country before anyone else’s”. But is Black history not Canadian history? What about the history of slavery in Canada? Is that not Canadian history? Ruby’s rant is a prime example of how White people can appropriate the discourse of official multiculturalism to assert their power and privilege over non-White people and deny their legitimate requests for equality and social justice. Why should FLOW give Ruby Jones this platform to voice her racist opinion on the only Black commercial radio station in Toronto, and not offer the same opportunity for the Black hosts on FLOW to provide their perspectives? Toronto radio producer Norman (Otis) Richmond says, in response to FLOW’s programming, that: “the black people in Toronto are among the most literate in the world. I hear black people talk about issues from left to right on The Fan and CFRB. We’re not just a boogie people; infantile hip hop is not going to hold us” (cited by Infantry). Richmond’s point about the lack of serious and critical discourse on FLOW’s radio shows means that FLOW is loosing the opportunity to take advantage of a very informed segment of their audience which is their Black audience, especially on issues like these that directly affect them.\(^{126}\)

\(^{126}\) The Facebook pages and postings are a testament to how socially, culturally and politically informed
When the Morning Rush was cancelled and Jemini and Mark Strong were let go, it created much uproar in the Black community, given that the change to the NEW FLOW was largely in favour of White identified interests. Many felt that with Jemini and Mark Strong gone, they had lost what was left of a major connection to an audible Blackness on a prime radio show that they could wake up to in the morning on the only commercial Black radio station in Toronto. Facebook pages such as “FLOW 93.5 WAS SOOO MUCH BETTER WITH MARK STRONG AN JEM IN THE MORNING!”, and discussion boards have emerged in Jemini and Mark Strong’s honor to protest the major transition to a morning show with radio hosts that many cannot relate to. For example, on the Facebook page “Petition for FLOW 93.5 to turn into a real Toronto Hip Hop station”, a discussion board titled “If you’ve been watching…Even the DJs on Flow have slowly become less BLACK and more commercially WHITE”, had one member ask: “Wheres GEM and STROM…WHERE’S HOLLYWOOD RICH VAGAN…WHERE’S washout SLIM…WHAT THE FUCK DOES JJ KING and MELANIE have to do with hiphop.........???????????????” (Douglas Lumps, November 20, 2007, original emphasis).127 Douglas’ frustration about the abrupt firing of two prominent Black show hosts and others on FLOW since the transition to the NEW FLOW, is quite evident. Another Facebook page titled “why does the new flow 935 suck?” has the following message posted by Patrick M, which demonstrates how concerned many people in the Black community are about the loss of Gemini and Mark Strong:

Could sum 1 plizz explain to all da flow fans watever happened to pipo like Gemini, Mark Strong, Wayne Williams, Hollywood Rich…theys all disappeared just like tha fade to black transition? WA APPEN? some1 say something…watzz da reason for their departure!? plus the music

FLOW’s Black audience members are.

127 In this context, the discussion board title that refers to DJs is actually referring to show hosts who are also considered DJs because they play music on their radio shows.
selection is horrible…so many songs…r repeated thru out the day…wats really new about the new flow thing plus to al da fans do the hits really move u like they did before pop, dance, rock plus the sir paul mccartney genre made itz way on the flow airwaves…wat happened to the flow 935 of 2002/3 and 2004? (October 24, 2007, emphasis my own).

These Facebook pages and discussion boards cannot be dismissed as mere rants that are unfounded – they are expressing what many within the Black community are feeling in a space that allows them to voice their grievances and get responses from others who share their sentiments about FLOW. To date, FLOW has not provided any formal response to these concerns that many within the Black community have about why Jemini and Mark Strong were let go. One FLOW audience member posted a statement on the Facebook page “Fu@k FLOW 93.5 IT’S ABOUT TIME WE HAD A REAL URBAN STATION” in response to the discussion board, “Whats the worst thing about FLOW?”:

  For me it has to be that wack morning show. One of the most important shows of any radio station is its morning show. With J.J. and Melanie Flow is sending their strongest message that urban is out! After all our support they just switch programming on us with no warning or any alternative (Soundboy Mike P., January 8, 2008, emphasis my own).

