Studies in Canadian Literature
Études en littérature canadienne

Putting Black Lives Matter into Canadian Literary Studies
Introduction

Camille Isaacs et Karina Vernon

Volume 47, numéro 2, 2022

Special Section: Black Lives Matter
Dossier spécial : Black Lives Matter

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1108318ar
DOI : https://doi.org/10.7202/1108318ar

Aller au sommaire du numéro

Éditeur(s)

University of New Brunswick, Dept. of English

ISSN

0380-6995 (imprimé)
1718-7850 (numérique)

Découvrir la revue

Citer ce document

Isaacs, C. & Vernon, K. (2022). Putting Black Lives Matter into Canadian Literary Studies: Introduction. *Studies in Canadian Literature / Études en littérature canadienne*, *47*(2), 6–21. https://doi.org/10.7202/1108318ar

Putting Black Lives Matter into Canadian Literary Studies

Camille Isaacs and Karina Vernon

> It is an uncanny mathematics that from Watts to Rodney King was a space of twenty-seven years, and from Rodney King to George Floyd, a space of twety-eight. And so, what is the evolution of the situation within this temporal symmetry?
>
> — Wayde Compton, "Three Riots"

> But if you go get the ropes
> I'll bring the bulldozer
> Because what we learned from our history
> Is how quick their idols shatter
>
> — El Jones, "Destruction: A Love Poem"

"Revolution," wrote Audre Lorde, "is not a one-time event. It is becoming always vigilant for the smallest opportunity to make a genuine change in established, outgrown responses" (140). Four hundred years of surviving a deadly anti-Black social order on Turtle Island has taught us that revolution is constituted by a range of tactics, from large-scale insurrections to the slow, strategic work of shifting the social relations that make the systems of colonization, enslavement, policing, and incarceration possible. For many abolitionists in Canada and beyond, Black liberation is not only about "the closing and ending of our reliance on the prison-industrial complex as a way of handling conflict" (Ware and Dias 33) but also "more deeply about shifting our relationships to land, to capitalism, to each other, and to ourselves" (Jones 81; see also Moten 42; Ware and Dias 33). At the height of the anti-police demonstrations of 2020, when, as Dionne Brand put it, the "x-ray that is the novel coronavirus expose[d] once again the bare bones of the social structure in which for Black and Indigenous people governance equals policing," and "all narratives [were] blown open" ("On Narrative"), it became possible to believe that the carceral system as we know it might be abolished in

our lifetime. As the largest ever multi-racial demonstrations for Black life erupted across Canada and globally, and the monuments to racism and colonization fell, it seemed to be possible that we were moving toward abolition in this more expansive sense, as the founding of a new society based not upon hierarchy, property, and discipline but upon life-protecting forms of egalitarian relation and care.

Three years after that moment, however, it feels harder to be so hopeful. Despite widespread support for defunding the police in Canada, budgets for policing have not only not decreased since 2020 but also swelled, in some cases substantially so. Police funding has not been significantly diverted toward addressing poverty, affordable housing, education, and mental health crises (Becken). Vancouver elected a new mayor endorsed by the city's police union (Kulkarni). Toronto City Council has increased police presence on public transit in order to address a social crisis (of its own making) that disproportionately affects racialized, mentally ill, and poor people (Mak and Harvey). All this despite reports confirming what we already know: that Black and Indigenous people are vastly over-represented as victims in police use of force (see Wortley et al. 10, 136). And it's getting worse. Police shootings were up twenty-five percent in 2022 (see Malone). Wet'suwet'en and Secwepemc land defenders continue to be surveilled, intimidated, and criminalized for protecting their territories from fossil fuel pipeline development. Despite the urgent need to return to abolition programs, a great deal of the momentum regarding abolition, as Brand anticipated already in 2020, has been "disappeared, modified into reform and including . . . equity, diversity, and palliation" ("On Narrative"). "We allowed ourselves to get distracted and co-opted," says El Jones in her interview in this journal. "Because it went from George Floyd, a cop kneeled on his neck, and then suddenly we were talking about racism in the workplace. I get why that's an issue, but is it *this* issue?" We will say more below about the ways in which the university and its institutions have recruited the labour of Black, Indigenous, and racialized people for anti-racism initiatives and what it has meant for this special section in particular.

