

1919



# free dreams

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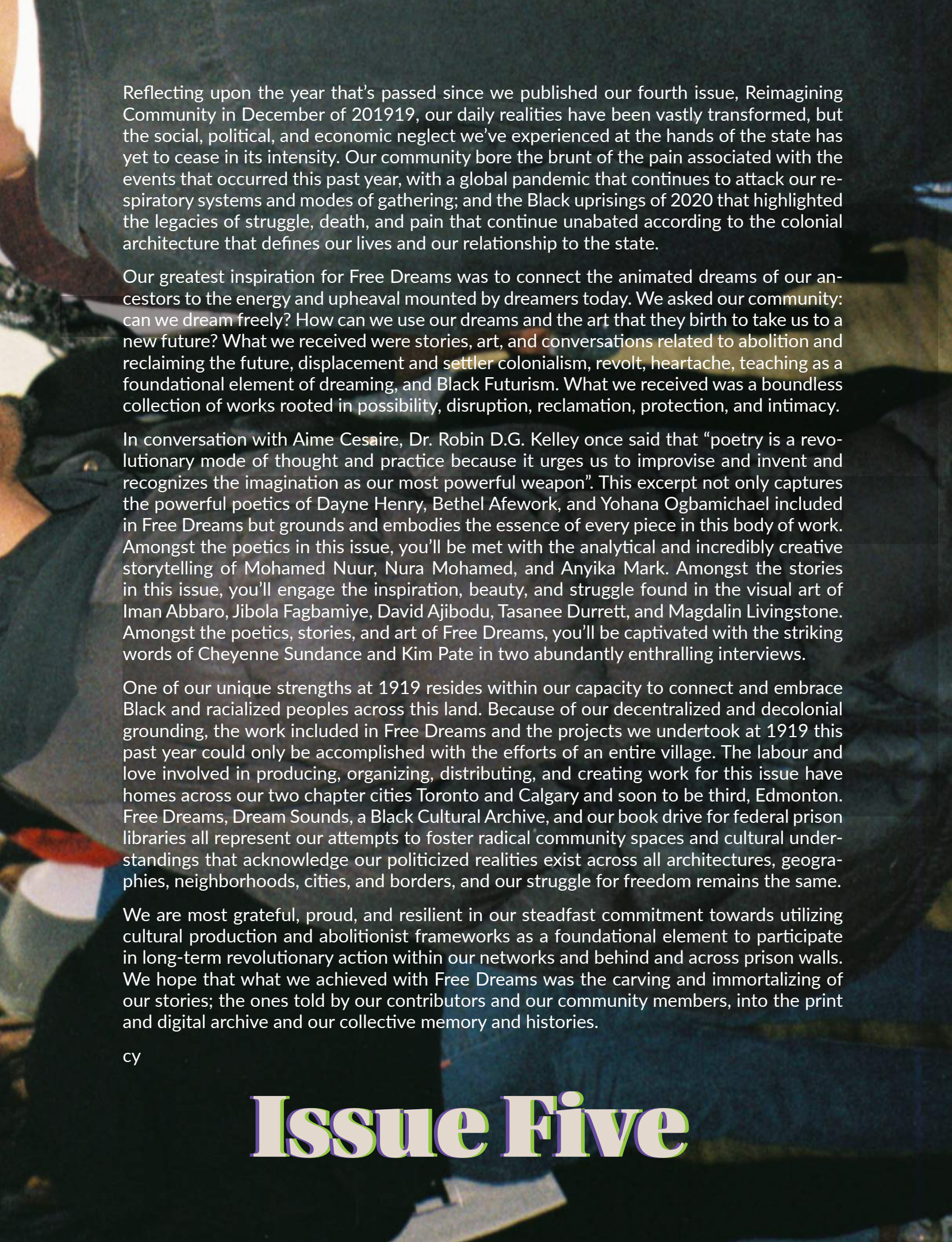
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Reflecting upon the year that's passed since we published our fourth issue, Reimagining Community in December of 2019, our daily realities have been vastly transformed, but the social, political, and economic neglect we've experienced at the hands of the state has yet to cease in its intensity. Our community bore the brunt of the pain associated with the events that occurred this past year, with a global pandemic that continues to attack our respiratory systems and modes of gathering; and the Black uprisings of 2020 that highlighted the legacies of struggle, death, and pain that continue unabated according to the colonial architecture that defines our lives and our relationship to the state.

Our greatest inspiration for Free Dreams was to connect the animated dreams of our ancestors to the energy and upheaval mounted by dreamers today. We asked our community: can we dream freely? How can we use our dreams and the art that they birth to take us to a new future? What we received were stories, art, and conversations related to abolition and reclaiming the future, displacement and settler colonialism, revolt, heartache, teaching as a foundational element of dreaming, and Black Futurism. What we received was a boundless collection of works rooted in possibility, disruption, reclamation, protection, and intimacy.

In conversation with Aime Cesaire, Dr. Robin D.G. Kelley once said that "poetry is a revolutionary mode of thought and practice because it urges us to improvise and invent and recognizes the imagination as our most powerful weapon". This excerpt not only captures the powerful poetics of Dayne Henry, Bethel Afework, and Yohana Ogbamichael included in Free Dreams but grounds and embodies the essence of every piece in this body of work. Amongst the poetics in this issue, you'll be met with the analytical and incredibly creative storytelling of Mohamed Nur, Nura Mohamed, and Anyika Mark. Amongst the stories in this issue, you'll engage the inspiration, beauty, and struggle found in the visual art of Iman Abbaro, Jibola Fagbamiye, David Ajibodu, Tasanee Durrett, and Magdalin Livingstone. Amongst the poetics, stories, and art of Free Dreams, you'll be captivated with the striking words of Cheyenne Sundance and Kim Pate in two abundantly enthralling interviews.

One of our unique strengths at 1919 resides within our capacity to connect and embrace Black and racialized peoples across this land. Because of our decentralized and decolonial grounding, the work included in Free Dreams and the projects we undertook at 1919 this past year could only be accomplished with the efforts of an entire village. The labour and love involved in producing, organizing, distributing, and creating work for this issue have homes across our two chapter cities Toronto and Calgary and soon to be third, Edmonton. Free Dreams, Dream Sounds, a Black Cultural Archive, and our book drive for federal prison libraries all represent our attempts to foster radical community spaces and cultural understandings that acknowledge our politicized realities exist across all architectures, geographies, neighborhoods, cities, and borders, and our struggle for freedom remains the same.

We are most grateful, proud, and resilient in our steadfast commitment towards utilizing cultural production and abolitionist frameworks as a foundational element to participate in long-term revolutionary action within our networks and behind and across prison walls. We hope that what we achieved with Free Dreams was the carving and immortalizing of our stories; the ones told by our contributors and our community members, into the print and digital archive and our collective memory and histories.