So what these expressions of confusion, frustration and anger on Facebook (about the loss of Jemini and Mark Strong) are really communicating, is a sense of loss that FLOW is no longer focused on the interests of the Black community and that Black people are no longer their target audience. Furthermore, these sentiments are also expressing frustration that there is no alternative commercial Black radio station to FLOW. On the Facebook page “Petition for FLOW 93.5 to turn into a real Toronto Hip Hop station”, a discussion board titled “If you’ve been watching…Even the DJs on Flow have slowly become less BLACK and more commercially WHITE”, Autumn Rose Walters, who identifies as a fan of FLOW, nonetheless, complained about not being able to identify with the new radio hosts, JJ and Melanie:
I feel flow has lost its “ethnic” factor…especially in terms of black radio
hosts…predominantly females…as a young, black canadian i’d like to for
once be able to identify with the personalities on flow ( like back in the
jemini days lol ) …(November 20, 2007).

Autumn Rose Walters’ criticism of the lack of identifiable Black radio hosts on FLOW,
demonstrates that they are increasingly alienating an important segment of the Black
community – young and female. More specifically, as her Facebook message describes,
a distinctly audible Black female voice is absent from FLOW. With the exception of
FLOW’s hip hop radio show host Jus Red of the “Trauma Unit”, there is no other
identifiable Black female host on FLOW. While it could be argued that “The Midday
Break” show host, Jeni, has an audible Black female voice, her racial and cultural
location as a White Canadian, can limit the content of her dialogue on FLOW.

Since Blackness is about a specific kind of sound on a commercial radio station, it
becomes a commodity that FLOW’s White radio hosts and DJs can take on. But not
being Black, FLOW’s White radio hosts and DJs are limited to the extent to which they
can connect to the Black audience because their life experiences are different.
Nonetheless, FLOW’s Black hosts, whether audibly Black or White, are also limited in
that the context of FLOW programming which does not offer them the opportunity to
connect to their Black audience by responding to issues that they could relate to. The
audible Black voices present on FLOW does not represent the diverse set of perspectives
and interests from the Black community. Instead, the audible Black voices on FLOW are
superficial because they only sound Black to denote Urbanness. FLOW’s first and
former music director, Farley Flex criticizes the “inauthentic voices” of some of the
station’s current on-air personalities. He comments: “they should choose people who
emanate a sense of authenticity with the music they play. It’s not about grammar. It’s
about the timbre of their voices. *It’s about sound*” (cited by Infantry, emphasis my own). For Farley Flex, a Black sound is more about where it emanates historically (and culturally) and less about who (meaning which bodies) make it (ibid.). But to suggest that to determine if a radio station is truly Black or Urban by judging it based on its sound, is limited because the content is just as important (if not, more) as the form. What needs to be considered then is what content do the audible Black voices deliver on FLOW? Is it in line with the social, historical, cultural and political location of the Black community in which the Black voice emerged? The hosts should be judged based on whether their audible Blackness speaks directly to the issues that the Black community is concerned with.

FLOW’s shift away from an identifiable Blackness in their programming and content to an identifiable whiteness, is evident in their advertisement campaigns, which provide a clear, visual representation of the gradual disappearance of Blackness from FLOW.

**Advertisement Campaigns**

During FLOW’s ad campaign for the launch of their radio station in 2001, they hired the advertising agency, TAXI, to produce a series of television and print advertisements featuring the tagline “Urban FM” (see figure 3.7 and figure 3.8), to sell to the public their exclusive Urban format radio station. However, the message that was communicated by the images in these ads goes beyond the context of FLOW as a radio station, to the social, cultural and political ideologies underlying its representation of Blackness. The first set of FLOW’s advertisements were television ads that were later
reproduced for their print ads. Both the television and print ads featured dark silhouettes of Black people portraying the kind of movements and productions associated with Black music and culture (notably dancing and DJing). These Black cultural productions are intended to express alterity and thereby, challenge dominant norms about race, gender, sexuality and class that define and confine subjects. According to Tricia Rose (1994) in her chapter, ““All Aboard the Night Train: Flow, Layering, and Rupture in Postindustrial New York””, Black cultural productions such as break-dancing and DJing embody identify-transforming characteristics. The FLOW television ad (see figure 3.7) featured a silhouette of a Black female dancing to hip hop music. The movement of her hips, arms, chest and braids, as well as her overall style, challenges specifically White Western patriarchal norms of femininity that characterizes Black women’s bodies as undesirable, hypersexual or unfeminine. Likewise, the sampling of various types of music and sounds by Urban DJs as they produce alternative versions of music,

128 The print ads were reproduced from a capture of the video images in the television ads which, like all their other print ads, were featured mostly in Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) transit stops (in the subway, trains and bus stops).
challenges the way it has been produced and confined in its record, CD and digital formats. These forms of re-narrating the body by the dancer and re-narrating music by the DJ, specifically challenges notions of stasis.

