

Winter 2026



THE
COLLABORATORY
for BLACK POIESIS

Sankofa Currents
Vol. 3

we make · we study · we remember · we write · we live · we be



we make · we study · we remember · we write · we live · we be

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OUR LIVING COMMITMENTS

Traversing medium and method, these non-hierarchical principles ground our living practices. We choose to return to and to expand our relationships to these as necessary reminders for us conjuring freer, more abundant worlds.

BLACK POIËSIS

**IMPROVISATION &
“ETHICS OF PACE”**

**TRANS
LIBERATION**

**COLLECTIVITY &
COMMUNALISM**

**BLACK ↔ INDIGENOUS
FREEDOM DREAMS**

BOONOOOONOOS

TRANSNATIONALISM

Thank you to the land

The Collaboratory for Black Poiësis (CBP) is an incubator and multidisciplinary hub for Black Studies research and Black⇌Indigenous aesthetic practices. We are honoured to have collaborators, accomplices, elders, comrades, and kin (living and ancestral) around the world. Our primary physical space and site of financial administration are currently housed within the University of Toronto's Faculty of Information, which is situated on the traditional lands of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit who continue to steward and defend their ancestral territories. This meeting place remains home to many more Indigenous peoples from across Turtle Island and beyond, including those rendered migrant, seeking asylum, and other immigrants subject to dispossession, antagonism, and other colonial and capitalist violence. The Greater Toronto Area also nurtures robust communities of Two-Spirit people who gather, organise, and sustain their relations.

The CBP was established in 2022 following the arrival of its Founding Director, a black trans nonbinary “newcomer” issued a temporary work permit to Canada with supporting contract from UofT. They maintain national citizenships, bloodline, and ethnocultural relations across las Américas (Garínagu, Maroon, and Bribri) and legal-cultural attachments to Cymru, the Mediterranean (Italy), and the coastal U.S. They arrived to Tkarón:to through and despite Western imperial-colonial matrices and with ongoing material benefits from accrued academic, socio-legal, cultural capital. These material, legal, and psychological tethers are coercively structured towards subtle and overt modes of colonial disrepair and class betrayal, which they struggle imperfectly to resist and reconfigure, in part through this collaborative experiment and beyond institutional or state-sanctioned affiliations.

The horizontal governance of CBP's ethos and obligations are shared by a transnational, majority black coalition of divergent class and ethnoracial backgrounds, native tongues, cosmologies, and dis/abilities.

Our “we” centres blackness and Black people. It harbours stories from and for kindred as well as globally Indigenous, Indigenous African, and politicised people of colour (i.e., those who understand the radical origins of the term from Loretta Ross who taught us in 1977 that “Women of Color is not a biological designation. It is a solidarity definition. A commitment to work in collaboration with other oppressed women of color who have been minoritized. It is a term that has a lot of power.” Among us include people who are Kānaka Maoli, Asante (Ntonso), Palestinian, Pinoy, Garínagu, Cree, Taíno, African European, Ladino, Anishinaabeg (Wasauksing, Nipissing, Ojibwe), Oromo, Maroon, Shona, Black Canadian, Nuba, Haida, Five Tribes Freedmen/Free Blacks, Métis, Ashkenazim, Afro-Latinos, Afghan, Esehoooni, Ewe, among others. This experiment is also materially supported by a small number of crip queer and working- or middle-class white Canadian or USian settlers who acknowledge their trans-generational colonial inheritances by actively committing to undoing its violence and redistributing its rewards. We do not shy from difference; rather, we attune ourselves to situated knowledges and cosmologies of Black, Black queer, ooloi & trans-feminist, Indigenous, abolitionist, and Indigenous African ways of relation and study. These teachings shape our necessarily expansive, world-building project(s). We reflect on our subject positions, resist elite capture, and strive to materialise our gratitude through reparative work and collective projects meant to deepen our relations to the original and ongoing stewards of these lands, in service of our collective liberation and their complete sovereignty.

We remember that UofT and the settler state of so-called Canada were founded on and continue to profit from various modes of exclusion, dispossession, and erasure through land theft, violence, and colonial knowledge production. Our decolonial work is necessarily uneven, but we commit to ongoing accountability and to supporting Indigenous self-determination here and everywhere, *from every river to every sea*. We reject all efforts to update or legitimise the Doctrine of Discovery and denounce settler and all colonialism, imperialism, and fascism in every form, including the genocidal, ecocidal, and scholasticidal impulses sustained—if not outright initiated—by the authoritarian designs of a death-dealing Babylon.

Lastly and everlasting, we extend gratitude to the bush; the soils, concrete jungles, sands, and red clay; mountains and volcanoes; farmlands; waters, deserts, skies, and seas that raised us. We yearn to honour them wherever we have gone on to grow and wherever we continue to root.

Tidings **A Letter from Our Director**

There are moments when the difficulty of the world announces itself loudly. Moments like this one, unyielding and thick, when difficulty feels ambient to some of us, folded into the weather, administrative language, productivity metrics, and the tightening noose of border regimes, including the perimeter of permissibility around what to say, to imagine, or to refuse during the obscene lulls between atrocities. The normalisation of red lines drawn along the fissures of the black condition, into the cavernous echoes of "now more than ever," as Morgan Parker names it, generation after generation after generation. We inhale. We exhale. We recognise what Amiri Baraka called "the changing same" and we continue, or begin again.

This issue arrives during North American Black History Month, a time often flattened into celebratory contaminants for identitarian or representational "excellence." But we know that living history is an active terrain of struggle. Oppressive regimes work double-time to unwrite and underwrite us as they feed on the intellectual, aesthetic, spiritual and material labours of our lives, cosmologies and our futures. We, "who did not die" as June Jordan holds, continue living through a period of deliberate disorientation, where border regimes at once harden, dissolve and extend their reach. Across this terrain, language is evacuated of meaning and thereby weaponised. Violence is obscured by procedure. Care is made conditional. Survival is framed as individual ingenuity rather than collective responsibility. Clarity itself becomes contested ground.

Since autumn 2025, the global architecture of enclosure has deepened. Across Palestine, genocidal assault continues amid development rhetoric and institutional equivocation. In Sudan and Congo, war and extraction intensify famine and displacement. In Haiti, foreign intervention once again circulates under the sign of stabilisation while eroding Black sovereignty. Across the Mediterranean, Europe's border regime converts water into a weapon, leaving migrants to drown or forcibly pushing them back in the name of security.

These are not isolated events. They are patterned extensions of racial capitalism and border imperialism. U.S. American policing, carcerality, and administrative governance have long served as blueprints for authoritarian formations elsewhere. What we witness now is not merely the return of old ghosts but their bureaucratic refinement: enclosure not only of land and movement, but of language, time, and thought. Within universities, this enclosure has taken on particularly insidious forms. We have seen intensified repression of students and workers engaged in anti-genocide organising; the expansion of surveillance and disciplinary procedures; the invocation of "civility," "institutional

reputation," and "risk management" as tools to foreclose ethical actions and discipline dissent. Student encampments and teach-ins, which are experiments in collective study and care-filled refusal, have all been met with surveillance, suspension, and brute force. In the ivory towers where some of us take up contingent residence, compliance is reframed as safety. Speed is mistaken for relevance or accelerated intellect, and neutrality masquerades as objectivity or rigour.

In our slow reading group, **Imagnitude + bondI**, we're spending a few months engaging over Stefano Harney and Fred Moten's open access work, *The Undercommons*. With them, we are tarrying over what the enclosure does, what it is, and how we get over when it seeks to narrow what counts as knowledge, value, relation, and possibility. What are we to do when the enclosure and the border attempts to steal our range?

Nevertheless, study and planning. Nevertheless, kindred.

The Undercommons offers one diagnosis through the dialogic imagination (multi-voiced conversation and wide-ranging perspectives to get at a shared problem). In it, Stefano Harney and Fred Moten remind us that enclosure is not merely spatial. It includes the epistemic, psychic, and material attempt to steal our range to imagine otherwise by narrowing what counts as knowledge, value, or possibility. The university, under these conditions, has been rendered less a site of study than a primary mechanism of capture primed to absorb dissent by translating it into manageable forms, and disciplining all that exceeds its terms.

We see the pattern and sow the seeds of refusal from these intentional conditions. U.S. American racial capitalism in its policing logics, its carceral imagination, its long history of experimenting on and against all life stemming from Indigenous and Black people as the originary subjects in its lab of colonial white supremacy. The imperial oligarchic project known as America (and Babylon) has long provided a blueprint for authoritarian governance, including fascist formations in twentieth-century Europe. What we are witnessing now is not the return of old ghosts, as dear comrade Harsha Walia reminded us recently, but chickens coming home to roost—if you imagine that instead of leaving, they really only flew South for the Winter, or got a second home with the help of a small loan from Father Empire and Mother Warmonger. But soon, winter is coming, everywhere, at long last. The problem of bureaucratic refinement is that enclosure is not only of land and movement, but of language, time, and thought itself.