Yet even as we feel disappointment with the direction that the movement for abolition has taken for the moment, we remind ourselves that the revolution is far from over. Revolution, after all, also encompasses the every day, sometimes compromising work that unfolds between public flashpoints. One of the appeals for us of editing a Black Lives Matter

section of *Studies in Canadian Literature/Études en littérature canadienne* is this opportunity to fight the atrophy of social and political memory in Canada regarding our own history of abolition and thus to highlight what Jones calls in her interview the "native Black radicalism" that predates and contextualizes the current Black Lives Matter movement.

Resistance to the capitalist worldview that took hold on Turtle Island around 1441 (King 1), which produced the twin systems of colonization and slavery, has been a constant project (Tuck and Yang 10). Slavery existed in Canada for over two hundred years, but enslaved people, Indigenous *panis* and Black, regularly resisted their status as property in a number of ways, including infrapolitics, or subversive acts that fly under the radar, such as insolent thoughts and gestures; slowing and refusing work; stealing and damaging property; and even the perilous act of fleeing enslavement (Maynard 25). Fugitive slave advertisements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries testify to the frequency of escape attempts (Mackey; Maynard 25; Nelson). Scholar Frank Mackey has located about fifty fugitive slave ads in the Montreal and Quebec *Gazette*s alone, indicating that the scope of Black fugitivity in what became Canada was much larger. The fugitive and non-fugitive narratives collected by abolitionist Benjamin Drew from 1812 to 1903 constitute some of the earliest abolitionist Black writing that we have. Drew was supported in his activities by the Anti-Slavery Society of Canada, formed in Toronto in 1851 by a multi-racial executive, including a number of formerly enslaved members of the Black community such as Henry Bibb, editor of *Voice of the Fugitive* (Landon 34). Later, after legal slavery was abolished in Canada in 1834, thirty to forty thousand freedom seekers arrived through the underground railroad. Here Mary Ann Shadd's activism, including in her *A Plea for Emigration; Or Notes of Canada West* (1852) and her weekly abolitionist newspaper, *The Provincial Freeman*, offered an important counterpart to the all-male membership of the Anti-Slavery Society of Canada by prioritizing the issue of Black women's rights (Zackodnik 110).

After the abolition of slavery in Canada, the legal authority to surveil, segregate, control, and punish Black and Indigenous people — to a lethal degree — passed to the Canadian state and its institutions: the police and criminal justice system, the prison industrial complex, education, border and immigration control, and child welfare (Maynard 7). As Desmond Cole documents with such clarity in *The Skin We're In: A Year of Black Resistance and Power*, "the struggle for Black life in

modern-day Canada is a living struggle, as urgent today as it has ever been" (17). Here again is an unbroken record of resistance to be invoked. Dionne Brand and Lois de Shield's *No Burden to Carry: Narratives of Black Working Women in Ontario, 1920s-1950s*, published in 1991, collects fifteen interviews with Black women whose recollections centre on the early decades of the twentieth century. Their fascinating interviews bring forward a history of radical feminism and transnational Black nationalism that informed the organizing and activism of this generation of women (Zackodnik 105). One salient action occurred in 1940 on Yonge Street in Toronto when the Black community demonstrated with placards around a roller-skating rink that had refused entry to a Black boy (Brand and de Shield 206). Similarly, in 1946 in Nova Scotia, Viola Desmond was supported in her fight against segregation by the Nova Scotia Association for the Advancement of Coloured People, by Cornwallis Street Baptist Church, and by the people of Black Nova Scotia who "arose as one and with one voice" (William Oliver qtd. in Thomson 84). Such struggles against the dehumanization of Black people and control over their movements were fought throughout Canada.

In the mid-twentieth century, the struggle for abolition also centred on deadly racism in policing. In 1952, Clarence Clemons, a fifty-two-year-old longshoreman from Edmonton who had moved to the Hogan's Alley neighbourhood of East Vancouver in the 1930s, was fatally beaten by a police officer known to the Black community as a "Negro-hating cop" (Garden). The cop was cleared by an all-white male jury. The Clemons case mobilized the Black community: in 1953, more than 150 Black Vancouverites, including some with Communist Party affiliations, met at the Fishermen's Hall and founded the Negro Citizens' League to agitate for an inquiry into police brutality (Garden).

The same story has played out time and again with horrifying regularity across Canada, a violent return that marks the "temporal symmetry" of our lives, as Wayde Compton puts it in the epigraph above. The history of police violence against unarmed Black people such as Clemons, arrested and ultimately murdered for "loitering" while waiting for his wife outside a Vancouver nightclub, is a terrible litany. Yet it is one that needs to be recited lest people imagine that the anti-police protests of our own moment come out of nowhere or are patterned on an American model. We aim to structure our recounting of deadly police encounters here in a way that does not spectacularize Black death but

prioritizes the story of Black resistance. We aim to show how Black communities have fought creatively and tirelessly against police brutality, often alongside our Indigenous and Asian Canadian brothers and sisters.