But, the subversive nature of these Black cultural productions, therefore, become limited by the very format of their reproduction. In the context of FLOW’s television advertisements for their “Urban FM” ad campaign, the music could be heard as the dancer dances and the DJ plays music which invites the viewer to join and become a part of FLOW. But in the form of a print ad, there is no sound and no movement to provide the viewer with the opportunity to interact with the ad or FLOW. Unfortunately, FLOW’s “Urban FM” ad campaign was the last and only set of advertisements to be featured in a video format and aired on television. All the FLOW advertisements that followed were produced only as print ads. This movement from television ad to the sole use of print ads signaled FLOW’s movement way from identifiable Black bodies, towards parts of the Black body as they increasingly commodified Blackness to represent the station. For example, FLOW’s “Non-stop hip hop R&B” print ad campaign (see figure 3.9), communicated to their audience the specific music they played as an Urban

Figure 3.8. Urban FM (DJ Silhouette). Source: flow935.com
radio station, through images of real people. However, these images emphasized certain body parts that were used to represent FLOW. In the Dancer ad, the dancer’s Afro hairstyle is part of FLOW’s logo. Both her Afro hairstyle and her outfit, specifically dates the image to the 1970’s era of music and fashion where this style was popular. Through the image, FLOW is able to communicate to their audience that their Urban music playlist includes hits from the 70s. But beyond communicating the type of music and style of a certain era that audience members may identify with, the blending of the dancer’s Afro hairstyle into the FLOW logo, specifically dislocates the Afro hairstyle from its social, historical, cultural and political origins, so that it could define the commodity object such as the letter “O” in the FLOW logo.

Like the Dancer print ad depicting the Afro as an object that connects the audience to the music and other content FLOW offered, another print ad campaign with the tagline “hip hop R&B reggae” (see figure 3.10) portrayed the Afro hairstyle to identify the other genres of Urban music that the station played – this time in the form of a vinyl record. But what distinguishes the Dancer print ad (figure 3.9) from the Afro Vinyl Record print ad (figure 3.10) is that in the former, the Afro hairstyle is worn by an
actual person, whereas in the latter example, the Afro (with the slight depiction of a face) is almost disconnected from the Black body. This slow transition away from the Black body further de-politicizes the Afro hairstyle so that it becomes just an Afro – a fetish object used to help define FLOW and Urban music as commodities that people can consume.

The Cable Rasta (see figure 3.11), from FLOW’s “R&B reggae hip hop” print campaign, is another example of the dislocation of Blackness further and further away from Black people (and the appropriation of body parts from the Black body) as FLOW increasingly commodifies Blackness. Although a face is somewhat visible on the Afro Vinyl Record, conversely the image of the Rasta Cable exhibits absolutely no trace of human features such as a face or body, only dreadlocks, which are completely disconnected from the Black body or Rasta. The colors at the ends of the dreadlock shaped cable wires, denoted by the red, green and gold colours (which represent Rasta
nationalism) are used to connect the cable wires specifically to a Rasta identity and thereby define the reggae music that FLOW plays. This particular hairstyle that Rastafarians wear (like the Afro hairstyle) is disconnected from its specific social, historic, cultural, political and religious contexts in which this hairstyle emerged. Such a disconnection allows the Rasta identity to be commodified in the form of cable wires so that it could identify reggae music (which itself is a part of Rasta culture) with FLOW. As a commodity object, the cable wires become the Rasta or contain the difference that Rasta identity represents. The Rasta then, is reduced to just deadlocks so that it could be easily commodified in the form of cable wires (to which it resembles) to define the value of FLOW as an Urban radio station that people can tune into to hear reggae music.

Disconnecting body parts such as Black hair from the Black body (or from where it was produced), represents FLOW’s gradual movement away from their Black
audience. When Blackness is used to define the value of FLOW as a commodity to sell Black music and culture to their mainstream predominantly White audience, who are vested in buying Blackness, FLOW is speaking to a particular subjectivity – one that is not in line with the social, cultural and political interests of the Black community. But how successful was FLOW in communicating what they represent as an Urban radio station to their audience, especially those outside the Black community? People with different life experiences and social and political identifications would bring that to their interpretation of FLOW’s ads. FLOW attempted to address this dilemma with their “anybody can FLOW” print ad campaign.