"Octavia's Seeds," vol. 3 of *Sankofa Currents*, gathers around the question of orientation beyond mastery and as practice. How do we find our bearings without surrendering complexity? How do we move without mistaking all motion

for progress or freedom? Across Black and diasporic traditions, artists and thinkers have long understood that direction is not given in linear terms, nor by maps drawn in advance. It is learned through relation, memory, refusal, and attention to those who have travelled before us. We turn to Octavia Butler as an oracle-analyst. In *Parable of the Sower*, Butler did not predict the future; she traced the trajectories already visible in her past-present conjuncture: climate collapse, privatised security and surveillance, ethnoreligious nationalism, corporate greed as governance, and bare-life survivalism. What mainstream criticism once dismissed as dystopian fantasy now reads as diagnostic realism. Butler understood crisis as cumulative and that power reorganises itself through scarcity and fear. Her protagonist Lauren Olamina's Earthseed insists that "G-d is Change." Part adage, part discipline, it reminds us that change is inevitable; shaping change is collective labour. We mobilise a metaphor of seeds that romanticise burial, though as the saying goes: they tried to bury us, but didn't know we were seeds. Seeds require darkness, pressure, and time, but they still require tending.

Black aesthetics across literature, sound, performance, visual culture, and everyday practices of life and survival and joy and rage have long functioned as such instruments and augurs. They do not merely represent the world; they contest its terms and transfigure our realities. They hold contradictions without resolution. They make space for grief without surrendering to paralysis.

In the present conjuncture, the aesthetic imagination is not ancillary to political struggle; it is among its most necessary tools. It allows us to sense what administration cannot measure, to remember what policy demands we forget, and to rehearse forms of life that exceed enclosure.

Black literary imagination has long performed this work. It diagnoses. It refuses enclosure. It offers forms of relation that exceed the dominant order. In the present conjuncture, aesthetic imagination is not ornamental—it is infrastructural. It allows us to name what administration cannot measure, to remember what policy demands we forget, and to rehearse other modes of living.

As Audre Lorde reminded us, "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house." But she also insisted that poetry is not a luxury, but is a vital necessity, "a way of giving name to the nameless so it can be thought." That naming, that "poiēsis in black," as R.A. Judy attested, remains the site, season, and liberatory reason of struggle itself. It is why artists, writers, and scholars are so often targeted first. It is why study must remain collective, fugitive, and vigilant. Naming is power. Imagining otherwise is threat.

The work gathered in this volume does not offer solutions in the narrow sense. It offers orientations: reflections on method, creative interventions that hold contradiction without paralysis, accounts of study undertaken under conditions that would prefer its absence. Together, they insist that to imagine otherwise is already to contest the world as it is.

Beyond these pages, the Collaboratory for Black Poiēsis continues to move in relation. This winter, we've been honoured to partner with All People Free from Oppression (APFO) in supporting our unhoused neighbours in ways that are grounded in dignity and mutual regard, not charity. We continue to circulate Zines for Gaza, which centres Gazan storytellers whose works are refusals against erasure and archives of Palestinian resistance, alongside free zines emerging from our upcoming workshop and fair. We recently convened Kin//Making, a two-part series on building material conditions and fellowship necessary for transformation.

These activities are the extension of our life and study. This journal issue gathers more ongoing and emergent research on the move, creative practice under pressure, and collaborations transfiguring new constellations. When our next issue arrives, it will continue to carry forward these experiments in collective orientation, always in service of Black people in coalitions of struggle, joyous thriving, and collective study. The next time I write may find us yet peaking through the fissures of an uncertain landscape, seeking safe harbour and hopefully dancing to the tune of our own drums.

Until then, we remain committed to telling our own stories, defending our studies, and refusing the enclosures that would reduce Black life to data or unthought aftermath. Kwame Ture reminded us, that we "shall have to struggle for the right to create our own terms." I'm editing this editorial on February 14th, which we should know for its sharp reminder about decolonial love. From Kealakekua Bay to Sudan, from 1779 to 1948 to 1492 to 2026, that loving struggle continues. We continue to nurture and plant new seeds and as Sonia Sanchez taught us, to "make our own definitions" and ourselves.



Image ID: a closeup image of three hands of various deep brown skin tones, two hands make the halves of a heart symbol and the third hand hold them in place underneath.



With gratitude and in principled struggle,



SA Smythe



Director, Collaboratory for Black Poiēsis
Associate Professor, Black Studies & the Archive
Tkarōnto, 14 February 2026

Who we are

Prof. SA Smythe is a critical theorist, composer-librettist, transmedia storyteller, and educator. They are Associate Professor of Black Studies & the Archive and a 2026/27 Jackman Faculty Fellow at UofT, completing their project, “**Black Trans Life and the Anarchival Ghost Print**.” Smythe serves on international juries and editorial or advisory boards dedicated to Black arts, culture, and politics; trans, disabled, and migrant justice; and independent publishing. They are editor of *Troubling the Grounds: Global Configurations of Blackness, Nativism & Indigeneity* (vols. 1 & 2) and *Transnational Black Studies* and author of forthcoming monograph, *Where Blackness Meets the Sea: On Crisis, Culture & the Black Mediterranean*, and a book-length choreo-poem accompanying a nine-part sound-performance suite, *proclivity*. Shortlisted for the 2025 Creative Capital Award in Socially Engaged Multimedia Performance, Smythe received the 2021–22 Rome Prize and fellowships in multimedia installation, composition, and interdisciplinary arts residencies including MacDowell and Banff (Leighton Studios). Their sound, film score, and performance work has been presented internationally, including flagship performances at the Power Plant in 2023, Toronto’s 2024 Biennial and the Vector Festival in 2025; Mattatoio Museum (Rome), Africa Writes Literary Festival (UK), Kamnagel, and transmediale (Berlin).



smythe at a piano 2023 Elliott Tilleczek

SA SMYTHE
(they / iel / lui / elle)
Founding Director
Collaboratory for Black Poiesis



UAHIKEA MAILE
(he / they / 'o ia)
Faculty Advisory Fellow,
Black-Indigenous Politics
& Transcultural Strategy

Prof. Uaheka Maile is a Kānaka Maoli scholar, organizer, and practitioner from Maunawili, O’ahu. He is assistant professor in the Department of Race, Diaspora, and Indigeneity at the University of Chicago. Maile’s research interests include: history, law, and activism on Hawaiian sovereignty; Indigenous critical theory; settler colonialism; political economy; feminist and queer theories; and decolonization. In *Gifts of Sovereignty: Capitalism, Settler Colonialism, and Indigenous Politics in Hawai‘i* (forthcoming, Duke University Press), Maile examines the historical development and contemporary formation of settler colonial capitalism in Hawai‘i and gifts of sovereignty that seek to overturn it by issuing responsibilities for balancing relationships with ‘āina, the land and that who feeds. Before Chicago, Maile was assistant professor of Indigenous Politics in UofT’s Dept. of Political Science. While there, he was Founding Director of Ziibing Lab, which continues to be one of our Collaboratory’s kindred-guides. They bring their generosity of spirit and deep transcultural relations as our consulting fellow and research collaborator on upcoming programs in anticarceral, anti-imperialist, and community-centred initiatives organized with and around Black and Indigenous relations and political-aesthetic convergences at sea and otherwise.

UofT Faculty “Friends of Mind”

Note: This is a non-exhaustive list in progress of research collaborators and co-sponsors directly and materially supporting the CBP’s research agenda and our creative ecology across the UofT tri-campus. These dynamic professors have extensive bios; please seek out and carefully engage their life-affirming work! And please stay tuned for the Fall 2026 issue of our journal, where we will present our board and the robust network of advisors local/domestic and transnational across various sectors (esp. GLAM, academia, STEAM/tech, community organising, memory workers, artists, and helpers), who have helped make our work possible since 2022.



KRISTEN BOS (urban Métis)
(she / her) | Assistant Professor (UTM) & Co-Director, Technoscience Research Unit



DAVID CHARIANDY, FRSC (he / him)
Professor of English
Novelist, Writer



KAMARI MAXINE CLARKE (she / her)
Distinguished Professor, Centre for
Diaspora & Transnational Studies; Centre
for Criminology & Sociological Studies



MICHELLE DAIGLE (Mushkegowuk
(Cree), Constance Lake First Nation)
(she/her) | Associate Professor & CRC
in Indigenous Geographies



MARIA HUPFIELD (Wasauksing First Nation)
(she/her) | Assoc. Professor & Director
Indigenous Creation Studio; CRC in
Transdisciplinary Indigenous Arts at UTM



R. CASSANDRA LORD (she / her)
Assoc. Professor & Acting Director, Black
Research Network, Historical Studies,
Women, Gender & Sexuality Studies



RHONDA MCEWAN (she / her)
Professor and Vice-Chancellor, Victoria
University, Institute of Communication,
Culture, Information and Technology



M. MURPHY (Red River Métis)
(they/them) | Professor & Co-Director
Technoscience Research Unit



THY PHU (she / her)
Professor (Departmental Chair) Acting
Vice-Dean Graduate & Postdoctoral
Studies, Media Studies

Research Fellows

DANA MURRAY (she / her)

BATS Student Research Lead & Project Manager

Dana Murray is a museum registrar and PhD Candidate in the Faculty of Information studying ecological disasters, care, and cultural heritage in Puerto Rico and Hawai'i. Her research examines the effects of extreme weather events on cultural heritage workers as they seek to navigate between professional duties and personal obligations, as well as the emergent practices that stem from this tension. Dana brings her experience, political commitments, and research interests to the CBP as student co-facilitator of the flagship research project on **Black Aesthetics & Transformative Stewardship (BATS)** including **Writing in Common** student-led writing support group, and **Kin//Making: Creative Tools for Community as Praxis**.



