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CLEARING AND CULTIVATING CARCERAL SPACE: A HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF  
STEWART DETENTION CENTER

by

QUINN OUELLETTE-KRAY

Under the Direction of Richard Milligan, PhD

ABSTRACT

Stewart Detention Center (SDC) is a private immigrant detention center in Lumpkin, Georgia, 150 miles southwest of Atlanta and is one of the largest immigrant detention centers in the country. I conduct a historical geography of the space in and around Stewart Detention Center to better understand SDC as a continuation of colonial and racial territorializations integral to the nation-state and extending from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the present. I analyze archival documentation of the material manifestations of carceral territorialization, including a 19<sup>th</sup> century map and photographs of a series of erosion gullies fifteen miles from SDC. Finally, an intimate geography of the body in detention brings this analysis into the contemporary carceral space. Tracking the spatial practices of white supremacist land-body violence that accrue over time will flesh out contemporary understandings of prisons and detention centers as not timeless institutions but contemporary iterations within a historical constellation of carceral space.

INDEX WORDS: Historical geography, Feminist analysis, Immigrant detention, Political ecology, Carceral, Rural

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STEWART DETENTION CENTER

by

QUINN OUELLETTE-KRAY

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Science

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2020

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2020

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STEWART DETENTION CENTER

by

QUINN OUELLETTE-KRAY

Committee Chair: Richard Milligan

Committee: Tiffany Lethabo King

Katherine Hankins

Electronic Version Approved:

Office of Graduate Services

College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

December 2020

**DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my parents Kim and Randy and to Harris. I certainly would not be here today if it weren't for those three.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

SDC: Stewart Detention Center

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to analyze a for-profit immigrant detention center as an iteration of carceral space within a white supremacist, settler colonial society. Incarceration in the United States has grown exponentially since the 1980s. Prior to this boom, in the early 1970s, criminologists theorized the stability of the rate of imprisonment over time, as national rates remained relatively unchanged over the previous forty years (Blumstein and Cohen 1973). According to Zimring, “[i]n the thirty years after 1972, the rate of imprisonment grew every year and the rate of imprisonment by 2007 was five times greater than at the beginning” (2010, 1228). Crime rates had been on the decline prior to this sharp uptick in incarceration, a fact that points to the top-down nature of this shift through increased policing and harsher sentencing. Specifically, the growing Black prison population in the 1980s and 90s was a result of the war on drugs waged against Black communities, executed through three-strike laws and mandatory minimum sentencing for crack cocaine offenses (Lynch and Verma 2016). Since the 1970s, the US has entered an era of mass incarceration, with a 500% increase in incarceration rates, and with a disproportionate majority of people of color composing those incarcerated.

Prisons and detention centers have an extractive relationship with Black, Latinx, and Native communities, where the criminal justice system revolves around the consistent criminalization of Black and brown communities. Scholars reference the institutional-scale explanation for mass incarceration as a result of neoliberal social restructuring through austere monetary policy, deindustrialization, and globalization, resulting in both a “surplus” labor population and, according to Gilmore (2007), surplus rural land, to then be recaptured by the prison system (Davis 1995; Wacquant 2009). Prison construction grew exponentially with the

boom in mass incarceration. According to Anne Bonds, there was a new rural prison every 15 days in the 90s (2012, 130). The incorporation of profit-making into corrections reflects large-scale shifts in labor and industry that both prompted and were shaped by mass incarceration.

One way that prison construction has both kept up with and encouraged its exponential growth is through private, for-profit prison ownership and management. Angela Davis writes that “the term ‘prison-industrial complex’ was introduced by activists and scholars to contest prevailing beliefs that increased levels of crime were the root cause of mounting prison populations” (2003, 84). Instead, mounting prison populations were attributable in part to the increasing entanglement of capitalism and the criminal justice system, with the development of the private prison industry in the 1980s. Corrections Corporation of America, now CoreCivic, formed in 1983 and has grown to become an almost two-billion-dollar company. Like public prisons, the private corrections industry is fraught with abuse and mismanagement, but little to no transparency in private prison and detention center records allows for reduced oversight (Thompson 2014). Private prisons confine a relatively small share of the total criminal justice system population in the United States: less than 9 percent of the total of 2.3 million (Sawyer and Wagner 2020). In turn, private corporations operate the majority of immigrant detention: “73 percent by some accounts” (Haberman 2018). Private immigrant detention boomed in response to increased migration into the United States.

The boom in immigration from Mexico to the United States due to neoliberal economic restructuring in the 1990s fueled increasingly punitive immigration policy (Coleman 2007; Hiemstra 2010; Coleman and Kocher 2011; Longazel 2013). In 1994 the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the resultant increase in imports to Mexico caused the destruction of small agribusiness and increased rural poverty by 20% in just four years (Bacon

2012). NAFTA had a catastrophic effect on Mexican farmers, where “[t]wo and a half million farmers and their families have been driven out of their local markets and off their land by heavily subsidized US and Canadian agribusiness” (Faux 2004). NAFTA set off an immense wave of migration to the United States and the US South in particular (Winders 2005; Yarbrough 2010). In 1990, according to Bacon (2012), “4.5 million Mexican-born people lived in the United States. A decade later, that population had more than doubled to 9.75 million, and in 2008 it peaked at 12.67 million.” With increased migration and increasingly wide-reaching anti-immigrant policy, immigration detention boomed (Juarez et al. 2018). Private detention centers swooped in to capture the newly unmanageable detainee population. Jamie Longazel writes that “the private prison industry was pulled out of financial peril in the late 1990s by a surge in immigrant detention” (2013, 89). According to Luan, “[a]s of August 2016, nearly three-quarters of the average daily immigration detainee population was held in facilities operated by private prison companies” (2018). These private immigrant detention facilities are concentrated in California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Louisiana, Florida, and Georgia (Freedom for Immigrants 2020).

Stewart Detention Center (SDC), the subject of this historical geographical analysis, is a private immigrant detention center located in Lumpkin, Stewart County, Georgia. Lumpkin is 150 miles southwest of Atlanta. SDC is the second largest immigrant detention center in the country at 1,752 beds and is operated by CoreCivic (Project South 2017). The operators of Stewart Detention Center have been accused of violating the human rights of detainees and failing to maintain safe and healthy conditions (Robles 2019; SPLC 2018; Redmon 2018; Project South 2018; Project South 2017; Detention Watch Network 2012; ACLU 2012).

Prisons and detention centers are materializations of the white supremacist nation state, one that is founded on the genocidal corralling and removal of Indigenous people and the violent and deadly enslavement and imprisonment of Black people. Hackett and Turk (2018) define the extractive nature of white supremacy, writing that “white supremacy assumes the biological or cultural inferiority of nonwhiteness (or both), thereby rendering resources, land, and socioeconomic capital to white settlers or those who align themselves with whiteness” (25). Stewart Detention Center is located on land in rural southwest Georgia. Creek people were forcibly removed from this land and Black people were enslaved to this land. This research proposes that the contemporary materialization of Stewart Detention Center was not only preceded by, but produced through, a series of land transformations that began long before the sale of the land to CoreCivic, a multibillion-dollar company that owns and manages private prisons and detention centers. This historical geographical analysis brings two past white supremacist territorializations to bear on one in the present. The iterations of carceral space that came before Stewart Detention Center trouble conventional notions of the carceral and offer novel sites for research and resistance. The following sections will elaborate on such sites and their significance.

This research was guided by the following research questions: 1) how have the social, ecological, and infrastructural transformations of Stewart County and surrounding southwest Georgia been structured by white supremacist settler-colonial violence, and 2) how does the white-supremacist settler-colonial history of Stewart County *restructure* our understanding of the dehumanizing confinement of Stewart Detention Center? This thesis presents the findings from an analysis of the historical geography of lands centered on Stewart County, Georgia combined with a feminist political geography study of Stewart Detention Center. I argue that attention to

the continuing reproduction of colonial and racial territorializations beginning in the 18<sup>th</sup> century is crucial to understanding the politics of space that, at once, situate Stewart Detention Center and become restructured by it. I propose that when considered in tandem, Indigenous removal, plantation slavery, and immigrant detention materialize through carceral space.

## **1.2 Stewart Detention Center and Stewart County, Georgia**

This section provides an overview of the recent history of immigration policing in the United States, followed by details of the site and case of SDC in Stewart county.<sup>1</sup> I outline the recent history of immigration policing and detention in the United States to contextualize Stewart Detention Center and to demonstrate the need for an investigation into the carceral space that the US immigration system has developed and relied upon for decades. The perceived need for immigrant detention centers stems from the manufactured immigration “problem” and the criminalization of migrants and immigrants, especially from Central and South America, as I will demonstrate.

Between 1980 and 2000 the foreign-born population in the United States grew by 17 million people (Budiman et al. 2020). This rapid growth was due in large part to neoliberal monetary and trade policies of the US government, the IMF, and the World Bank that favored multinational corporations over smaller farmers and manufacturers, creating joblessness and prompting migration into the nearby US (Faux 2017). In 1994 NAFTA further increased migration from Mexico into the US (Faux 2017). According to Filner, “[i]n Mexican industry, the privatization of many public sector companies and the opening of the domestic market to foreign competition resulted in massive layoffs and the elimination of blue-collar jobs in

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<sup>1</sup> While Stewart Detention Center is specifically in the city of Lumpkin, I chose the county scale for this project because it provided a parameter that was place-specific with a traceable socio-political history, as opposed to a regional scale with multiple jurisdictions. That being said, the county scale is also large enough to capture a significant number of movements, relationships, and spatial formations.



thousands of companies, particularly after 1994” (2001). As a result of NAFTA, factories congregated in the Northern region of Mexico closer to the US border where some infrastructure already existed. Influx of foreign made products into Mexico weakened local manufacturing. “From 1990 to 2007, the unauthorized immigrant population more than tripled in size – from 3.5 million to a record high of 12.2 million in 2007,” and as of 2017, an estimated 10.5 million “unauthorized” immigrants were present in the country (Budiman 2020).

The increase in Central American and Mexican immigration of the 80s and 90s in turn led to racialized criminalization, where “[i]llegality thus becomes “incarnated” on the immigrant body through processes of racialization” (Hiemstra 2010, 79). In 1988, a “new era” of immigration detention began with the Anti-Drug Abuse Act and “mandatory detention of all non-citizens who had committed an ‘aggravated felony’” (Freedom for Immigrants 2018). The Clinton administration developed increasingly punitive anti-immigrant laws in both 1994 and 1996. In 1994 “Operation Gatekeeper” doubled border patrol agents and added border wall to even more terrain, killing increasing numbers of those crossing, and the 1996 laws, especially the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA) and the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA), both having significant implications for expedited removal and the destruction of due process for immigrants (Coleman 2012b). Further, the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), a private firm that has been around since the 1970s, designs conservative bills for legislators to introduce in the interest of paying corporations. ALEC is behind some of the harshest anti-immigration legislation (Scola 2012). This includes Arizona’s SB 1070, signed into law in 2010, which gave law enforcement the power to request immigration documents during routine interactions; Georgia has a “copycat” bill with similar repercussions, H.B. 87 (Campbell 2011; Stuesse and Coleman 2014).

Frameworks and technologies for immigration policing developed by the Clinton administration were not significantly deployed until the Bush administration as a reaction to 9/11 (Chishti et al. 2017). These shifts include the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, with its border policing agency Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and its internal policing agency Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), both of which maintain, according to Lauren Martin, “wide discretion to decide who to detain, where, in what conditions, and for how long” (2013, 149). Further, the 1996 policy 287(g) deputized local and state law enforcement allowing them to place retainers on people they suspect to be present in the country unlawfully and hold them for arrest by ICE agents (Coleman 2012a). As of October 2020, there are 77 law enforcement agencies in 21 states participating in 287(g) agreements (ICE 2020). Under Obama, immigration enforcement reached nearly \$18 billion in funding, with significant increases in noncitizen removals—deportation through formal means rather than “voluntary return”—where “[t]he underlying reasoning was to deter illegal border crossing and remove unauthorized immigrants before they become integrated into U.S. communities” (Chishti et al. 2017). Despite some legislation sympathetic to immigrant populations, “the Obama administration deported about 3 million immigrants between 2009 and 2016, a significantly higher number than the 2 million immigrants deported by the Bush administration between 2001 and 2008” (Budiman 2020).

More recently, the Trump administration has promoted multiple anti-immigrant policies and sentiments, including a massive border wall, a ban on travel from Muslim countries to the United States, and threats to end the essential program for deferred action for childhood arrivals (Foer 2018; Pierce et al. 2018). In late 2017 families were being violently separated after crossing the border, with parents and children being detained in different ICE detention facilities

rather than being detained together or paroled. Outrage erupted when the “zero tolerance” policy was announced by Trump administration in May of 2018—no tolerance for unauthorized border crossing no matter the reason and separation of children under the age of 18 from parents with no formal system of cataloguing those separations (SPLC 2020). Separation of children from their parents was a mechanism in attempting to deter future migrants. Between May 5th and June 9th 2018, at least 2,342, but potentially as many as 4,368, children were violently taken from their parents and caretakers at the U.S. Mexico border (SPLC 2020). Journalists and human rights advocates toured a child detention facility in McAllen, Texas and found that the children were being kept in cages and unsupervised (Merchant 2018). Despite an executive order signed by Trump to end the family separation policy unless the parent was endangering the child, CBP continued to separate children from parents for numerous vague and unsubstantiated reasons. Over 3 years later the parents of at least 545 migrant children have still not been found (Ainsley and Soboroff 2020).

Immigration policing, detention, and deportation are administered through a vast network of programs and facilities in the U.S., and Stewart Detention Center is but one revealing example of the infiltration of immigration enforcement into the interior of the U.S. The incarceration of undocumented immigrants has skyrocketed since the 1990s, where “In 1994, approximately 6,800 people were held in immigration custody on any given day... In fiscal year 2017, ICE jailed a daily average of nearly 40,500 people” (Detention Watch 2018, 2). Only the border states Texas, California, and Arizona detain more immigrants daily than Georgia (Freedom for Immigrants 2018). In fiscal year 2019 enforcement and removal operation’s average daily population in ICE custody reached 50,165, a 19% increase from 2018 (ICE 2019). The breakdown of ICE detention facilities is as follows: “five ICE-owned, contractor operated

Service Processing Centers, eight privately owned and/or operated Contract Detention Facilities, 12 Intergovernmental Service Agreement (IGSA) facilities which are dedicated to detaining ICE detainees, and approximately 200 shared-use IGSA's" (ICE 2019). The specific immigrant detention center that I investigate in this research is Stewart Detention Center.

