

"POWERFUL ANALYSES OF BLACK REALITIES IN CANADA." — OMAIRA ISSA, RADIO-CANADA

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UNTIL WE ARE FREE

REFLECTIONS ON BLACK LIVES MATTER IN CANADA

**EDITED BY RODNEY DIVERLUS, SANDY HUDSON,
AND SYRUS MARCUS WARE**



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University of Regina Press

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Printed and bound in Canada at Friesens. The text of this book is printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper with earth-friendly vegetable-based inks.

COVER ART: Photo by Paige Galette

COVER AND TEXT DESIGN: Duncan Campbell, University of Regina Press

COPY EDITOR: Marionne Cronin

PROOFREADER: Kristine Douaud

“All Power to All People?: Black LGBTTI2QQ Activism, Remembrance, and Archiving in Toronto” by Syrus Marcus Ware was originally published in *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly*, Volume 4:2, pp. 170–80. (c) 2017 Duke University Press. All rights reserved. Republished by permission of the copyright holder, Duke University Press. www.dukeupress.edu.

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

TITLE: *Until we are free : reflections on Black Lives Matter in Canada* / edited by Rodney Diverlus, Sandy Hudson, and Syrus Marcus Ware.

NAMES: Diverlus, Rodney, 1990- editor. | Hudson, Sandy, 1985- editor. | Ware, Syrus Marcus, editor.

DESCRIPTION: Includes bibliographical references.

IDENTIFIERS: Canadiana (print) 20190224347 | Canadiana (ebook) 20190224363 | ISBN 9780889776944 (softcover) | ISBN 9780889777361 (hardcover) | ISBN 9780889776968 (PDF) | ISBN 9780889776982 (HTML)

SUBJECTS: LCSH: Black lives matter movement—Canada. | LCSH: Blacks—Canada—Social conditions. | LCSH: Blacks—Civil rights—Canada. | LCSH: Blacks—Political activity—Canada. | LCSH: Race discrimination—Canada. | LCSH: Canada—Race relations. | CSH: Black Canadians—Social conditions. | CSH: Black Canadians—Civil rights. | CSH: Black Canadians—Political activity.

CLASSIFICATION: LCC FC106.B6 U58 2020 | DDC 305.896/071—dc23



U OF R PRESS

University of Regina Press, University of Regina Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada, S4S 0A2 TEL: (306) 585-4758 FAX: (306) 585-4699 WEB: www.uofrpress.ca

We acknowledge the support of the Canada Council for the Arts for our publishing program. We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada. / Nous reconnaissons l'appui financier du gouvernement du Canada. This publication was made possible with support from Creative Saskatchewan's Book Publishing Production Grant Program.



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For our Ancestors,
whose struggle we continue
until we are free.

For our Elders,
whose fight we continue
until we are free.

For Andrew Loku, Jermaine Carby, Sumaya
Dalmar, Abdirahman Abdi, Pierre Coriolan,
Amleset Haile, Kwasi Skene-Peters, Alex Wetlauffer,
and the unnamed, whose lives we will continue
to honour until we are free and ever after.

For our children and our grandchildren,
whose futures we will defend
until we are free.

For all of us in the now,
may we all be free.

There can be no future where white
supremacy thrives at the expense of Black
humanity, and with this orientation, we will
continue to fight for true liberation until the day
that each of us experience it. All Black life.

Until we are all free.

—THE EDITORS

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POWER TO ALL PEOPLE: BLACK LGBTTI2QQ ACTIVISM, REMEMBRANCE, AND ARCHIVING IN TORONTO

SYRUS MARCUS WARE

This chapter was originally published as an article in Transgender Studies Quarterly 4, no. 2 (May 2017): 170–180.