In the late 1970s, several mass protests were organized by the Albert Johnson Committee in Toronto to give voice to the collective anger and grief of the Black community over the escalation of police violence (Stasiulis 68). In 1979, Andrew "Buddy" Evans was fatally shot outside a nightclub by a police officer who subsequently was not held criminally responsible. In September that year, three thousand people participated in an eight-hour, eight-mile protest march that, according to Daiva Stasiulis, the Black newspaper *Contrast* described as "reminiscent of the civil rights era in the American deep South" (68). The following month, Black and racialized people organized a rally "sponsored by the Sikh-led Action Committee Against Racism" that attracted between twelve hundred and two thousand demonstrators (69) to protest the police killing of Albert Johnson, a thirty-five-year-old Jamaican father of four shot to death by Metropolitan Toronto Police inside his own home. Two police officers stood trial for manslaughter and were acquitted. Through the 1970s, Black, West Indian, and South Asian communities in the city created "a plethora of 'race relations' and 'visible minority' committees, liaison and consultative structures, [and] programs and commissions" to fight institutionalized forms of racism in policing and education (63). The murder of Johnson was one of the earliest cases of lethal policing that drew national and international attention and is repeatedly commemorated in Black Canadian literature. Austin Clarke memorializes Johnson in his novel *More* (2008), Dionne Brand revisits this history in *Thirsty* (2002), and Lillian Allen writes about Johnson in the poem "Riddim an' Hard Times" (1993):

> dem pounce out the music
> carv out the sounds
> hard hard
> hard like lead
> an it bus im in im belly
> an' a Albert Johnson
> Albert Johnson dead dead
> dead (63-64)

A genealogy of the struggle for abolition in Canada that constitutes what Jones calls our "native Black radical tradition" must include the

story of the Black nationalist organization Black United Front (BUF) in Halifax, formed in 1968 in response to centuries of racism and, in the 1960s, the razing of Africville.[1] Founding members of BUF Burnely "Rocky" Jones and William Pearly Oliver were in transnational dialogue with Stokely Carmichael and the Black Panther Party and adopted the Panthers' ten-point program, a political agenda that, if made more explicitly feminist and intersectional, would be as relevant today as it was in 1968.[2]

Our genealogy also pulls in the story of *Our Lives*, the newspaper produced between 1986 and 1989 by the Toronto Black Women's Collective. This newspaper centred on the lived experiences of Black women in Canada but took an intersectional, decolonial, anti-racist, and transnational approach to Black struggle in its analysis of anti-Blackness, colonialism, poverty, patriarchy, queer Black life, and apartheid. In the spring of 1989, the Women's Collective published an issue titled *No Justice, No Peace* dedicated to reporting on racist policing and to "demand[ing] an end to police killings of Black people in Toronto [and] . . . Quebec, and the injustices to Native and Black people in Nova Scotia, and Native people in Manitoba," which "show racism as endemic to the entire Canadian judicial system and the system of policing" (Toronto Black Women's Collective 1).

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Black Action Defence Committee (BADC) of Toronto carried out important work on the policing of Black communities. It was founded in 1988 in response to the killing of Lester Donaldson, a forty-four-year-old Jamaican Canadian man suffering from mental illness (Bell). The BADC successfully agitated for the formation of Ontario's Special Investigations Unit, a civilian oversight agency responsible for holding police accountable in cases of lethal force and sexual assault. In 1992, the BADC coordinated a demonstration of about one thousand people to protest the killing of twenty-two-year-old Raymond Constantine Lawrence by a white plainclothes police officer, a murder that occurred only two days after the video surfaced of Rodney King being beaten to death by Los Angeles police officers. Demonstrators in Toronto marched from the US consulate to Yonge and Bloor, where they sat down and blocked traffic for forty-five minutes. Notably, the same sit-in tactic was adopted by BLM-TO at Pride twenty-four years later, in 2016, to demand adequate funding for Black queer programming at Pride and to end police participation in the event. The 1992 uprising, labelled "the Yonge Street riot" by the

OUR LIVES

CANADA'S FIRST BLACK WOMEN'S NEWSPAPER $1.00

Spring 1989 Volume 3 #1

NO JUSTICE NO PEACE!