Stewart Detention Center (SDC) is located in the city of Lumpkin in Stewart County, Georgia (Stewart). Stewart County is in southwest Georgia along the border of Georgia and Alabama. Stewart's entire western border is composed of the Chattahoochee river. Stewart has a total area of 464 square miles. In 1990 87% of Stewart's area was professionally managed forest (Moye 2006). Stewart County is located within the upper Gulf coastal plain region of the state, within close proximity to the fall line. Stewart's location on the coastal plain means that the terrain is flat with a mostly sandy soil composition.

Stewart County is not unique in its rural, isolated location and lack of resources. It is also not especially unique in that it hosts a carceral facility, in this case an immigrant detention center. According to the 2010 census, Stewart had a population of 6,058 people. In 2010 the racial and ethnic makeup of Stewart was 28% white, 47.3% Black, and 24% Hispanic or Latinx (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). The county seat of Stewart is Lumpkin, who's population was 2,741 as of the 2010 census. The peak of Stewart County's population occurred between 1890 and 1900 at approximately 16,000 residents, and since then Stewart's population has declined in every decade of the twentieth century. Stewart has lost around 1,000 residents in every decade since its peak until stabilizing at around 6,000 residents in 1980. In 2015 Stewart County had a per capita income of \$15,612 and a median household income of \$30,954 (U.S. Census Bureau 2015). Stewart is ranked 140 out of 159 counties in Georgia in terms of lowest per capita income, as measured by the total income earned divided by population (U.S. Census Bureau

2015). Further, Stewart is ranked 3,117 out of 3,143 counties in the United States in terms of lowest per capita income, excluding the territories of the U.S (U.S. Census Bureau 2009-2013). In 2017, Stewart County, Georgia was one of the poorest in the nation with 37.4% of its adult population living in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau 2018).

Stewart Detention Center (SDC) is 1,752 bed, medium security, all male facility. The private corrections company CoreCivic operates SDC through an Intergovernmental Service Agreement (IGSA) between ICE and Stewart County (Project South 2017, ACLU 2012). SDC opened 2004 and employs approximately 140 people. Stewart County made a profit of \$666,834 from Stewart Detention Center for fiscal year 2018, which was 13% of the county's total revenue (Stewart County 2018). Stewart County's total revenue in 2018 was \$4,878,287. The cost to the county of maintaining the detention center's population is \$54.25 per person per day (ACLU 2012). Due to its spatial isolation, SDC lacks legal and social services. SDC has one of the highest deportation rates in the country, and people detained there report countless abuses against their physical and emotional states (Project South 2017). Stewart Detention Center is a for-profit immigrant detention center in an isolated, rural town in southwest Georgia. SDC is a culmination of the increasing criminalization of immigration and the growing private corrections industry and an appropriate site for a historical case study of the production of racialized spaces of exclusion, erosion, and containment, or carceral space.

The more recent history of immigration detention in the United States revolves around NAFTA and the destruction of the rural Mexican agricultural economy, which caused a boom in migration from Mexico into the US. Increased migration fomented increasingly punitive policies and technologies of immigrant policing that employ racialized tactics to construct the immigrant as an illegal subjectivity. This context situates Stewart Detention Center as a component of the

contemporary immigration climate in the United States and an iteration of carceral space. Further, SDC, together with the colonial and plantation history of Stewart County, Georgia, is a revealing site in the production of white supremacist carceral space that dates back much further than the immigration policy of the 1990s. A historical geographical analysis of the space of SDC and surrounding Stewart County brings SDC to bear on earlier iterations of white supremacist carceral space and vice versa. A feminist geopolitics of the body in detention attends to the immediate experience of people currently detained in SDC and demonstrates the ways in which illegality is cast from the global scale of the nation to the intimate scale of the body. These two methodologies reject carcerality as self-evident or timeless by addressing the production of carceral space through time and scale.

### **1.3 Review of carceral geographies and immigrant detention literatures**

Carceral geographies attend to a diverse range of landscapes and scales. Hackett and Turk (2018) define carcerality as “a system that confines, entraps, and incapacitates, whether that be through the criminal legal system or by other means. This system of control in the United States has always been a function of a social order founded on white supremacy” (24). Carceral ideology and technologies are a function of the white supremacist, settler colonial nation and have thus served to confine, exploit, disappear, debilitate, injure, and kill Indigenous, Black, Latinx, Muslim, trans, queer people, and all others outside the white cis-gendered heteropatriarchy in the United States. The study of carceral space is a subdiscipline of geography and is often attributed to Foucault’s genealogy of punishment and the shift from corporal, public punishment to institutions of confinement and disciplining like prisons and mental hospitals (Moran et al. 2018). Moran et al. (2018) critique Foucault, stating that “[he] spent very little time considering the thoughts of the governed or the precise and lived nature of their self-discipline or

self-development” (676). Current scholarship on carceral space addresses, broadly, the political economy of prison construction and the socio-spatial dialectic of racialized illegality.

Carceral space is a territorialization of white-supremacist settler-colonialism. Sara Smith (2012) defines territorialization as the ordering of land and bodies in relation to geopolitical state projects of white-supremacy and settler-colonialism, writing, “[a]s bounded, ostensibly controlled space, the constitution of territory is crucial to state formation” (1515). Scholars Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2007) and Angela Davis (2003) have documented the production of carceral space, arguing that prisons are a spatial fix to crises of state-building and that the nation as we know it has been built and maintained by enslaved and imprisoned labor, respectively. Gilmore defines prisons as “geographical solutions to social and economic crises, politically organized by a racial state that is itself in crisis,” specifically highlighting the shifts in production and industry in the U.S. throughout the twentieth century and the attendant shifts in joblessness and social welfare (2002, 16). Gilmore has evidenced the systematic construction of corrections facilities “at the margins of social spaces” and has made crucial discoveries on the importance of attending to the connections made across seemingly impenetrable prison boundaries by activists combatting isolation (Gilmore 2007).

A carceral state is characterized by its incessant criminalizing, containing, and banishing of those it deems illegal. Ananya Roy’s term “racial banishment” describes the constant corralling and expulsion of people of color in the United States, a process that is central to a white supremacist state, as “carcerality is not a sideshow...it is a necessary logic” (2019, 228). Roy understands racial banishment as it “emphasises state-instituted violence against racialized bodies and communities...it is embedded in the legal geographies of settler-colonialism and racial separation” (2019, 227). Imaginings of Black, Indigenous, and Latinx bodies as inhuman

and thus socially and civilly dead, as Roy offers, are a fundamental prerequisite and implication of banishment. Roy implicates gentrification within this problematic as well, understanding it as dispossession, rather than displacement. This distinction signals the violence of removal, where racialized subjects are imagined as neither remaining nor going anywhere specific, as *dis-placement* is the removal from one's proper place or the place where one has meaning and makes meaning. The term does not define a *re-placement* and is thus inherently without one. This production of "placelessness" is integral to the settler-colonial project and the territorial formation of white-supremacist racial state (McKittrick 2011).

Katherine McKittrick (2011) has documented the crucial element of placelessness in the destruction of a Black sense of place. Further, McKittrick has offered that connecting the plantation to the prison accounts for both the anti-Black violence and death of the white supremacist production of space and the spatial and social practices that exceed or escape that violence, which they term "plantation futures" (2011). Numerous, complex ties connect the carceral spaces of the past and present, such that "a rapidly expanding, taken for granted, and familiar institution, contemporary prisons mimic, but do not twin, the plantation" (McKittrick 2011, 955). Carceral space is the result of systematic and centuries long violent and genocidal treatment of Indigenous, Black, and Immigrant communities; more specifically, the clearing of Indigenous people and the theft of their land coupled with the enslavement and systematic violent suppression of Black life and the imposed illegality of immigrant presence. Martin and Mitchelson (2009) aptly define the process of dynamic criminalization, writing that "through changes in legal categories, media representations, and policy discourses, different groups of people come to be seen as migrants, immigrants, asylum-seekers, refugees, illegal aliens, or criminal aliens, with each term connoting raced, classed, and gendered bodies" (468). Carceral



geographies literature makes the connection between prisons and detention centers in order to understand all carceral space as a function of white supremacy and colonialism.

Detention centers produce the very subject they require, as “detention is a spatial practice through which transboundary migrants are contained in order to be made legible as noncitizens and either authorized or deported” (Martin 2013, 158). Alison Mountz (2013) and Lauren Martin (2013) have fleshed out the practice of siting detention facilities in increasingly isolated geographies and they both extend this quality beyond the environment and into the geography of the body. Martin writes that this is a kind of “spatial ‘distance decay,’” where “detention’s disciplinarity is not therefore confined to the detention centre itself, but acts upon and through wider networks of intimacy, support, and forced mobility” (2013, 162-163). Mountz also attends to the isolation of detention centers, writing, “Obviously, detention isolates individuals. But beyond this fact, the *manner* and *location* in which people are isolated matter” (2013, 92). Mountz locates isolation both spatially and bodily, citing dispersal, separation, concealment, control, death, and the creation and creative use of islands as the mechanisms of isolation in detention (2013).

(Im)mobility features widely in immigration studies and has established a plural and complex understanding of movement and containment in immigrant life-worlds who are forced to operate under the constraints of exclusion from the mainstream labor market and social institutions, often relegated to liminal spaces (Conlon 2011; Mountz 2011; Nevins 2012; Moran et al. 2013). Mathew Coleman follows the devolution of immigration enforcement and policing down to their infiltration into spaces of social reproduction, conceptually moving the border into the interior of the U.S. and literally onto the space of the body as it moves dynamically through space (2012a). A growing body of scholarship on migration and carceral spaces utilizes critical

concepts of abolition and decolonization to establish a plural understanding of mobility and agency (Loyd et al. 2012). The use of these concepts has foregrounded thought on analyzing detention beyond its practices of dehumanization. Abolitionist scholars forge a connection between mobility and freedom that is tied to chattel slavery and realized by Black organizing (Loyd et al. 2012).

Attending to the scale of the body is a necessary component in understanding the social construction of the “illegal” subjectivity and the ways that imposed subjectivities are transgressed. Research on “hungering” and hunger strikes specifically provides insight into the social construction of the political body, where being-political can be found in spaces of seemingly mundane, everyday practices such as eating in detention (Conlon 2016). Karma Chàvez (2010) operates at the scale of the body in their work on spaces of care in detention, where normative gender roles are subverted in times of crisis and interconnectedness overcomes isolation. Isolation and care are just two of the many qualities that weave in and out of detention centers and can be traced to unlikely places, as scholarship on the capacity of the body in detention intentionally centers acts of resistance against erasure (Conlon 2016; Moran et al. 2013).

This body of literature on carceral spaces and immigrant detention unravels both the real and imagined space inside and around prisons and detention centers, exposing them as contradictory, unruly spaces. As Mat Mitchelson (2019) writes, “these remarkably complicated sites are very much on the move, materially and discursively trailing in the wake of criminalisation and dynamically articulated with capital” (222). Stewart Detention Center is one such site as it occupies a space of extreme isolation yet has effects that extend much further beyond its fences. This quality is captured and unpacked through a historical geographical

analysis coupled with a feminist geopolitics of the body in detention that presents SDC as an iteration of white-supremacist settler-colonial carceral space.

#### **1.4 Methodology and materials**

I employ historical geography as my main methodological framework. While each chapter involves a specific practice of textual or material analysis, historical geography serves as the justification for my choice of each chapter's spatio-temporal site and materials. Addressing the method of historical geography in carceral studies, Martin and Mitchelson offer the following insight: "were you to hold one prison constant, and follow it through time, you would find a diversity of comings and goings, and the near-constant reordering of that place" (2009, 461). Following the tradition of feminist, abolitionist, and decolonial geographers that center the long arc of racial capitalism as it structures space, a site-specific case study will secure Stewart Detention Center as intrinsically tied to its geographical predecessors (Loyd et al. 2012). I document the treatments and transformations of the land and people that occupied the space of Stewart County before Stewart Detention Center. A historical analysis that maintains the same or similar spatial parameters over the course of a significant period of time is thus able to track "place-specific power dynamics and their spatial durabilities over time" (Van Sant et al. 2018, 13).

A central component of this project is the process of territorialization, both by the nation and the subject or body. Smith describes territorialization as "bounded, ostensibly controlled space," and, "the constitution of territory is crucial to state formation" (Smith 2012, 1515). Territorialization is the making and demarcating of space, often for development or private ownership. In this research territorializing refers to the manner in which white settler-

conquistadors materialize carceral space through the violent containment, erosion, and removal of Indigenous people from their ancestral lands.

A historical geographical analysis provides the framework for an approach to the contemporary problem of immigrant detention in Stewart County that is accountable to the white supremacist structuring of space. The articulation of the carceral in the preceding two chapters centers the transformation of bodies and terrain, and thus in Chapter 4 I employ a framework of feminist geopolitics to explore the relationship between the territory of the body in detention and the territory of the nation. Sara Smith expertly defines this approach as a “geopolitics of bodies in the plural: their presence, their absence, and their state of health” (Smith 2012, 1515). I attend specifically to the ways that material conditions inside Stewart can be understood beyond their dehumanizing capacity as they reflect and inform broader processes of illegalization and belonging.

The method of critical historical analysis extends largely from the work of Michel Foucault and his methodologies of archaeology and genealogy (Garland 2014). Foucault’s earlier method of archaeology involved archival work in unearthing discourse as a means not of unearthing origins or secret histories, but surface level relations so common to social and political life that they are mistaken as natural (Lotringer et al. 1996). Influenced by Nietzsche, Foucault shifted his methodology away from archaeology towards genealogy as a means of centering the power-knowledge production that determines certain truths as “without history” (Foucault 1980, 139). The contemporary “truths” that Foucault was concerned with, such as sexuality or medicine, have non-linear histories that are the products of both oppressive and productive power. Ultimately, Foucault’s methodologies enabled him to conduct a history of the present, and especially of the epistemes that are taken as self-evident.

Historical analysis is a method for implicating the past within the present. More specifically, a historical geography evidences the ways in which the past accrues and accumulates, as opposed to ending and beginning anew with certain eras and passing on the torch of time. But the accumulation of the past is not always explicit or characterized by abundance. On the contrary, as I will show in the second and third chapter, the accumulation of time is often characterized by loss, not gain. On the importance of the past in understanding and addressing the present, Sharlene Mollett suggests “geographers put histories to work...as substantive and empirically rich complements to *contemporary* spatial inquiries” (as cited in Van Sant et al. 2018, 13). Wayne Yang offers the concept of “‘Storied land’ as an antidote to settler colonial vanishing’, or the erasure of indigenous peoples and space. Storied land draws attention to ‘the when of land, not just the where of place’” (as cited in Van Sant et al. 2018, 11). Connecting a series of land transformations over time can evoke what Kate Derickson terms the “annihilation of time by space” (2020). “Holding the spatial frame constant,” as Derickson writes, “disrupts a collective understanding of linear time and wrests that space into a conjunctural and geographical reframing” (2020, 490). Derickson prefers “*ruptural* pre-histories” over the more sanitized, liberal understanding of history as intertwined (2020, 489). Ruptures imply seismic shifts in spatial and social organization while also not excluding the processual racialized dispossession, or “banishment,” as Roy refers to both Indigenous removal and contemporary gentrification.