INTRODUCTION

I consider the erasure of racialized and Indigenous histories from white trans archives, timelines, and cartographies of resistance. I examine interventions by Black queer and trans historiographers, critics, and activists who have attempted to re-inscribe Blackness into the history of LGBTTI2QQ¹ space in Toronto. Lastly, I consider how power and privilege influence what is allowed to be remembered and what is considered archivable. This paper was created through several collaborative feedback sessions with the Marvellous Grounds collective and draws on the emerging Marvellous Grounds archive project.² In particular, I draw on the writing of contributors Monica Forrester, a Black trans activist from Toronto who has worked doing sex-worker outreach for the past two decades; Richard Fung, artist and activist and one of the founders of Gay Asians of Toronto; and Douglas Stewart, a Black activist and organizer who co-founded Blockorama³ and other key Black queer and trans organizations in the city.

The classic archive structure—and I’m speaking here primarily about white trans and queer archives—is the allegedly neutral, disembodied collection of objects that create and inscribe a narrative of struggle and resistance that always begins with whiteness and that is used too often in the service of homonationalism, gay imperialism, and the vilification of the less progressive other.⁴ As Haritaworn argues in *Queer Lovers and Hateful Others*, the queer timeline we are describing/critiquing suggests a seamless march towards rights, with anti-hate-crime activism as the apex of history that the rest of the world must be forced into.⁵ Instead, I am suggesting that we start with a Black trans and queer history as a way to orient us towards

different pasts and futures, as well as a radically different account of the present and what needs to change. As I will illustrate in this text, we need to consider what we want to remember and how we want to remember it, building an archive of our movements going forward to ensure that intergenerational memory can inform our activism, community-building, and organizing. By tracing the histories of QTBIPOCs⁶ in Toronto, and the omissions of these narratives in mainstream archives, we can begin to do this work.

I would like to begin by calling names, following in the line of author Courtney McFarlane and his important commitment to remembering the great legacy of Black queer and trans folks in Toronto over the past several decades.⁷ I want to call names to bring the spirit of these activisms into the room with us, to remember that it is ongoing and enlivened by a consideration of the past, present, and (Afro) future.⁸ I'd like to call into this space the important work of trans women of colour and Indigenous trans and two-spirited folks, who are often omitted from the archives—from official records and collective memories of what has happened in this place. And so I call names: Mirha-Soleil Ross,² Yasmeen Persad, Monica Forrester, and Nik Redman, the names of those with us, but also those who have already passed on, including Sumaya Dalmar, Duchess, and countless others. I call these names as an act of remembrance and reverence, but also as a suggestion for where to begin looking for our trans people of colour archive—in names called and stories shared.

COMING OUT AS TRANS AND BLACK

When I entered the largely white trans community in Toronto in the late 1990s, coming out as a Black trans person felt incredibly isolating. The 519 Church Street Community Centre's trans programs were in their infancy, and though they did a lot to promote early trans visibility, the ephemera they created tended to reproduce the idea that there were few (if any) Black trans people. Online resources like FTMI¹⁰ and the Lou Sullivan Society did not do a good job of connecting with/to/creating work by trans folks of colour, something that would eventually change after years, if not decades, of trans folks of colour mobilizing and organizing. And so, I came out and felt quite isolated. But through organizing within Black queer spaces, I met other people. I got to work with Yasmeen Persad through The 519's Trans Shelter Access Project; I got to connect with Monica Forrester through my

work at PASAN. We shared information and resources. I found out through researching sex reassignment surgery (SRS) in North America that one of the first trans people to have SRS inside America was Delisa Newton, a Black trans jazz singer. I learned about Storme DeLarverie, a Black gender-variant performer and activist who set the stage for countless future trans artists of colour. Where was I to go to find out about Black trans history in Toronto? Historical and grassroots queer archives often don't do a good job at actively participating in the documentation and preservation of the artefacts, stories, and materials of Black and African diasporic cultural production and activism despite a stated desire by community members to have their work be part of a visible archive.¹¹ This erasure is part of a larger conceptualization of the Black queer subject as a new entity whose history is built upon an already-existing white LGBTTI2QQ space and history.