DINA BLANCO PENA (she / her)

Master's Research Fellow in Cultural Memory & Heritage

Dina Blanco Pena is a multidisciplinary public historian committed to celebrating the diverse histories of Canada's marginalized communities. A first-generation Japanese-Dominican Canadian raised in downtown Toronto, she developed an early passion for the city's underrecognized histories. Dina recently contributed to **York University's Heritage Singers Project**, a multimedia hybrid exhibition honoring the legacy of Caribbean folk music in Toronto. She is pursuing her Master's in Museum Studies at UofT and serves as Co-President of the **Museum Professionals of Colour** student association, working with fellow MPOC members to foster a supportive network for students of colour within the Museum Studies program and profession. As MPOC student liaison and CBP research fellow Dina co-leads global Black cinema series, **Night Visions**, and the CBP's research initiative, **Freedom Library for Otherwise Worldmaking** continuing her commitment to community-building and public-facing historical practices.



INGRID JONES (she / her)

Research Fellow in Curatorial Practice (Special Projects)

Through collaborative projects and decolonial methodologies, Toronto-based curator and creative director **Ingrid Jones** interrogates the systemic erasure, commodification, and invisible labour of Black and racialized people within institutions. She has curated exhibitions, projects, and programs for the Doris McCarthy Gallery, SAVVY Contemporary, and the Art Museum at the University of Toronto. Ingrid has also designed masterclasses on photographic best practices for Sheridan Institute and lectured at Toronto Metropolitan University on design for innovation and activism. Her work has been featured in *Computer Arts Projects* (UK), *Vice Berlin*, *Photografie*, *Waddington's*, and *Art, Design & Communication in Higher Education*. Ingrid is advancing her PhD in Art History at UofT.



Incoming Fellows!

With thanks to the Fall 2025 Research Fellows for the lessons and contributions, we welcome a new cohort joining us for Winter and Spring 2026 into this shared practice of study, creative practice, and critical inquiry.

ISABELLA JOAO (she / her) Master's Research Fellow in Cultural Stewardship & Accessible User Experience

Isabella Joao is a second-year Master of Information student at UofT, specialising in User Experience Design (UXD). She is a Black woman of Jamaican and Portuguese descent whose work intersects UX research and digital archives, emphasising accessibility, ethical research, and community-centred digital practices. She has conducted research for ***Digital Misogynoir: Navigating Racism and Sexism in Online Spaces***, a project examining algorithmic bias and anti-Black misogynoir across social media platforms. Isabella is also the creator of the digital exhibition ***Echoes of Liberation: The Untold Stories of Black Resistance in Canada***, which highlights Black-Canadian activism through archival and multimedia storytelling. She is currently a UX Researcher co-op at Simplii Financial, conducting inclusive and accessible digital banking research. As a CBP Fellow, Isabella is interested in equity-centred design, programming digital/technical community workshops, and research that sustains Black intellectual and community life.



ABLA ODELIA TOUGLO MIDOJI (they / them) Master's Research Fellow in Cultural Advocacy & Archives

Abla Odelia is an Ewe-Canadian-American multidisciplinary artist-archivist-researcher who is invested in anti-colonial methodologies and cultural-political strategies. They have a Bachelor's degree in Political Science from Florida International University. While in South Florida, they developed a deep interest in Black Archives and Special Collections through their time volunteering at the African-American Research Library and Cultural Center. Abla Odelia is pursuing both a Masters of Information (MI) and a Masters of Museum Studies (MMSt) in the Faculty of Information as part of UofT's combined degree program. They maintain their special interests in embodied and community archives, the cultivation of (queer) Black and African cultural heritage across borders, and collections management. During their time as a CBP research fellow, Abla hopes to dissolve the boundaries between academia and grassroots/ underground cultural landscapes focusing on sound and visual art.



MOSKA ROKAY (she / her)

Doctoral Fellow in Archival Practice, Migration & Memory Work

Moska Rokay is an Afghan refugee and settler currently living and working in Toronto as a PhD Candidate at UofT’s Faculty of Information. Her doctoral research project explores the archival needs of diverse Afghan communities in Canada to challenge the archival field towards more community-centered practices for refugee and diasporic communities of war. She explores these topics through the creation of a digital collection of oral histories with Afghans in Canada, modelling a digital archive grounded in a feminist ethics of care, community engagement, and that amplifies refugee knowledge, lived experiences, and storytelling on their own terms.



INTERESTED IN JOINING THE COLLABORATORY?

If you are pursuing your own research in conversation with Black studies and of material benefit to Black life and/or if you have any interest in supporting the logistical, academic/written research, and/or creative needs of this multidisciplinary hub for Black Studies, arts & culture—e.g., supporting cultural strategy, offering editorial or technological skills, refining critical media or aesthetic practices, community facilitation, or grant/policy research and writing—then please reach out to us about **paid postgraduate Research Fellowships, project-specific Research Assistantships, or Liaison/Coordinator Positions** for AY2026/27. Applications will open in March.

See linktr.ee/blackpoiesis for those upcoming calls.

We firmly prioritise Black⇒Indigenous people with firsthand, embodied experience materially contributing to the lives, infrastructures, aesthetics, studies, cosmologies, and creative sovereign spirit of Black communities and their relations. We prioritise students of Black study and do not disentangle this from African Studies or Caribbean Studies. We are a research-driven space not a social venue, and beyond academic credentials, our understanding of “study” includes community organisers and advocates, cultural practitioners and stewards, information professionals, technicians, artists, makers, organic intellectuals and institution-affiliated scholars.

Our community-oriented and self-motivated work insists on direct communication, deep intellectual exchange, creative-critical experimentation, generosity of spirit, cultural heritage stewardship, collective responsibility, community ethics, and sustaining coalitions of possibility.

Upcoming Deadlines

Summer 2026 (May–Aug): apply by 15 April 2026
Fall 2026 (Sept–Dec): apply by 25 May 2026
Winter 2027 (Jan–Apr): apply by 16 October 2026

Full AY 2026/27 (Sept–June):
apply by 01 June 2026

Note: Brief interviews will take place for all final candidates, held virtually or in-person depending on mutual access needs and availability. Specific details regarding award stipends and other direct resources will be clearly communicated with each open call. Research positions disbursed via monthly stipend do not establish an employment relationship with the University of Toronto.

Project-Specific Support

Much of the behind the scenes work conducted Prof. Smythe to resource and develop the CBP and conduct its research initiatives would not be possible without the dedicated coordination of our student project manager and project-specific research coordinator, studio assistants, and technical production support who contribute to defined initiatives across research, studio production, operations (i.e., admin and other logistical labour).

SKY CAMERON (they / them)

Project Coordinator for *No Body But Ours*: an access-centred poetry and performance showcase and virtual community series for disabled QTBIPOC/2S+ artists

Skylar Cameron is a Doctor of Musical Arts candidate in Voice Performance with a Collaborative Specialization in Sexual Diversity Studies and a member of the Centre for Global Disability Studies at UofT. Their dissertation, “Unruly Vocality: A Phenomenological and Arts-Based Exploration of Disabled Professional Classical Singers’ Experiences,” draws from critical disability studies, queer theory, and phenomenology, examining how disabled singers navigate and resist systemic ableism and chrononormativity within the classical music industry. Sky is the project coordinator supporting NBBO, bringing their deep commitments to crip and queer aesthetics, arts-based methods, and disability justice to this SSHRC-funded project, as well as years of experience as a performer and cultural programmer.



GIGI WONG (she / her)

Research Assistant (Administrative) to the CBP Director

Gigi (Wai-Chi) Wong is a doctoral student in Media, Technology, and Culture at UofT’s Faculty of Information. As a research assistant to Prof. SA Smythe and the CBP, Gigi primarily supports the administrative matters for the CBP’s sustainable development and community-related strategic goals. Gigi is also an External Research Associate in York University’s York Centre for Asian Research fostering dialogues and community engagement on Chinese-speaking queer racialized migrants’ everyday experiences in Toronto. Her doctoral research explores the articulation and circulation of queer Asian diasporic affect and digital intimacies in digital art and platforms, and emergent media (VR and AR), with an emphasis on queer diasporic Asian artists’ artworks.