As FLOW began to redefine its target audience, the “anybody can FLOW” print ad campaign (see figure 3.12) communicated specifically to their mainstream White audience. It represented FLOW’s transition away from its Black target audience to a White audience as it re-branded itself through the tagline, “anybody can FLOW”, to identify itself as a mainstream multicultural radio station to which “everybody”, regardless of their racial location, can tune in to FLOW. In other words, you do not have to be Black to listen to FLOW. The impersonal nature of FLOW’s previous print ads, represented by the gradual movement away from an identifiable Black person/body to commodity objects that resembled parts from the Black body, was addressed by the “anybody can FLOW” print ad campaign by re-inscribing human subjects back into FLOW’s advertisement campaign. However, this human subjectivity was represented in the form of a disconnected body and head – but one that pertains specifically to a White male subject, denoted by the central position of the White male body and head. It is evident from the ad that the subject of FLOW is a White male because the head and the
body in the foreground belong to that of a White male. This is further denoted by the exposed notch on the White male head which can connect to the hook on its respective body. This exposed notch and hook apparently lessens the de-humanizing effect of this decapitation; but only for the White subject. While the heads of non-White people are present in the ads, they are in the background and do not have their corresponding bodies. So what does this mean for these bodyless individuals? How can they experience the music that FLOW offers without a body to express it? The body in the ad, for which Blackness is inscribed on, experiences the sensations from the music FLOW delivers and expresses it by break-dancing. But without a body, this cannot occur for the non-White heads in the ad. In addition to race, the gendered subtext of the ad particularly prevents the Black female head from connecting to the (White) male body in the image. In other
words, the Black female subject is rendered incomplete with no respective body – an incompleteness that specifically disconnects her from FLOW. The gendered and racialized nature of this ad further disconnects Black females from the art of break-dancing, as purely a male expression. But why would FLOW have to go to this extreme and produce this violent image to communicate that White people can listen to FLOW, enjoy Black music or break-dance?

In going Black, or in this case, break-dancing to the Urban music that FLOW offers, White people must, apparently, lose their identity which is expressed in the very separation of the head from the body. But this separation or loss of head/identity is only temporary. The White male body/subject is still able to remain a White male, even as he tries on the different non-White heads/identities in the ad. This implies that White people/consumers can experience Blackness through FLOW. In other words, listening to FLOW allows White people to temporarily go Black. In claiming that “anybody can FLOW”, Blackness becomes a fetish because it comes to symbolize merely a superficial difference that “anybody” (which is the White male body) can take on and thereby removes break-dancing, Urban music and FLOW from the social, historical, cultural and political contexts from which they emerged. In doing so, Black people are marginalized since the ad does not speak to their subject positions. This splitting between the body and head, to make White people become part of FLOW, prevents FLOW’s Blackness from being whole. The image in the ad is highly symbolic of multiculturalism’s violent erasure and its prevention of Black people from existing autonomously in nation. In the ads, the White (male) audience the ad speaks to is being invited into the space of FLOW to consume Blackness. The central position of the White male in the ad legitimizes the
space of FLOW as multicultural or inclusive. Although the Black (female) head in this ad suggests a Black presence, it only exists to depict the multicultural image of diversity – a diversity predicated on liberal individualism, where our difference is conceived as a difference that that distinguishes us from each other. This then translates into “we are all the same in terms of our difference from each other”. In other words, our difference is what makes us the same. As a result, FLOW gets subjected to extended levels of accountability by multiculturalism to prove its inclusiveness by having to include White people.

The role that White people play in defining FLOW as an inclusive multicultural space involves an element of policing of the boundaries of difference that is required of White people when going Black. In going Black, White people rely on the boundaries of difference where Black people must be fixed in their place. In this way, White people can know and remain who they are while they attempt to become Black. But to do this, White people must be able to recognize Blackness. While going Black, the White audience/consumer/subject gets close enough to sustain Blackness as the origin of difference. This journey of the White subject in becoming Black through FLOW, not only transforms the White subject but it also transforms the Black subject. It is a transformation that requires a violent displacement of the Black subject by reducing Black people and culture to a commodity. Black people then are not allowed to be the subject of FLOW. Blackness is made incomplete by this ad or is kept from fully laying claim to FLOW as a Black space.

