

MUSICAL GENTRIFICATION

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THE GENTRIFICATION OF MUSIC

Throughout the musical history of America, there has been a trend of white artists becoming famous and successful for playing music that originated in black communities. This often happens regardless of the white artist's intentions with the music. Factors include: institutional racism in the music industry, with record labels being much more likely to sign and promote white artists; and social racism, with many white audiences being more comfortable listening to music made by white artists. Artists such as Elvis Presley and The Beatles were very quick to acknowledge the black artistic pioneers that came before them, as Elvis told *Jet* magazine in 1957, "A lot of people seem to think I started this business, but Rock 'n' Roll was here a long time before I came along. Nobody can sing that music like colored people. Let's face it: I can't sing it like Fats Domino can. I know that." Even so, these artists still rose to a level of popularity much higher than their predecessors, becoming two of the highest grossing musical acts of all time. The effects of this can be seen very specifically in the transition of Rock & Roll from a genre of music made for and by the black community to the overwhelming majority of the rock community being white.

In my video, I use a mixture of found footage from concerts, music videos, interviews, and a Ted Talk from Stacey Sutton to compare the process of Rock & Roll going from white music to black music to gentrification—the process of a lower income and typically black community, to a higher income and typically white community. With this project, I hope to lead the viewer to recognize that all art comes from somewhere, and to pursue the artists that inspired and came before the artists that they enjoy.

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