Collaborators

Many people texture the fabric of our growing infrastructure. We recognise a few of our collaborators: the artists, scholars, cultural stewards and memory workers whose contributions sustain the broader ecology of our collective work.

D.BELL (she / they) Collaborating Member

CBP Projects: Decolonial Resistance Training ; Writing in Common

DBell is a health & PE enthusiast, a teacher for over 15 years, and a PhD student in Curriculum & Pedagogy at OISE. DBell has been a part of a number of initiatives and developments for the advancement of sport via collaborations with the IDEAS lab, Motus Training Studios and other programs, including the Decolonial Resistance Training joint initiative by Profs. Janelle Joseph and SA Smythe. DBell's research is focused on decolonizing fitness and finding ways to support anti-racism in sport. DBell is also an LGBTQ2S+ advocate. A fitness coach by industry standards, DBell's history in professional athletics helped establish her movement and strength practices, but also her struggles. Her focus is now on the joy and healing that movement can bring.



REEN MIKHAIL (she / they / he) Collaborating Member

CBP Projects: [magnitude + bond] ; Freedom Library Steward

Reen Mikhail is a graduate student at the Faculty of Information, an illustrator, and language facilitator. They are currently working on metremenkeemi (egyptian/coptic) language revitalization and archiving through creative making. They are interested in the rematriation of ancestors incarcerated in museums, whose systems disconnect relations through colonial anachronization. Reen is committed to finding ways to build capacity and community through a disability justice lens that centres non-carceral forms of care. They currently work in both public and academic libraries, and previously worked in mad research, community programming, and public health. They enjoy spontaneous feline interactions and learning new crafts.



GABRIELA SEALY (she / her)

Collaborating Member in Material Cultures & Decolonial Practice

Gabriela Sealy is a researcher, curator, and maker who works at the seams of memory, material, and care. Rooted in the textile traditions of the African diaspora, her work stitches together oral history, archival fragments, and creative practice to trace what survives and who carries it. Gabriela joins the CBP this winter as the inaugural facilitator for *Kin//Making: Creative Tools for Community as Praxis*, a two-part workshop series for culturally grounded multi-sensory attunement and memory work. Gabriela's practice moves between storytelling and scholarship, threading the personal with the political. Guided by the hands of those who came before, she uses cloth not just as a medium, but as a method—to touch the past, to imagine otherwise, and to hold space for what has been passed down. Gabriela brings her training in curatorial work, conservation, and cultural heritage to projects that honour community, creativity, and intergenerational legacy.



CHRISTELLE TESSONO (she / her)

Collaborating Member in Black Feminist Politics & Policy

Christelle Tessono is Tech Policy Researcher currently pursuing her doctoral studies at the University of Toronto's Faculty of Information. She is interested in tackling the relationship between racial inequality and digital technology from a policy lens. As a result, this has led her to work on projects related to political advertising on social media platforms, gig work, facial recognition technology, data governance and AI regulation. In the spirit of an ethics of pace, Christelle looks forward to slowly familiarizing herself with the cadence of our Collaboratory, participating in select programs and invited collective activities that deepen her studies.



SHEBA ABENA WIAFE (she / her)

Collaborating Member in Political Thought & Community Study

Sheba Abena Wiafe has a political science background and is completing her PhD in the Social and Political Thought program at York University. Her research focusses on investigating the migratory movements of African women to Europe against the histories of the trans-Saharan and trans-Atlantic slave trade and its psychoanalytic iterations. Moreover, Sheba continues to do freelance work as political educator and empowerment trainer, where she facilitates workshops, organizes community events, as well as participates in and moderates panel discussions.



Special Project Residencies

ANDREANN ASIBEY (she / her) 2026 Curator-at-Large, Programs & Research Engagement

Andreann Asibey (Drea) is a Ghanaian-British-Canadian curator, cultural producer, and educator whose people-centred practice bridges community engagement, public programming, and cultural production. Her work amplifies systematically marginalised voices and cultivates spaces where pluralistic stories can thrive. She has produced multidisciplinary projects including *Para Juntar* (The Africa Centre), *Building Our Collective Futures* (Wellcome Collection), and *A Journey through Otherworld* (Art Museum at UofT), which received the 2025 Ontario Galleries Award for Best Public Program. Her exhibitions include *Lusophonic Hapacities*, *Echoes Within These Walls*, *GRIOT*, and *Climate Calling*, addressing memory, displacement, systemic racism, climate, and health. Drea brings her skills to cultural programming and to professional development for sustainable mentorship and Black presence. Primarily, she'll work with CBP Director SA Smythe to help steer **The Black Field**, a GLAM site visit and professional development series; and to support the curatorial research and educational outputs in anticipation of the 2026 Toronto Biennial of Art's partnership with the CBP. She is currently building **Studio Kilombo**, a curatorial studio centring living heritage, ancestral knowledge, and collective liberation. Check out www.studiokilombo.com.



KAY ULANDAY BARRETT (they / he / Siya) 2025/26 Artist-in-Residence, Disability Poetics & Community Activism

Kay Ulanday Barrett is a poet, essayist, cultural strategist, and A+ napper awarded 2024 Disabled Futures Fellow by the Ford Foundation, Mellon Foundation, and United States Artists. They are winner of the 2022 Foundation for Contemporary Arts Cy Twombly Award for Poetry, the 2022 Next Book Residency with Tin House, a James Baldwin Fellowship at MacDowell, and in 2023, residencies at Baldwin for the Arts and Millay Arts awarded by Lambda Literary. Their second book, **More Than Organs** (Sibling Rivalry Press, 2020) received a 2021 Stonewall Honor Book Award from the American Library Association and was a 2021 Lambda Literary Award Finalist. During his residency, Kay is co-convene/curate **No Body But Ours: A Virtual Showcase Created by & for the Sick & Sovereign**, our SSHRC-funded series making access-centred literary spaces for Black queer, trans, and other non-Black or Indigenous QTIPOC/2S+ disabled artists and audiences. Check out Kay's work: www.kaybarrett.net & [@brownroundboi](https://twitter.com/brownroundboi) on social media.



SAID YASSIN (he / him) CBP Community Advisor & Cultural Strategist

Said Yassin is a Somali Muslim curator and creative producer based in Toronto with over a decade of experience throwing memorable events in unconventional spaces. His work consistently explores the relationship between space and art, with a focus on creating intentional, community-driven cultural experiences. Said has collaborated with leading organizations including Manifesto, Small World Music, and the Aga Khan Museum, bringing a sharp curatorial eye and deep community connections to each project. As the founder of It's OK* Community Arts and the visionary behind the It's OK World Festival, Said continues to push boundaries around how and where art is presented—centering grassroots innovation, cultural authenticity, and access. Check out itsokworld.com.



Special Project Residencies

KADHJA BONET (she / they) Artist-in-Residence – Black Sound & Community Infrastructures

Kadhja Bonet is a recording artist, songwriter and producer from California. She released 2 full length albums as well as EPs and singles with Fat Possum Records and Ninja Tune Records before relocating to Toronto to achieve a master's in music technology and digital media from UofT. Professionally, Kadhja has collaborated with Childish Gambino, Anderson .Paak, Khrangbin and many others, but now shifts her focus to equip new artists with the skills and resources to carve out their own sounds and ethical music pathways. By teaching workshops and other free seminars, Kadhja aims to shift the ways we consume, curate and create music to reflect an ethical and politically empowered climate. Through a community partnership between It's OK* Studios and the CBP, Kadhja will be an artist-in-residence with the Collaboratory for Black Poiesis, where she will be lead workshop designer + facilitator for the upcoming **Songwhisperers' Symposium**, a community-centred public workshop series and community research project into community infrastructures meant to deepen our preparation and commitment to Black sound, shared study, and collective independent music-making. The series will also accompany research publications from this work.



IT'S OK STUDIOS* (est. 2019) Community Partner & Collaborator



It'sOK* Studios was established as a joint initiative between Founder & Creative Director **Said Yassin** and former Marketing Director, **Alicia Brown**. It was incorporated as a not-for-profit by Said in November 2020. This independent Black-led and operated venue's mission is to ensure equitable representation and to create opportunities for Black Artists and Black Arts workers. This includes: developing infrastructure, building creative capacities, engaging audiences, enabling artists, connecting industry professionals, and developing collaboration with creatives within all disciplines.

A gallery, social gathering/co-working space, and a flexible interdisciplinary, multipurpose arts venue currently located on Queen Street West, the 10,000ft² venue has held projects such as installations, interactive works, and in 2024, the week-long CBP multidisciplinary gathering, **Calling the Conjurers: An Otherwise Symposium for Black Life and Study**. The space now hosts rotating programs focusing on the concept and development of work from Black grassroots emerging artists and musicians; developmental workshops for creatives to gain valuable skills; and insights on creating and sustaining a creative practice. From March to June, it will be the main site of the **Songwhisperers' Symposium** along with the CBP studio.