Doreen Massey underlines the importance of defining the concept of “space” (1993). Massey contends that conceptualizations of space thus determine the ways in which the spatial is political. One important problematic that Massey indicates is the conceptualization of space and time in binary opposition to each other, where “time is the one which matters and of which

History (capital H) is made” (1993, 142-143). Massey also cites the feminist critique of masculinist conceptions of dichotomies as irreconcilable, such as space and time or body and mind, as further reason to reconcile space and time and their bearing on one another. To conduct a spatial analysis is to “try to think in terms of all the dimensions of space-time” (1993, 153). Thus, according to Massey, space is temporal, multi-dimensional, interrelated across scales, and co-constituted with social relations. Following Massey’s findings, this historical geography of Stewart County explores spatio-temporal configurations of white supremacist territorialization and multiple processes and materializations of the carceral that result.

The task of understanding the various and sometimes disparate forms that carceral space can take is made possible through historical geography because, as a method, it is doubly productive in utilizing the present to frame the past and vice versa. In this project I turn to the diffuse and temporally fraught spatializations and monuments to carceral space in order to better understand the more explicit materialization that is the detention center, although that too is diffuse and temporally fraught in sometimes even more insidious ways as it purports to be a stable, concrete institution.

Because of the massive temporal and spatial scale of systems of confinement and control in the United States, a scaled down research area can allow for a place-specific analysis that is also reproducible in its broader themes. The materials I will analyze in the following chapters will track the treatment of racialized bodies in Stewart County from the 18<sup>th</sup>-century to the present site of one of the nation’s largest immigration detention centers. I term these land transformations clearing, cultivating, and incarcerating. I propose that these transformations are in themselves material monuments to white supremacist carceral space, as the clearing, the canyon, and the detention center.

In Chapter 2 I analyze the cartographic elements of an 1825 map made by Henry Schenck Tanner that depicts the remaining Native Creek territory between the settler states of Georgia and Alabama. The map was published the same year as the Treaty of Indian Springs, the first formal treaty of forced removal of the Creek people of Georgia. The original map is held by the David Rumsey Map Center in the Stanford Library. In Chapter 3 I examine Providence Canyon, a series of over 100 erosion gullies located in Stewart County 10 miles west of Stewart Detention Center. I treat the canyon as a material in terms of its formation during plantation slavery and its political-ecological significance for conceptions of “natural” monuments. I include photographs of the gullies taken in the late 19th and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. In Chapter 4 I center Stewart Detention Center and utilize two reports executed and compiled by immigrant justice organizations, Project South (2017) and ACLU of Georgia (2012). These reports consist of detainee interviews from inside SDC that highlight the embodied experience of the people detained.

## **1.5 Contributions**

According to Moran et al., carceral geography can “contribute to developing understandings of what the prison is; how this has changed in time and space; and how the prison continues to change and develop, including paying attention to the lives of the prison before and after it exists *as such*” (2018, 674). This thesis contributes to carceral geographies scholarship by further developing analysis of for-profit immigrant detention centers. Methodologically, I demonstrate the utility of a historical geography to identify the iterations of containment and confinement that precede contemporary institutions of carceral space. This methodology connects histories of racial banishment and colonial territorializations to their presents. By combining historical archival materials of Stewart County and contemporary immigrant justice

reports on the conditions inside Stewart Detention Center, this research contributes to scholarship on carceral spaces and migrant detention that construct bridges of insight into and out of the actual sites of detention.

Current research on carceral spaces and immigrant detention finds that detention centers occupy a dynamic space both of isolation and interconnection (Mountz 2013; Morin & Moran 2015). This follows Foucault's early finding that the technologies of carceral spaces and temporalities are organized in an archipelago like formation and occupy a continuum between compact and diffuse registers (Moran et al. 2018). Archipelago as a framework of carceral space applies throughout time as well—in the case of Stewart County, the multiple sites of violent racial exclusion and suppression are an archipelago, or constellation, in the same space, but throughout time. White supremacist settler colonial territorialization in the 1800s is an original element of carceral space and is reproduced today at Stewart Detention Center.

In Chapter 2 I center the forced removal of Creek people from Georgia by white settler-conquistadors, as Black and Native Studies scholar Tiffany Lethabo King (2019) refers to them. I analyze a map from 1825 that was created the same year as the first treaty to formally remove Creek people. In this map analysis, I demonstrate how Creek removal as depicted on the map remains dynamic. In the case of Creek removal as carceral space, an understanding of forced movement as part of the carceral continuum is in line with the critique made by Alison Mountz of “assumptions both that confinement necessitates *immobility*, and that mobility is inherently connected with freedom and autonomy” (Moran et al. 2013, 4). Further, following Wilderson's writing on the clearing as both a noun and verb, I propose this map is evidence of the act of banishment, despite the map's static nature (2010). The active process of clearing (King 2016) that ultimately becomes the “empty space” of the clearing is characteristic of carceral space and



its inclusion through erasure. The materialization of the clearing connects forced Creek removal to the unrestrained plantation slavery that succeeded it.

Chapter 3 hinges empirically on Providence Canyon, a series of erosion gullies 15 miles from Stewart Detention Center. Providence formed from chattel slavery and cotton plantation's unsustainable agricultural practices in Stewart County shortly after Creek removal. I engage the work of Katherine Yusoff (2018) on the geology of conquest to propose that Providence is a monument to carceral space. In my analysis, I demonstrate the importance of considering Providence as a multi-dimensional empiric that provides insight into the diversity of carceral spaces. Providence represents violent white supremacist territorialization both metaphorically and materially, in its monumental size and displaced soil, its depiction of the type of soil destruction that destroyed the planting industry in the South, and its contemporary status as tourist attraction and erasure of the violent means of its birth. Black Geographies and Black Ecologies scholars have explored the more-than-human capacity of Black people in toxic landscapes and have presented numerous occasions of Black people constructing a liberatory, elusive, and often anti-capitalist sociality (Roane 2018; Vasudevan 2019; King 2019). In this chapter I conclude with a proposal that the destruction of soils in southwest Georgia by way of plantation agriculture demonstrates an alternative agency through ecological destruction.

Chapter 4 is set in the intimate scale of the body at Stewart Detention Center. I utilize a feminist geopolitics of the body as a means of connecting the small scale, lived experience inside Stewart to the large-scale project of racialized immigrant detention. Mountz and Hyndman propose that the intimate and the global "coconstitute places such as the border, the home, and the body" (2006, 448). I analyze immigrant justice organizations that report visceral accounts of food in Stewart as rotten and containing foreign objects as well as water that smells of feces and

is non-potable. I propose that a materialist analysis of the construction of the immigrant body shows it to be intimately tied to the construction of a racialized, “illegal” immigrant subjectivity. This finding ultimately connects the contemporary carceral space of immigrant detention to Creek removal and the enslavement of Black people in Stewart County, as carceral space is composed of these multiple iterations of white supremacist containment and banishment that transform land and bodies in tandem. Despite attempts at erasure, detainees inside Stewart always take up space—an interstitial space inscribed with resistance, as demonstrated by El Refugio, an immigrant justice organization and hospitality house down the road from SDC that transgresses the isolation of detention, experienced both by detained people and their loved ones.

The goal in connecting these three sites is not simply to show that clearing and cultivating had to occur in order to make space for incarceration. Rather, these sites together illustrate how white supremacist territorialization is achieved through carceral technologies of banishment, erosion, and containment. The land transformation of each chapter is intimately tied to the racialized body of the Indigenous, Black, and Immigrant subject, illustrating a geopolitics of nation, territory, and race.

## 2 CLEARING

This chapter begins some 200 years before the Stewart Detention Center (SDC) was constructed in Lumpkin, Georgia. I argue that Stewart is not adequately understood in terms of its contemporary dimensions, capacities, or juridical functions. In order to better understand SDC as a white-supremacist settler-colonial territorialization, I define and flesh out the violence of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Muscogee Creek forced removal. I understand carceral space to refer not only to the contemporary materiality of the detention center and its interiors, but the human and more-than-human history of that land parcel, county, state, and nation through time. A historical geography of Stewart County will unearth the exclusions, containments, and banishments that make up the carceral state and materialize some 200 years later as Stewart Detention Center. These centuries are filled with numerous, violent accretions and erosions, both of people and soil. These territorializations are not just side effects of a liberal nation-state that features carceral punishment as a peripheral component. I term this period of white supremacist carceral territorialization *clearing*. Carceral technologies were central to the containment and clearing of 23,000 Muskogee Creek people from southwest Georgia and Alabama. This massive event in the territorial production of the racial state has both human and more-than-human implications that reverberate for centuries. Stewart is a continuing formation of this centuries-long violent geologic process of white supremacist sedimentation and territorialization.

### 2.1 Banishment as territorial technology

Ananya Roy's (2019) concept of racial banishment connects Indigenous removal to contemporary immigrant detention and carceral geography. According to Roy, for racial banishment, "carcerality is not a sideshow...it is a necessary logic" (2019, 228). Roy understands racial banishment as it "emphasises state-instituted violence against racialized bodies and

communities...it is embedded in the legal geographies of settler-colonialism and racial separation” (2019, 227). Racial banishment as an analytic frames the constant policing, containment, and expulsion of Indigenous, Black, and Latinx people in the United States, a series of processes that I track as a necessary step for understanding the carceral geography of Stewart County and its contemporary materialization of for-profit immigrant detention. This process begins with the expulsion of the Muskogee Creek people by the state of Georgia.

I am beginning my analysis of Stewart County, the contemporary location of a massive for-profit immigrant detention center, in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century because late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century immigration quotas, labor recruitment programs, and neoliberal monetary policies, among many more articulations of infrastructure and development in the United States, are among the more contemporary components of a historical web of colonial socio-spatial transformations (Ngai 2004). The aforementioned processes illuminate crucial aspects of immigration policing and the immigrant detention system. On the subject of the political-economic processes of making people illegal and subject to removal Martin and Mitchelson summarize that “through changes in legal categories, media representations, and policy discourses, different groups of people come to be seen as migrants, immigrants, asylum-seekers, refugees, illegal aliens, or criminal aliens, with each term connoting raced, classed, and gendered bodies” (2009, 468). In this chapter I treat clearing as a land transformation central to the materialization of white supremacist carceral space. The clearing of land that results from the banishment of Creek people in southwest Georgia is in and of itself a monument to white supremacist carceral space, characteristic of the treatment of Indigenous people by the United States in its violent erasure.

This chapter hinges empirically on the reading of a 19<sup>th</sup> century map of the US colonial frontier that depicts Georgia, Alabama, and the rapidly shrinking Indigenous Creek territory in

between the two states. Henry Schenck Tanner's map, titled "Georgia and Alabama" and published in 1823, illustrates the clearing of Creek, or Muscogee, life that had already been underway for nearly a century before the treaties of Indian Springs, Washington, and Creek Agency were drafted between 1825 and 1827. The first of those treaties was annulled and the latter two ratified to banish Creek people from Georgia. I read Tanner's map, published 2 years before the Treaty of Indian Springs, for its inclusions and its obfuscations.

The cartographic elements that are absent from the Creek territory depicted on Tanner's map signal a deeper ideological clearing. An analysis of the visual clearing of Creeks from the map is instructive in how their representations aided in justifications for their genocide and forced removal. This includes Creek social and spatial practices such as lack of land ownership, practice of usufruct, and homes and structures being built to only last a few years (Saunt 1999). A lack of Western articulations of private property and permanence in Creek life was taken up as impetus to remove Creek people. Further, the stage of clearing that the map presents is imminent rather than complete, which provides valuable information on the temporality of carceral geography. I argue that Tanner's mapping of Creek territory simultaneously acknowledges Creek spatiality and delegitimizes it.

This account of anti-Indigenous violence makes clear that settler colonial territory is conditional on defining and enforcing an *inside* and *outside*, not only marked by walls and cages but by more diffuse, unruly, and ongoing (de)formations of territory. Davis et al. (2019) summarize the landscapes that white supremacist carceral geographies materialize as, writing that "The dispossession of Indigenous peoples, the enslavement of Black peoples, and the propagation of nonhuman life on encomiendas, plantations, and reservations are interrelated, *yet distinct*, processes in service of the colonial-racial, capitalist project" (7).

This chapter details the process and materialization of Creek clearing and its centrality to carceral space in Stewart County. I document the notable aspects of Creek life that were manipulated by and assimilated to British settlers in the years leading up to formal, forced removal. I then focus in on the map elements that signaled both an ideological and material clearing. I utilize theories of racial banishment and clearing to frame my analysis of the map and the treaty as racialized land transformations, or the initiation of a geology of conquest that can be tracked throughout this thesis.

## **2.2 A brief overview of Creek history**

According to Claudio Saunt, in the same fashion of many of the Western mechanisms of ordering that we utilize today to refer to Indigenous people and life, “the term ‘Creek’ itself originally had been the English name for Native Americans living on Ochese Creek, a tributary of the upper Ocmulgee River in Georgia, but traders, retaining only the second word, began applying it to every native resident of the Deep South” (Saunt 1999, 13). The British also came up with the further distinguishing terms of Upper and Lower Creeks. In reality, these names did not correlate with latitude, rather, “this nomenclature referred to the fork of a trading path from Charleston whose southern or lower branch dropped off toward the Chattahoochee” (Saunt 1999, 13). This chapter centers the Lower Creek people, as theirs’ is the territory that present-day Stewart Detention Center is located on. In the following sections I briefly outline Creek settlement in Georgia.

Within the span of three years The Treaties of Indian Springs, Washington, and Creek Agency resulted in the Creek people’s complete removal from their ancestral lands in Georgia. The Treaty of Indian Springs, ratified in 1825, is the illegal marker, even in the unjust terms of colonial law, of banishment that also embodies the centuries prior of slow, deliberate clearing.