Multiculturalism requires repeated acts of violence to fix Blackness in a state of embodied difference to prevent it from revealing the history of racial oppression and
inequality in Canada. This means that the Blackness FLOW represents must eventually be erased. The violent erasure of a Black focused radio station is made symbolically clear through this Break-dancer ad, with the incomplete and marginal position of the Black subject. FLOW’s White employees therefore, function to legitimize FLOW as a multicultural radio station. Multiculturalism, therefore, allows the possibility of surveillance of Blackness to be expanded. This means that when White people are in the space of FLOW, Black people cannot openly talk about the violence of White supremacy. So as a multicultural radio station, FLOW becomes a space that White people must be included in order to police Blackness and thereby prevent it from existing on its own terms.

The failure of FLOW to address the racist dialogue that emerged from their White radio hosts is a result of the discourse of official multiculturalism that informs representations of Blackness at FLOW. The violent image of this ad is predicated on the dissolution of Blackness at FLOW. Blackness is thereby prevented from surviving because it must be transformed into the multicultural.

FLOW’s “more to move to” print ad campaign (see figure 3.13) represented the gradual transition to a Rhythmic CHR format and corporate re-branding to the NEW FLOW. These ads communicated FLOW’s music and program change to accommodate more music by non-Urban artist such as Nelly Furtado (see figure 3.13). While the image of this artist again depicts the disembodiment of FLOW’s previous Break-dancer print ad, the implications are far less de-humanizing given that the head in the image is of a popular artist. These gradual changes over the period of FLOW’s print ads away from an identifiable Blackness, to a commodified Blackness, and finally, to these latter two print
ad campaigns where Blackness is no longer visible as FLOW attempts to re-define itself into a corporate image.

With a new radio license, FLOW hired a new advertising agency, Lowe Roche, to create their print ad campaign for the launch of the NEW FLOW. This ad campaign portrayed a series of line graphs and mock statistics describing the artists that FLOW would play (see figure 3.14). The ad reads: “Keeping your radio permanently tuned to the NEW FLOW may result in 20% purchasing a subwoofer; 32% spontaneous dance parties; 58% collaborating with Timbaland.” This ad suggests that by listening to FLOW, one would be able to buy the things necessary to meet or be like your favourite artist. But as simplistic as this sounds, the ad is meant to specifically appeal to the values of consumer culture. In their press release for the NEW FLOW, FLOW described the ad campaign as “bold”, “eye-catching colourful graphics” with “cheeky headlines that use
made up percentages” (The New FLOW press release, 1). Such “sleek” and “vibrant” graphics signal to corporate advertisers, “Pick me! – you never noticed us before; this is who we really are, we are not a Black or Urban radio station, we are a hits station that has a broad audience like your consumer market base”. But this ad campaign for the NEW FLOW is a type of generic advertising style that is common to corporations. The line graph is often used by corporations to represent their financial and sales projections, as well as trends over a period of time in the market. Since corporate advertisers are FLOW’s new audience, this ad campaign is able to successfully communicate to them that FLOW can deliver good market results. With no bodies, no identifiable images of Blackness, these ads provide FLOW with some ambiguity so they can simultaneously
address their listeners and their corporate advertisers. But the corporate image and language communicated by this ad is more often than not, unfamiliar to FLOW’s audience. These ads are often met with confusion because people do not understand what it is that FLOW is marketing or what brand of radio station they are. This was evident in the Facebook messages discussed previously, where many complained they did not understand what exactly the NEW FLOW ads are suggesting and most importantly what kind of radio station FLOW is trying to portray they are. This confusion with the corporate image of the ad suggests that it was meant specifically for those who could interpret it. This Line Graph ad allows FLOW to demonstrate to their corporate advertisers, just how corporate a brand they could be – a corporate brand that is no longer identifiable as Black.

**The End of Blackness?**

From the very beginning, Milestone was confronted with a conceptual problem when proposing a Black focus radio station to the CRTC. In their first application, the CRTC denied Milestone’s application by implying that there is no Black community – a Black community that is self-assured and self-determined. While Milestone continued to emphasize community, given the CRTC Commissioners’ repeated references to dance music to appeal to a broader base, led them to shift their focus away from the social and political interests of the Black community and their bid for a radio license, to focus instead on a mainstream White audience in their second application. Milestone won a radio license in their third and final application by successfully using official multiculturalism as set out in the Broadcasting Act to make the case for a more broad based radio station. In the process, Milestone de-politicized and then commodified
Blackness, in order to respond to the CRTC’s conditions concerning the financial viability of a Black format radio station. The radio station FLOW, born on February 9, 2001, was therefore legitimized through official multiculturalism, which combined with market interests, seriously limited how the station could include elements that directly related to the needs of the Black community. As FLOW evolved over the years to accommodate a mainstream White audience and corporate advertisers, the erasure of Blackness was evident in the introduction of non-Urban music, the transformation of their morning show program and hosts from an audible Blackness to an audible whiteness, and finally, advertisement campaigns, where representations of Blackness are no longer evident. Multiple strategies, then, were employed to eliminate Blackness from FLOW. From Milestone’s corporate partnership with Standard Broadcasting, to White radio hosts and ad campaigns that targeted a mainstream White audience, Blackness was made to disappear from FLOW to accommodate the increasing central position of White subjects. These were accomplished through representations of Blackness that were in line with the discourse of official multiculturalism.