A MARVELLOUS ARCHIVE: BLACK AND TRANS COMMUNITIES THROUGH TIME AND SPACE

Trans lives of colour follow a different temporality—we fail the progress narrative espoused by the white trans movement (as advancement is typically reduced to acquiring “rights” that are inaccessible to most and in fact are wielded against so many on the margins of the margins through the prison-industrial complex, the war on terror, and the development industry).¹² At the same time, trans lives of colour open up different futures that are not just a reproduction of/diversification of/assimilation into the same. As Sylvia Rivera explains, trans folks of colour were at the front lines in part because they experienced rampant marginalization and, as a result, they “had nothing to lose.”¹³ Our relationship to the law changes our relationships to space and organizing and creates a certain set of freedoms, and also restrictions, in our work.¹⁴ Rivera and her communities put everything else on the line to fight for systemic change and to fight for self-determination because of these relationships. Here, I am pointing to a different set of activist ancestors that create a tension and challenge to what and how we remember collective struggle.

By starting with QTBIPOC narratives, we gain a different entry point into trans and queer collective archives and timelines of resistance, and we interrupt the ways that these omissions produce a whitewashed canon. Starting with our stories and reading them alongside more mainstream narratives, we can inform trans theory, guide future activism, and set the

stage for new ways of working for change. Derrida, in his seminal work *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, argues that we produce something through these acts of re-remembering, or sharing stories: we create a sense of physical, liminal, and phenomenological space to consider our past, presents, and futures.¹⁵ In contrast, the prioritization of white queer and trans people's history by white historiographers suggests that all LGBTTI2QQ community organizing and development was created by and for white people.¹⁶ Instead, we offer a type of counter-archiving, as conceptualized by Jin Haritworn in the introduction to *Marvellous Grounds*.¹⁷ Counter-archiving highlights the problems of a presentist agenda that selectively highlights and erases subjects, spaces, and events in order to expand its own power in the present into the future, without letting go of either the past or the future. It further questions what acts, subjects, and inscriptions legitimately constitute an archive. The question thus becomes not where is the archive, but rather why are Black subjects always already conceptualized as new additions? The stories of the resistance that Black peoples have enacted since being on Turtle Island are continually forgotten and erased.

WE'VE BEEN HERE: BLACK TRANS ORGANIZING IN TORONTO AND BEYOND

Contrary to the claim of newness, countless artists, activists, poets, and community mobilizers within Black queer and trans communities in Toronto have done the work of documenting our stories. This archive of Black movements over time and space exists and is exemplified, for example, by Debbie Douglas, Courtnay McFarlane, Makeda Silvera and Douglas Stewart's 1997 anthology that brought together queer Black authors in Canada, entitled *Má-Ka Diasporic Fuks: Contemporary Writing by Queers of African Descent*;¹⁸ the piles of historic video; the vivid textile banners and art by Black queer and trans people created for Blockorama¹⁹—currently housed in local activist Junior Harrison's basement, highlighting a large gap in the municipal archive; and in the embodied interpersonal storytelling that happens when we get together in community: at Blockorama; outside of a Black queer dance party by local DJs Blackcat, Nik Red, and Cozmic Cat; in the park outside of the queer community centre, The 519 Church Street Community Centre. There is, in fact, a big literature on the Black queer and trans experience already, and here I'm

thinking of the important work of Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley, Rinaldo Walcott, OmiSoore Dryden, CasSandy Lord, and so many others.²⁰

The discourse of the “new” QTIBPOC subject is further belied by the long history of activism by QTBIPOCs across this north part of Turtle Island. Toronto in the 1970s and 1980s was brimming with activism by QTBIPOCs organizing around homelessness, LGBTQ activism, HIV/AIDS, education, anti-apartheid activism, disability justice, and challenging racism and other forms of systemic marginalization and oppression, to name but a few examples. Folks were getting together to write letters in support of activists fighting against apartheid on the continent, including South African gay rights activist Simon Nkoli. Artists were coming together to form political arts initiatives like *Desh Pardesh*, a festival of queer and trans South Asian arts and culture in Toronto; the *MayWorks Festival of the Arts*, a labour arts festival that makes intersectional links between class, race, and gender through an understanding of labour arts; and the *Counting Past Two* festival, one of the first trans film festivals in North America. Mainstream LGBTQ records and municipal archives have omitted these initiatives, yet they exist in our community and persist in an oral tradition of telling and retelling, embodied in our activism. These tellings and retellings are self-directed and draw on what Eve Tuck has conceptualized as desire-based research: the need to root our considerations in a “framework . . . concerned with understanding complexity, contradiction, and the self-determination of lived lives” in order, she elaborates, to