LEARNING 2GETHER
(a workshop series)

SONGWRITER'S

SYMPO-

SIUM

Build a Lasting
Collective

A **free** emerging artist program featuring lectures, guest speakers and weekly feedback sessions with lead instructor Kadhja Bonet. Walk away with a press kit, industry knowledge, and a song you're proud to share. Celebrate your achievements with a final showcase!

12 Weeks to Elevate Your Craft
and Develop a Release Strategy

 COLLABORATORY
for BLACK POIESIS

Apply by
March
17th



PROGRAM DATES
Monday evenings
from March 30
hello@itsokworld.com



A dear friend, collaborator and interlocutor, Ashon's work insists on surrender as analytic and bloom as an overflowing and insurgent form. We love this piece, where gesture offer release and invites us into witness. One can almost hear the vibrancy of the colours raising up off of the canvas and trickling down the everliving flowers pressed onto it, while a Black woman raises her hands to glory.

yes. surrender. bloom. (number 5),
by Ashon Crawley (2020)

Sheridan's installation asks what it means to speak from—and not merely about—the margins, a place that Toni Morrison told us is a place she would gracefully look out from, to let the centre look at her (if it must), instead of the usual way things are set up to be. In Kuffour's work, which Smythe first saw in the Netherlands in 2022 on a return visit to see friends at the Black Archives in Amsterdam. There, scale, bold sunbeam colours, and large-print text reconfigured public address into intimate insistence on black and brown presence and liberation. Love here is not sentimental; it is positional and architectural. We carry that with us.



Love from the Margins, by Sherida Kuffour (2022)

Fellow Features

method, ethos & grounding

The Cultural Heritage Worker and Extreme Weather Events

by Dana Murray

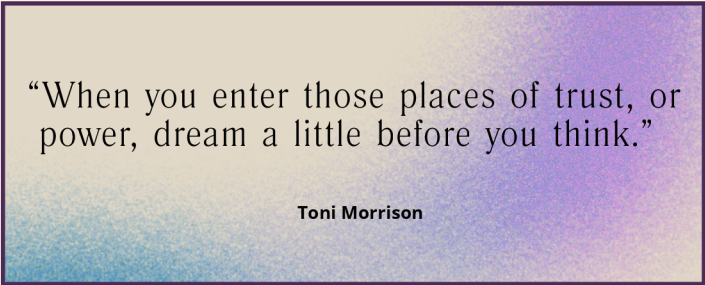
A registrar and collections steward prior to my return to academia, my doctoral research stems from over six years of experience volunteering with the **Association of Registrars and Collection Specialists** (ARCS) and the **American Institute for Conservation** (AIC) on their respective emergency committees. With both, I witnessed a need for better understanding and recognition of the emotional and psychological toll that emergency response and recovery work takes on cultural heritage workers—a toll that is often overlooked or undervalued. Within these roles, I was frequently asked by members where they could direct their colleagues or employees for psychological first aid and other forms of care following an emergency or large-scale disaster. Regrettably, we were not always able to help those that came with questions. It was because of these “failings” that I inevitably returned to the drawing board and began my PhD.

I often feel conflicted about the cultural heritage sector. I see its great potential for fostering meaningful relations and sharing of knowledge, but I also recognize that, in its mainstream and dominant forms, it is an industry established on a foundation of violent extraction and erasure. At the same time, work within the sector is often presented as a vocation. It is one that some describe as feeling called to do, going so far as to draw parallels to the duty of care described in the medical field. You will find language such as obligation, duty, and responsibility etched into professional codes of ethics, job descriptions, and institutional mandates. But what strikes me most is that in a field bound by ethical standards of conduct expected from the professionals within their purview, such as those presented by the International Council of Museums or the Canadian Museums Association, too often the human or personal element is removed, overlooked, or ignored. Specialist codes of ethics and (inter)national law take priority, which disallows room for personal ethics to be considered.

And so, I ask, how does disaster recovery fit into the equation?

Professional guidance for emergency planning prioritizes the wellbeing of the collection while offering little recognition of the personal circumstances of staff. During disasters, cultural heritage workers have families and communities to support alongside their heritage collections, and as the emergency cycle progresses from response to recovery, the distress associated with such events continues to take a heavy toll. Regrettably, the body of research on the repercussion of disasters on cultural heritage workers remains limited, particularly in regions where prolonged colonial, imperial, and capitalist histories persist through legal subordination, disaster capitalism, and environmental extraction.

Following the calls for support from colleagues across the sector, my work considers the incompatibility between personal and worker duties in cultural heritage institutions during experiences of crisis, and the cultural heritage practices that emerge in response. Specifically examining extreme weather events, my dissertation considers Hurricane María in Puerto Rico in 2017 and the 2023 Lahaina wildfires in Hawai'i. In this work, I study institutional configurations post-disaster and the forces that shape how workers and administrators respond in/as both community members and institutional representatives. Looking forward, both Puerto Rico and Hawai'i face increasingly severe climate challenges shaped by their colonial legacies, including stronger hurricanes, flooding, landslides, sea level rise, wildfires, as well as drought and water scarcity—yet they continue to resist, create, and imagine otherwise. Having witnessed the capacity of disasters to unveil systemic issues, I am drawn to what is possible in the wake of disaster—the re-imaginings and transformative change that take shape in those malleable moments.



“When you enter those places of trust, or power, dream a little before you think.”

Toni Morrison

Committed to multidirectional collaboration, this work adheres to an ethics of care modelled on that of Black feminists and disability justice activists, wherein research methods strive to deter the accumulation of power among the most privileged, increase and legitimize shared power, and explore alternate potentialities in heritage practices. In so doing, my work seeks to provide insight into cultural heritage leadership in periods of crisis as well as emerging responses to compounding crises.

Culture, Community, and Memory-Making: Public History as a Living Practice

by Dina Blanco Pena

Joining the Collaboratory for Black Poiësis this year as a Master's Fellow and MPOC student liaison in Fall 2025, I was excited to bring my commitments to public-facing history and community-building to the collaboratory. As a first-generation Japanese-Dominican Canadian raised in the inner city of Toronto, my work has long been shaped by the desire to make visible the layered, often underrecognized histories of the communities that shaped me. Currently pursuing my Master of Museum Studies at the University of Toronto, I approach public history as an embodied practice, one where culture and study share space rather than act as separate entities.

This is a sentiment shared by the CBP. In addition to my capstone project, I have been able to bring this embodied practice with me into the programming and research I have been involved in here, across three main streams.

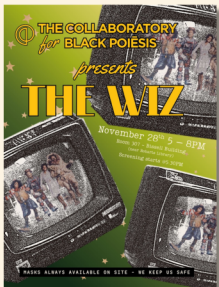
(Re)groundings: CBP's Fall Open House

In late November of last year, I helped coordinate the CBP's Fall Open House. This event was initiated to re-launch some of the programming and public-facing research of the CBP's Black Aesthetics & Transformative Stewardship (BATS) project. Together fellows, collaborators, and community members to share ongoing research, artistic projects, and collective intentions, the event served not only as an introduction to the year's activities, but as an invitation to gather. Fully embodying the mission of the space, our event catered food from Black-owned restaurant Dave's Drupatis Roti and Doubles, put up artwork by Black artists and brought in people from all walks of life in this celebration of community. For me, the open house reaffirmed the importance of accessibility in intellectual work, of ensuring that scholarship does not retreat behind institutional walls but remains accountable to the communities it engages.

Night Visions

In collaboration with Prof. Smythe and Dana Murray, this year we developed *Night Visions*, a Black film screening series. Initially planned as an informal but intentional team-building gathering between members of the CBP, it has now become a public programme creating space to encounter classic and contemporary Black film through community. Not an avid watcher of film before this, it has been fun to explore how visual storytelling shapes political imagination and historical memory while simultaneously sharing the joy of others rehearsing their favourite lines from their favourite childhood films.

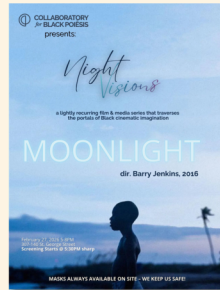
previously featured films...



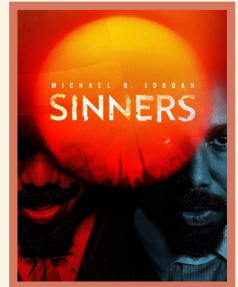
The Wiz (1978)



Black Panther (2018)



Moonlight (2016)



Sinners (2025)

Sankofa (1993), *Bam Bam: The Sister Nancy Documentary* (2024), *Rafiki*, *Pumzi* (2009) & more to come!

FLOW Project: Freedom Library for Ongoing Worldmaking

In a climate marked by book bans, threats to intellectual freedom, and heightened censorship, the simple act of reading and sharing books remains a radical act of resistance.

An emerging initiative at CBP, the Freedom Library project connects Black Studies, library studies and community life. Framed by Freedom Libraries of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, a response to segregation and restricted access to public libraries, the CBP's Freedom Library project aims to continue this legacy of creating accessible, community-rooted spaces for reading and study in response to the increased threats to intellectual freedom today. Receiving donations from Eve Ewing, Lorgia Garcia Peña, J. Khadijah Abdurahman, Ruha Benjamin thus far, although not yet fully realized, the project aims to create more literary access for those most impacted by these acts of censorship.