Some hints of Blackness survive on FLOW. There are live DJ mix shows featuring some of Canada’s top Urban DJs which no other Toronto-based commercial radio station has; specialty music shows like Soca Therapy (that plays soca, calypso, ringbang, chutney, rapso and zouk) and Riddim Track (that plays reggae and dancehall) which are both featured for several hours on Sundays; Hip hop shows OTA Live and the Real Frequency; the community events listings of important Black community organizations on FLOW’s website; Black History Month coverage providing examples of famous Black people who contributed to world history; and finally the coverage and
celebration of Barack Obama’s presidential win as the first Black President of the United States. But given the gradual disappearance of Blackness over the years to meet FLOW’s corporatization and the elimination of important programming, many worry that these positive and promising aspects of FLOW or what is left of Blackness, are at risk of also disappearing from FLOW. For example, when FLOW was launched in 2001, their website featured a link to Milestone’s corporate website (see Appendix B and C). This website provided information on Milestone and the history behind their company and FLOW. The website even identified FLOW as “the first Black-owned and operated radio station in Canada” (milestoneradio.com). However, after the launch of the NEW FLOW, Milestone’s corporate website is no longer available. In addition, many of FLOW’s specialty programs are featured during times that are inaccessible such as the hip hop shows, The Real Frequency and OTA Live which air only a few days a week during the late night between 11pm and 1am. Concerns over the time slots for these programs which FLOW’s Black audience favours, remain unresolved. The Sunday morning Gospel program “The Word” is no longer a part of FLOWs programming since the launch of the NEW FLOW. One Facebook page titled, “Petition to bring back THE WORD” from Flow 93.5 to its Full Time”, protested this. Some people on Facebook have even proposed the idea of an alternative Urban radio station to FLOW in order to get the kind of radio programming they desire, such as the Facebook page, “Bring Back WBLK 93.7!!! Who Remembers Those Day[s]!!!”. Other concerns about music programming also remain unresolved. Some complained on Facebook that there was not enough reggae music. On the Facebook page, “Petition for FLOW 93.5 to turn into a real Toronto Hip Hop station”, Hali Lee wrote, “real hip hop AND REGGAE…they should
create an all reggae station too” (November 11, 2007, original emphasis). To date FLOW has not played the wide variety of Black music such as African and Latin music that Milestone proposed in their applications. Nicole Jolly responds to such criticisms saying:

we tried very hard to fulfill expectations, but certain things are not commercially viable. Do people not think that if we could play reggae or zydeco 24 hours a day and triple our ratings we would not do it? We did start out playing these things and it hurt us. Until (critics) walk down here with a cheque to pay our staff and light bills…the best they can do is get people’s tastes to change, then they can get what they want on radio (cited by Infantry).

But what Nicole Jolly may need to consider is that FLOW, being the only Urban based commercial radio station in Toronto, has subjected the station to much scrutiny and for this reason, as the criticisms indicate, there needs to be an alternative to FLOW in order for the Black community to get the diverse programming they are looking for.

One broadcaster, Fitzroy Gordon, attempted to address the lack of alternative commercial radio broadcasting to FLOW that would fill the diverse needs of the Black community in Toronto, in 2005, when he applied to the CRTC for a commercial radio license. Gordon proposed to operate a radio station that specifically targeted the Caribbean and African communities in Toronto by offering diverse music programming that include, “Reggae, Soca, Calypso, Gospel, Zouk, Cadence and Seggae, a range that would cater to the tastes of the various Caribbean and African communities in Toronto” (Decision CRTC 2006-135, par. 6). In 2006, the CRTC approved Fitzroy’s application but only in part on the condition that he finds a technical alternative to operating the station. Milestone however, had posed an intervention against Gordon’s application, arguing that FLOW would be most affected given that Gordon’s proposed radio station “would be targeted to the primary audience already served by FLOW 93.5, namely the Black (including the Caribbean and African) community in Toronto” (Decision CRTC
2006-135, par. 13). But the evidence presented in this thesis directly challenges
Milestone’s intervention in that FLOW has not effectively met the diverse needs of the
Black community with their shift to a mainstream White audience in the interests of
corporate advertisers. Milestone then will have to think of ways to reconnect with the
Black community in order to keep their Black audience.