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Free Dreams  
Dayne Henry

i don't dream of much  
lest they be stomped out by the boots of our oppressors  
but when i deign to imagine  
it's a simple kind of life  
not one of cottages and high paying nothing jobs  
but freedom  
to be myself  
with myself  
of myself  
that's my dream  
for me, for us  
to determine our own limits  
shackled no more  
by the chains of inequality, poverty, illness  
recompense for iniquity and broken promises  
taking that freedom tightly in our grip  
using it to free someone else  
and to pass on our stories  
to the next person who dreams  
dream your free dreams  
for me



Shaza Elhour



# elements

James Baldwin once said “Freedom is not something that anybody can be given. Freedom is something people take, and people are as free as they want to be”. I want you to ask yourself then, what does it mean to be free? To exist without being bound by the shackles of a society that continually places the concept of Blackness in a box?

My series ELEMENTS is inspired by the vast identities in the Black Diaspora. This film-photography series showcases our unique embodiment and serves as a reclamation of our ability to dream freely, despite living in a world that tries to push us towards the opposite. Throughout the series I aimed to capture my models in their most authentic state. To do this, I asked them to bring an object that they thought symbolized them, or wear an outfit that made them feel joyful. I wanted to capture my models in their element, reminding each other that we are more than the boxes society places us in. These images are captured on Kodak Gold 200 & Kodak Portra 800 using a PENTAX K1000 w/ a 50mm lens.

Iman Abbaro



# Dare to Dream, Dare to Teach

Written by Nura Mohamed

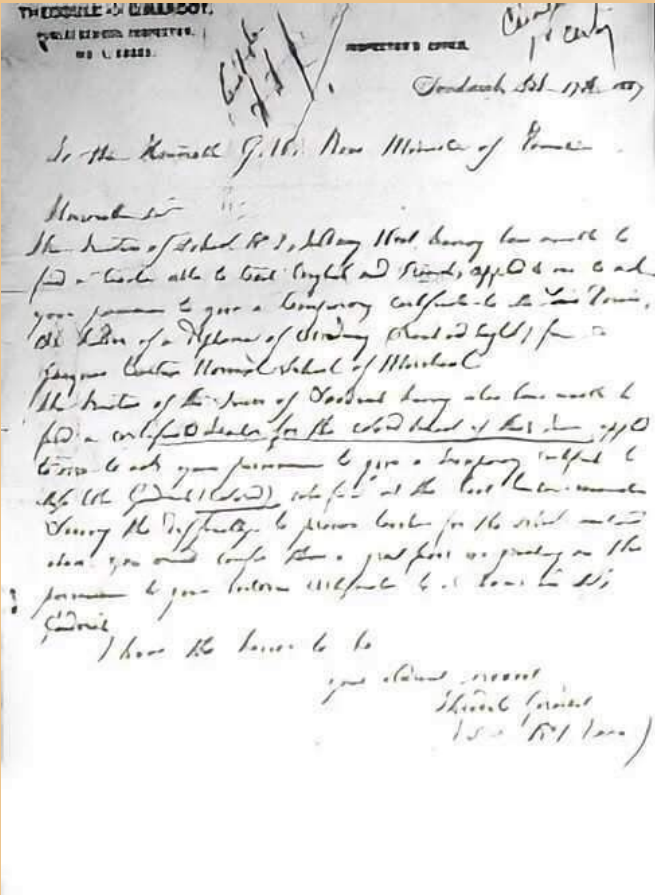
When I was young, I would drag an old whiteboard my mother had to the living room and sit my cousins and siblings down. With promises of doing chores for them for a week, they would sit and listen to me explain what I had learned at school that week. I was obnoxious, drawing diagrams and saying big words simply to mimic my teachers. But in the end, they understood what I tried to teach them, and nothing seemed to get close to the thrill that brought on. I dreamt of having a classroom of my own one day, teaching real students that I didn't bribe with a week of chores.

As I got older, the dreamy world without limits I created had to take on a more realistic design, with consideration to my position in the world and what I thought I could do and who I could be. My dreams became constrictive, and I wrote, dreamt and advocated less. I knew I wanted to be a teacher, but where was the money in that? I wanted to be a teacher, but who would hire me? And how could I teach a curriculum that didn't recognize truth, reconciliation and equality for all?

Undecided if I could create the change I dreamt of as a kid, I found a request permit in the Ontario Archives for coloured schools for a sociology class on Blackness and freedom. The request, addressed to the Department of Education, was made by a Black teacher, Miss Ella Gooderich from Sandwich, Ontario in 1887. Miss Goodrich who self-identified as a Black woman in the letter was a qualified teacher, proficient in both English and French, yet made the request to teach at a coloured school. Knowing the discrimination and alienation she must have felt, she still pushed against the boundaries set for her for the betterment of her community.





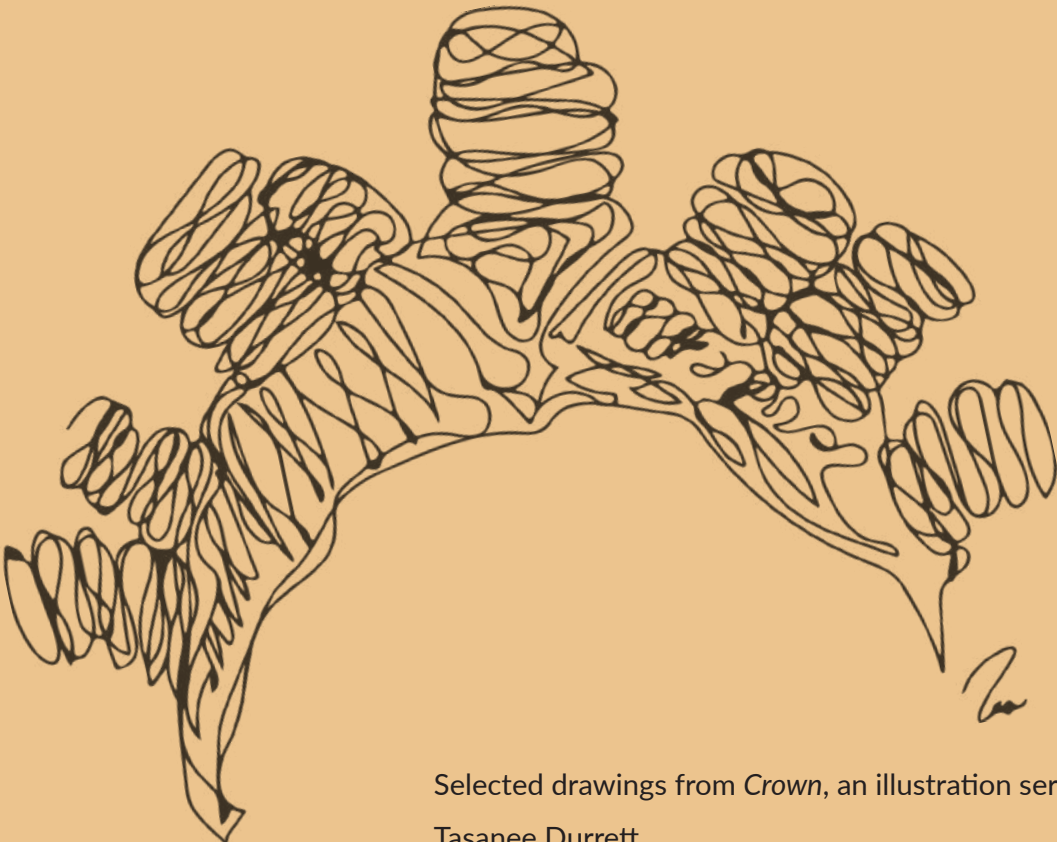


Sandwich, Town of. Request for permit for teacher Miss Ella Goodrich for colored school, Department of Education select subject files. 1885-1913

The use of formal education and teaching continues to be means of disrupting imposed narratives and creating agency within Black educators and students alike. Miss Ella Goodrich not only dreamt of teaching coloured students but took the necessary steps to educate and create a safe learning space for coloured students.