The Toronto Black Women's Collective's Proposal to the March 8th Coalition for IWD 1989

The Toronto Black Women's Collective with the support of the Coalition of Visible Minority Women and the Toronto chapter of the Congress of Black Women suggest WOMEN AND POVERTY as the theme for the 1989 International Women's Day celebrations.

It is apparent across this country that poverty has far reaching negative effects on women's lives and is the primary cause of most social dilemmas which the majority of women face daily. For this reason, we would like to see workshops organized on the following sub-themes focussing on how poverty affects women differentially according to their race and class: **housing, shelter, daycare, healthcare, and welfare.**

The Toronto Black Women's Collective regards the issue of poverty as the number one cause of most social ills which befall the vast majority of women. The Collective is committed to the struggle of all working class women internationally, though the most immediate focus of our practical work is with Black women in Canada. Our work has afforded us the insight necessary to appreciate how poverty affects women, particularly Black women. Hence, the term *poverty* is not at all problematic for us because we clearly understand the debilitating effects of the *reality of the condition.*

As pointed out above, it is *poverty* which prevents women access to decent housing. It is *poverty* which forces women to put up with physical, sexual, psychological and other forms of abuses in the home. If they had the means they would surely leave instead. In fact, it is *poverty* which causes many women to enter a household unit of economic dependence on a man in the first place. *Poverty* prevents access to all kinds of necessary resources for a decent life. *Poverty* creates powerlessness which prevents women autonomy over their lives. Indeed, it is *poverty* and that resultant powerlessness which has created what has become known as a "Third World." Clearly, *poverty* has personal, national and international implications for women.

It is evident to us that improvements to women's lives *must* be addressed from the standpoint of *women and poverty.*

Support Black People and People Of Colour Against Police Brutality

Statement by the Toronto Black Women's Collective and Black Women at York University on Tuesday January 17, 1989 at a press conference of the Black Action Defence Committee.

We demand an end to police killings of Black people in Toronto. We also demand and end to police brutality on the working people's of Toronto. These police actions are racist in their intent and execution! This is a racism which has been proven as historically embedded in Canadian society and which indirectly allows police to exercise their contempt for Black people, and in fact, encourages them to be more brutal to all people of colour.

Toronto is not alone in this practice. The recent killings of Blacks in Quebec, and the injustices to Native and Black people in Nova Scotia, and Native people in Manitoba show racism as endemic to the entire Canadian judicial system and the system of policing. People of colour do not receive due process in Canada. Instead due process is executed by the police officer with a gun on the streets of Toronto.

The police judged and executed Lester Donaldson and Michael Wade Lawson. Now, it is being said that there is a war between the Black people and the police in Toronto. Well, this sure is a one-sided war. It is the police who have the guns and power, and Black people apparently have the wrong colour. The lives of Black people and all people of colour are in peril in Toronto. The Black community has killed no one; the Black community has brutalized no one and indeed defenceless!

We feel defenceless because it appears the police are running the state. They certainly seem to think so. This is why they have been asking for the resignation of the Attorney General. They

Fig. 1: *Our Lives*, vol. 3, no. 1, Spring 1989. From *Rise Up!: a digital archive of feminist activism*. See riseupfeministarchive.ca.

mainstream media, was the basis for Andrew Moodie's 1997 play, *Riot*. The play follows the conversations of six Black Canadian roommates as they discuss everything from the Rodney King riots, to Quebec sovereignty, to the difficulty of paying rent. It deals in particular with the peculiar contours of Canadian racism: as one character says, "Canada is ten times more racist than the United States; they just hide it here" (29). Dionne Brand also writes in detail in *Bread Out of Stone* (1994) about being at the Yonge Street insurrection and experiencing, with other Black Torontonians, "the imperative to tear down all manifestation of a system that keeps its foot at our throat" (121).

This genealogy of the struggle for Black lives in Canada aims to bring out a history often hidden and forgotten. It is a condensed and selected account, yet it is already far too long, far too devastating. We wanted (yet didn't want) to include more, but the limited space of a journal introduction prohibits us from doing the record of Black struggle in Canada more justice. Published work on this history, however, both scholarly and creative, is already out there; you just need to find it. This is what activist and artist Ravyn Wngz was alluding to in her fierce impromptu press conference address in the summer of 2020, when BLM-TO activists were arrested and detained for splashing pink paint on statues of Egerton Ryerson and John A. Macdonald:

> I just want to add something. We've tried many different ways to get the attention and the conversation of those in leadership roles and positions. It took us having to do this to get y'all to show up. We've been writing letters, we've been creating books, photography, performance art. We've been doing every single way possible to let you know what we deserve, what we need. And you don't even have to dream it up. We've done the work for you.