document . . . not only the painful elements of social realities but also the wisdom and hope. Such an axiology is intent on depathologizing the experiences of dispossessed and disenfranchised communities so that people are seen as more than broken and conquered. This is to say that even when communities are broken and conquered, they are so much more than that—so much more that this incomplete story is an act of aggression.²¹

Indeed, these archives interrupt the neoliberal insistence on the forced telling and retelling of a one-dimensional narrative by those on the margins—a telling that is obligatory in what Tuck contrasts as damage-centred research. Instead, these shared memories tell of a deep, intersectional knowing that can inform our understandings of our own lives today, direct

our future activism, and help us build stronger communities rooted in care and justice. These lived movements and collective memories are described by Marvellous Grounds contributor Monica Forrester, who talks about her entry into activism in the 1980s. She helps us understand the different relationship that young Black trans women of that time had to archivable ephemera: keeping the kinds of objects that mainstream archives value as proof of value/worth was hard, given what they were up against. She states:

the corner was the only community that existed. At that time, it was the only place where we could share information. And, that's where I've learned a lot . . . the determination to make change And when I was thinking about history, and archiving, I thought, "Oh! I wish I took pictures" Because we were in such a different place back then. I think survival was key. No one really thought about archiving, because we really didn't think we would live past 30. Our lives were so undetermined that no one really thought about, "Oh, should we archive this for later use?"²²

Forrester's text references an urgency of activism that aimed to prolong life and chances of survival in a white supremacist and transphobic world, but that frequently eludes dominant queer narratives of space and time. Thus, QTBIPOC organizing happened not in the village, but at the corner. Forrester's story informs our understanding of subsequent activisms in the city, for example, shaping our understanding of how to organize to stop sex workers from being pushed out of the LGBTQ village in Toronto as part of ongoing gentrification processes and anti-sex-worker stigma. By situating our understanding of the corner as being a community centre, a home, a classroom, and the other sorts of places described by Forrester, we can build a fight that ensures that the access points the corner represents are intact when we are done fighting.

Furthermore, as Forrester describes, in the face of ever-present systemic violence, "no one really thought about archiving, because we really didn't think we would live past 30." Just because Black trans people didn't keep ephemera doesn't mean we don't have an archive and things to remember. The obsessive collecting of posters and memorabilia—think of the elaborate pin button project²³ launched at the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives, a national archive of queer culture that was founded in 1973, and that now is the largest independent queer archive in the world. Despite claims that it

represents and reflects queer culture across Canada, many have critiqued the archive's lack of racialized historical content, the lack of a visible trans archive, and its anachronistic name, "Lesbian and Gay Archives." Groupings such as the display of thousands of pin buttons mean nothing without the embodied memories and stories that contextualize their creation. We might speculate what the archives of Monica Forrester would have looked like and how they'd differ from the elaborate pin button project. What would the archives of Monica Forrester have looked like, had there been the capacity to create such documents at that time of great struggle? What would have been created or changed through the process of such recording? What would the community have had to look like and who would have had to be in power to foster an interest in the creation of such an archive? What would power have had to look like in the village at that moment for the lives of Black trans women to be considered worthy of archiving or remembering? We can reflect on Forrester's words to help us understand recent QTBIPOC interventions in the city, such as the Black Lives Matter—Toronto (BLM—TO) shutdown of the Toronto Pride parade in June 2016 and the subsequent anti-Black racist backlash and violence that followed within Toronto's queer and trans communities.²⁴ Her articulation of who gets to hold power and have ownership over the directions and decisions of these communities—in essence, who is remembered as being here and part of the fight—is brought to life in the BLM—TO moment. Their presence in the parade was seen by many to be unexpected, and their political analysis considered divergent and unwanted, with some white community members chanting, "Take this fight to Caribana,"²⁵ suggesting that Black queer and trans organizing was not "of the village," as this is an always already-white space, and that our organizing belonged in an explicitly Black space: Caribana. BLM—TO's leadership, largely made up of queer and trans members, and their role as Pride Toronto's Honoured Group still did not afford them belonging in the (presumed to be all-white) queer and trans community.

