Paayal Bedi
Artist Statement

Gentrification is the process of renovating deteriorating urban neighborhoods by more wealthy residents, which often leads to the removal of lower income families. The community of Hannibal Square is a present-day example of this. Hannibal Square is a historically African American neighborhood in Winter Park, Florida, and is also one of the poorest. Yet it is now an area filled with elegant restaurants and large wealthy homes. Though a few of the original homes have been salvaged, not many are left. Soon even these few may just disappear.

This series of photographs portrays an anonymous African American construction worker, who serves as a symbol for the labor that invisibly builds these sites. This worker represents all of Hannibal Square and serves as a representation of the continuous construction that occurs throughout. The worker is presented as an anonymous figure as a means of speaking to the many injustices members of the community have faced, including being thrown out of their homes to create space for the newer developments that are arising. The faceless worker also represents the “undervalued” reactions they receive from the community. The single construction site depicted functions as the “home” for the anonymous worker, where he eats, sleeps, and lives to help the “wealthy” take over. This construction site also represents the breaking down and rebuilding of Hannibal Square that is occurring all the time. When I walk this area I look around and see what used to be the beautiful American dream and a home to many that has been destroyed to create the new. One of the most iconic and historical spots, Hannibal Square has undergone many changes but is still one of the most beautiful and interesting areas of Winter Park.