Her efforts are my dreams, to teach, learn and protect Black students while encouraging them to dream without boundaries as well. The sense of community and the empowerment students will receive from being taught about Black issues in the curriculum, both from the past and present by Black educators like myself is a reclaimed dream similar to Miss Goodrich's. A dream that must be worked on in all areas, including what is taught and by whom in Canadian schools.

This month is my first month as a teacher, with my own class and students I did not bribe. While our world looks vastly different right now, I'm thankful and consistently inspired by educators like Miss Goodrich who dared to dream of classes taught by Black women, for Black students to see. I share her dream and I am now living it, for our new future.



Selected drawings from *Crown*, an illustration series by Tasanee Durrett

# An Ode to Nort

Bethel Afework

Our love left me speechless

It was surreal

The 18 years I stayed loyal

I finally

Dismantled, analyzed

Our relationship.

Dedicated to what I thought was "true love"

*This is to my ex, Nort*

It's the heartbreak

After trusting and sacrificing

Beyond the capabilities of one's dimensions

Wearing your banner

Proudly on my back

I learnt about the

Money fraud and 'blue' collar facade

That someone could look you in the eyes and  
convince their lies as honesty

"Treaty agreements"

Treating them as belligerent

But...I love you

For you taught me that I am unique, talented,

A deity you once called me

Candidness is a treasure

And that my voice is a vital addition to this so-  
ciety

You cradled my fears

Hushed them quietly

Resting them to peace.

Simultaneously, abusing my family

As I sleep...

You are the serial killer who got away

Their bodies lie in the centre of conflict

Then we cuddle in the morning

As you assure me that they're at ease

But then I overheard you

Calling them "extremists" and "diseases"

But...I love you

For always pushing me to exert

Beyond my greatest efforts

Reminding me that

This, oh this, is the land of opportunity

Thank you for tucking me in every night

For a slumber

Free from disturbance

I never feared armed officials

Knocking on my door

To abduct me

And the only bombs I heard at night

Were fireworks

They said you were no good for me,

But I believe in 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 chances

Till I realize you don't believe in

Forgiveness

Or apologies,

Or changing your ways.

Self righteous,

Worshiping your own status.

You've marked a bittersweet identity, forever

On me you see because

I tasted *freedom*...

On your lips for the first time

It melted in my mouth like Hershey's white chocolate

Freedom

A reminder that when you, Nort

Steal a creation

It works for your benefit

Even though it isn't...

Yours.

# Interview with Bethel Afework

## Writer of 'An Ode to Nort'

### ***What inspired An Ode to Nort? Can you explain the title? Who is Nort?***

"So, right when I got out of high school... I started realizing a lot of lies that we told we were told, the way that history was constructed, and I didn't realize how convoluted history could be. I was at this exhibit...by Blackfoot artists and until then I didn't realize what treaty agreements were...how this country actually came about and I started losing a lot of faith and trust 'cause I was born and raised here [Canada] so for me, my conception and story of this place is my parents saying we came here for opportunities, we came here so you can have a better life, and that was the construction I always heard. You hear 'John a McDonald' at school and you just hear 'he's the 1st Prime Minister, close the book, let's move on' right. You don't hear about how he started residential schools and... the nuances of the KKK in Alberta and...you don't even hear about Black settlers! You don't hear about any of these things! So, Nort... I... just dropped the "h" in North and it [was] meant to be "North America" 'cause I wanted it to make it sound like a real name. I know that Australia is also like a huge British colony but I'm... focusing on my part of the region and [it's] not just Canada but America itself."

### ***Tell me about the poem and the message you are conveying?***

"I'm not trying to completely erase all the great things Canada has done for me, but I'm extremely critical 'cause, you know, if I said like

fuck the establishment and... let's overthrow the government, that would completely erase all the things that I'm actually really privileged to have access to. But I think that it's so important for us to... take a step back and not just... live in these rose coloured glasses. There's privilege of being born here; there's privilege of picking up the phone and [having] an Anglo Saxon accent; there's privilege of never having to go through culture shock because this is my culture. And it's different experiences for someone that is Indigenous, where this is their Homeland.

When I talk about freedom, and 'Nort always stealing creation even though it isn't theirs' - it's important to know that... if you experience privilege and freedom it's always on the backs of someone else's suffering - Indigenous people have suffered...

You know our parents never wanted to leave back home and if things were to be well, we would still be there. I know it's so nuanced. I hear my parents talking about how much there's war back home or whatever the case is, but I also see how much they've suffered being here. My dad always said [he] had no conception of coming to "ferrenge<sup>1</sup>" but yet he's here and so it's just so difficult 'cause the only reason we're here is because of displacement. It's not like our families wanted to leave... Europe is only rich because of external [Stolen] resources - without Africa, France would be poor; like there is no conception of Belgium chocolate - that's from West Africa; there is no concept of gold

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<sup>1</sup> Amharic for "a white man's land."

and silver and all these riches...”

**Do you think you “loved” the freedom presented in the imagery of Canada? What may have contributed to this belief?**

“I think that the narratives of this country and what they want you to believe is what really brought me to the idea of freedom. There needs to be some type of like power given back to Indigenous people like you know... and I don’t know what that would look like but I think that it’s really messy when you talk about freedom because even if we were to be completely free, you have to give up something for freedom right?”



Photograph by Esther Cho

*Editor’s Comment: “I think that freedom must be intimately tied to community, because community is not selfish and so freedom cannot be selfish either.”*

“Exactly and I think the individualistic ideas [are] the downfall...it’s like what’s good for the greater good... that will give everyone ultimate freedom... if we’re really watching out for each other.”

**How does your commentary on freedom throughout the piece address the Indigenous experience? Do you think that Indigenous people would assume the pov you present in the piece?**

“I don’t think so because I feel like my point of view is very much the person from ‘somewhere else’ coming here for the idea of a better life, a new beginning and I don’t think it encompasses the Indigenous experience whatsoever. This is their homeland... but for us it’s like we came from somewhere recently and this isn’t even the point of view of like a fourth gen [sic]. This is very... first, second, third gen [sic] probably stops at third gen POV. I think the only time that I really addressed it was the “treaty agreements” and I wrote in there “treating them as belligerent.” Indigenous people... they don’t

even believe in being truly colonized - [they] never gave up [their] land. The whole point is that it’s really honing in on the lies of ‘freedoms’ which is something that... would be a totally different experience, I think, for indigenous people - although, I can’t speak for them but I just... I could imagine.”