The illegality of the Treaty of Indian Springs resulted in its nullification one year after it was ratified. This made it the first ever “Indian treaty” to be annulled. This was a victory in itself because it acknowledged the illegality of William McIntosh, a White Creek chief, signing away the territory of hundreds of Creeks that had no political or familial relation to him. But this victory was actually a profound loss for the Creek people of Georgia. After the Treaty of Indian Springs was annulled a new treaty called the Treaty of Washington was signed in 1826, and while not forcibly removing all Creeks to “Indian Territory,” mainly in Oklahoma, Creek people were erased from Georgia (Haveman 2016). Clearing was taken back up by the Treaty of Washington in 1826, which resulted in the removal of Creeks from Georgia and their forced relocation across the Chattahoochee into what is now Alabama. The last of the Creek populace was banished from the Southeast between 1836 and 1837, prior to the support of Presidents Andrew Jackson and Martin van Buren for the Indian Removal Act of 1830. Ten years prior, centuries of Creek and White tension and violence culminated in a series of treaties that would result in the banning of Creeks for their ancestral lands in Georgia. Leading up to these treaties, wealthy, mixed race Creeks were used for their influence in trying to get others to relocate to territory west of the Mississippi as many of them, like William McIntosh, had already moved and established their plantations (Haveman 2016). Ultimately, the Treaty of the Creek Agency was signed in 1827 to rectify the discovery of a strip of land in Georgia along the Chattahoochee that had been missed in the previous treaty and was still populated with Creek towns. Almost immediately after, during the Land Lottery of 1827, stolen Creek land would be auctioned off through to Georgia’s eligible white male settlers.

The legal geographies of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries are central to racial banishment and I include them in this account to acknowledge their role in establishing colonial practices of

private property and land use, two elements of carceral territorialization. Legal geographies also make sense of the ideological clearing that necessarily preceded the assumption that Creek people were so untethered from their land that a single treaty could engender their removal. In many ways Creek people *were* “untethered from their land” in a literal sense in that they practiced usufruct and built impermanent shelter, but these qualities are only interpreted as negative within a Western framework of land and territory, where “to be ‘without’ is to embody savagery or other characteristically non-white-impooverished traits” (McKittrick 2011, 953).

According to Nicholas Blomley, “there is an intrinsic and consequential geography to law’s violence as it relates to private property” (2003, 121). Blomley has detailed the relationship between the colonial mechanisms of conquest, namely plotting, surveying, and mapping the land, and the intrinsic violence of such spatial practices. Creek geography consisted of many towns and lacked a hierarchical ordering or governmental superstructure and this organization complicated Western notions of political structure, leading to the British inaccurately referring to the Creek towns as a confederacy (Hahn 2004). This understanding can be aptly explained through Kate Derickson’s finding that the nation is never autological; it is always genealogical (2020). This makes apparent the breadth of the manufactured nature of colonial spatial and political organization, where the larger project of nationhood was not reserved for just its progenitors, the British and Americans, but for those being actively excluded and removed from this project as well. Blomley characterizes this double move of acknowledgement and erasure when he notes that “the frontier, which appears as a neutral boundary, serves as a condition of possibility for property’s violence, distinguishing and constituting at one and the same time” (2003, 135). The Creek nation, or more accurately, confederacy, as Hahn offers (2004), needed



to be simultaneously acknowledged and erased, a double articulation of colonial power that I will attend to in my map analysis later in this chapter.

The longer processual aspect of forced removal that lead up to the treaties was often achieved through less overt means—many treaties after the War of 1812 were enacted without emigration clauses or an exchange of land west of the Mississippi. This meant that settlers encroached on Native territory, cramping them and making emigration seem like their only option. According to Haveman, “no one did more to terrorize the Creek people in the 1820s and the 1830s than the tens of thousands of white illegals who streamed into the Creek nation” (2016, 6).

After the annulment of the Treaty of Indian Springs a new treaty was negotiated in November of 1825 and it disputed whether the Creeks would regain any of Georgia in the new treaty, the Treaty of Washington. Unfortunately, “the Creeks reclaimed their territory within Alabama, but lost all their land within the accepted but still unsurveyed boundary of Georgia” (Haveman 2016, 22). Even removal was a binary of presence and absence, as evidenced by the Treaty of Creek Agency that followed the discovery of a “narrow strip of land” that had not been accounted for in the Treaty of Washington. “Even as the Creek people sought to adjust to their new lives on a reduced domain, the Creek National Council faced another demand from Georgia for more soil. Soon after the ratification of the Treaty of Washington, Georgia discovered that a narrow strip of land along the Alabama border was not included in the cession” (Haveman 2016, 39). After the first two treaties, Indian Springs and Washington, 7,000 Lower Creeks were forcibly removed from Georgia as a result of both fast (the treaties) and slow (the encroachment) mechanisms. This removal was not clean or total though, because, “in a show of resistance over the land cession, a number of Lower Creeks burned down their houses and fences and cut down

the fruit trees that grew on their land so that no white families could enjoy the benefits of their labor” (Haveman 2016, 24). Further, some Lower Creeks would return to their ancestral lands to hunt, and when there were not enough deer, they would hunt settler’s cattle. Finally, the Treaty of the Creek Agency was signed in November of 1827 and legally severed ties between the Creeks and the state of Georgia (Haveman 2016). As documented by Haveman, "Thomas L. McKenney, who also signed the document, later recalled of the agreement that 'every foot of land remaining to the Creeks, of what was once their immense domain in Georgia, was now ceded'" (2016, 40).

### **2.3 Mapping and clearing**

My analysis of Henry Schenck Tanner’s 1823 map, “Georgia and Alabama,” highlights the clearing of Creek people prior to the formal forced removal of the treaties. Tanner was an American cartographer born in 1786. Tanner produced this map for an atlas of the United States. He also produced a map of Mexico in 1822 containing several errors, which was later used to draw the border between the United States and Mexico during the Mexican-American war (Carrera 2011). In addition, Tanner created the first geological map of Georgia, published in 1825, which connects his mapping of Creek removal to the mapping of Georgia soils for agricultural production and plantation slavery (Van Sant 2018). According to Blomley (2003), the surveyor is a violent agent of private property and “plays an important role in the inauguration of a particular view of space as detached and alienable” (135). Tanner’s map depicts the remaining Creek territory in 1823 as white settler-conquistadors were completing their final encroachment on the ancestral lands of the Muscogee Creek people.

My theoretical approach to the analysis of Tanner’s map follows the work of King (2019), who employs a “Black geographical reading practice” in their analysis of a 1757 map

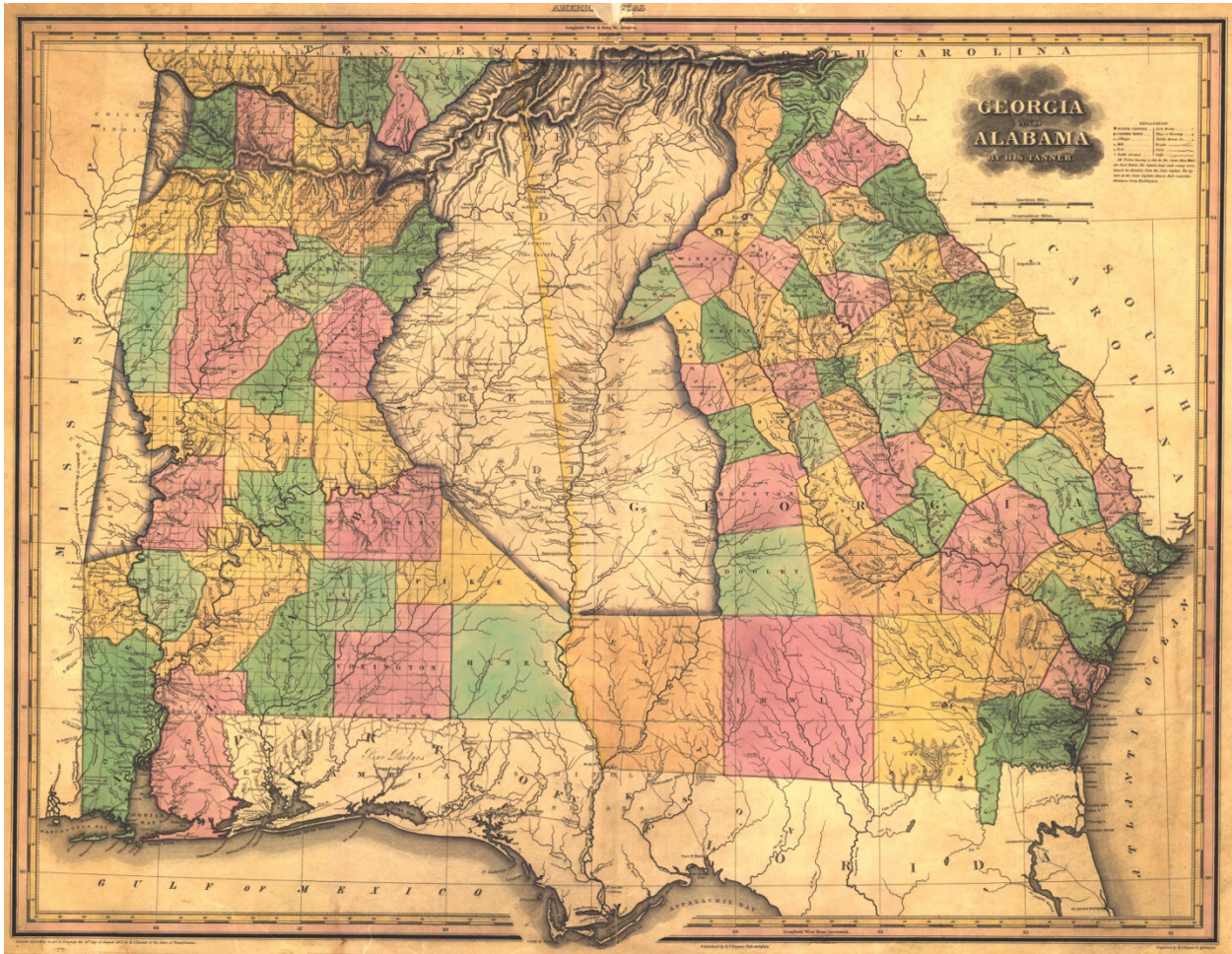
made by William Gerard de Brahm depicting South Carolina and Georgia (2019). In a critical reading of the map elements, especially the cartouche, King notes the cartographic construction of the Human, or Sylvia Wynter's theory of "Man1," the assumed white male subjectivity. In King's analysis the territorialization of whiteness is co-constitutive with the human. The cartographic elements of de Brahm's map write into existence enslaved Black people as property embodied and Indigenous people as invisible but impending threat, and thus, "because Black and Indigenous bodies are buffers between nature and the chaos of exteriority, the transcendent European subject can maintain its interiority and ideal humanness as Man1" (King 2019, 80). King notes that de Brahm's map was made for the purpose of property, and the White Male subject is never property; therefore Blackness is the only thing that must be embodied on the map.

Approaching Tanner's map using King's methodology and theoretical paradigm, I also draw from Frank Wilderson's (2010) differentiation between *clearing* as noun and as verb to analyze the map as weapon in the forced removal of Creek people from the land. For Wilderson, the perceived productivity and progress of the noun form obscures and erases the violence of the verb and naturalizes the "civil society" that is born of the forced removal. Here, clearing as a verb, and the violence and death against Indigenous people that composes it, is erased from collective consciousness and history and replaced with a story of heroic national origins. According to Wilderson, "*Clearing*, in the Settler / 'Savage' relation, has two grammatical structures, one as a noun and the other as a verb. But the Western only recognizes *clearing* as a noun" (2010, 207). This obfuscation renders the clearing as empty, fertile space, ripe for settlement and synonymous with the birth of civil society, and thus untethers it from its verb form. Wilderson likens this to the way Americans conceive of "the little Baby Jesus," or in this

case, “The little baby Civil Society” (2010, 207). Wilderson ponders what could have been if movies of the past 100 years mirrored back to Americans the reality of the birth of the little baby civil society, “how shattered might that faith become were the films to reveal that the newborn babe suckled Indian blood instead of White breast milk?” (Wilderson 2010, 207-208). The mapping of Creek clearing displays both the process of forced removal and the clearing, or open space, that resulted. The land-body violence of forced clearing is characteristic of carceral space and connects Indigenous removal to plantation slavery and immigrant detention in a geopolitics of nation, territory, and race.

My analysis of Henry Schenk Tanner’s map is further framed by King’s finding that “indigenous relations to the earth and nonhuman ecologies peek or leak through on the map” (2019, 90). The push and pulls of duality are a feature of Creek knowledge and meaning making, with the colors red and white specifically having significance (Hahn 2004). “Red hearts,” Chigellie and Antioche, two Creek chiefs, suggested, “were central to the identity of Creek men” (Saunt 1999, 16). For example, “Creek towns and clans were joined by their common commitment to the white path that existed in constant tension with the red” (Saunt 1999, 22). Historically there existed a tension and dynamic relationship between young Creek warriors and elders—elders and women had to “whit[en] the red hearts of young warriors” (Saunt 1999, 25). The recurrence of dualities, specifically white and red, informs my reading of Henry Schenk Tanner’s 1823 map. In this reading, elements of Creek epistemology bleed through in the map’s visuals. The clearing, in both its noun and verb form, of Creek people from Georgia and Alabama materializes on Tanner’s map in the shape of a heart, drained of blood, turned white. A thorough reading of Tanner’s map illuminates the inclusions and exclusions, as well as the

inclusions that conversely serve to exclude, or clear. This map analysis illustrates the materialization of carceral space that is the clearing.



*Figure 1: "Georgia and Alabama," H.S. Tanner, 1823.*

## 2.4 Creek exclusion through inclusion

The cartographic elements of Tanner's 1823 map both represent and aid in the clearing of Indigenous Creek people from southwest Georgia. This includes the title, coloring, labeling, and spatial formations. Despite Creek land being very much the focal point, Tanner's map is titled "Georgia and Alabama." The area where Stewart County was incorporated in 1830 is not yet

territorialized as Georgia and is instead memorialized as Creek land in the space of Tanner's map. While county divisions do not yet disturb Creek space, state lines do. The boundary between Georgia and Alabama cuts through the remaining Creek lands as a preliminary territorialization on the road to total Creek clearing. Cherokee, Seminole, Chickasaw, and Choctaw territory are also technically included on Tanner's map but receive little cartographic attention. This exclusion by way of inclusion is exemplary of the cartographic mechanism employed by Tanner to materialize the clearing before it had been legally executed by the coming treaties. But exclusion through acknowledgment also maintains some semblance of existence and thus renders the map an artefact of both Creek removal and Creek existence.