**Some Implications**

We are able to extend the case of FLOW to understand in general why
expressions of a self-assured and self-determined Blackness in Canada are usually met
with denial and fear. Through the discourse of official multiculturalism, the Canadian
nation can suppress the claims of Blackness and avoid remedying racial inequality. This
disavowal of Black history and Black autonomy in Canada produces an enduring racist
legacy for Black communities, through which the backlash against Milestone’s initial
proposed Black focus radio station may be understood. This very important point about
the inconceivability of Black self-determination continues to resurface when (for
example) a Black focus radio station and Black focus schools are also rejected. It also
resurfaces when Black History Month continues to be targeted by racist discourse that
says Black people are being given special treatment that is unfair to *all* other groups.
Recently, in 2007, the TDSB renamed Black History Month, “African Heritage Month”
in response to a motion put forward, which used the discourse of official multiculturalism
to argue that diversity and equality for *all* students was not being met by supporting
Black History Month (Notice of Motion for Consideration).129

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129 The rather violent move on the part of the TDSB to erase Black and History out of Black History Month speaks more to the kind of anxieties and subject positions of the very people who put such a motion forward in the first place. Heritage Month particularly places all racial groups on an equal playing field so that the racial hierarchy of power and difference that exists, and for which White people continue to benefit
Milestone being subjected to the terms and conditions of official multiculturalism, had very limited options to articulate their subject position. There is no category “Black” that Milestone could use to represent themselves and articulate their vision of a Black focus radio station. Multiculturalism only offers very rigid categories of identity such as “men”, “women”, “children”, “multicultural”, “multiracial” and “Aboriginal”. Consequently, Milestone having no other legal recourse than official multiculturalism had to propose their Black radio station under the only two available categories, “multicultural” and “multiracial” to legitimize their application for a Black radio station. Therefore, to have their claims addressed for racial equality and social justice, Black communities cannot use official multiculturalism. So what alternative legal and political recourse can Black communities negotiate that would be specific to their social, historical, cultural and political location and thereby create the racial justice and equality they deserve?

Some scholars have proposed a critical multiculturalism that is focused on developing ethical encounters between subjects as a way to move beyond the debilitating rhetoric of its institutionalized form (Giroux 1994, McLaren 1994, Hall 2000, Hesse 2000). But what would an ethical multiculturalism look like and how would that address the specific claims made by Black communities? Hage (2000) argues that we would first need to develop strategies that go beyond tolerance to destroy the mechanisms through which White hegemony continues to reproduce itself. Hage suggests that when White people meet the will of the ethnic other, they often respond with anxiety because official multiculturalism continues to feed them the lie that they have power. The goal should be
to change the encounter between White and non-White people by first giving White people another language, politics and subject position that does not allow them to express feelings of loss of power. This would create a more ethical encounter between White and non-White people, which would allow us to live more ethically with difference in a truly multicultural society. As bell hooks (1996), in her essay, “Marketing Blackness”, warns:

Commodification of blackness strips away that component of cultural genealogy that links living memory and history in ways that subvert and undermine the status quo. When the discourse of blackness is in no way connected to an effort to promote collective black self-determination it becomes simply another resource appropriated by the colonizer. It is then possible for white supremacist culture to be perpetuated and maintained even as it appears to be more welcoming, more inclusive (178).
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SOUL SEARCH WORKSHOP CD COMPILATIONS MILESTONE AWARD INDUSTRY RESOURCE

UrbanFLOWcase is FLOW 93.5 FM's commitment to Canadian talent development. FLOW 93.5 FM is committed to fostering Canadian talent and artists who create music that reflects the station's unique urban format.

FLOW 93.5 FM's UrbanFLOWcase initiatives include:
- The annual Soul Search, an extensive talent competition to find and make new Canadian musical stars.
- An industry development workshop series
- A series of Canadian urban music compilations
- The FLOW 93.5 Milestone Award, an annual scholarship for visible minority youth interested in pursuing post-secondary studies in Broadcasting, Journalism or Music.
- Support for artist performances at various events and concerts.
- Sponsorship of various local industry talent and arts organizations.