Concluding thoughts

Across these initiatives, whether through film, print history, or community library-building, my work at CBP is guided with community in mind. As I continue my fellowship, I look forward to deepening the Freedom Library project, expanding *Night Visions*, and building stronger bridges between museum studies and community practice. Further, I look forward to continuing my work as a liaison as the co-president of the Museum Professionals of Colour (MPOC) student association, as we strive to foster networks of support for students of colour navigating cultural institutions.

I am grateful to be part of a community that treats study not as solitary achievement, but as shared responsibility.

Study in Practice:

| magnitude + bond |

The Seeds of Attention: Reading Toni Morrison

by Tina Zafreen Alam

What becomes possible when we read and work slowly and together, outside the classroom? For me, this reading shifts from a mostly internal and privatized practice to something collaborative, something more akin to watching a film in a theatre. We experience the text alongside one another [and we experience something of one another, in turn?] We feel the deviations and provocations in common, though not always the same.

I lived in Brooklyn when Toni Morrison died at the age of 88 on August 5, 2019. The air was thick with grief. I knew I didn't want to be alone with it and made my way to the now-closed Ode to Babel in Crown Heights, where hundreds of people gathered to share stories about Morrison and speak to how her work impacted their lives. The space was packed, mostly with generations of Black women, and there was a long wait to get in the door. What a way to honour Morrison, I thought, to gather together and share and mourn in this way.

Years later, I saw a flyer for **[magnitude & bond]** and signed up to read parts of Morrison's collection, *The Source of Self-Regard* (2019) as a group. In moving through these essays and speeches, I reflected on the process of writing and the craft and revision strategies that Morrison employed in her works of fiction to produce the affective responses she wanted. Morrison mentored the teacher I had one of my first writing fellowships with. I feel most animated when I think about form and content in art and how they might function symbiotically. Reading and engaging together at [magnitude & bond] strengthened my resolve to be precise, deliberate, and intentional in how I deploy craft in my own poetic writing practice. Witnessing Morrison's impact has always moved me. She touched so many through the narratives she told and beyond that shifted the very way that writers write through her work, and as an editor and a mentor.

NEW
funding
opportunity

COMMUNITY AESTHETICS & PRAXIS MICRO-GRANTS

*micro-grant opportunities for policy, research, and research-creation works
rooted in Black Studies, Indigenous Studies, Migrant- and Refugee-Centred
Scholarship, Socially Engaged Arts/Research-Creation & Anti-Colonial Study*

Priority for 1st cycle:
APPLY: bit.ly/CAPmicrogrant
by 01 APRIL 2026

Questions? Contact:
blackpoiesis@utoronto.ca
SUBJECT LINE: Last Name, CAP Grant

The new **Community Aesthetics & Praxis (CAP) Initiative** was envisioned and administered by the **Collaboratory for Black Poiesis** in partnership with Indigenous-led **Technoscience Research Unit (TRU)** and co-sponsorship from the **Black Research Network (BRN)**, the **Canada Research Chair in Transdisciplinary Indigenous Arts**, and the **Critical Refugee and Migration Studies Network of Canada**. CAP Micro-Grants provide limited, rapid-access research funds to support advanced student fieldwork, capstone projects, and socially engaged research-creation projects that foreground creative and community-oriented praxis through humanistic, social scientific, and technoscientific inquiry and are grounded in at least (1) one of the following approaches, analytics, and/or methods: Black Studies; Global Indigenous Studies; Trans Studies; Disability Studies; class-conscious, migrant- and refugee-centred scholarship; Indigenous, Black, postcolonial and anticolonial Cultural Studies.

Designed to support Black, Indigenous, migrant, POC, and working class racialised emerging scholars and creative practitioners meaningfully and materially engaging these fields and frameworks, regardless of their disciplinary unit or academic background. CAP Micro-Grants supplement practical, often underfunded research needs that are essential to ethical and community-engaged work. Grants are typically awarded twice per year, in amounts ranging from **\$250-\$500**, as funding allows. They may be used for expenses such as transcription, translation, community honoraria, archival access, local travel, and creative or documentary materials.

For details on eligibility, deadlines, and any further info about the CAP micro-grants and its co-sponsors and funding partners, see: www.blackpoiesis.org

CYCLE I OF THIS MICROGRANT INITIATIVE IS GENEROUSLY CO-SPONSORED BY:



TRANSDISCIPLINARY INDIGENOUS ARTS



COLLABORATORY
for BLACK POIĒSIS



INVITATION TO COLLABORATE

Our multidisciplinary hub for black study and black aesthetic practice welcomes proposals for programs, gatherings, or projects by and for Afro-diasporic, Black Indigenous, African researchers, students, communities, independent culture workers and all our relations.



We welcome proposals for a wide range of events, including but **not** limited to:

Workshops ▾ Critical Literacy Trainings ▾ Teach-Ins ▾
Roundtables, Lectures, Readings ▾ Performances ▾
Exhibitions ▾ Study Sessions ▾ Mutual Aid Initiatives



Questions? Contact us: blackpoiesis@utoronto.ca

Your Subject Line: Collab - Proposal



COLLABORATORY
for BLACK POIĒSIS

Writing in Common

*a writing collective hosted by the
Collaboratory for Black Poiesis*

***"Study is what you do with
other people."***

— Fred Moten

A group convened by and for graduate students, postdocs, and early career researchers across UofT and the GTA.

IN-PERSON:

Drop-in writing hours at the CBP shared regularly

VIRTUAL:

Check-in, Fridays 11am

***muted mics, cameras optional, 15-20 min check-in and goal setting!*

Virtual drop-ins using pomodoro method
W/F & alt. weekends

*****We facilitate COVID-Conscious-only & Black or BIPOC-only sessions with interest and by request.***

Looking for an **antidote** to writing in isolation and the extractive pace of academic life?

Research Fellows in The Collaboratory for Black Poiesis are convening a space for writing in common—towards shared goals and towards work that matters to and for community. Here, we nurture steady, sustainable writing practices for your research and creative projects, beyond the pressures of productivity, evaluation, or fixed deliverables. Together, let's build a steady rhythm for writing and research grounded in principles of Black study, freedom dreaming, and mutual regard.

*Each session offers opening grounding practices, quiet writing time in an ambient environment, light snacks, and mindful reflection to close. We'll meet regularly in the Collaboratory space or on Zoom all year round. **Come write with us.***

**Submit your
expression of interest**



140 St. George Street
Toronto, ON M5S 3G6
& virtually

Questions?

Access Needs or Ideas?

Contact us at

blackpoiesis@utoronto.ca

SUBJ. LINE: "WiC Group"

COMMUNITY highlights

COMPAC: Field Report

by Moska Rokay with Founding COMPAC Members

The Critical Orientations to Memory, Preservation, and Collecting (COMPAC) Group examines offerings centred on archives and memory, exploring how they intersect with matrices of domination and power. Through collaborative critical analysis and co-reading, exhibition tours, experimental workshops, and bi-weekly group discussions, we gather to explore new ecologies of thought. Together, we consider what steps established and emerging memory workers might take to ethically protect and promote the lives of those being collected and preserved, and we ask what interventions are being mobilised to build transformative and sustainable networks of care for racialised and minoritised memory workers. As researchers, archivists, memory workers, and cultural stewards, we understand our responsibility to safeguard the material in our care while also attending to the effects this work has on the communities from which that material originates and which it represents. We ask: how can memory work be conducted responsibly, ethically, and in partnership with communities, and what might be standing in our way?

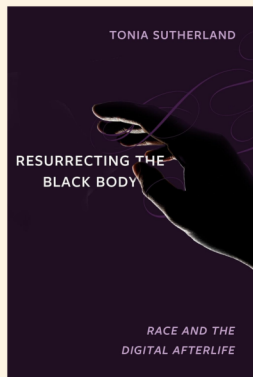
Our group was founded by PhD Candidate **Moska Rokay** in late 2024, alongside founding members and fellow Faculty of Information doctoral students **Dana Murray** (PhD.c) and **Josh Wilson** (PhD student), three students with critical professional and personal commitments in GLAM institutions and culture work. In April 2025, COMPAC participated in the Faculty of Information's Doctoral Student Association (DSA) Research Salon, co-producing and co-presenting a research poster that reflected our findings to date, as well as our initial formations and future orientations. Looking ahead, COMPAC's continued collaborations include co-writing a research article and developing public-professional materials foregrounding critical praxis on a topic aligned with our members' overlapping interests, drawing from shared readings, discussions, workshops, and jointly attended exhibitions.