The remaining Creek territory that Tanner includes is located at the center of the map and is not in color but it is framed by a colorful Alabama and Georgia, making it visually distinct from the rest of the map. The shadowing on the edges of and surrounding Creek territory is particularly instructive here. The lack of color on the Creek portion of the map presents it as informal or under written in its lack of thoroughness and detail. Georgia and Alabama are illustrated in color, representing their formalized territoriality. The lack of color for Creek spatiality, as opposed to the vibrant color of the American territories, illustrates Creek land as empty and available for settlement and territorialization. Georgia and Alabama are elevated and hovering over Creek territory, a position that would enable an easy overtaking and settling of the two states on top of Creek land, thus refilling the clear, emptied lands with the color formal state formation.

The top right corner of the map includes an "explanation" next to the title, which appears to be floating in a cloud of black smoke. The explanation accounts for all of the symbols on the map except for the ones in Creek territory. There are small triangles depicted throughout Creek

land that are not defined in the legend. Many of these triangles are labeled with Creek words, and others with variations on the term “Indian Village,” including “Indian Vil.,” “Indian. V,” and “Ind. V.” The inclusion of the complexity of the Creek Confederacy without acknowledgement of such in the legend is effective in denying the legitimacy of Creek spatiality. According to Tanner’s mapping, Creek towns were not legitimate enough to be included formally in the legend despite their inclusion and naming on the map. This signals a distinction between the kind of settlement that was characteristic of the nation state and the kind of settlement that was understood as clear, see-through, and thus already gone before physical removal. White-supremacist settler-colonial mapping made Creek life and land clear and available for clearing. The carceral technology of clearing is illustrated by the ability of the surveyor to see through existing life-worlds and map them as clear. Tanner maps the space of Creek settlement as already clear in relation to Georgia and Alabama and thus available for transformation through territorialization.

King’s cartographic analysis of de Brahm’s map is overflowing with insights, but one of increased importance to my analysis is their finding that many of the roads on de Brahm’s map trace over Cherokee, Creek, and Catawba trails. On this point, King writes that “de Brahm’s method of cartographically eliminating Indigenous presence at once works to announce it and, if read with Indigenous life in mind, allows Indigenous movement and geographical relations to speak back through the map” (2019, 90). This unintentional announcement of Indigenous life-worlds and spatial practices is also evident on Tanner’s map. In the middle of the remaining Creek territory on Tanners map is the label “Extensive Pine Forests.” This inclusion is significant because the remainder of pine forests confirms that the carceral space of the clearing is still in process, as clearing in its noun form is synonymous with glade, meaning an “open

space in a forest” (OED). The Creek towns, the bodies of water, and the pine forest are the mapped elements of Creek society and are more than enough evidence of Creek existence. But the inclusion of this evidence by Tanner is without the kind of significance that Georgia and Alabama display because Creek territory is drawn without the cartographic style that signals legitimacy and permanence in the world of Tanner’s map.

My analysis of Tanner’s map has served to illustrate the materiality of the clearing, an oxymoronic reading of what is intended to be empty space. This duality, of cleared and occupied space, is an answer to King’s call to conduct “counter-cartographies that en flesh flat spaces and embed Indigenous stories and place making into the map” (2019, 100). I read the competing binary of Creek clearing and inclusion on this map as aligned with and resulting from the complex life-worlds of Creek people and their more-than-human relationships. This duality acknowledges the influence of Creeks on settler-conquistadors and not just the other way around, as is conventionally told. Ultimately, mapping Creek territory into oblivion cannot escape the influence of Creek people themselves.

In order to track the materialization of carceral space, it is imperative to account for the land transformations of Stewart County and the people that were uprooted, violated, beaten down, and killed by white settler-conquistadors. Ananya Roy’s theory of racial banishment connects Indigenous removal to contemporary regimes of imprisonment (2019). This connection is vital in expanding understandings of carceral space as temporally long and drawn out, with deep ties to the initial project of racial banishment that is forced Indigenous removal. Roy determines that dispossession is a project of the state, and this chapter has shown that the process of racial banishment is one of carceral territorialization. The carceral state contains and clears both bodies and land by way of exclusion through inclusion. Banishment revolves around the



relationship between unsettled and contained, one that Creeks constantly blurred and transgressed in the White settler imaginary, as depicted on the Tanner's map.

### 3 CULTIVATING

The plantation society of Stewart County and surrounding Georgia in the mid 1800s is the context of this second iteration of carceral space. Since the mid 1700s enslaved Black people had been inhabiting Georgia alongside Native people and white settler-conquistadors, occupying dynamic, intimate, and violent relationships both in service and resistance to the establishment of the colony and state (Saunt 1999, King 2019). This chapter returns to Stewart County in the 1850s when plantation agriculture and chattel slavery were growing quicker than the soils could regenerate. The rate of cotton production in Georgia exploded in a matter of years in the wake of Creek banishment to “Indian territory” in Oklahoma, save for one tribe that remained and continues to live in Alabama presently, the Poarch Creek Indians. Settlers took up the *clearing* in southwest Georgia that was forged through the violent suppression, murder, and removal of Indigenous people. The process of territorialization and materialization of carceral space entered a new stage: cultivation. The violent transformation of Stewart County’s lands through the forced removal of Creek people and the enslavement of and cultivation by both enslaved and post-emancipation Black people did not just clear and cultivate the land, it was co-constitutive of the ecological, economic, social, and bodily violence that is necessary to maintain a white supremacist carceral state.

In this chapter I continue to develop a historical geography of Stewart County and the multiple materializations of carceral space in and around Stewart throughout settler time. Following the clearing of Chapter 1, the land transformation examined in this chapter is soil erosion. Plantation agriculture, especially cotton cultivation, eroded the soil across Georgia and much of the Southeast, leaving particularly deep scars on the land of Stewart County (Sutter 2015). Ten miles west of Stewart Detention Center is a massive series of erosion gullies called

Providence Canyon (Providence), or Georgia's Little Grand Canyon, as Providence is referred to on the Georgia Department of Natural Resources website. I argue that Providence Canyon is both a material and metaphorical tool in understanding the production of carceral space. Providence is a direct result of the plantation economy and a sedimentary record of anti-Blackness. As a landform, the canyon represents both the erosion of the land and the body that are characteristic of carceral space. Thus, Providence advances our understanding of carceral space in Stewart County as it confirms the relationship between ecological and bodily destruction and carceral construction.

Without a careful consideration of the plantation history of Providence, its significance lies mainly in its "natural beauty" and in the scientific contributions it prompted. Along with numerous other erosion gullies in central and southern Georgia, Providence served as an exemplar in the development of 19<sup>th</sup> century geology. In order to reap the analytical insights into carceral space that the canyon can offer, I challenge this whitewashed history and center the territorialization of plantation slavery within the development of the gullies. This chapter hinges empirically on a reading of the environmental history of Providence Canyon (Sutter 2015) through the framework of "white geology" (Yusoff 2018). Katherine Yusoff's scholarship centers the extractive qualities of anti-Blackness alongside the constitutive capacities that geology has had in determining the positivist, enlightened human subjectivity. The canyon as it stands today is sedimentary evidence of anti-Blackness. I argue that Providence Canyon is a spatial analytic in understanding the diversity of forms that white supremacist carceral space can occupy, and further, is itself a materialization of carceral space as it constitutes the land and body violence and erosion central to the carceral state.

### 3.1 Plantation slavery in southwest Georgia

In this section I provide a brief overview of the changes in land tenure and plantation slavery after Creek removal and increased cultivation in the mid 1800s. I draw a significant portion of this environmental history of Providence Canyon from Sutter's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Gullies* (2015). The violent transition from Creek inhabitation to settler control of the land was formally enacted through treaties, land cessions, forced removal, and finally, a land lottery system that randomly assigned plots of land to white men. The State of Georgia used a lottery system for redistributing the stolen land. There were 8 land lotteries between 1805 and 1833. The land lottery that resulted in the formal settlement of Stewart County was authorized by the Act of June 9, 1825 and occurred in 1827. At that time the land was not Stewart County yet, but Lee County. Land was surveyed and documented in terms of its value, which was represented by tree types. According to a district plat of survey, the "cleared" land was then divided up into lots of 202.5 acres, a size determined and measured by chains (Tippens 1827). Eligible citizens registered their names and county of residence and name tickets were drawn from one drum and lot tickets from another. There were also blank tickets in the land drum so that it equaled the number of names. Once someone won a lot, they would then take out a land grant at a fee of \$18 per lot (Georgia Archives 2020). The randomness of drawing names from a wheel detracts from the settler colonial territorialization of a land lottery that was only available to white men.

The forced removal of native Creek people allowed for intensified cotton planting in Georgia in the mid 1800s. A massive influx of settlers brought enslaved people from the upper South and launched the cotton production that would make Stewart one of the most economically productive counties in the state. In the year 1850 there were 16,027 people in Stewart County,

including 7,373 slaves; 7.6 million lbs of cotton were produced (Sutter 2015, 19). While Creek people farmed in flood plains and practiced intercropping of beans to replenish nitrogen, according to Post, “[c]otton planters grew very little clover, peas or other nitrogen-fixing crops and relied on manuring and the availability of inexpensive land to counter-balance declining yields” (2003, 317). Further, a new variety of disease resistant cotton seed and the utilization of the horse or mule drawn plough led to booming cotton production (Post 2003). In just 30 years after the formal removal of Creek people, Georgia had the most enslaved Black people after Virginia, as documented by the 1860 census, and by the mid 1800s, southwest Georgia was one of the most profitable and brutal cotton producing regions in the South (Haney et al. 2009; Sutter 2015). According to Sutter, “during the height of row-crop agriculture, average soil loss was about seven inches *across the entire piedmont*” (2015, 112, emphasis in original). The rapid rate of agricultural production caused extreme soil exhaustion and erosion, two widely recognized ecological consequences of plantation slavery (Raper 1937; Reidy 1992; Post 2003). Stewart County is just one rural place among many that was ravaged by plantation agriculture. Raper (1937) writes that “the gully stage of erosion is common throughout the upland stretches of the old slave plantation areas of the south” (201). Providence Canyon is a monumental exhibit of the destruction that plantation agriculture had on the land and on the Black people that were forced to cultivate that land.

Providence Canyon is ten miles west of Stewart Detention Center, the private immigrant detention center that that propels this project. In total, there are 159 substantial gullies in Stewart county (Sutter 2015). According to Sutter, “while the exact origins of Providence canyon are hard to determine, it was well formed before the civil war” (2015, 6). David Walker Lowe was a settler close to what is now Providence. The canyon is named after his church that

had to be moved multiple times at the will of the gullies (Sutter 2015). Providence consists of sixteen gullies, totaling 1100 acres in area. The gullies of Stewart County continued to expand in the half century after the Civil War, until they covered tens of thousands of acres by the early twentieth century. Providence is a series of erosion gullies on the portion of Georgia that is flat coastal plain, and thus a spatial anomaly in terms of the “natural” landforms of Georgia and their respective regions. The displacement of soil from Stewart County through the cultivation of enslaved Black people resulted in numerous deep lacerations in the land. The white supremacist territorialization of Stewart County is apparent in the erosion of land and body.

A central technology of white-supremacist land acquisition in settler-colonial Georgia is the soil survey. Here an 1837 Gazetteer of the state of Georgia describes the soil composition of southern and central Georgia:

In the southern section the soil is sandy, with rich low grounds. Where pine only is produced, the soil is unproductive; but where other kinds of timber grow with the pine, it is generally fertile. In the middle section, the soil is a red loam and remarkably fertile...It is not pretended that these three different kinds of soil are confined by parallels of Latitude, exclusively, to the several sections named: but that they generally prevail in these sections is obvious to all acquainted with the State. (Sherwood 1837, 76)

In the same gazetteer the forced removal of Cherokee and Creek peoples is referred to in terms of the soil: “Now there are white settlers in all parts of that country. The right to the soil has always been maintained by Georgia” (Sherwood 1837, 74). The “always” of this quote indicates that settlers treated the soil of Georgia’s landscape as their rightful property before they forcefully obtained it through Indigenous removal. It follows that claims to soil ownership signal the violence of notions of soil improvement and the extent to which a sentiment of ownership is

destructive to land and body. The political nature of agricultural improvement is complicated further by the distinction that even before the soil was stolen from Indigenous people it already belonged to white settler-conquistadors. Van Sant writes that “[t]he improvement of agriculture via the soil survey was a method for exerting territorial control and managing populations” (2018, 7). Claims to soil ownership can be considered the precursors to the soil surveys that determined which land could be further “improved” and was worthy of public utilities and which land was too marginal and thus further abandoned by the state’s resources (Van Sant 2018). Stewart County is an example of a marginal land, as demonstrated by the attention it got from Farm Security Administration photographers in the 1930s as the poster child of poverty and poor land use practices, and by its contemporary status as one of the poorest counties in the country (Sutter 2010).

The unrelenting and short-sighted mode of plantation agriculture that was underway in southwestern Georgia in the 1800s caused major loss in topsoil and widespread erosion. But an environmental history that revolves around unsustainable farming practice yet omits settler colonial white supremacy denies the relationship between environmental destruction and racial capitalism. These theoretical gullies, like the literal ones of providence canyon, deepen through the repetition of geologic narratives that forgo a correlation between the terrain and the social conditions that soil treatment is a result of. Analyzing Providence canyon produces different results when it is considered as a problem of short-sightedness and unsustainable agriculture rather than a matter of ecocidal anti-Blackness. This chapter demonstrates that the territorialization of the carceral relies on both land and bodily violence and control, as was show in Chapter 2 with the corralling and forced removal of Native Creek people from Georgia in order to materialize the clearing. The land-body violence of carceral production manifests in a

variety of spaces and structures. In the case of Providence Canyon, the erosion of the land of Stewart County, the enslaved Black people that physically executed that erosion, and the landform that resulted are part of the production of carceral space that is now Stewart Detention Center. The white-supremacist carceral-state territorializes through racialized bodies and purportedly underutilized land to consistently render the utility and disposability of land and bodies.

### **3.2 Providence Canyon as White geology**

I employ Katherine Yusoff's framework of White geology (2018) to expand upon the environmental history of Providence Canyon provided by Paul Sutter (2015). As a framing analytic, McKittrick offers that "[n]ormative intellectual structures understand geography and literature and physics and geology to be absolutely different. Of course, there is overlap. We know there is overlap. But noticing and building overlap is discouraged" (2019, 243). Both Sutter and Yusoff address the geological theories that developed in response to the erosion gullies of Georgia. The science of geology provides access to the science of the land, soil, and deep time that was used to develop humanist thought, adding further definition to the binaries of human and nonhuman and increasing the distance between more than/other than human ways of understanding and interacting with the land: Native and Black ways.