Forrester's words tell of the need for an intersectional understanding of what has happened within Black queer and trans communities in Toronto in the past four decades. She urges us to consider sex workers, poor and working-class trans women, and others who are marginalized within larger Black queer and trans organizing, as historical subjects. At the same time, her historical narrative does not simply "bring Black trans ephemera to the

archives.” It raises larger questions about who can interpret our histories and who can understand our embodied repertoires.

CONCLUSION

I began this chapter by calling names. I will end it by sharing an encounter that illustrates, or perhaps embodies, the problem with the archive. Memory is a fascinating process. The more we recall, or perhaps repeat, our memories of events, the more we begin to remember the memories more than the events.

I recently met with a self-proclaimed elder, a white gay activist whose account of the Toronto bathhouse raids is widely cited. He asked me for an interview, and I was telling him about my own organizing and my desire to build on the important work of trans women of colour leading our movements. He leaned forward and said, matter-of-factly, “You know, it’s not true. People nowadays say that trans women of colour were there, but they weren’t. I was there. I would have remembered.” He was so certain that he was a more accurate witness of what had happened in the Toronto and New York histories that he could discount the living stories of trans women. He felt such confidence in his own memory as being *the* memory —*the* archive, *the* impartial record of human history. We simply were not there in his mind, and thus we were ripped from the fabric of time and space. The memories of this elder, for a variety of reasons including anti-Black racism, transphobia, and the active marginalization of trans Indigenous and racialized people from these movements, do not recall our presence at these events and eventually become “*the* event.”

But we were there; we are, as Miss Major says, “*still fucking here.*”²⁶ And we already exist in the beautiful (Afro) future. By beginning here, by starting with *these* genealogies, we can re-remember that we are here, that we will continue to exist, continue to fight, to struggle for change, and to win, as Assata Shakur urges us.²⁷ Black trans archives live in the moments of shared story, of names called, of gatherings and celebrations in public space. Our archives live in our bodies and minds, and they span across time and space.

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- LGBTTI2QQ: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual, Intersex, Two-Spirited, Queer, and Questioning.
- Marvellous Grounds is a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and Early Researcher Award-funded forerunning collection of art, activism, and academic writings by queers of colour in Toronto. It is a book and web-based project and is co-edited/curated by Jin Haritaworn, Alvis Choi, Ghaida Moussa, Rio Rodriguez, and Syrus Marcus Ware at York University in Toronto.
- Blockorama is an eleven-hour Black queer and trans arts festival that runs on Pride Sunday in Toronto. The event is in its twenty-first year as of 2019.
- On homonationalism and gay imperialism, see Jinthana Haritaworn, Tamsila Tauqir, and Esra Erdem, "Gay Imperialism: Gender and Sexuality Discourse in the 'War on Terror,'" in *Out of Place: Interrogating Silences and Queerness/Racality*, ed. Adi Kuntsman and Esperanza Miyake (York: Raw

Nerve Books Ltd, 2008); Rinaldo Walcott, Foreword to *Disrupting Queer Inclusion: Canadian Homonationalisms and the Politics of Belonging*, eds. OmiSoore H. Dryden and Suzanne Lenon (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2015), vii-x. On the vilification of the less progressive other see Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994); Kusha Dadui, "LGBT Refugees and Canadian Border Imperialism," in *Marvellous Grounds: Queer of Colour Histories of Toronto*, eds. Jinhana Haritaworn, Ghaida Moussa, and Syrus Marcus Ware (Toronto: Between the Lines Press, 2018).