In AY2025/26, COMPAC gratefully partnered with the Collaboratory for Black Poiēsis, gathering each month for one of our bi-weekly meetings in this space. Being in careful relation with the CBP has been crucial to reinforcing our “ethics of pace” (Bailey 2021; CBP Principle #3), gathering with shared intention, and cultivating a community of care among researchers and memory workers seeking to upend power in its many deleterious manifestations within memory practices. The CBP has functioned as a pivotal physical and intellectual site alongside which we have been able to sustain our own autonomous formation, while also considering the transformation of our respective fields through engagements in and adjacent to Black Studies scholarship and related creative expression.

featured reads...



None Like Us: Blackness, Belonging, Aesthetic Life
Stephen Best (2018)



Resurrecting the Black Body: Race and the Digital Afterlife
Tonia Sutherland (2023)

COMPAC emerged when a lone doctoral student refused the solitary conditions of academic study and instead sought to foster a community of care grounded in shared commitments to memory practices, power, and an ethics of pace. As a group, we have learned the importance of protecting our community’s dynamics, relations, and mutual trust and collective regard by keeping our numbers small and manageable. To this end, COMPAC will continue to expand our horizons, attending exhibitions, workshops, talks and discussions relevant to our respective research areas and cultural interests, aiming to enrich our individual projects and further develop our shared practice.

Study in Practice

NO BODY BUT OURS

A VIRTUAL SHOWCASE CREATED BY & FOR THE SICK & SOVEREIGN

No Body But Ours is a monthly virtual performance series and community gathering space created by and for sick, disabled, Mad, neurodivergent, Deaf, Blind, and politically disabled QTIBIPOC/2S+ artists. Bringing together live performance, mutual practices & access toolkits and community conversation, our series centres access and racial justice as a collective practice and place for aesthetic imagination beyond an ableist, trans antagonist, extractivist world.

This series is hosted on monthly by the Collaboratory for Black Poïēsīs (last Tuesdays, 7-9PM). It is supported in part by funding from the Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) with additional promo support from the University of Toronto's Centre for Global Disability Studies and the Critical Digital Humanities Initiative. Curated and co-convened by 2025/26 CBP artist-in-residence in Disability Poetics & Community Activism, **Kay Ulanday Barrett** and CBP Director and Associate Prof. Black Studies & the Archive at UofT, **SA Smythe**.



Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Canada

KIN//MAKING:

Creative Tools for Community as Practice

During Black History Month, we held a two-part workshop series designed for Black, Indigenous, and other racialised students of colour and emerging arts and culture community-based practitioners.

Facilitated by Gabriela Sealy, each workshop invited participants to collectively explore strategies of **mutual care**, **aesthetic practice**, and **community stewardship** in the current political moment. Together, we identified community needs, mapped relational ecologies of support, and prototyped small-scale creative interventions and shields designed to strengthen belonging, tap into cultural memory, and forge new pathways for thriving in urban environments.

These workshops were generously supported in part by the School of Cities Small Grants Program.



COLLABORATORY for BLACK POIESIS

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

SCHOOL OF CITIES

KIN//MAKING

Creative Tools for Community as Practice
a hands on Afrocentric textile & crafts workshop



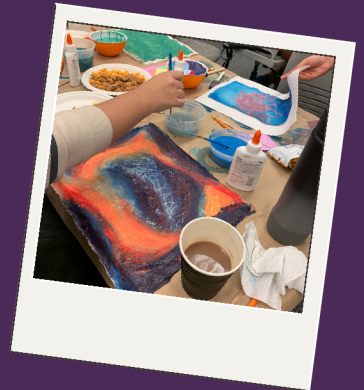
w/ *Gabriela Sealy*

A researcher, curator, and maker who works at the seams of memory, material, and care. Rooted in the textile traditions of the African diaspora, her work stitches together oral history, archival fragments, and creative practice to trace what survives and who carries it.

Part I (Feb 12th) & Part II (26th)
2-4PM at the CBP Atelier/StudioLab
University of Toronto, St. George

Questions? Email us at: blackpoiesis@utoronto.ca

COME AS YOU ARE! NO PRIOR EXPERIENCE NEEDED. MATERIALS, SNACKS, AND PPE ARE PROVIDED.



UNIVERSITY OF
TORONTO

SCHOOL OF CITIES



WINTER TERM: WEEKLY SCHEDULE

MON

Writing in Common: a research writing group

Weekly drop-in
11-2pm

*** COVID-Conscious-only & BIFOC-only sessions available*

Critical Orientations to Memory, Preservation, & Collecting (COMPAC) Reading Group

biweekly, 1-3PM

meets @ CBP on: 08 Sept, 06 Oct, 03 Nov, 01 Dec, virtually or offsite for other sessions

***contact us to connect w/ autonomous student organizers for participation.*

Letters of Calling: a freedom library + detention letter writing initiative

monthly, 4-6PM

***holiday-specific, seasonal and multilingual [EN-FR-ES-AR] sessions*

TUC

OPEN HOURS
12-3pm

Gallery hours, info sessions and open library hours to read from our freedom library will be announced on social media and our listserve!

Sick & Sovereign: No Body But Ours

a poetry showcase by and for disabled QTIBIFOC/2S+ artists

4th Tuesdays
October to June
6-8PM ET

Co-curated by 2025/26 artist-in-residence Kay Ulanday Barrett

WED

[magnitude + bond]
a **slow** multimedia reading group

3rd Wednesdays
2-5pm

CLOSED

space reserved for community & lab strategy meetings, graduate seminars Black & BIFOC-only activities

THU

The Black Field

Black GLAM tours and field trips, somatic nature walks, art openings, live-in-studio concerts, community study groups, skill-building workshops and teach-ins.

co-curated with 2026 Curator-at-Large, Andreann Asibey

FRI

Writing in Common: a research writing group

Weekly virtual check-in
11am

SAT

*** GLAM tours, nature walks, ad hoc community gatherings, community study groups, DIY workshops and teach-ins ***

SUN

CLOSED

reserved for internal research activities, community meetings or workshops Black & 2S/QTIBPOC-only programs.

Any shifts or additions to our programming will be shared on our Instagram @blackpoiesis. Stay tuned for our new website launch this Winter!



Curated by **the Panther Trio** (Maria Hupfield, Olivia Shortt, SA Smythe)
Produced by **the Sustainable Partnerships** team

HELD TOGETHER BY GLITTER TAPE

MAR 12TH, 2026 _____ **AT 7PM**
PAY WHAT YOU CAN - SUGGESTED CONTRIBUTION \$10

Eventbrite registration link:

bit.ly/GlitterTapeCabaret

Project website:

<https://theartistsbroadsheet.com>



COLLABORATORY
for **BLACK POIESIS**



Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada



EVENTS OF INTEREST



[Rhythmic Repair](#), a textile-based group exhibition presented by Wildseed Centre for Art & Activism, opened February 11 and continues until May 2, 2026.

The installation [Passages by Damien Ajavon](#) is on display in the Classic Wing Lobby of the Drake Hotel from February 16 - 28.

Dr. Dana A. Williams will be speaking about her book [Toni at Random](#) at the Toronto Reference Library on February 23.

[For Viola](#), a Hot Docs screening series centering Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour-led stories and filmmakers commences on February 25.

Black Futures and Get Crafty are co-hosting the [African Textile Collaging Workshop](#) on February 26.

Developed by the Canada Black Music Archives, [B'Lack Then: Muted Melodies](#) is on at the Archives of Ontario until February 27.

It'sOK*Studios is taking us back to basics: [What Are You Listening To?](#) is a pretty simple idea. People in the same room, sharing what they are listening to right now. It could be a song you love, something that makes you feel a certain way, or something you just find interesting. let's hear all of it." March 1, 4-7PM.

The Well Being Collective @ Hart House is hosting [Rest is Resistance - Black History Month](#) throughout the month of February.

BAND Gallery is hosting [Book Talk | Crafted Kinship: A Journey Through Black Caribbean Creativity](#) on March 15.

Featuring artist Christina Leslie, The Power Plant is hosting [South Facade Billboard](#) until March 22.

[The Black Research Network \(BRN\) Research Symposium](#) is scheduled for March 27

[The Toronto Zine Library's zine fair, Paperjam 2026](#), is taking place on March 28.

SPREAD THE WORLD

Thanks for reading! Tell your colleagues, comrades, co-learners, and kin about us and tell us what you're working on. We'd love to hear from you about how we might continue to deepen the horizons of possibility for Black life, thriving relations, study, and freedom dreaming in practice & in process.

blackpoiesis@utoronto.ca | [@blackpoiesis](https://twitter.com/blackpoiesis) | linktr.ee/blackpoiesis

Whenever you read this, remember that you're still in the world.

There can be **no business as usual** or polite equivocation during a time of competing genocides, rising authoritarianism, ongoing pandemics, increased climate catastrophes. Tap in to the many community manifestations, teach-ins, and other ways to build and repair. Contribute wherever possible to mutual aid initiatives including fundraisers, and make it your duty to check on your people (through digital & physical space) to inform and resource yourself and be a resource for others.

Let's get free!