BLM in Canadian Literary Studies and Its Institutions

So, if revolution means "becoming always vigilant for the smallest opportunity to make a genuine change" (Lorde 140) and Jones implores us to "get the ropes" ("Destruction"), how do we address this in our literary institutions? How can Canadian literary studies change some of its "established, outgrown responses" (Lorde 140)? As this special section is published, those of us in academia and English studies must ask ourselves what more we can do to confront anti-Black racism in our classrooms, institutions, literature, and journals. A special section is insufficient. What are we doing to enable Black flourishing in our

institutions? Is Black literature on the curriculum? In the journals? Are Black students mentored, encouraged, given the space to thrive? Are Black faculty members given opportunities to pursue research or to sit at the table?

In 2019, a Black graduate student was racially profiled at the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences. It was a telling example of the anti-Black racism that many Black academics and students face daily. The response from the federation was underwhelming at best, resulting in the Black Canadian Studies Association's (BCSA) refusal to participate in Congress 2021. In a June 2019 letter, the BCSA asked Congress leadership to "commit to the challenging, long-term work of addressing systemic, widespread anti-Blackness and all forms of racism." Julie Rak amplified the appeal that the BCSA made to other associations in the spring-summer issue of *The Angle*. Specifically, Rak called on ACCUTE to withdraw from Congress in a meaningful gesture of "solidaire." We were disappointed when that did not happen. We now call on academic journals to work toward better "solidaire." Just as violence disproportionately affects Black and other racialized communities, so too the response must work disproportionately to address it. And this responsibility cannot rest solely on Black academia. Many of the readers of *SCL/ÉLC* sit on boards of other journals or institutions. What are you doing to confront anti-Black racism in your institutions? It will take all of us to enact change. To do nothing is to be complicit.

There are specific actions that we can take to bring abolitionist practices into our classrooms that make Black students and indeed all students safer. Building Black knowledges and literatures into the curriculum is an important start, but the knowledges in those texts are seriously ironized, if not undermined, when they are read in courses in which standard university "academic integrity" policies are in place. We have shifted the academic integrity policies in our own courses because standard University policies are rooted in a carceral model of surveillance and punishment and are part of the university's colonial, anti-Black legacies. Indeed, we know that Black students and students of colour are at a higher risk of being accused of academic dishonesty (Tichavakunda). Much of the default panic about ChatGPT, the AI tool that uses predictive technology to generate written texts, including essays, is also rooted in a carceral pedagogy. Many universities are encouraging instructors to assign more in-class writing so that students might be better monitored, that is surveilled, by their instructors. But

we don't want to be turned into classroom cops. We ask how our course policies and practices can better support the kind of ethical social relations in the classroom that the Black, Indigenous, Asian Canadian, and Muslim writers whom we teach help us to imagine.

Bringing the struggle for abolition to our pedagogy also requires us to support faculty and students of colour-led initiatives for abolishing campus police and instituting restorative justice practitioners to handle microaggressions and conflicts in our campus communities. Several institutions in Canada have established such restorative justice models (Dalhousie, Queen's, UVic, Guelph). There should be more.

Contributions to the Section

The creative and scholarly contributions that we have gathered here connect Canadian literary studies to our focus on Black Lives Matter. Billy Johnson highlights the early activist tradition through an examination of Black Canadian modernity and the Maritime publication *Neith: A Magazine of Literature, Science, Art, Philosophy, Jurisprudence, History, Reform, Economics* (1903-04). Johnson argues that, though short-lived, *Neith* offers Black Canadians significant examples not just of early-twentieth-century writing but also of national, international, and Black diasporic community. *Neith* "appeared when no similar vehicle for anti-racist discourse existed north of the forty-ninth parallel." As such, the magazine appears to function as a kind of pre-BLM journal, especially for Black people in New Brunswick, which created what was perhaps the first legislative act of anti-Black racial discrimination by granting "unto the American and European *white* inhabitants . . . the liberties, privileges, and pre-eminences of freemen." This historical look at a response to anti-Black racism in the Maritimes is a fitting example for the current movement.