Sutter's book *Let Us Now Praise Famous Gullies: Providence Canyon and the Soils of the South* (2015) provides an environmental history of the formation of Providence Canyon. Sutter contrasts different theories as to why the soil was so heavily eroded in the Southeast, whether that be from crop type or planting style. Sutter also documents the evolution of soil surveys as a response to the gullies developing throughout the Southeast. Notably, Sutter includes the co-emergence of a geological science with the erosion of the southeastern land. As



Sutter notes, “[i]t was during the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that concepts of geologic deep time became widely discussed and debated” (2015, 26). Specifically, Sir Charles Lyell, a Scottish geologist, visited Georgia and observed the gullies as an example in his newly developed theory of uniformitarianism, rather than catastrophism (Yusoff 2018). A gully in Milledgeville deeply impressed upon Lyell and is even named after him.

Yusoff’s book, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (2018), is an exploration in the co-constitution of Blackness and matter, specifically geologic matter and modes of extraction, through “the role of earth archives as material deposits that maintain a colonial relation through the extractive and waste industries” (2018, 49). Yusoff applies the distinction between human and non-human that was conceived of by Sylvia Wynter to the case of mineral extraction and the objectification of Blackness, asking, “how is geology as a discipline and extraction process cooked together in the crucible of slavery and colonialism?” (2018, 9). In addition to Wynter, Yusoff draws on Hortense Spiller’s query of how property became associated with the human, or how the human became property. Rather than think about what we know about humans that makes them available to objectification and value assignment, Spillers challenges us to think about how those systems of property, ownership, resource extraction were constructed and how they discipline non-owners. In Yusoff’s words, they “seek to undermine the *givenness* of geology as an innocent or natural description of the world” (2018, 10). Instead, geology is defined through delineations of human and nonhuman and coproduced with resource extraction.

Yusoff’s text is an appropriate framework to consider Providence Canyon as an iteration of carceral space because it implicates geology in the production of Blackness as inhuman matter, amenable to extraction. Plantation slavery caused the displacement of soil from Stewart County and left massive gullies that led to the continued disinvestment from Stewart and the

eventual construction of a private immigrant detention center. As Yusoff writes, “[t]he birth of racial subject is tied to colonialism and the conquest of space and the codification of geology as property and properties. Thereby geologic resources and bodily resources (or racialized slavery) share a natal moment” (2018, 58). Beyond the specific case of Stewart County and Providence Canyon, land-body violence and ecological destruction is a technology in the production of carceral space.

Soil erosion in the plantation South is a rift in ecological and subject formation. In other words, the Black life and labor that went into soil erosion and the scientific discipline that resulted from it bookend two conceptual rifts that are ripe for analysis. In balancing the natural and the more-than-human dynamic of Providence Canyon, Katherine McKittrick offers guidance on the importance of striking a balance between materiality and metaphor, asking, “[w]hat happens to the rift if [it] is not just a metaphor for a ‘conceptual opening’? what happens, at least for me, is the hard task of working out how environment disaster, ecology, and geology, are tied to black studies” (2019, 246). Yusoff determines that the extraction of slave labor alongside and in service to the extraction of resources defines Black life as nonhuman. This designation becomes naturalized alongside extraction through the formalization of geology as a discipline and science. To address the question of inhumanity, Yusoff explores themes such as the Anthropocene and the “Golden Spike,” or the time period and attendant political-ecologic changes chosen as a marker for the beginning of the Anthropocene. Their analysis of the origin story of the Anthropocene initiates a broader discussion of geologic time, and more specifically, linear progress, which Yusoff sites as one of the main mechanisms in suppressing and collapsing Blackness with inhuman matter.

Yusoff proposes that the development of the concepts of deep geologic time by Sir Charles Lyell initiated a linear progress narrative for geologic matter, and thus for Blackness (2018, 75). This linear progress narrative has been challenged by Black Studies scholars that propose a more-than-human framework to understand the often fraught, intimate relationship between Blackness, labor, and land. As Vasudevan offers, “[e]ven as toxic exposure recomposed Black bodies, Black workers gave life to aluminum. Jason’s statement that ‘a lot of the blacks ... gave their blood, sweat, life’ to aluminum is more material reality than metaphor” (2019, 8). King (2016) offers another poignant example with their analysis of the indigo stained hands of formerly enslaved people in Julie Dash’s film *Daughters of the Dust*. King asserts that the fungibility of Blackness allows for more-than human relationships that defy linear temporality or Euclidean space, writing that “[t]he pores of the hand become a part of an ecological constellation that includes both flesh and plants” (2016, 1034). In the following section I attend to the material reality of the destruction of plantation soils by the hands of enslaved Black people and the ways in which this complicates and expands notions of agency.

### **3.3 Black geographies and alternative agency**

Read together, Sutter’s text illuminates the utility of Yusoff’s project. Sutter considers the implications of enslaved labor as agent of soil erosion. Further, Sutter asserts the agency of enslaved people in discussions of their deliberate destruction of landscapes as acts of resistance. Yusoff finds that white supremacist conceptions of the human determined Black people as nonhuman because of their relationship with and role as extraction. It follows that Yusoff’s assertion that “monuments made to these moments of extraction only accrue the extension of value to those colonial forces” (2018, 12) rings true for Providence Canyon. The erosion gullies of Georgia impressed Lyell as an objective framework for deep time, calculated through the

progress of landforms, and in turn, as Yusoff (2018) proposes, the lack of progress of enslaved Black people out of the category of nonhuman. A critical alternative to Lyell's interpretation of the canyon is the finding that agency in ecological destruction lends itself to a more-than-human conception of Blackness.

In this final section I will review the literature of Black Geographies that consider landscapes of white supremacy as both deadly and alive with modes of more-than and other-than-human ways of being. A material analysis of soil erosion means considering its implications for the hands that dislodged the topsoil and made it vulnerable to shift and travel. In the case of Providence, it is also notable that agency in ecological destruction materialized as something awe inspiring in its beauty, a quality shared by the landscapes of the US that inspired in white settlers a desire to conquer and eventually a desire to conserve. According to Yusoff, "the relation of slave to provision ground was a relation to a contingent earth, a material relation forged in resistance to the dehumanizing of colonialism that opened a carceral geography" (2018, 36). Similarly, analyses of the laboring Black body on the plantation that occlude this interpretation of a more-than-human agency neglect to acknowledge the imprint that Black life has through a Black sense of place, beyond solely violence and death (McKittrick, 2011). Yusoff writes that "[t]he history of Blackness by its very negation in the category of nonbeing within economies of Whiteness lives differently in the earth" (2018, 9).



*Figure 2: Providence Canyon from Rim, Ronnie Honerkamp, 2008.*

The more-than-human dimensions of coloniality and racial capitalism include ecological destruction, toxicity, and soil erosion, as well as fugitive and anti-capitalist practices of land use and sociality (Van Sant 2018; Wright 2018; Roane 2018; Vasudevan 2019). Carrie Freshour expertly makes this connection in the geography of poultry plants, also in rural Georgia, writing that “Poultry-processing plants are critical sites of racial capitalist accumulation produced through an unequal valuation of people and places, which simultaneously robs the worker and the soil” (2020). King adds further dimension to the connection between land accrual and erosion and racial capitalism, writing that “Black bodies as ecotones (and shoals), or what environmental scientists would identify as transitions in the landscape, function as symbols of liminal, in-between spaces and phases in dynamic processes” (2019: 103). King unearths a different kind of

power in the relationship and dominion that Blackness holds over the land and soil on the plantation. Theories of Blackness and its construction as fungible within racial capitalism expose the limited and narrow implications that a labor framework has for defining life within slavery.

Providence exhibits the fungibility of Blackness that King insists on, where:

“[t]heories that attempt to triangulate Blackness into the Settler/Native antagonism in White settler states do so by positing Blackness as the labor force that helps make the settler landscape possible [3]. It is true that Black labor literally tills, fences in and cultivates the settler’s land. However, this singular analysis both obscures the issue of Black fungibility and reduces Blackness to a mere tool of settlement rather than a constitutive element of settler colonialism’s conceptual order” (2014).

This quote illustrates the imperativeness in conceptualizing the erosion of the land in Stewart County as a more-than-human process. The cultivation of the soil by enslaved Black people was not a “mere tool of settlement,” as King warns against, because it was constitutive of the science of geology and had critical implications for the resultant knowledge of deep time and positivist earth sciences.

### **3.4 Cultivating the carceral**

J.T. Roane writes that “[e]nslaved Black people and their descendants, over whom the institution cast a long shadow, navigated the precarious line between acting directly as the agents of ecological destruction and working the landscape to carve out the contours of an entirely different kind of social order” (2018, 247). Land use as an analytic must be extracted from the binary of ownership and non-ownership, as this occludes the complicated relationship to land that develops from an intimate, violent, and oftentimes deadly relationship to it. Centering material land transformation allows for the impressions that enslaved and post-emancipation

Black people made through cultivation and transformation on the plantation, both with the destructive monocropping of commodities and with their personal gardens, or plots, that nourished them and created openings for self-sufficiency outside of slave labor (Roane 2018). Further, this analytic opens up the possibility for agency to lie in the hands and bodies that made contact with the land. Agency in soil erosion implies agency in the ruins of racial capitalism that were ultimately a component in the demise of cotton plantation agriculture in the South.

In this chapter I have argued that Providence Canyon is an iteration of carceral space. Considering Providence as carceral broadens our understanding of the production of carceral spaces and the iterations of the carceral that precede the contemporary prisons and detention centers that are often more recognizable than a canyon or a clearing. Further, the canyon as carceral space solidifies that land-body violence is central to white supremacist carceral territorialization. When considered in both its metaphoric and material capacities, Providence Canyon informs multiple registers of the need for a historical geography of the production of white supremacist carceral space. The land and body-use history of rampant and destructive plantation slavery that Providence is a direct result of exemplifies the dynamic contradiction always present in carceral space, where the carceral is never completely total or finished, as we see in its multiple iterations throughout this paper, and thus there are always interstitial opportunities for agency and resistance.

Beyond its significance as a unique and storied landform, Providence is a monumental manifestation of plantation slavery that can serve as evidence for a Black sense of place, as McKittrick (2011) refers to it, and further, for troubling conventional notions of agency and relationality with the land. I consider the geology of Providence Canyon and the co-constitution of geology, slavery, and anti-Blackness to be processes in the cultivation of Stewart Detention

Center and in the treatment of the detained body in Stewart. Juxtaposing Stewart Detention Center and Providence Canyon conjures an image of carceral space that is above ground in its pressing contemporary materiality and violence, and deep below the soil in its genealogy of settler colonialism and white supremacy.



#### 4 INCARCERATING

In this chapter I conduct a feminist geography of the body in detention in order to flesh out the space of detention, the way space becomes mapped onto the body, and thus the designations and transformations that the body undergoes while detained. I analyze reports compiled by immigrant justice organizations that include striking accounts of food at Stewart frequently being rotten, containing foreign objects, and being served in grossly insufficient portions (Project South 2017). The visceral effect of these accounts provokes an exploration of ingestion and the active role that food content and quality play in the way detained and most often non-white immigrant bodies at Stewart are imagined and treated. This chapter tracks the broader processes of *illegalization* onto the small scale, every day, material exchanges that happen inside Stewart.

The previous chapters have documented key iterations of carceral space within the history of the territory of Stewart County. Today Stewart Detention Center, one of the largest private immigrant detention centers in the country, utilizes the *cleared* and *cultivated* carceral space of Stewart County. As I have demonstrated over the course of this paper, carceral space materializes through white supremacist territorializations that violently contain, erode, and remove both people and land. The carceral territorializations that have accrued to become Stewart Detention Center first materialized in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Georgia with the forced removal of Creek people from their ancestral lands. In the mid 1800s the “emptied” space of Creek lands was captured by white settlers and enslaved Black people. What followed was massive soil erosion. The sandy soil of Stewart County was over-worked through intensified cotton production under chattel slavery, resulting in numerous hundred-foot-deep gullies. These gullies mimic “natural” canyons and further obfuscate the white supremacist territorializations that

incessantly extract from land and body until there is nothing left but a gaping wound. This chapter addresses white supremacist territorialization at the bodily scale inside a contemporary iteration of carceral space in Stewart County: Stewart Detention Center.

Carceral space structures and is structured by anti-Indigeneity and anti-Blackness. Early iterations of carceral space materialize through the removal of Creek people and the enslavement of Black people in southwest Georgia. While these articulations of white supremacy did not follow the exact same formula, land-body destruction was fundamental to both. I make the case for an inclusion of anti-Immigrant violence within this understanding of white supremacist territorialization. The inclusion of Stewart Detention Center in this constellation of carceral space troubles any origin story of violent and deadly immigration detention being solely the result of contemporary anti-immigrant policy and private management. As Martin and Mitchelson confirm, “detention practices have specific legal, political, and historical geographies that point toward the continuation of a violent, colonial past, rather than a break from a more peaceful, law-abiding neat past” (2009, 469). The containment, erosion, and removal of detained immigrants is a white supremacist carceral territorialization. Rather than seek to redefine theories of the carceral, I propose that putting these three sites in conversation with one another elaborates current carceral geographies research.

Immigration policing in the United States has been decorated with racist legislation against Asian, Muslim, and Latinx people for over a century (Ngai 2004). Contemporary imprisonment of migrants deemed “unlawful” is central to the continued territorialization of the white supremacist carceral state, where the body of the nation is purported to be impenetrable, and when it is transgressed it exploits, isolates, and banishes. Approaching the technologies of immigrant detention from the perspective of anti-Black and anti-Indigenous settler colonial pasts

and presents constructs a “relationality of flesh beyond the laws of comparison” (Weheliye 2014, 124). Comparison often maintains a parallel structure, whereas relationality is free to layer, precede, and succeed. Ruth Wilson Gilmore prompts geographers to “develop a research agenda that centers on race as a condition of existence and as a category of analysis, because the territoriality of power is a key to understanding racism” (2002, 22). Ultimately, white supremacist territorializations cannot be accurately understood without the concept of carceral space, and in turn, the contemporary carceral space of immigrant detention cannot be aptly and dynamically considered in isolation from the history of extractionist land transformations and racialized banishments.

Chapter 4 presents an analysis of reports by Project South (2017) and the ACLU of Georgia (2012), two immigrant justice organizations, on the conditions inside Stewart Detention Center to develop an intimate, feminist geopolitics of the body in immigrant detention. Rather than take these conditions as unfortunate consequences of privatized detention, a materialist analysis of the treatment of the detained immigrant body shows the food and water to be intimately tied to the construction of an emptied, unrecognizable “illegal” subjectivity. This treatment is not unique to Stewart Detention Center or even immigrant detention as a whole; it is an integral mechanism of carcerality and an attendant transformation of the incarcerated, racialized body.