**What message, if any, might be lost in this piece that you want readers to capture?**

“Freedom is definitely very nuanced and there’s no such thing as true freedom. I think that if you feel free or in any terms privileged...it’s important to look back and [ask] who is suffering because of that. I think also intersectionality might have been missed here but everyone’s experience is so different depending on who they are; the little things matter and how that comes apart to create our experiences is so important. If I was...a man, my experiences would have been different and you know, this poem would probably have been different; if I was someone with a disability, obviously there’s things that would have been different and things in my day-to-day life that I would have experienced. At the end of the day, if you have any conception of, or feel like you’re experiencing freedom, you should ask yourself why and how. We can’t fix Canada but you can talk about your community...*just look within your community and see who needs uplifting, who needs their voices to be amplified.*”



"For the past three years, photography has been my only form of self-expression. My work has been strictly creative portraits, however there is always a subtle message within all my images. In contrast to my style of photography, the Black Lives Matter protest was the one time I wanted my message to be clear as day.



I knew that I wanted to capture images that would grab the attention of anyone that came across my pictures from that day. With that in mind, I chose to shoot at a quicker shutter speed and wider aperture in order to capture the sharpest images so viewers wouldn't miss any details. I focused on passionate protestors demonstrating against racial oppression, hoping to capture a moment in time that would be remembered forever.

You can check out more of my multidisciplinary work @davidajibodu".

# Towards

## ***Abolition begins by reclaiming the future***

The idea of a *tabula rasa*, or a blank slate, is the unspoken promise behind dreaming and the practice of freedom dreams. That the future holds all possibilities that we can project on to, be it abolitionist or utopian or a radical reimagining of community, demands a *tabula rasa* as a condition is something generally accepted by those of us who consider ourselves invested in working towards a better world, however we define it. But for the incarcerated, formerly incarcerated, and people who have been through the legal system, the *tabula rasa* is one that is foreclosed by records that forever consign them as 'criminal' without much recourse.

Individuals with criminal records wear a life-long stigma that essentially locks them out of wide sectors of the economy and society, disqualified from many positions and forced to remain in the margins. In addition to those who have been through the legal system, thousands of Canadians also have a police record, i.e their name will come up in a police background check as a result of police interactions or other contacts with the legal system despite not being convicted of a crime.

Once you consider that Indigenous and Black people are massively overrepresented in federal prisons (comprising 30% and 7% of the federal prison population respectively), and are more likely to encounter the police and/or legal system in general alongside unhoused people, the working poor, drug users, and other marginalized populations, it is clear the lack of a *tabula rasa* produces a largely racialized and indigenous underclass fit for exploitation. If you have a record you are marked for a type of social death – unable to work across a wide variety of jobs, unable to adopt or have custody of children, and mobility is restricted when travelling abroad.

This is despite record suspensions – equivalent to pardons in the Canadian legal system - being found to reduce recidivism and help offenders reintegrate into society. Criminal and police records are instead hallmarks of a broader punitive approach to criminal justice, with the inability to leave the past behind pulling ex-offenders back into a spiral of crime, inducing detrimental effects across society. This has been echoed by Canada's former Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale, who has called for reform himself.

Senator Kim Pate, the former executive direc-

# Tabula Rasa



S a

## Mohamed Nuur

tor of the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, introduced Bill S- 208 in 2020, which would automatically eliminate criminal records after two years for summary convictions or five years for indictable offences<sup>1</sup> To take an approach rooted instead in abolition, towards a tabula rasa for all to freedom dream on, is to take up her call and abolish the current record suspension system as we know it.

### ***The numbers and the current process:***

According to the Canadian Civil Liberties Association (CCLA)<sup>2</sup>, 13% of all Canadian adults have a criminal record. An average of 350 000 – 400 000 charges are filed in Canadian courts each year, with convictions comprising upwards of 200 000 cases – the rest are stayed, withdrawn or acquitted, which also generate their own non-convict records that come up in background checks. Several hundred thousand more Canadians per year have a police contact record as a result of carding or street checks, mental

<sup>1</sup>Kim Pate, “Criminal Records Have Become a Lifelong Stigma,” March 20, 2019, <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/march-2019/criminal-records-become-lifelong-stigma/>.

<sup>2</sup> Canadian Civil Liberties Association, “False Promises, Hidden Costs,” False Promises, Hidden Costs (Canadian Civil Liberties Association, May 2014), <https://www.ccla.org/recordchecks/falsepromises>.

health episodes, or other events which generate a police report. In addition, the amount of background checks conducted by employers and landlords each year has skyrocketed, despite the same CCLA report arguing that the amount of information increasingly revealed by these checks is rarely justifiable. In fact, the current research shows that record suspension actually reduces the likelihood of criminals to commit crimes in the future, in that they aid in the successful reintegration into society. This is due to the removal of barriers to employment facilitating re-entry into the workforce, but also due to the removal of internal barriers: the psychological impact of the future being a tabula rasa, of having new horizons open up and a new lease on life, directly reduces the chances of recidivism.

Unfortunately, public policy has yet to reflect the evidenced-based research. In 2012, the requirements to receive a pardon or record suspension actually became more stringent: the fee had been raised to \$631 and wait times have been increased to 5 years for summary offenses and 10 years for indictable offenses. This was a result of a turn toward “tough-on-crime” measures implemented under the Harper government that sought to increase the punitive nature of our legal system.

a For All

“To wear a criminal record is to be branded and destined for return to the space of unfreedom; a threat that looms large across every economic relationship.”

The result? Pardon applications dropped by 40%. Pardons became out of reach for the working poor and anyone who doesn't have a spare \$600 lying around, further entrenching formerly incarcerated populations into the conditions that lead people to turn to crime in the first place.

Movements for reform have generally centered around expungement for specific crimes, such as cannabis related charges following legalization in 2018, or specific types of records, i.e the Mental Health Police Record Coalition's drive to eliminate the detrimental impacts of mental health police records. The John Howard Society of Ontario (JHSO) "Invisible Burden" report also has a host of recommendations to reform the current system of criminal and police records, including more research; strengthening anti-discrimination laws to protect formerly incarcerated peoples with records, tax incentives for employers that hire formerly incarcerated peoples, and a reform to the system that models the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA) approach of automatically destroying some records after a period of time<sup>3</sup>. There has also been some movement towards automatic expungement on the provincial level: Ontario introduced the Police Record Check Reform Act in 2015, which eliminates summary convictions from appearing in background checks after 5 years, among other reforms<sup>4</sup>.