In an alternative response to BLM, Camille Isaacs suggests personal monumentalization as an antidote to the many outdated monuments and misnamed institutions and/or buildings. Through an analysis of Tessa McWatt's *This Body* and David Chariandy's *Soucouyant*, Isaacs argues that the protagonists, Victoria and Adele, should be considered as markers of history (personal, national, and global) through their journeys in the diaspora. Memorialization can be redistributed from the "ossified monument to the living, breathing, moving body, which would then disseminate memory . . . and keep it alive." Especially in light of

continued racial injustices, "personal monumentalization is a fitting way to commemorate the after-effects of slavery." Isaacs also engages with artists Camille Turner, Camal Pirbhai, and Nona Faustine. What both novels illustrate, and in light of the current moment in which Black lives are so devalued, is that alternative approaches to history and memorialization that are flexible, wide-ranging, and encompass the ordinary human being are needed.

In "Silenced Resilience: Models of Survival in David Chariandy's *Brother*," Basmah Rahman posits community organizing as a counter to traditional notions of resilience regularly proffered in the Canadian system, particularly in Scarborough, Ontario. Rahman questions what comprises success in Black communities. What does resilience mean? Rahman argues that "*Brother* emphasizes the flaws in normative models of resilience that rely on individual success and presents alternative modes of survival rooted in community empowerment." For those in Black communities, the local barbershop, in this instance Desirea's, can be a "site of resistance." Individual success, a capitalist work ethic, and traditional educational routes are not sufficient to enable Black flourishing, according to Rahman's analysis of Chariandy's work. An emphasis on working together, acknowledging alternative forms of knowledge and success, and resilience defined communally are the way forward for Chariandy's characters. These models are not enough to save Francis, the eldest son, however, and Rahman argues that, "because the desires of the youth for belonging disrupt neo-liberal discourses, normalized society criminalizes and violently prevents the youth from continuing the alternative models that empower their communities."

Any discussion of racial justice must include a discussion of gender equality. In "Struggling toward Identity in *The Motorcyclist*," David Creelman critiques the picaresque tradition's replication of misogynistic attitudes toward women. Creelman argues that George Elliott Clarke uses the picaresque to consider "a society whose racism is so strong that it has warped the impulses of the protagonist, who feels that his only response to oppression in one area of his life is to become an oppressor in another arena." The article can serve as a counterpoint to Hanna Nicholls's interpretation of the novel as reinforcing female oppression, by suggesting that Clarke highlights the problems with his protagonist's position. The protagonist cannot sustain long-term relationships, he learns that sexual conquest does not lead to racial conquest, and he begins to recognize the wrongs that he has committed against women.

This is all symbolized, according to Creelman, by the eponymous motorcycle: "That this picaresque narrative has, as its central symbol of freedom, a vehicle that is also a recurring image of horrific death is an irony that strengthens throughout the novel." At the end of the novel, the protagonist, Carl, has moved away from the centrality of the motorcycle and the picaresque tradition accompanying it. He becomes more of a participatory figure, community-minded, committed, and self-aware. Can we see the rejection of the picaresque tradition as a movement toward Black thriving? For Creelman's reading of Clarke's work, sexual freedom is connected to racial freedom.

What better way to enable Black thriving than through breaking bread together? The ways in which food can be a site of community are the subject of McKenna Boeckner's article, "Trinidadian/Canadian Food and the Fiction of Belonging in David Chariandy's *Brother*." Boeckner articulates "how cultural food and food practices also provide an affective locus for Chariandy to navigate his fiction of belonging." Using Anita Mannur's concept of "culinary citizenship" (13), the article examines Trinidadian dishes, specifically callaloo and pelau, and how they "function as a vocabulary vehicle to express the complicated politics of nationhood." Boeckner argues that it is through these food items that Michael, Francis, and their mother, Ruth, understand their place in Canada, but he also situates the family's diet within Scarborough's dense foodscape. Food is not only an identity but also "an articulation of pain, of diaspora, of loss as much as it can act as an articulation of sustained and embodied difference."

Interspersed between these articles are a number of creative fiction and non-fiction pieces, including new work by Lillian Allen, Wayde Compton, Ian Keteku, and Uchechukwu Peter Umezurike. Karina Vernon provides an incisive look at Black activism in Canada through an interview with Nova Scotian activist and writer El Jones. Opening and closing this special section are the work of linocut artist Khadijah Morley.