#### **4.1 Immigrant policing and detention in Georgia**

Latinx communities have grown significantly in the U.S. South, and in Georgia especially, where nationally, “Georgia was first in percent change in the Hispanic/Latino population from 2000 to 2015, which grew at a rate of over 118%” (ARC 2018). A growing Latinx population means that these tactics find ample space for implementation. The

consequences of racial profiling, pervasive policing, and partnerships between local and federal law enforcement are concentrated within Stewart, but the policing of immigrant bodies does not stop at the doors of the detention center. Therefore, this research considers the conditions inside Stewart as extensions and reflections of the racialized imaginaries that compel an amplifying immigration enforcement network. As such, the spaces of immigration detention inside the detention center are but one aspect of a broader carceral space casted across Georgia and the southeastern U.S., dependent on but not limited to the 1,752 beds inside the center.

A major dimension of Georgia's rising role in immigrant detention is the state's adoption and compliance with federal immigration surveillance and detention initiatives. The reinstatement of Secure Communities in January of 2017 after a two-year long suspension affords nonfederal police the authority to check someone's immigration status once they are arrested and in custody through fingerprint sharing between the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security (ICE 2018a). State and local police can then alert Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) if a detainee is seen fit for removal, which initiates a 48-hour detainer that provides time for ICE agents to retrieve them (ICE 2018b). The 287(g) program allows partnerships between ICE and nonfederal police. Four weeks of training deputizes state and local police, allowing them to perform the duties of an ICE agent (Coleman 2012a). According to a Project South report, "Although compliance with immigration detainers is voluntary, 95.5% of detainers resulted in the individual being held in detention" (2017, 8). ICE declares that a 24-hour reporting hotline is sufficient enough in preventing racial profiling (ICE 2018a), but these policing tactics fundamentally rely on racial profiling for their execution as they are both initiated by visual markers of appearing "undocumented" (ACLU 2014). Secure Communities

and 287(g), among many other policies, effectively shift the border as a site of policing and exclusion from the southwest into the interior of the country.

The recent immigration climate in Georgia reflects and compounds over a century of racially motivated immigration restriction in the United States (Ngai 2004). Highly invasive and localized immigrant policing programs have been implemented in Georgia in the recent past (Winders 2007; Hiemstra 2010; Coleman and Kocher 2011). Georgia House Bill 87, “one of the toughest in the nation,” is otherwise known as the Arizona copy-cat bill (referring to SB 1070 in Arizona), although it not only copies SB 1070 but compounds on it. HB 87 allows “state and local police officers to request immigration documentation from criminal suspects and, if they do not receive it, to take the suspects to jails, where federal officials could begin the deportation process” (Brown 2011). Another highly restrictive immigration policy is The University System of Georgia Board of Regents’ policy 4.1.6, one of the most restrictive policies regarding higher education and immigration status in the county that has “banned undocumented students from the five most competitive public universities in Georgia since early 2011” (Black et al. 2016, 284). This policy has led to multiple direct-action protests and arrests involving local advocacy organizations such as Freedom University and Georgia Undocumented Youth Alliance (Zenteno 2014; Georgia State Signal 2017). While some Georgia institutions allow DACA students to attend, they still force them to pay the much higher out-of-state tuition (Redmon & Stirgus 2018). Immigrant geographies scholarship recognizes that the construction of the illegal immigrant subject happens in diverse spaces outside of the detention center long before apprehension, but this process continues inside detention as well.

While the carceral space cast by Stewart is not restricted to the confines of its campus, it is necessary to identify the particular nature of isolation and violence that occur inside its walls.

Apprehension initiates “the practice of detaining—typically on administrative as opposed to criminal grounds—asylum seekers, and irregular migrants until they can be deported, their identities established, or their claims adjudicated” (Moran et al. 2013, 2). The nature of detention at Stewart is civil, rather than criminal, because presence in the country without legal documentation is a civil violation. This distinction leaves detainees without many of the legal protections that ensure some semblance of fair treatment, although that is rarely the case for people of color within the U.S. justice system, citizen or not. Civil detention means, notably, that “detained immigrants are not entitled to legal representation under the Sixth Amendment, nor are they required to be provided with an interpreter to explain the legal proceedings affecting them” (Project South 2017, 30).

Despite being a civil detention center, in appearance and affect Stewart is explicitly penal and incarcerates in the same fashion that a prison would. According to Project South, an organization that advocates for immigrants and documents conditions in Georgia detention centers, Detainees are either housed with 60 to a room and no private bunks, toilets, or showers, or they are confined to small cells if they have been deemed a security risk. Detained immigrants pay high rates to use the telephone, which is a necessity when legal council is almost always remote (Project South 2017). Advocacy organizations have accused Stewart of forcing detainees to eat rancid food and drink unpotable water, and hunger striking is met with disciplinary action through isolation and pepper spray (ACLU 2012; Project South 2017). Supplementing malnourishment is also expensive, and commissary is often taken away from detainees as a form of punishment (Project South 2017). This lack of guaranteed legal aid is compounded by Stewart’s geographical isolation. Stewart is located 148 miles from Atlanta and there are no hotels within a 40-mile radius. Stewart’s location in rural Georgia has a direct effect on the

likelihood of detainees to win their immigration cases. There are very few immigration lawyers in the area, and thus lawyers must take full days off of work in order to commute to Lumpkin and visit with their clients, severely reducing their ability to provide legal counsel (Project South 2017). In 2015, for example, only 13% of applications for relief were granted and just 6 people were granted asylum, versus 112 denials (U.S. DOJ 2016).

The spatial isolation of Stewart also alienates detainees from their loved ones and allies. The dearth of hotels, restaurants, and transportation options in Lumpkin makes visiting a detainee extremely expensive and time consuming. On top of this, risk is incurred for family members that are vulnerable to apprehension as soon as they enter the vicinity of Stewart, and “this concern is not an irrational one, as some of the detained immigrants at Stewart were apprehended while attempting to complete court orders, often relying on false promises from ICE officers that they will not be detained. Thus, some men are unable to see their families throughout their detainment” (Project South 2017, 28). The realms of everydayness and sociality that are under surveillance outside of Stewart are reproduced within Stewart’s walls. Eating, drinking, sleeping, washing, communicating, and connecting are all severely stifled. Tracing materialities from the scale of the body to the scale of national ideology, as I have begun to do in this introduction, will deepen our understanding of the detention center, its structuring logics, and the carceral space that it produces, both within and beyond its walls, cells, and fences. This allows theoretical and literal intervention into the spaces where contradiction gives way to malleability. One example of such an intervention is El Refugio, an organization housed less than two miles from Stewart Detention Center that directly combats its spatial isolation. El Refugio is “a hospitality house offering meals and lodging at no cost, as well as offering friendship and comfort to the loved ones of immigrants who are detained” (elrefugiostewart.org).

This one, small organization addresses multiple consequences of spatial isolation, both material and emotional, demonstrating that networks of isolation and intimidation are not impenetrable.

#### **4.2 Feminist geopolitics of the body**

I utilize a feminist geopolitics of the body as my method in analyzing reports on the food and water conditions inside Stewart Detention Center. Eating and drinking inside detention is an empirical site that enables pathways between the most intimate scale of the body and the increasingly transnational scales of immigration detention and policing. Connecting this range of scales opens up an analysis to the broader structural and historical explanations for contemporary carceral configurations. In this case, a historical analysis of the space of detention has indicated multiple materializations of carceral space over time in various forms. Thus, to heed the current imprisoned status of over 1000 people in Stewart County right now, I explore the materiality of the body as carceral terrain in this chapter. This section outlines the literature on intimate and feminist analyses that inform my use of the method.

Sara Smith defines intimate geopolitics as the dynamic relationship of control and transgression between the territory of the body and that of the nation (2012). Smith's framework and methodology of intimate geopolitics accomplishes a multi-scalar approach that attends to the controlling impulses of the nation-state, the lived experience of its subjects, and the ways in which both territorialize their desires. As a method, Smith attends to the bodily scale in order to better understand matters of large-scale geopolitical import. This framework goes beyond forging connections, seeking instead to understand how political subjects display affecting agency despite seemingly totalizing control, as "[i]t is not that macrolevel organized pressures bear down on the hapless individual; rather, bodies are sites of geopolitical animation, and territoriality is known and refused primarily in corporeal enactments" (Smith 2012, 1523-1524).



Further, Smith understands the body as having capacity beyond the binary of submission or transgression, and thus territorializing a “rocky terrain” (2012, 1516).

Pavithra Vasudevan (2019) offers a method of “intimate inventory,” building off of Smith’s intimate geopolitics and the poetics of Dionne Brand. Vasudevan works at the scale of an aluminum company town in West Badin, North Carolina to illuminate intimate ties between Black laborers and their loved ones and the toxic landscapes that they both toil for and experience pleasure in. Many sites in West Badin are fraught with contradictions as they demonstrate simultaneous toxicity and pleasure. Vasudevan writes that when “[e]xamined through an intimate lens, these sites reveal how racialised toxicity preys on caring relations, blurs culpability, and undermines environmental security” (2019, 5). Most poignantly, Vasudevan indicates Badin Lake as a culmination of this fraught existence under “atmospheric racism,” where a place of natural beauty and leisure activity for Black people becomes a “conduit of racialized toxicity” through contaminated water and fish (2019, 16). Similarly, Carrier Freshour writes of the Georgia poultry industry and the intimate geography of the laboring body under racial capitalism. Freshour proposes that “If we are to understand ‘bodies as places,’ then poultry plants, like prisons, extract from the scale of the body in ways directly and intimately tied to the criminalization of bodies as territories, primed for extraction” (2020).

The body of the detained immigrant is a central feature of immigrant detention scholarship (Winders 2007; Hiemstra 2010; Coleman 2012a; Mountz 2013). In her research on detention, Allison Mountz attends to the urgency of fleshing out carceral technologies, writing that “[o]bviously, detention isolates individuals. But beyond this fact, the *manner* and *location* in which people are isolated matter” (2013, 92).

Scholarship on the body and health in detention can serve as an entry point to the relationships and capacities of detained people. Research on “hungering” and hunger strikes provides insight into the capacity that the incarcerated body maintains to be political, despite being seemingly stripped of such power (Conlon 2016). This capacity is especially poignant in terms of the detained immigrant subjectivity being void of applicable political power in a “foreign” nation and without basic rights while inside detention. Karma Chavez’s account of the death of Victoria Arellano, an HIV positive transgender woman, while in ICE custody signals the undoing and subsequent unrecognizability that immigrants undergo when detained (2010). Arellano’s unrecognizability was violently compounded by her transness in an all-male detention facility but was nonetheless a product of her “illegal alien” status as well. Chavez offers that “Even as detainees’ bodies fail, because of the dehumanization, guards can/do not see their own bodies as interconnected to detainees” (2010, 8). But Chavez also provides a dynamic account of Arellano’s detention, where fellow detainees transgressed traditional gender roles and offered critical care to Arellano when her health was rapidly declining.

Kyla Wazana Tompkins’ theories on ingestion serve as a framework for understanding how alienation materializes through food in the detained immigrant body. Tompkins offers that “[e]ating intervenes as a determining moment in what I argue are paradoxical and historically specific attempts to regulate embodiment, which I define as living in and through the social experience of the matter we call flesh. Nationalist foodways—and the objects fetishized therein—in turn become allegories through which the expanding nation and its attendant anxieties play out” (2012, 4). The white supremacist and settler colonial anxieties over immigration and the imagining of the immigrant as trespassing, with their bodies seemingly untethered to the soil that is ideologically married to patriotism, can be directly linked to the

material conditions of eating and hunger within Stewart. The geography of illegal immigration positions the body of the detained immigrant as unrecognizable within a liberal, humanist framework that relies on terra-based bonds. What passes through the body and emanates out from it—whether resistance, control, or submission—is thus responsible for its materiality in a similar capacity that more conventionally biological qualities are. I am conducting the following intimate, feminist analysis of food and eating in immigrant detention in an effort to highlight the ways in which the corporeal, specifically the bodily organs and gastrointestinal tract, is bound up with systems of white supremacy and colonialism in ways beyond a liberal, humanist framework.

An intimate geography of the body demonstrates how external processes of “illegal” immigrant subject formation are accomplished in part by the internal, gastrointestinal conditions inside detention. As Martin and Mitchelson aptly write, “the material practices within detention centers are, then, bound up with the visual and textual representations of a nation-state’s outsiders more generally” (2009, 469). I utilize the conditions of eating and drinking in detention to access the construction and treatment of the body in detention. Further, without a framework of racialized subject formation, corporeal analyses of the more quotidian being and eating in detention remain at risk of being lost to the assumption that poor quality of life while incarcerated is self-evident.

#### **4.3 Immigrant justice reports on the conditions inside**

I analyze two reports made by immigrant justice organizations on the conditions inside Stewart Detention Center in order to explore these bodily technologies further. The first was conducted by the ACLU of Georgia in 2012, and the second by Project South in 2017. I highlight accounts of food and water in detention as reported in these documents by Project South (2017)

and the ACLU of Georgia, (2012) but first, I contextualize the contemporary treatment of the body in detention with past treatments of the Latinx (im)migrant body. Stewart's bodily treatment of detainees is one moment in a long history of Mexican and Central American migration across the United States' southern border that imbued and abused the body with imaginings of dirt and disease. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, starting in El Paso, Mexican migrant laborers were made to report "to the immigration station once a week for bathing, a hated requirement that gave rise to a local black market in bathing certificates" (Ngai 2004, 70). This included vaccinations, de-lousing procedures that involved being inspected in the nude and, for women, their hair being doused in kerosene (Burnett 2006). This history of trying to rid racialized flesh of its recognizability and wholeness instructs an understanding of the present-tense emptying of the body in detention.

"Imprisoned Justice" is a report by Project South compiled in 2017 that profiles Stewart Detention Center. The report includes interviews from numerous detainees detailing the conditions inside Stewart Detention Center, including their access to legal counsel, translators, medical help, and food and water quality. In the following sections I highlight the accounts of ingestion in detention. It is notable that the large majority of accounts in the Project South report are intensely visceral and thus offer access to the intimate scale of the body of the detained person, and more specifically, the gut. This micro scale in turn instructs on the imaginings of the nation-state and its impulse to render immigrant bodies as flat and empty, thus confirming their disconnection from American soil and their purported amenability for removal (Dittmer 2005).