However, the demand for a tabula rasa is more

than just about reform or the technicalities of re-integration. It is fundamentally about the relationship the formerly incarcerated have to the prison. To wear a criminal record is to be branded and destined for return to the space of unfreedom; a threat that looms large across every economic relationship, a disciplinary tool that bars the formerly incarcerated from full participation in social life. The fact that indigenous and Black people are overrepresented in prisons by orders of magnitude also makes criminal records a vector of institutional racism, as defined by Ruth Wilson Gilmore as the “the state-sanctioned and/or legal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerabilities to premature death.” The foreclosure of possibilities available to formerly incarcerated peoples results in a shorter lifespan, given both the traumatic impact of incarceration on the physical body as well as the restriction from full participation in society producing vulnerabilities through economic marginalization. That it is a largely indigenous and racialized demographic subjected to this socioeconomic stratification is not a coincidence, but emblematic of the racial capitalism and settler colonial logic undergirding the legal system. As such, the demand for a tabula rasa is an abolitionist demand, for some respite against carceral capitalism and the prison-industrial-complex, the chance for a clean break from the past and be restored as a full human and citizen.

<sup>3</sup> John Howard Society of Ontario. "The Invisible Burden: Police Records and the Barriers to Employment in Toronto," 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Canadian Civil Liberties Association. "What You Need to Know about the New Police Record Checks Reform Act," September 27, 2019. <https://ccla.org/need-know-new-police-record-checks-reform-act>.

## ***A tool of restorative justice:***

The current approach to criminal records is entirely punitive. The restriction from full participation in society is designed to punish, rather than rehabilitate or put the offender on a path towards transformative or restorative justice. But what if we re-oriented our approach to use criminal records and pardons as a tool of restorative justice for crimes that involve a victim? In this sense, rather than criminal records being automatically generated for every charge and conviction as they are now, and pardon eligibility based on time elapsed since the crime was committed, criminal records would automatically expire except for violent crimes. The victims of the crime and/or families could then be empowered to award or deny a pardon once time has been served, depending on whether they believe the offender has been held accountable and is worthy of re-entering the community<sup>5</sup>. Such an approach would require being grounded in transformative justice principles and would make a tabula rasa contingent on a healing process that centers the victim and/or families, rather than the hands of the carceral state and its institutions.

To fully realize this vision of a tabula rasa would also require a broader re-imagining of our criminal legal system towards abolition. The demand for a tabula rasa, for the possibility of formerly incarcerated peoples to be fully restored as members of society and have a blank slate to freedom dream upon is the first step towards ending the prison industrial complex as we know it. This means ending the war on drugs through legalization and regulation, taking a healthcare rather than a criminalization approach. It means decriminalizing poverty through using a system of income-based fines, rather than incarceration, to atone for minor theft and other property crimes. It means ending the current practice of subjecting the formerly incarcerated to more surveillance through parole and other administrative detention practices that restrict their ability to move and thrive within their communities. It means taking an approach to justice that fosters life, rather than continuing to feed our people through a machine that marks them for premature death. It means reclaiming the future, by abolishing the past.

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<sup>5</sup> AllCleared. "Restorative Justice and Pardons: Completing the Circle." AllCleared, June 20, 2019. <https://allcleared.com/blog/restorative-justice-pardons>.

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[1] Kim Pate, "Criminal Records Have Become a Lifelong Stigma," March 20, 2019, <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/march-2019/criminal-records-become-lifelong-stigma/>.

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[4] Canadian Civil Liberties Association. "What You Need to Know about the New Police Record Checks Reform Act." September 27, 2019. <https://ccla.org/need-know-new-police-record-checks-reform-act>.

[5] AllCleared. "Restorative Justice and Pardons: Completing the Circle." AllCleared, June 20, 2019. <https://allcleared.com/blog/restorative-justice-pardons>.

# Interview with Canadian Senator Kim Pate:

Senator Kim Pate is the former executive director of the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies. She introduced Bill S-207 and Bill S-208 in 2020. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

***How will Bill S-207, which ends mandatory minimums, and Bill S-208, which allows for automatic record expungement, facilitate a more holistic and rehabilitative approach to criminal justice?***

First of all, I don't call it a criminal justice system anymore, I haven't for a long time. It is a criminal legal system because until we change the things we're talking about, it's not a justice system at all. If you're racialized, poor, or have mental health or addiction issues you are (1) more likely to come to the attention of the police, i.e. while on the streets or as a kid in care, and (2) more likely to be criminalized and imprisoned if you do something that other people may also do but not be arrested for. What I am hoping is that the bill for judges to not impose mandatory penalties (S-207) and the bill to allow criminal convictions to expire (S-208) will allow two things to happen: the first is to reduce the number of people going into the prisons, particularly those already massively overrepresented in the penal system. The second is to allow for convictions to expire when they get out and start to reintegrate into the community.

Right now, people are spending several thousand dollars just to get their convictions suspended, not even expunged. There are all kinds of groups profiting off folks trying to do that. Originally, when the government first brought in the pardon system, all it cost was a stamp; or if you lived in Ottawa you could walk over to the parole board office to drop off your application for a pardon. That was it, that was the cost of it. When it comes to Bill S-208, I just thought what we really need is for the records to go in the simplest way possible. It wasn't even an original idea - under the Young

Offenders Act records just expired when someone became of age. Under the Youth Criminal Justice Act, they don't expire but are automatically suspended. So it's not a new idea.

***What are the major roadblocks to the bill's passage, and what can those of us on the outside do to support it?***

There are roadblocks at the parliamentary level. The reason I introduced both of these bills is because they were promised by the current Liberal government before they came into power, yet they weren't implemented. Criminal record reform was promised, as well as reviewing and terminating some of the mandatory minimum penalties. So when I was first appointed, I spent the first year working with the ministers of public safety and justice, and offering draft legislation. Initially people were really keen, but I was never a politician before this and I didn't realize if the government in power hasn't made changes within the first couple years, you may not see the changes as promised because then they start working re-election. I didn't know that and I was naïve. So when it was pointed out to me, I decided to introduce both bills in the senate.

The first time it got to the committee stage, the 2019 election was called. The second time I introduced them, the parliament was prorogued in August of 2020. This time around marks the third time I've introduced both bills; but now there's talk of another election, so I may have to introduce them a fourth time. My hope is if there's another election, whoever's in power will agree to these two bills.

The other roadblock is that since these bills are undoing the work of both Liberal and Conservative governments, there's some opposition from both my conservative and liberal colleagues. I think we have an uphill battle. However, the government responds to the people who elect them. We need to make these bills election issues so those running at least have to account for why they wouldn't support a more progressive approach to our legal system. So call, email, visit

*“To me, defund, decarcerate, and abolitionist calls are fundamentally about investing in community, in relationships, in the very services and supports we have needed and undervalued during this pandemic.”*

your local MP or party candidates and ask them why they don't support it. We've tried to counter every argument people have come up with against both bills, and there are compelling reasons to pass both of them.