The Significance of a Special Section

Although we acknowledge that there are a limited number of articles in this special section on Black Lives Matter, we also lament the need for a special section at all. What kind of world relegates the hopes, dreams, and lives of its Black populations to particularity rather than incorpor-

ating them into the everyday for everyone? We do not believe that it is a dearth of Black scholars working in the field. Many who spoke to us admitted to being overworked and exhausted, unable to meet the deadline constraints of the section at such a painful time. It is difficult to write about the state of Black lives when one is still caught in the crosshairs, still running for one's life. As Christina Sharpe has written, "How do we memorialize an event that is still ongoing? . . . How does one memorialize the everyday? How does one . . . 'come to terms with' (which usually means move past) ongoing and quotidian atrocity?" (20). Despite reduced rates of infection, we're still actively living in a pandemic. Inflation places everyday purchases out of reach. There are fewer supports for the unhoused and for mental health. And anti-Black violence continues. As Brand writes, "I've been living a pandemic all my life" ("On Narrative"). And when the COVID-19 pandemic is declared over, Black people know that the societal infection will continue. There is nothing special about it.

So where do we go from here? So many of the articles in this section call for an acknowledgement not just that Black lives matter but also that they embody our various knowledges. We are our own archive, in the moment, fluid, varied. But Jones, in her interview with Vernon, also calls for a kind of forgetting, "Practices of forgetting are also interesting, and not allowing something to be solidified." We must also elevate the everyday, the mundane, ordinary people, for their lives truly are special. We must reclaim and unearth our histories. This work has been done for a long time, of course, as the partial genealogy above shows, and it must continue and in more venues. Perhaps most importantly, we must have hope and joy in our lives. We selected the cover image by Abigail Permell in part because it was a glimmer of brightness in a dark time. As the struggle continues, we must grasp at the everyday beauty that we come across and hold on for dear life.

Notes

[1] See also Jones's interview in this issue.

[2] The ten-point program was as follows.

1. We want freedom. We want to be able to control the destiny of black and oppressed communities.
2. We want full employment for our people.

3. We want an end to the robbery by the capitalists of our black and oppressed communities.
4. We want decent housing, fit for the shelter of human beings.
5. We want decent education for all people and an education that teaches us our true history and role in present society.
6. We want our community to be healthy and for them [to] use to their advantage . . . the free health care in this nation.
7. We want an immediate end to police brutality and murder of black people, other people of color, and all oppressed people in this nation.
8. We want an immediate end to all wars.
9. We want adequate rights for all black and oppressed people held in federal, provincial, county, municipal prisons and jails.
10. We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace.

An expanded ten-point program is available at www.marxists.org/history/usa/workers/black-panthers/1966/10/15.htm.

Works Cited

Allen, Lillian. "Riddim an' Hard Times." *Women Do This Every Day*, Women's Press, 1993, pp. 63-64.

Becken, Bob. "'Defund the Police' Calls in Canada Began in 2020: Today, Budgets Continue to Climb." CBC Radio, 12 Feb. 2023, www.cbc.ca/radio/day6/defund-police-2023-budgets-grow-1.6741711.

Bell, John. "Before Black Lives Matter: Black Action Defence Committee." *Socialist.ca: International Socialists*, 27 Feb. 2022, www.socialist.ca/node/4507.

Black Canadian Studies Association. "Update and Statement from the BCSA Regarding Anti-Blackness and Racial Profiling at the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences." 7 June 2019. blackcanadianstudiesassociation.ca/statements.html.

Brand, Dionne. "On Narrative, Reckoning, and the Calculus of Living and Dying." *Toronto Star*, 4 July 2020, www.thestar.com/entertainment/books/2020/07/04/dionne-brand-on-narrative-reckoning-and-the-calculus-of-living-and-dying.html.

—. *Bread Out of Stone*. Vintage Canada, 1994.

—. *Thirsty*. McClelland and Stewart, 2002.

Brand, Dionne, and Lois de Shield. *No Burden to Carry: Narratives of Black Working Women in Ontario, 1920s-1950s*. Women's Press, 1991.

Clarke, Austin. *More: A Novel*. Thomas Allen Publishers, 2008.

Cole, Desmond. *The Skin We're In: A Year of Black Resistance and Power*. Penguin Doubleday, 2020.

Compton, Wayde. "Three Riots." *Studies in Canadian Literature*, vol. 47, no. 2, 2022.

Drew, Benjamin. *A North-Side View of Slavery: The Refugee: Or the Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada. Related by Themselves, with an Account of the History and Condition of the Colored Population of Upper Canada*. J.P. Jewett, 1856.

Garden, Bailey. "The Tragic Death of Longshoreman Clarence Clemons." *BC Labour Heritage Centre*, 18 Feb. 2020, www.labourheritagecentre.ca/the-tragic-death-of-longshoreman-clarence-clemons/.

Jones, El. "Destruction: A Love Poem." *Abolitionist Intimacies*, Fernwood Publishing, 2022, p. x.