Jinhana Haritaworn, *Queer Lovers and Hateful Others: Regenerating Violent Times and Places* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015); "Marvellous Grounds and the Belated Archive," Roundtable plenary at the Trans Temporality Conference, University of Toronto, Toronto, April 1, 2016.

QTBIPOC stands for queer, trans, black, Indigenous, and people of colour.

Courtney McFarlane, speech given at Blockorama town hall meeting, The 519 Church Street Community Center, Toronto, April 16, 2007.

Lisa Yaszek, "Afrofuturism, Science Fiction, and the History of the Future," *Socialism and Democracy* 20, no. 3 (2006): 41-60, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08854300600950236>; Octavia E. Butler, *Parable of the Sower* (New York: Open Road Media, 2012).

These trans activists contributed greatly to the development of trans community during the 1990s and early 2000s in Toronto. Mirha-Soleil Ross is a trans artist, sex worker, and activist who has led seminal research and organizing in Montreal and Toronto from the early 1990s to the present day. Yasmeen Persad is a Black trans woman in Toronto who has worked for over 10 years to create access programs for trans women of colour through The 519 Church Street Community Centre and the Sherbourne Health Centre. Monica Forrester is a Black trans woman who has spent several decades doing street outreach and organizing amongst trans sex workers in Toronto. Nik Redman is a Black trans man in Toronto who has worked for two decades to create trans-specific programming and resources for queer trans men, trans parents, and filmmakers of colour. Sumaya Dalmar was a black Trans woman who died in 2015 in Toronto. The handling of her case by the Toronto Police Services came under fire when her death was not initially reported. Duchess was a well-known Black drag queen in Toronto who died suddenly of meningitis in the early 2000s in Toronto.

Female To Male International. Found online at FTMI.org on May 31, 2016.

Andrew Flinn, Mary Stevens, and Elizabeth Shepherd, "Whose Memories, Whose Archives? Independent Community Archives, Autonomy, and the Mainstream," *Archival Science* 9, no. 1-2 (2009): 71-86. The lack of adequate archiving and a desire to create a Black queer and trans archive has come up several times; for example, it was the theme and focus of the Toronto Queering Black History gathering at Ryerson University in 2010 that featured talks on the subject by Notisha Massaquoi, Rinaldo Walcott, Courtney McFarlane, and Syrus Marcus Ware. The gathering was organized by a student collective led by Lali Mohamed and has become an annual event.

Jinhana Haritaworn, Adi Kuntsman, and Silvia Posocco, "Murderous Inclusions," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 15, no. 4 (2013): 445-52, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2013.841568>.

Sylvia Rivera, "Sylvia Rivera's Talk at LGMNY, June 2001 Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center, New York City," *CENTRO: Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies* 19, no. 1 (2007): 116-23,

<https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/377/37719106.pdf>.

Rivera, "Sylvia Rivera's Talk"; Syrus Marcus Ware, Joan Ruzsa, and Giselle Dias, "It Can't Be Fixed Because It's Not Broken: Racism and Disability in the Prison Industrial Complex," in *Disability Incarcerated: Imprisonment and Disability in the United States and Canada*, eds. Angela Y.

Davis, Chris Chapman, and Alison C. Carey, 163–184 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan: 2014); Julia Oparah Chinyere/Sudbury and Margo Okazawa-Rey, eds., *Activist Scholarship: Antiracism, Feminism, and Social Change* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2009); Lena Palacios, Rosalind Hampton, Ilyan Ferrer, Elma Moses, and Edward Lee, “Learning in Social Action: Students of Color and the Québec Student Movement,” *JCT: Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* 29, no. 2 (2013): 6–25, <http://journal.jctonline.org/index.php/jct/article/view/469>.

Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

Mario H. Ramirez, “Being Assumed Not to Be: A Critique of Whiteness as an Archival Imperative,” *The American Archivist* 78, no. 2 (2015): 339–56, <https://doi.org/10.17723/0360-9081.78.2.339>;

Flinn, Stevens, and Shepherd, “Whose Memories, Whose Archives?”