***How has the reception to the bills amongst your colleagues changed following last summer's protests? Have you seen an increase in support, or has it remained steady?***

I think if it came to a vote right now, they would pass. Both due to the protests, and because the Parliamentary Black Caucus have also included the need to review mandatory minimums in their calls for change. It was also in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action, as well as the calls for justice for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, so the support is there. Is there follow through though? Not yet. When it does come to a vote, I'm optimistic Parliament will vote in support.

***What is your perspective on the calls for prison abolition in Canada? Where is the movement today, how does ending mandatory minimums and introducing automatic expungement factor into it? Are you optimistic for the future?***

I'm always optimistic and hopeful, and not in a falsely positive way. I've spent most of my working life trying to create space and opportunities to succeed for people who haven't had those. I see that as a huge responsibility I take on, particularly in this privileged position in the Canadian Senate. I've spent the first half of my working life trying to figure out how to improve and reform the legal system, especially as I saw more and more racialized people & poor people pass through the legal system. When it became clear that women were the fastest growing prison population, most of whom

had been at first victimized, I thought to myself how can women be the fastest growing population? How can 44% be indigenous and 10% Black? We are talking more than half are racialized women and that isn't counting other women of colour. How can it be that 87%-91% have experienced previous instances of violence and abuse? How can it be that they almost all have mental health issues as a result of past trauma? How can it be that almost all of them have been in contact with the child welfare system? And how can we argue that is what public safety is about?

As a result, I have spent the last twenty years or so, before I was appointed, trying to expose the prison industrial complex and dial it back. To me, defund, decarcerate, and abolitionist calls are fundamentally about investing in community, in relationships, in the very services and supports we have needed and undervalued during this pandemic. Just today I was writing about the fact that most of my colleagues do not understand that while we were banging pots and pans and cheering on frontline folks, food handlers, and personal support workers, steps from Parliament Hill the homeless shelters have gig workers and personal support workers working full time and they cannot even afford to rent an apartment. In fact 91% of the communities in this country, a person working a full time at minimum wage cannot afford to rent a one bedroom apartment. No wonder so many people are dying in long term care, no wonder so many people are homeless. That's what defund, decarcerate, and abolition is about – it's investing in people and not in institutions and structures that reinforce and multiply the discriminatory impacts that people are already experiencing. Who gets access to education, healthcare, and social and economic support shouldn't be an accident of birth.



# Excerpt from Making Moves

Written by Anyika Mark

## Preface

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3 years ago, when I embarked on my playwrighting journey, I so desperately wanted to write Black people out of our current realities in the city. Every time anyone asked me about what I was thinking of writing, I would always say 'it's not going to be about pain or sadness. I want it to be Black people just living life!'

But it wasn't possible. I couldn't write out the sadness we experience- the trauma. It was impossible for the story I wanted to tell.

And I thought I would be more heartbroken to learn that. Instead, it inspired my title and motivated the vision in a completely different way.

& this isn't me glorifying the trauma of the Black experience. But rather, acknowledging that we get through it together. By re-creating everything, never giving up on ourselves and standing strong for one another.

My message to us in the new decade- utilize your voice now, prioritize your people in the stories you wish to tell and make it a point to archive us in the public and private sphere. Our art, our professions, our skills, our talents and our closeness to community will actualize as vehicles to a liberatory future.

So, I wanted to share this monologue; my contribution from these cold Toronto streets to the cultural landscape of the city. One of my many offerings to honour the dynamism of my people and to amplify ourselves first. I encourage everyone to share their own perspective on our experience here in Toronto, in Canada, in whatever medium comes natural.

No one is free until we are all free. Make your contribution today for our liberatory tomorrow.

Keep making moves comrades and continue to stay safe.

## Tyrone

My father always told me that the cold would be our biggest challenge in Canada. That over here, the winters are so harsh, you can barely see the sun.

My friends in Grenada teased me for months before we left home. Said I'd never be Grenadian again because when you go to Canada, you have to be a Canadian.

Between the cold and being Canadian... I don't know which was the hardest to adapt to.

I never really thought I belonged in Canada and when 4 officers in black uniforms forced themselves in our home and took my father away, I was reminded that I was never going to be, no matter how much they wanted us to believe it. February 29th, 2007. The day my father was taken from us. It was a leap year so even the calendar erased his existence from our lives.

Back in 2007, Immigration Detention was ruthless. My mother and I would wait hours for a 20min phone call with him and 10 of those minutes would be for the lawyers. They'd sit across my mother and I while they explained how there wasn't anything more that could be done about my fathers' deportation and that they had other cases to catch up with. How they couldn't keep representing us for a dollar under their rates.

So, my mother went back to work, I went back to school and my father went... home.

He'd call every now and then to check in on us, see if we were doing okay in Toronto. When I was younger, I'd always tell him that I was coming home and that I hated Canada. He'd chuckle softly and tell me that I was blessed to be born in Canada. That I had free health care, better opportunities and a strong passport. And that I'd only spent a small fraction of my life in Grenada, so I didn't even know what I was missing.

But there was a void, an emptiness that never really left me.

And black men, they have a certain fate here. A particular, unspoken destiny that everyone apparently just... knows.

But my mother, God bless her, never let me get distracted. Never let me out of her sight and never let me stray from a righteous path. Every evening from the age of 8 to 18, she would come into my room before I went to bed and we'd pray. We would pray for my father. We would pray for Grammy's health and strength. And she would pray for me. She'd ask God to hold me in the moments that she couldn't. She would pray that my heart stayed pure and my brain stayed focused on my school. And she would pray to never lose me.

My life has been hard but life is just hard. For everyone. I cannot think of myself as an exception.

But I don't think life is harder for me because of the 'opportunities' we missed. More so that those opportunities were never designed for me to access.

I've made my peace with it. Many of my niggas have.

We all know where we could have been but sometimes, you really can't outrun your destiny.

The Black-Man-in-the-Americas destiny.

# Black Futurism

Jibola Fagbamiye

Oil on Canvas - Mixed Media 2019, 2020

Conventional imagery of indige-  
history is most often portrayed as  
escapism but to articulate Black  
ty and history of indigenous Black  
in which the burdens of coloniza-  
from the struggle to achieve an

In this series, each portrait evokes  
and graffiti culture, punk, and  
would challenge the audience's





nous Africa is overrun with stereotypes. A continent of beauty, diversity, and immemorial primitive, uncivilized, and monolithic. My work confronts that portrayal, not for a sense of Futurism that centres around dignity and emancipation. Through this, I explore the beauty and traditions across Africa through the lens of a Pan-African, Afro-futurist Utopia. Colonialism and imperialism are a thing of the past. The Africa of my art has emerged victorious economic, cognitive, and spiritual emancipation.

a sense of freedom, beauty, and dignity. This is done by immersing elements of hip hop sci-fi superimposed over images of indigenous African cultures. The imagery, I'd hope, perception of Blackness—as they see it today and how we can imagine it for tomorrow.