FLOW 93.5 FM has committed $2.1 million over the seven-year term of our current license to these and other Canadian Talent Development initiatives. We are committed to nurture and support Canadian artists, help establish a Canadian urban music industry and contribute to the genre worldwide.

Contact information: Aisha Wickham
UrbanFLOWcase c/o FLOW 93.5 FM, 211 Yonge Street, Toronto, ON
Phone: 416-214-5000

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The FLOW 93.5 FM Milestone Award is a partnership with Ryerson University’s School of Radio and Television Arts. This audio scholarship was designed to recognize a visible minority student who has demonstrated outstanding creativity in Audio/Video Journalism or Music Production.

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Milestone Radio Inc. owns and operates, FLOW 93.5 (CFXJ-FM), the first Canadian radio station to bring an Urban sound to the airwaves.

Click here for more information on the first Black-owned and operated radio station in Canada. for the history of Milestone Radio

the milestone story
company bios
job/ intern opportunities

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APPENDIX C
The Milestone Story

The story of Milestone is one of struggle, commitment, dedication and long-awaited success. In 1988, five prominent members of Toronto's Black community formed Milestone Radio Inc. and applied for their first CRTC licence to operate an Urban-format radio station in the Toronto area. Denham Jolly, Zanana Akande, the late Carl Redhead, Reynold Austin and Tony Davy, shared a vision to bring a voice to Toronto's diverse communities.

Despite tremendous community support and strong media coverage, the CRTC denied Milestone a licence in the summer of 1990 but the disappointment didn't deter the Milestone team. Several prominent politicians were supportive of the Milestone cause. Marcel Masse, the Communications Minister at the time, sent a letter to the CRTC urging them to open the application process. He believed there was strong demand for a dance/Black music station in Toronto. During the subsequent years, Milestone kept working towards their goal of providing Torontonians with more choice. Good news came in June 1992 when the CRTC conducted a new set of hearings and recommended a Toronto market study to further assess the demand in the region for the Urban format.

Bolstered by the positive results of the study, the mid-90s were a time of rebuilding as Milestone began to prepare for its second bid for a CRTC licence. In its second application, Milestone once again received widespread support with an unprecedented 12,000 letters of intervention written in support of the company. To the disappointment of Milestone's many supporters, the CRTC voted to award the licence to the CBC by a controversial 3-2 majority.

Milestone appealed the decision and followed with a powerful public campaign to petition the Federal Cabinet. Milestone addressed the Council of City of Scarborough regarding the appeal and was awarded a favourable vote. Similar resolutions were subsequently submitted by the City of York and the City of Toronto on behalf of the group.

In May 1998, in response to Milestone's appeal, the Federal Cabinet sent the CRTC an Order in Council to reserve a frequency on the FM band for applicants bearing in mind Toronto's diverse society and the need for employment equity. Several months later the CRTC announced that it would once again call for applications for Toronto radio service. In the following year Milestone readied its application for the frequency of 93.5 on the FM dial. The new application again received widespread support and gained even further credibility when Standard Broadcasting became a minority investor in the station. Finally on June 16, 2000, 12 years after its creation, Milestone's efforts were rewarded when the CRTC granted them a radio licence. The newest chapter of the story began February 9, 2001 with the launch of Canada's first Urban format radio station: FLOW 93.5, the culmination of years of dedication and hard work by the Milestone team.
The Urban Radio Format

Within the present radio and music industries, Urban refers to a diverse, cosmopolitan music format based on Rhythm and Blues music and related genres. This format is a modern-day reflection of the rich musical traditions of Black musicians and Black-influenced music over the past century.

What we call Urban today is a mosaic reflecting the contribution of a varied group of artists over the last four decades. In the 50s the sound was defined by artists such as Chuck Berry, Little Richard and Sam Cooke. In the following decade artists such as James Brown, Aretha Franklin and Otis Redding helped shape the sound. During the 70s, it was Stevie Wonder, Marvin Gaye and Bob Marley. The 80s featured George Clinton, Michael Jackson and Run DMC with Janet Jackson and Whitney Houston emerging in the early 90s. Today such well-known artists as 50 Cent, Beyonce, Glenn Lewis and Jully Black are making their own contribution to this popular sound.