COLLABORATORY *for* BLACK POIĒSIS

*Have something to share with our networks? Want your event to be featured or even to contribute a 1pg. (A5) spread to our next journal discussing your own ongoing work in Black Studies and/or Black Aesthetic Practices? Get in touch with us by **August 1st** for inclusion in Sankofa Currents, vol. 4 (Fall 2026).*

Project Credits & Gratitude

ARTWORK CURRENTLY ON DISPLAY AT THE COLLABORATORY

“Love from the margins” (2022), **Sherida Kuffour**; “we are a long-remembered people / A Prayer for Q” (2023), **Courtney Desiree Morris**; “Portraits: *Dwell in Revolution: Ancestors for a Judaism Beyond Zionism*” (2024), **Micah Bazant**, **Pushcart Judaica & Making Menschen**; “Going to the Chapel III” (2024), **Malika Ali Harding**; “Black Studies guides on a living quilt [two squares]” (2023; 2024), **Sonia Bumrah**; “dancing in one spot, no. 8” (2018) and “yes. surrender. bloom. (no. 5)” (2020), **Ashon Crawley**; “Trans Formation” (2025), **Dani Kriatura** (@bodythudz artisanworks and All Peoples Fighting Oppression); from “Meditations on the Declension of Beauty by the Girl with the Flying Cheek-bones” (original poem 1989), **M. NourbeSe Philip**; installation prints (2025), **M. NourbeSe Philip** and **Katherine McKittrick**; “mass, taste, weight;” “you got one more in you,” and “Bottomless Basement of Black Treasures” (2023), **THEYxRST** [Autumn Joi Knight and SA Smythe]; and Selected Final Projects (2023, 2024, 2025), **Students of “Black Studies & the Archive”**; “A letter print from Octavia Butler’s Parable of the Sower,” **Amos Paul Kennedy, Jr.’s Citizen Printer** (2025); “Sourire et Regard” (2025), **Jean-Eddy Rémy** acquired from the **BAND Gallery**.

BLACK AESTHETICS & TRANSFORMATIVE STEWARDSHIP (BATS)

Dana Murray (student co-PI) and SA Smythe (faculty co-PI). Partially supported by the 2025 Inclusive Excellence Research Grant awarded by the Faculty of Information at the University of Toronto. A host of additional workshop collaborators and a public report of the public portion of our activities will be detailed in our 2026 year-end review.

BLACK.QUEER.EVERYTHING.

Co-Founding Directors **Anika Simpson** (Howard) and **Moya Bailey** (Northwestern). Founding BQE Faculty Collective Members **Marlon Bailey** (Washington University, St. Louis); **Ashon Crawley** (University of Virginia); **Savannah Shange** (UC Santa Cruz); **SA Smythe** (University of Toronto); and **Jennifer Williams** (Howard). BQE Postdoc Fellows **Shaeeda Mensah** (2022-23); **Brendane A. Tynes** (2023-24); and **Kevin A. Blanks** (2024-25). Primarily sponsored by the Mellon Foundation Higher Learning program. Summer Institute held June 2026 at the Historically Black institution, Howard University.

HELD TOGETHER BY GLITTER TAPE

This cabaret-style event presents a collage of sound, story, movement, and memory work from Indigenous and Black acts currently local to the GTA. Featured performers: **Abi Cudjoe**, **Ravyn Wyngz**, **Sanjeet Takhar**, **Raven Davis**, and **The Panther Trio** (Maria Hupfield, Olivia Shortt, and SA Smythe), with **Chris Mejaki** as MC. This two-night event marks the culmination of **Open Aesthetic Assemblies** (co-convened by the Panthers between **the Collaboratory for Black Poësis** and **Indigenous Creation Studio** since 2024) and launches our partnership with the Faculty of Music’s “**Sustainable Partnerships**” initiative, administratively supporting this Cabaret through a SSHRC Connection Grant spearheaded by Drs. **Nasim Niknafs**, **Ely Lyonblum**, and **Laura Menard**. With additional thanks to the Faculty of Music’s **Artist Solidarity Research Network**, **The Tranzac Club**, **Sara Constant**, and project PA and technician, **Adrian Berry**. **Research-Creation Studios**, which provided studio equipment and other materials: **mannish waters atelier**, SA Smythe’s performance and interactive sound art studio; Maria Hupfield’s **Indigenous Creation Studio**; and Olivia Shortt’s **Boujee Studio**.

KIN//MAKING: CREATIVE TOOLS FOR COMMUNITY AS PRACTICE

The two-part inaugural Kin//Making workshop was facilitated by Gabriela Sealy and co-developed with support from Dana Murray as a part of the (BATS) initiative. Materials for the Afro-Indigenous Batik visual arts and embroidering workshop were provided by Gabriela Sealy with support from **mannish waters atelier**, **the CBP**, and the **School of Cities** Small Grants program.

SHARED HORIZONS: THE POLITICS & POETICS OF TRANSATLANTIC ABOLITION

Co-PIs and Project Curators SA Smythe and Vanessa Eileen Thompson; Visual Designer Engy Mohsen; Web Architect Fred Kannemeyer. Seed grant provided by a faculty incubator grant from the **UCLA Luskin Institute on Inequality and Democracy**. Funding for Phase II provided in part by the **WGSJ Community Knowledge Alliance Fund** in 2025. Thank you for the trust and visions of the many orgs and campaigns who are contributing to this ongoing living archival platform: www.sharedhorizons.org.

We further extend our gratitude to our ancestral, living, and future kin—to our readers, mentors, guides, accomplices, elders, collaborators, protectors, stewards, and kin. To all who continue the necessary struggles for liberation, education, and plant new seeds: Thank you. Chi miigwetch. Mersi. Shukran. Cuchimilgracias. Mahalo. Grazie. Nuff respect & thanks.

Closing Notes

Accessibility Statement

Masks always encouraged and available on site; we keep us safe! We maintain three true and medical-grade HEPA filters in the studiolab, as well as tabletop/portable air purifiers for public programs, study sessions, and workshops. We are dedicated to access and will do our best to make our space accessible for all participants and collaborators for all events.

Publication Notes

Volume 3 of *Sankofa's Currents*, "Octavia's Seeds" was a collaborative initiative edited and with an introduction by SA Smythe, co-designed by Dana Murray and SL Graphics. Featured articles, reports, and reviews from contributors: Dina Blanco Pena, Dana Murray, Tina Zafreen Alam, Moska Rokay & Kay Ulanday Barrett.

Follow us:

on Instagram [@blackpoiesis](#) and check our linktr.ee/blackpoiesis for updates on any shifts or additions to our programming.

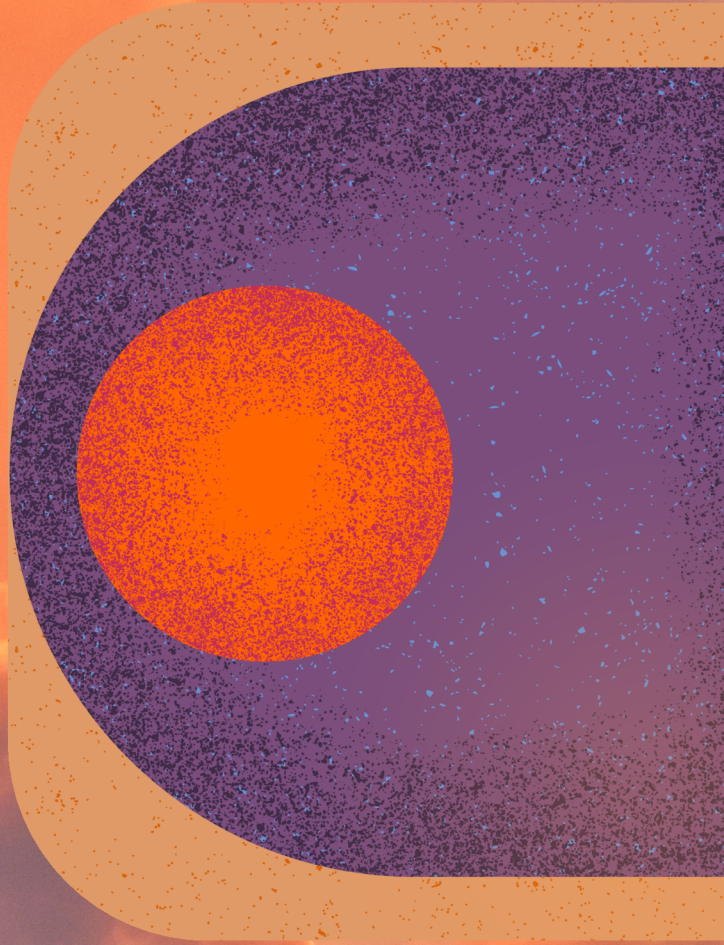
With relevant program name in **SUBJECT LINE**, contact:

blackpoiesis@utoronto.ca & stay tuned for our new website in Spring 2026!

“Without community, there is no liberation...but community must not mean a shedding of our differences, nor the pathetic pretense that these differences do not exist.”

— Audre Lorde





COLLABORATORY
for **BLACK POIĒSIS**

an experiment where making, being, and study happen together