Summarily, the report states that "[i]n addition to food being frequently reported as spoiled or expired, foreign objects, such as hair, plastic, bugs, rocks, a tooth, and mice, were reportedly found repeatedly in the food" (2017, 31). Food at Stewart Detention Center is reported

to have been served in such insufficient portions that one immigrant recounted losing seventy pounds while detained (Project South et al. 2017, 31). Water at SDC is described as “green, non-potable, smelling of feces, or completely shut off” (Project South et al. 2017, 32). Descriptions of the food and water quality in Stewart quickly turn towards the visceral, consistently reporting food containing foreign objects, insects, and brown or green water as just some of the horrifying living conditions (ACLU 2012; Project South 2017). These accounts are visceral in a literal sense, where they recount technologies that target the gut of the detainee. According to one Honduran detained immigrant: “Once a week, we are given chicken. Stewart provides beef, but it is too disgusting for anyone to eat. Once, for a whole week, we were fed beans that had maggots growing in them. I did not notice until the second day” (Project South 2017, 31).

The ACLU report that detainees experience a fifteen hour period between dinner and breakfast, and there are no snacks offered free of charge (2012). Reports of extreme weight loss are also common, including one detainee whom the ACLU reported lost 68 pounds (2012). In a turn towards the grotesque, the ACLU reports that chicken is served raw and sometimes bloody, writing that “[d]uring the summer of 2011, the vast majority of men we spoke with reported being served rancid or undercooked chicken” (2012, 56). Further, ingestion is weaponized in a way that considers sustenance as a privilege, not a right:

“Detained immigrants explained that there are only two forms of punishment: taking away commissary (how they supplement meals) and going to segregation (where they cannot go to the commissary anyway). Consequently, punishment at Stewart always involves being hungry.” (Project South 2017, 37)

The food in detention far surpasses the possibility that it is just the result of cost-cutting in for-profit detention. Disturbing accounts of raw meat and rapid weight loss are extreme but very real

conditions inside detention that transform the detained body into a carceral space, cleared and eroded.

In one instance reported by Project South, the violent othering of detainees is illustrated in a more subtle, but nonetheless visceral way. According to the report, a lawyer that visited a client at Stewart recounted the following: “at some point, I went to drink out of a drinking fountain. A nicer guard motioned for me to not drink the water. Her supervisor was there, so she had to be subtle, but it was clear that she did not want me to drink the water from the water fountain” (Project South 2017, 32). In this case, a non-detainee is apprehended as such in the moment that a guard deters them from drinking the unpotable water. This interaction is telling of the pervasiveness of illegality throughout the space of the detention center as it imbues seemingly mundane things with its potentiality. The food and water inside Stewart Detention Center has the capacity to apprehend the terrain of the body as illegal.

In 2014, dozens of detained immigrants went on hunger strike at Stewart Detention Center. According to Project South, “[i]n response, detention center staff put the facility on a twenty-four hour lock down, threatened to force-feed participants, and used pepper spray on some men” (2017, 39). Hunger striking inside SDC is met with violence and punishment, as was the case for Palestinian detainee Alaa Yasin, who participated in a prolonged hunger strike to protest detention with unforeseeable release: “[i]n response to his hunger strike, ICE unsuccessfully attempted to get a court order to force-feed him and informed him that he would be placed in solitary confinement” (Project South et al. 2017, 39). Deirdre Conlon understands hunger striking as an exercise in being political rather than a “monumental” event necessarily exhibiting resistance (2016). Conlon proposes that in being political, these acts are “consonant with liberal government” (2016, 135). In this understanding, Conlon ultimately discounts the

material practice of “hungering” as less important than its political significance, writing “...I have emphasized that what is significant about hungering for freedom is the practice of questioning in and of itself” (Conlon 2016, 145). Alternatively, taking the method of hunger striking seriously implicates the lack of nourishment or sustenance as a key component on subject creation, for both “illegal” immigrant and political being.

Food is supposed to be a lively thing that generally affirms life and promotes it, but at Stewart food transforms into something deadly. As is evidenced in the above accounts, inside Stewart, food that lacks nourishment maintains the process of illegalization. Rotten food works to symbolically and literally empty the body of the vital organs that would normally signal humanity, effecting a statelessness that comes with the absence of recognizability under liberal humanism. Once flattened, the body’s perceived lack of organs gets performed materially through the food and water quantity and quality. After such treatment the detained immigrant body does not need to be nourished and it does not require water. According to this carceral logic of white supremacist territorialization, the terrain of the racialized and criminalized immigrant body is in opposition with the terrain of the nation and is treated as such through carceral technologies of containment, bodily erosion, and banishment.

#### **4.4 Embodied immigrant detention**

The conditions of imprisonment are unavoidably embodied. In the accounts of eating and drinking at Stewart described by Project South and the ACLU of Georgia, detention is ingested through food and water and it is felt through corporeal pain, and in extreme cases, death. An intimate geopolitics of the body in detention ultimately fleshes out the carceral space both inside Stewart Detention Center and beyond, to the scale of the nation. The territorialization of the white supremacist nation-state is reliant on the embodied subject creation inside Stewart

Detention Center as this process affirms Stewart as carceral space. Stewart Detention Center does not just surround and enclose prisoners but moves through their bodies in ways that attempt to collapse the space between the physical body and the physical detention center. Implicating the treatment of the body as an integral technology of carceral space ultimately rejects misguided attempts to blame individual corrections officers or specific facilities for the numerous abuses and deaths in the institution of immigrant detention.

Inside Stewart, a mixing of edible and inedible objects signals the collapsing of body with space. In the space of detention, the boundaries separating food from other things begin to dissolve along with the internal organs of detainees. In order to "...account for the viscosity of regimes of inequity organized around mythologies of difference," as Tompkins proposes, relaying these accounts of ingestion at Stewart should not be read only in terms of their sensational quality (2012, 10). The very territory of Stewart Detention Center is reliant on illegal-subject formation. Treatment of the detained immigrant body is not only the result of dehumanizing narratives or austere management practices; this treatment territorializes carceral space in dynamic articulation with detained immigrant bodies. Similar to the clearing, Stewart Detention Center is a space of forced emptiness by way of exclusion through inclusion. And like the canyon, Stewart Detention Center is a space of erosion. Detention centers are tools of the carceral state, obviously, but in a much more affective sense than as mere containers for discipline.

#### **4.5 Interstices**

Carceral space is never total or finished; it is always shifting and rearticulating. This unruly quality contradicts the purported nature of banishment, containment, and detention as bounded and stable projects. The contradictions and rifts of carceral space are clear throughout



the various iterations in Stewart County. In these shifts and transformations are the possibilities for intervention. According to Amber Musser, “the difficulty in taking on flesh, however, stems from the fear that objectification reifies identity and essentializes subjects in particular ways” (2014, 20). In order to avoid such essentializing, a materialist analysis of the flesh should be done in a way that accordions the layers of capacity rather than collapses them. Thus, while crushingly heavy, the technologies and spaces of containment and confinement at Stewart are not total or finished. One example of such an intervention is El Refugio, an organization housed less than two miles from Stewart Detention Center that directly combats its spatial and social isolation. El Refugio is “a hospitality house offering meals and lodging at no cost, as well as offering friendship and comfort to the loved ones of immigrants who are detained” (El Refugio, [elrefugiostewart.org](http://elrefugiostewart.org)). This one, small organization addresses multiple consequences of isolation, both material and emotional, demonstrating that networks of isolation and intimidation are not impenetrable. Instances of resistance, like hunger striking, or conversely forging community and care through food in detention demonstrate what Sara Smith describes as “[t]he materialities that make the terrain of the body so difficult to navigate” (2012, 1516). Abolitionist scholar Carrie Freshour has posed the question, “If bodies are places, or sites of extraction...do these acts, hunger strikes, food riots, and food as creative expression, work to fill in the ‘holes of life’ stolen by the state?”

There are always interstices of subversion that show how the body is never completely available to oppressive power. Smith writes that “the boundaries between territory and the body itself dissolve—the body exceeding its boundaries, refusing to be marshaled into an instrument of territory, even as territory seeps into the body” (Smith 2012, 1524). Instead of being flattened, that body changes and often becomes more complex. An extreme example of this is hunger

striking. During hunger strike the emptied body becomes capable of transcending the imposed statelessness and the attendant (perceived) helplessness. As Deirdre Conlon offers, hunger striking should be understood not as a moment of exception, but one where statelessness conversely opens up the space for the democratic practice of being-political (2016). Rather than glorifying the ingenuity or exceptionality of such practices under the strain of imprisonment, I cite said moments of eating and hungering in order to outline the ways that the body is rocky terrain, as Smith says, and cannot ever be fully taken up by the state and made into cleared or cultivated land (2012).

The findings of this feminist geopolitics of the body flesh out the space where abject food and water conditions could be categorized and filed away under the unfortunate consequences of private detention and loose institutional performance standards. Instead, and as many scholars have noted, illegal subject formation does not end at the moment of apprehension. Stewart Detention Center is carceral space occupied by both oppressive and productive power relations. This complexity is first and foremost a quality of capacity, where detention does not render immigrants incapacitated, despite their treatment as empty bodies and the real, physical repercussion of such violence. This complexity also means implicating the material conditions alongside the ideological ones so that the detained immigrant's corporeal experience can be understood in tandem with the imposed imaginaries, histories, and racial differences that construct their bodies as illegal and detainable in the first place. Reading immigrant justice reports through the digestive tract and narrowing in on the embodied, small scale allows an analysis that finds both isolation and care on a bodily level, a duality that rejects the purported totality of carceral space. A deeper understanding of the space of Stewart Detention Center

beyond its siting and isolation allows both theoretical and literal intervention into the spaces where contradiction gives way to malleability.

## 5 CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have assayed the ongoing process of violence and death through banishment, erosion, and containment. This includes and unites anti-Indigenous, anti-Black, and anti-immigrant violence. The mechanisms of containment and removal evidenced throughout time and across racialized bodies and subjectivities construct carceral space. Clearing, cultivation, and incarceration of and by Indigenous, Black, and Latinx people have permanently changed the landscape of Stewart County. Historical geography evidences a matrix of oppressive power and dynamic resistance between settler-conquistador /white supremacist state and Black/Indigenous/Latinx people over time and the carceral landscape and interstices/fractures for resistance, care, and nourishment.

The regime of immigration enforcement, detention, and removal is not a coherent machine but a reactionary and self-reinforcing cycle of illegalization. Political theories on power, sovereignty, and exclusion indicate the intrinsic project of the nation-state as one of racialized violence and control, both overt and covert, and as one of tricky loopholes and contradictions of interest that enable constant violence and death (Foucault 1975; Agamben 1995; Gilmore 2007). The shift of the border into the U.S. Southeast brings these immigration enforcement technologies into the more intimate spaces of immigrant social reproduction and infuses everyday practices of commuting, working, child-rearing, and even relaxing at home with constant fear and anxiety (Cravey 2003; Winders 2007; Stuesse & Coleman 2014).

Chapter 2 presented the results of an analysis of an 1823 map that depicts forced Creek removal in flux in order to understand the space of the *clearing* as both noun and verb. In Chapter 3, I explored the materiality of the canyon, a series of erosion gullies in Stewart County that resulted from plantation slavery, and the bearing that this canyon has had on geologic

science and ecological agency. Finally, Stewart County and Stewart Detention Center were central to my fourth chapter. I conducted a feminist geopolitics of the body, considering the food and eating practices inside detention as constitutive of the illegalized immigrant body. In every chapter, I treated material manifestations of white supremacist carceral space as dynamic and unruly, exposing internal contradictions, and thus gleaning interstices of opportunity for resistance.

Land transformations illustrate how the same space of southwest Georgia has been called home by, and violently changed hands between, prominent Creek towns, extremely lucrative cotton plantations, and one of the largest private immigrant detention centers in the country, over the span of about 200 years. These three articulations of white supremacy are not mutually exclusive or total. Nonetheless, these transitions tell us more about carceral space than they withhold about objective timelines of conquest and post-colonialism. The temporalities of these white supremacist projects are of particular importance because they do not adhere to conventional notions of velocity or the speeds at which natural land transformations are supposed to take shape and permanence. Instead of slow geologic time and swift, instantaneous settler time, the reverse is evident in the 200 years leading up to Stewart Detention Center. The forced removal of Creeks was processual and compounding, and the erosion of soil to form Providence canyon was quick in terms of deep geologic time.

Approaching the technologies of immigrant detention from the canon of anti-Black and anti-Indigenous settler colonial pasts and presents constructs a “relationality of flesh beyond the laws of comparison” (Weheliye 2014, 124). Comparison elicits a side-by-side configuration, whereas relationality is free to layer, precede, and succeed. As la paperson makes clear, “we see

the condensation of anti-Black and anti-Indigenous technologies to dispose of brown bodies and to create frontier space—a militarized zone of policing and death” (2017, 12).

The coupling of settler and geologic time in turn allows for an analysis of the geologic formations and ecological invasions of Stewart County as more than just naturalized occurrences outside of the colonial projects that made permanent marks on the land. Ecological connections and metaphors are not to meant flatten Blackness and Indigeneity with land or labor, but to bring them to bear on ecology and geology, to rewrite these sciences and correct their assumed neutrality and whiteness. The geology of conquest employs theories that center the territoriality and spatiality of settler colonialism. Further, a geology of conquest goes beyond the romantic imaginaries of territory and land acquisition that propelled settler-conquistadors to utilize geology for its purported scientific objectivity and its material implications. The land transformations of racial banishment and plantation slavery resulted in the geology of Stewart being fundamentally changed. As Haveman notes, chillingly, “Within two years of the Treaty of Indian Springs signing, a visitor travelling through the area marveled that from the Flint River to the Chattahoochee there were ‘*cotton* land speculators thicker than locusts in Egypt’” (2016, 40). Settler-conquistador time speeds up geologic time and exacerbates ecological interactions, as will be evident in the coming section with the rapid erosion of soil due to cotton plantations.

Carceral space is a territorialization of white supremacist settler-colonialism that dynamically transforms Indigenous, Black, and immigrant life-worlds and lands. This territorialization is evidenced in the land transformations that Stewart County has undergone in just the last two centuries. Carceral space is violent in its containment and banishment, the two major processes that it is composed of. There is evidence of these processes in and around Stewart Detention Center, both today and throughout time. The violent transformation of the

land and people of Stewart County by way of removal and genocide of Indigenous Creek people and enslavement of and cultivation by Black slaves and post-emancipation Black people did not just clear and cultivate the land of Stewart County, it was co-constitutive of the ecological, economic, social, and bodily violence that is necessary to maintain a white supremacist carceral state.

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