Haritaworn (2015); Jinthana Haritaworn, Ghaida Moussa, and Syrus Marcus Ware, eds. *Marvellous Grounds: Queer of Colour Formations in Toronto* (Toronto: Between the Lines Press, 2018).

Debbie Douglas, Courtney McFarlane, Makeda Silvera, and Douglas Stewart, eds., *Má-Ka Diasporic Fuks: Contemporary Writing by Queers of African Descent* (Toronto: Sister Vision Press, 1997).

Started by Blackness Yes! in 1998, Blockorama is a day-long arts festival at the city’s annual Pride celebrations that has developed over seventeen years of resistance to whitewashing within queer organizing. An explicitly political space run by an independent committee of grassroots organizers (Blackness Yes!), the arts programming spans twelve hours and centres the narratives of Black and African diasporic trans, disabled, deaf, and queer people.

Omise’eke Natasha Tinsley, “Black Atlantic, Queer Atlantic: Queer Imaginings of the Middle Passage,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 14, no. 2-3 (2008): 191–215,

<https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-2007-030>; Rinaldo Walcott, *Black Like Who? Writing Black*

Canada (Toronto: Insomniac Press, 2009); Rinaldo Walcott, “Reconstructing Manhood; or, the Drag of Black Masculinity,” *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 13, no. 1 (2009): 75–89,

<https://doi.org/10.1215/07990537-2008-007>; Rinaldo Walcott, “Outside in Black Studies: Reading from a Queer Place in the Diaspora,” in *Queerly Canadian: An Introductory Reader in Sexuality*

Studies, eds. Maureen FitzGerald and Scott Rayter (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press, 2012), 23–34; OmiSoore Dryden, “Canadians Denied: A Queer Diasporic Analysis of the Canadian Blood Donor,”

Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture & Social Justice 34, no. 2 (2010): 77–84; R.

CasSandy Lord, “Making the Invisible/Visible: Creating a Discourse on Black Queer Youth,”

master’s thesis, University of Toronto, 2005; R. CasSandy Lord, “Performing Queer Diasporas: Friendships, Proximities and Intimacies in Pride Parades,” PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2015.

Eve Tuck. “Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities,” *Harvard Educational Review* 79, no. 3 (2009), 416.

Monica Forrester, transcribed audio interview, Marvellous Grounds Project, 2015.

The Pin Button Project featured a campaign to solicit the donation of historic activist buttons from Toronto queer and trans people. The project had some content that reflected a racialized history, but largely reflected a white queer history. For more information, see <http://www.clga.ca/pin-button-project-launch-party>, accessed May 31, 2016.

BLM—TO was named Pride Toronto’s Honoured Group and as a result was asked to lead the Toronto Pride parade. During the parade, BLM-TO held a twenty-five-minute sit-in during which they presented the Pride Toronto executive director a list of demands co-written with two other Black queer and trans groups: Black Queer Youth (BQY) and Blackness Yes!. The groups collectively demanded that Pride Toronto do better by Black, Indigenous, racialized, trans and disabled people, and refused to restart the parade until the Pride executive director agreed to address their concerns. There was tremendous backlash by white festival attendees, with many throwing water bottles at Black activists, screaming racial slurs, and yelling that they were being “selfish.” In the days that followed, many of the BLM—TO organizers received death threats and hate mail in response to this direct action.

Toronto Caribbean Carnival, known by most as Caribana, is the largest annual festival in the city of

Toronto. Held over several weeks and culminating in a day-long parade and carnival celebration, the festival is heavily policed and the site of the festival has been moved from a prominent location down to the edge of the city's waterfront.

Miss Major is a lifelong activist and community organizer well known for her role in the Stonewall Riots and for helping to set up supportive programming for black trans women across the United States. Annalise Ophelian and Florez, StormMiguel, creators, *Major! A New Documentary Film*, San Francisco: Floating Ophelia Productions, 2016.

Assata Shakur, *Assata: An Autobiography* (London: Zed Books, 1987).

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