—. "'We Are the Living Archive': An Interview with El Jones on Abolition and Writing." Interview by Karina Vernon. *Studies in Canadian Literature*, vol. 47, no. 2, 2022.

King, Tiffany Lethabo. *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies*. Duke UP, 2019.

Kulkarni, Akshay. "Vancouver Police Union Breaks with Tradition and Endorses ABC Vancouver for Municipal Election." CBC News, 5 Oct. 2022, www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/vancouver-police-union-endorsement-1.6607093.

Landon, Fred. "The Anti-Slavery Society of Canada." *The Journal of Negro History*, vol. 4, no. 1, 1919, pp. 33-40.

Lorde, Audre. "Learning from the 60s." *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, The Crossing Press, 1984, pp. 134-44.

Mackey, Frank. *Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal, 1760-1840*. McGill-Queen's UP, 2010.

Mak, Ivy, and Lex Harvey. "Toronto Police to Increase Number of Officers on TTC after Series of Violent Attacks." *Toronto Star*, 26 Jan. 2023, www.thestar.com/news/gta/2023/01/26/ttc-toronto-police-mayor-tory-hold-joint-newser-to-address-recent-violence-and-safety-issues.html.

Malone, Kelly Geraldine. "Expert Warns of 'Perfect Storm' as the Number of Police Shootings Increases in 2022." *CTV News*, 27 Dec. 2022, www.ctvnews.ca/canada/expert-warns-of-perfect-storm-as-the-number-of-police-shootings-increases-in-2022-1.6209520.

Mannur, Anita. "Culinary Nostalgia: Authenticity, Nationalism, and Diaspora." *MELUS: The Journal of the Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States*, vol. 32, no. 4, 2007, pp. 11-31.

Maynard, Robyn. *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present*. Fernwood Publishing, 2017.

Moodie, Andrew. *Riot*. Scirocco Drama, 1997.

Moten, Fred. *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*. U of Minnesota P, 2003.

Nelson, Charmaine A. "The Canadian Fugitive Slave Archive and the Concept of Refuge." *ESC: English Studies in Canada*, vol. 45, no. 3, Sept. 2019, pp. 91-115.

Nicholls, Hanna. "'All Cunt and No Conscience': Female Sexuality and Representation in George Elliot Clarke's The Motorcyclist." *Studies in Canadian Literature*, vol. 43, no. 2, 2018, pp. 188-204.

Rak, Julie. "Solidaire: Why ACCUTE Should Talk about the BCSA and Congress 2021." *The Angle Newsletter*, Spring-Summer 2021, accute.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/THE-ANGLE-Spring-Summer-2021.

Sharpe, Christina. *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*. Duke UP, 2016.

Stasiulis, Daiva K. "Minority Resistance in the Local State: Toronto in the 1970s and 1980s." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 12, 1989, pp. 63-83.

Thomson, Colin A. *Born with a Call: A Biography of Dr. William Pearly Oliver, C.M.* Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia, 1986.

Tichavakunda, Antar. "Let's Talk about Race and Academic Integrity." *Inside Higher Ed*, 30 June 2022, www.insidehighered.com/views/2022/06/30/academic-integrity-issues-are-not-race-neutral-opinion.

Toronto Black Women's Collective. "Support Black People and People of Colour against Police Brutality." *Our Lives*, vol. 1, no. 3, 1989, p. 1-2.

Tuck, Eve, and K. Wayne Yang, editors. *Toward What Justice? Describing Diverse Dreams of Justice in Education*. Routledge, 2018.

Ware, Syrus, and Giselle Dias. "Revolution and Resurgence: Dismantling the Prison Industrial Complex through Black and Indigenous Solidarity." *Until We Are Free:*

Reflections on Black Lives Matter in Canada, edited by Rodney Diverlus et al., U of Regina P, 2020, pp. 32-56.

Wngz, Ravyn. Untitled Manifesto. *CP24*, 21 July 2020, marksking.com/my-fabulous-disease/the-scorching-words-of-ravyn-wngz/.

Wortley, Scot, et al. *Use of Force by the Toronto Police Service Final Report*. www.ohrc.on.ca/sites/default/files/Use%20of%20force%20by%20the%20Toronto%20Police%20Service%20Final%20report.pdf.

Zackodnik, Teresa. "'In Another Place, Not Here'? Black Feminist Histories and Dionne Brand's *No Burden to Carry*." *Topia*, vol. 34, 2015, pp. 103-17.