# Cant Nobody

*Tell us about Growing in the Margins and the programming you offer through this initiative.*

“Growing in the Margins (GITM) is a program under Sundance Harvest and soon to be its own separate non-for-profit. GITM is either a drop-in program or a 12-week mentorship program that’s completely free for youth aged 18 to 25 who are marginalized within the food system and are Black and Indigenous, persons of color, LGBTQ2+S, and youth with disabilities, whether that be physical, learning, or hearing disabilities.

I started GITM because agriculture is really white and I didn’t think that a youth, similar to me when I started, should have to make the decision to work on a farm that doesn’t reflect their values. If I had something like this, I would have not made as many mistakes as I did, and I probably would have felt more supported and had an easier time entering agriculture. So I really started this program because I couldn’t find it for myself when I became a farmer. I want to ensure that at least now, youth who have similar lived experiences to me can have some support when they become farmers.

*What needs are you trying to address with GITM?*

When a Black woman wants to start a farm, the biggest barriers that I’ve been told about is land and education. Education and having a mentorship [program] is especially important with agriculture, because you can read a book, I have all the books on my bookshelf about agriculture, but you can’t really put it into practice until you actually get your hands in the dirt. Having a place for youth to practice agriculture alongside learning the fundamental concepts is very important. GITM being free [removes] another barrier that often comes into place.

Right now, one of the only ways a youth can learn about agriculture is through an unpaid internship and many organic farms exploit unpaid internships. Who has the privilege to take an unpaid internship for six months in Guelph? Someone who has intergenerational wealth, someone who has no kids, no dependence, and no debt right? And it’s usually white middle class women that take those internships so they then reflect the, now, workplace of the farmer. So when we’re thinking about farmers, we always think of a white person, usually white youth now, and it’s because they’re the only ones that have the privilege to go to the middle of nowhere for six months and

# Tell Me

assimilate within that community, but also gain that privilege of learning how to farm that way.

***What does your work as an educator and mentor mean to you?***

My role as an educator/mentor means a lot to me. I think if I, for example, saw representation in agriculture that looked like me when I was younger, I may have become a farmer way sooner. I think that a lot of people assume that Black women have to pull themselves up by their bootstraps but what if we have no boots to begin with. I feel like that's the biggest piece right there. It's like we can't expect Black women to... save agriculture by making it anti racist and making it food justice informed unless we actually have the resources to start.

A lot of people clap and cheer for Sundance Harvest being such a success but I literally started from scratch. I had no money. I started Sundance Harvest with \$5,000. People are like, you can do it, anyone can! And I say, well, no. I don't think this is the way it should be done and I think I probably aged like five years ahead of myself because of the amount of stress. I don't think this is sustainable for many people. I'm really excited to help start up projects and ensure that they're sustainable in the long term and people don't have to suffer through the growing pains.

***In what ways are you enlightened or inspired by your ancestors who cultivated and developed a relationship with the land before you and how does that inform the programming and growing you now undertake with Sundance Harvest and GITM?***

# Nothing



Our ancestors are resilient, they're fighters, they have persevered ...created so many beautiful histories and agriculture. Booker T Watley created the first CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) program. Carver did a lot of work with legumes and soil health and crop rotation. Black people's throughout Turtle Island have been innovating agriculture and you can really see that throughout the history of the Trans Atlantic slave trade when enslaved Africans were bringing over seeds and bringing over historical ways of planting rice for example, in the Carolinas in the South.

I think that a part of me farming is also part of me reclaiming that I'm doing it and I want to do it, despite my ancestors not having a choice to do it. So I think eventually I'll deep it and dig deep into that, but not right now.

***Centuries of ongoing land struggles against settler colonial Canada have disrupted the social, political, and spiritual relationship indigenous groups have cultivated to their ancestral lands across this continent. Do you believe, and if so, could you expand upon how growing your own food can begin to restore and revitalize one's social and spiritual relationship with the land?***

I do see a connection with growing your food and revitalizing one's social and spiritual relationship with the land. No one can win Mother Nature and there's so many farmers right now in southern Ontario, white farmers, of course, who are happy, about the longer growing season because they can grow more grain but at the end of the day, that means you have more droughts. So no matter what, unless Mother Nature's in balance, you're going to lose the battle. There's no way to farm well without being in relationship with the land. I can't sow wheat in a field that is barren unless I put compost and that compost is for the earth. It's not for me. In this relationship, I'm literally feeding earth back to Earth and that has to happen for me to feed myself.

I would also say it is pretty amazing seeing you're part of the landscape of the earth in a way that's...so deep that you don't even understand it. I don't even understand it. No one can understand it because that's the cellular



Photography by Cheyenne Sundance

walls of the soil. At the deep, deep core of the soil mycelium, fungi, and microbial activity happens and we don't even notice it as we're walking down a path of Earth. We don't even notice how our feet vibrations are shaking the mycelium and spreading those spores and that actually makes up that soil.

The really cool and spiritual part of farming for me is that every single thing on the planet that isn't man made is compostable. If I die on a field while farming, my body will turn into soil and that soil will enrich someone else's crops or will simply enrich the earth. That may be morbid, but I think about that a lot, about how historically bodies decayed in the earth and gave back to the earth. We are one of soil and we become soil when we die as well.

***GITM serves those who are dispossessed within the food system by supporting them in starting their own food sovereignty and urban farm projects for their communities to ensure justice and resiliency. As a result, GITM as well as liberating Lawns, makes inherent connections between***

***the Land Back movement, food sovereignty, and food resilience. Could you expand upon the importance of these connections for your practice and highlighting their enduring relationship?***

As someone who isn't indigenous to Tkaronto, I would say that regarding Sundance, the things that I tried to do in solidarity are less of acknowledgments and more of building relationships. One of the GITM youth gardens in Bell woods, where Sundance literally got started, I gave that back to Aboriginal Legal Services and they work with indigenous people in the Tkaronto area. So what I've been doing at Sundance Harvest is tending land and then giving it back, and I think I'm going to make up a public letter with Aboriginal Legal Services to talk about why it's important, so other people can learn how to do it.

Second thing is, I also asked community members and my Indigenous friends what they want regarding land back and the biggest thing I heard last year was what I could grow in my greenhouse. I grow 500 plus tobacco seedlings a year and I give them for free in solidarity to Indigenous people, organizations and community centres. I also deliver them because I know that transportation is a barrier. Besides that, I actually grow tobacco every single year and I donate that or give it in solidarity, of course to my friends, and those same centres as well for free. This is useful because if they don't have growing space and they can't take a tobacco plant, they can still get tobacco grown on this land, which is very important. I've been doing that for two years now and it's a really, I think, transformative thing and anyone who's interested in agriculture can really look at, well, what do they have. I don't have a lot of material wealth, aside from what Sundance Harvest puts into new projects, but I do have access to two greenhouses and if I didn't do something with those greenhouses that was in solidarity then I don't think I could call myself someone who's a food justice advocate. I'm very critical of myself and I've always been very critical about what I can do. I understand that as I get older and Sundance too, I can probably do a lot more and I will really aspire to do that.

