

So Much Food

Food plays a prominent role in *Grace*. Prominently featured are many foods that are treasured in African-American culture. During times of trouble, people often find comfort in food that reminds them of a person or time when they felt happy or safe.



Fried Chicken and Collard Greens

Soul Food photo by Jennifer Woodard Maderazo.
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Black-Eyed Peas

Mmm... black eyed peas photo by jeffreww.
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Corn Bread

Photo by Douglas P Perkins. Courtesy Wikimedia Commons.



Pumpkin Pie

Pastel de calabaza photo by medea_material.
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What foods are comforting to you? Who do they remind you of?

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Piscataway and Nacotchtank Land Acknowledgement:

Ford's Theatre sits on the homelands of the Piscataway and Nacotchtank peoples, who have long lived, farmed, and worked on this land. Ford's Theatre Society honors the continued traditions of both peoples, many of whom continue to live in their homeland.

Ford's Theatre Student Matinee

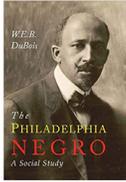
PROGRAM



Music and Lyrics by Nolan Williams, Jr.; Book by Nolan Williams, Jr., and Nikkole Salter;
Directed and Choreographed by Robert Barry Fleming

Bogle, Augustin, Prosser, Dorsey, Jones and Minton

This list of six families is prominently featured in *Grace*, but they are not just names that the playwright selected. These names represent Black men who lived in Philadelphia and used catering to create a path to wealth. W.E.B. Dubois discussed their rise to prominence in his 1899 book *The Philadelphia Negro*.



It was at this time that there rose to prominence in power as remarkable a trade Guild as ever ruled... This was the Guild of caterers, and its masters include names which have been household words in the city for 50 years: Bogle, Augustin, Prosser, Dorsey, Jones and Minton... In 1837 only about 350 men out of a city population of 10,500 Negroes pursued trades, or about one in every 20 adults.*

The question, therefore, of obtaining a decent livelihood was a pressing one... The whole catering business, arising from an evolution shrewdly, persistently and tastefully directed, transformed the Negro cook and waiter into the public caterer and restaurateur and raised a crowd of underpaid menials to become a set of self-reliant, original business men, who amassed fortunes for themselves and won general respect for their people.

*Trade: a skilled job, typically one requiring manual skills and special training such as bricklaying, construction or woodworking.

Over Time

Minton's Place, the restaurant featured in *Grace*, is struggling to survive in a neighborhood that has been drastically changed by gentrification.

Gentrification is a process in which a poor area (as of a city) experiences an influx of middle-class or wealthy people who renovate and rebuild homes and businesses. This often results in an increase in property values and the displacement of earlier, usually poorer residents. This is often caused by:

Historic conditions: Policies and practices that made communities susceptible to gentrification.

- Redlining: a practice that refused a loan or insurance to someone because they live in an area deemed to be a poor financial risk, these decisions were often made against minorities.
- White flight: sudden or gradual large-scale migration of white people from areas becoming more racially or ethnoculturally diverse.
- Historically low incomes.
- Low property taxes.

Over Time (cont.)

- Poor housing loan practices that led to higher foreclosure rates.
- Brain drain: when highly trained or educated people leave their area of origin.
- Drugs in the community.
- Gang activity.

Disinvestment and investment patterns: This describes a pattern that happens to communities that are considered historically poor, i.e. lacking resources like money, businesses, access to safe recreation areas. Resources such as low-cost office spaces, upgraded parks or renovated apartments/houses, are infused into these communities to attract new, often wealthier, residents. This results in the cost of living rising in these communities, thus pushing out the long-time residents, who often have to move into even poorer communities.

Historic Community

- Neglected parks with broken equipment and few sidewalks
- Lots of fast-food restaurants available and a few neighborhood spots
- Extremely limited and overpriced shopping options
- Poor access to public transportation

Gentrified Community

- Cleaned parks and walkable areas with new playground equipment
- Healthier restaurants with a greater food selection
- Wider selection of shopping options at better prices
- More options and accessibility for public or private transportation

What Do You Think?

Gentrification is a complex system of events that extends beyond the elements listed above. However, using the information given about gentrification, discuss the questions below with a friend.

- Have you noticed any of the above actions in your community or a community around you?
- Is gentrification always bad?
- Could neighborhoods be improved in ways that protect the historic residents, while improving the quality of life there?
- How can historic residents protect or improve their community?
- Are new residents responsible for preserving the history of a community they may be a part of gentrifying?