***What is keeping you, others like you, or the community at large from dreaming freely? How do you keep those challenges from affecting/blocking your dreams?***

What I do is to try to have a dream and I just don't include white supremacy in it as much as I can. That's why everything Sundance Harvest does is so Black Femme because I don't see them in my dreams. When I'm closing my eyes, I don't see white men working at my farm I see black femmes working on my farm. I would say the biggest thing and people always ask me what my favourite quote is and my favourite quote of all time is actually by Little Nas X. The quote is "ain't nobody can tell me nothing, you can't tell me nothing". That's my favourite quote I've ever heard in my life. I read books and books and books and I like this quote the most because I feel like that is what I embody.

The second thing is, if you are doubting yourself, see who you're surrounding yourself with. Are you surrounding yourself with strong Black friends who understand the same struggle? Or are you surrounding yourself with people who maybe have no lived experiences similar to yours and maybe that's why they're doubting you. You want to have people who can just love you and they can just be there for you in a deep, serious, and beautiful way. I have some ride or dies that really ground me and they push me to do that work.

***How is or can the community, 1919 included, support you and other urban farmers like you in dreaming freely in your practice? And it could be anything from the most simple to the most radical way***

The biggest thing I would say is partnering with Sundance because when the farm store gets revamped and I start welcoming other urban farmers to sell their produce on the site, I will need more urban farmers to sell their produce on the site. Every single one of us on the Earth has an ancestor that grew food. You're connected by blood to a farmer, no matter what, no matter who you are, even in your home country, you can probably see some family that farms. They don't have to be farmers for profit, it could just be for sustenance. I would say dive deep and take that self doubt out, grow radishes, grow salad mix. Those are easy and if you want to make a little extra dough from that, sell it through Sundance harvest because ideally I would like Sundance to turn into a cooperative, but I need more people because I can't be a cooperative of one.

# Dream Freely and Inspire

Yohana Ogbamichael

We may be able to dream freely  
Yet it seems that our worst nightmares appear  
more clearly  
Is our dreams more of a distant fantasy,  
rather than one we can achieve in reality?

Nightmares  
Manifest at the hands of our oppressors

DREAMS  
Require us to apply pressure

DREAMS  
We must face the aggressor

The fiercest battle...  
is the one within

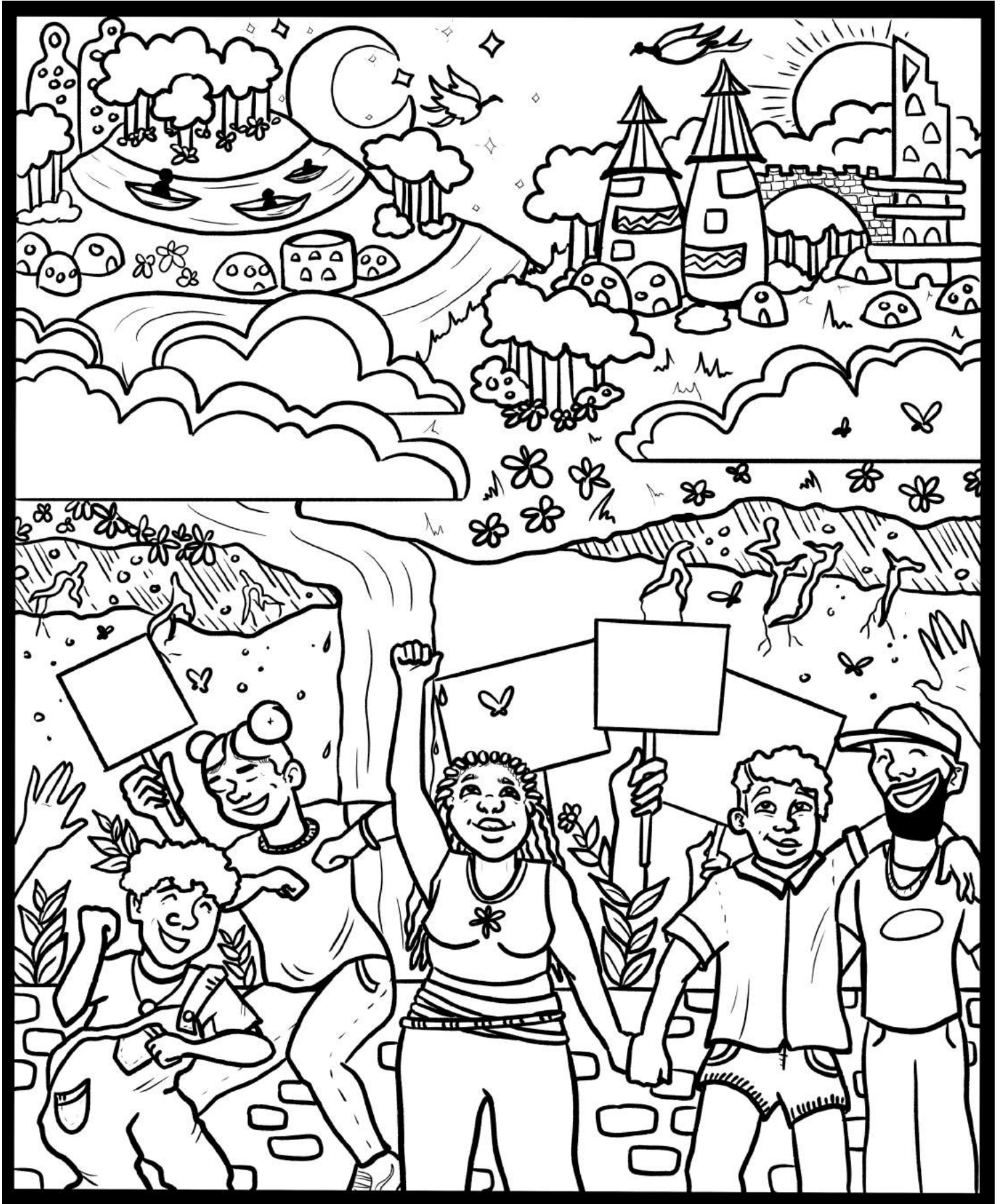
When we look in the mirror  
Who is that we see in the reflection?

We have been wearing a mask long before  
the world required it for protection  
The mask of perfection  
Pure deception.

Our dreams are suffocating below the sur-  
face  
But you are here for a divine purpose

Never stop dreaming  
You will start achieving the things that you  
desire  
And this will inspire generations to come  
Freeing them from the fire

God is the protector and provider  
May He bless you with the strength you  
require  
I know you are tired but please continue to  
Dream Freely and inspire



Coloring Page by Magdalin Livingstone

# 1919

1919 Magazine is an independent critical and editorial publication actively providing spaces for young Black and racialized people to see themselves and their experiences reflected. 1919 organizes and produces works across our multi-disciplinary platform that transform spatial, physical, and digital boundaries through a lens that is radical, honest, and grounded in the rejection of oppressive institutions.

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