Geographies and Futurities of Being: Radical Black Activism in a Context of Anti-Black Islamophobia in 1990s Montreal

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis analyzes the connecting political, spatial, and spiritual aims of Black activists in 1990s Montreal. I investigate how they worked at reconfiguring the Black community in Montreal against the East/West language divide. I also examine how the White anti-racist Left developed anti-Black Islamophobic discourses against radical Black activists who were Muslim and/or associated with Islam. Lastly, I pay particular attention to the role of spirituality in the visions that radical Black activists had for the Black community in Montreal. This research offers us a way to understand how Black geographies emerge and how they exceed geographies of domination. It seeks to contribute to a body of literature in Black geography though an investigation of how Black radical organizing reimagines and transforms space and place.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface……………………………………………………………………………….…...................ix

A Little Matter of English and French ……………………………………………….………......xiii

1. Introduction..1

1.1 Black Montreal in the 1990s ……………………………………………………………...5

1.2 Literature Review ………………………………………………………….………….11

1.2.1 Black Geography …………………………………………………………11

1.2.2 Black Montreal ……………………………………………………..................14

1.2.3 On the Intersection of Islamophobia and Blackness ……………………………..15

1.2.4 Afro-Pessimism and Antiblackness ………………………………………………...18

1.2.5 Afro-Pessimism Meets Islamophobia ……………………………………………21

1.2.6 Anti-Black Islamophobia and Spirituality as/and Politics………………………..24

1.2.7 Black Radicalism in Quebec ………………………………………….................27

1.3 Research Design ……………………………………………………………………29

1.3.1 Research Questions …………………………………………………………29

1.3.2 Methods …………………………………………………….........................31

1.4 Participant Biographies …………………………………………………….................34

2. "All Black Everything:" Blackening Quebec's Geography ……………………………………..37

2.1 Montreal and the Transnational Politics of Blackness ….……………….........…………..39

2.2 On the Ruse of Ethnicity in Quebec …..49

2.3 Conclusion ………………………………………………………………….............55

3. Imagining a Black Montreal without the East/West Divide …...58

3.1 What About the Language Divide in Montreal ……………………………………………58

3.2 East Montreal: On Belonging and Containment ………………..……………………………63
3.2.1 Longueuil: Telling Black Women's Spatial Stories ……………………………..63
3.2.2 Hochelaga-Maisonneuve and the Geography of Whiteness ……………………..72
3.2.3 "Push Her! Push Her!:" Displacing Black Women from Montreal ..……………77
3.2.4 Reflecting on Gendered and Sexualized Antiblackness …………………………80
3.3 From Self-Defence to Malcolm X ………………………………………………………81
3.3.1 The "Malcolm X of Longueuil:" When Black Self-Defence is Prohibited ……...81
3.3.2 The Ministry of Security for Black People in Canada …………………………...87
3.3.3 "Also Known as X:" Bridging the Linguistic Divide….………….…………….....92
3.4 Conclusion …………………………………………………………………………98
4. Black Organizing and the White Left: Two Contesting Geographies 100
4.1 Carrying the Black Radical Black Imagination Into the 90s ……………………..............102
4.2 With Friends Like These: Antiblackness in Anti-Racist Activism………………………..112
4.2.1 White Scholars and Activists Against Black Youth ……………………………112
4.2.2 Police Brutality and White Resistance to AKAX ……….……………….………..124
4.3 Conclusion ……………………………………………………………………………..129
5. Spirituality and/as Politics ……………………………………………………………………130
5.1 Black Spirituality as Community Building ……………….………………………...........135
5.2 From Sunni Islam to the Nation ……………………………………………………140
5.3 "Homemaking" in the Nation of Islam ………………………………..........................147
6. Conclusion 155
References 161

PREFACE

I am a Black feminist activist of Rwandese origin, born in the Congo, having grown up in Gatineau (Quebec) at a time when there were very few Black people in that city. I was 24 years old when I moved to Montreal, but it is the place that I now consider my hometown. Montreal, and my neighborhood of Côte-des-Neiges especially, is where I fully came into my blackness – my Black feminist self – and it is also where I converted to Islam. Montreal is home because it is where Black feminist Délice was born. It is also in Montreal that I first learned about the long history of Black presence and radical resistance in the province. Learning about the Black history of Montreal has served as a point of departure to interrogate other Black political manifestations in the rest of the province, as well as the influence and impact Black activism in Montreal has had on other parts of the diaspora.

When I arrived in Montreal in 2006, debates on Islamophobia and on accommodating certain religious practices, namely those associated with Muslim people, were dominating the public sphere. Three years later, when I became more deeply involved in the (white) feminist movement, debates on secularism, or laïcité as it is called in Quebec, became the acceptable way to question the place of women of colour within the movement. Parallel to my time in the white feminist movement, I was also actively involved with various Quebec sovereigntist groups where policies on secularism were analyzed primarily through the prisms of "post-race" and "colourblind" politics. These policies were not critiqued for inscribing a raced social order, but rather for counteracting previous efforts to "include" and "integrate" (non-Black) Muslim people into Quebec society. Amidst the increasing Islamophobic sentiment in the province, both state and activist discourses erased the history and the realities of Muslim Black people in Québec, implicitly and often explicitly imagining the Muslim subject as an Arab or South Asian person rather than a Black person. I was briefly involved with "Independentists for an Inclusive Secularism," a group that opposed the fact that the proposed Quebec Charter of Values

(2013) banned religious symbols from the public sphere, especially the hijab. At one of the meetings a well-regarded progressive white scholar questioned my presence: “I don’t understand why you're here. You’re Black. The Charter has nothing to do with Black people, so why are you here?” (see Mugabo 2016). From that moment forward, the unimaginability of the Black Muslim in Quebec has remained a topic that I have viscerally needed to think through. Denise Ferreira da Silva (2013) invites us to “write blackness back into the political” (49) and that has been the starting point for this study.

The erasure of Muslim black people from public discussions of Islamophobia in Quebec has been more than incidental. It has served strategic political purposes. As non-Black Muslims in Quebec began to organize against Islamophobia in the mid−2000s, their activism sought recognition from the state and inclusion into white Quebec society. In many cases, the anti-Islamophobia political strategies that non-black Muslims operationalized, and continue to operationalize, rely quite explicitly on antiblackness and remind us, therefore, of the differentiated position of Muslim Black subjects. As an example, in a February 2015 interview, Samah Jabbari, the spokeswoman of the Quebec Muslim Forum, vociferously argued against the Charter. Near the end of her interview, her argument reached an apex when she said: “We [non-Black Muslim people] won’t accept to be the slaves, nor the negroes of Quebec” (“Racisme envers les musulmans,” 2015). Jabbari’s statement betrays the profound conviction that non-Black Muslims do not and cannot occupy the same position as Black people and therefore will resist any politics that attempt to subjugate them in such a manner.

Often, when Arab, Persian, and South Asian Muslims declare their humanity as a strategy to counteract Islamophobic discourses that problematically conflate them with terrorism, it is part of a quest to be recognized and accepted by white society. That strategy, however, not only puts Muslim Black people at a distance, but also leaves unquestioned and indeed *normalizes* Black subjugation.

These types of political strategies made it clear to me that Black people's experiences of Islamophobia are distinct. From then on, I began to formulate the concept of "anti-Black Islamophobia" as an attempt to capture the specificity of Muslim Black experience, and this research is part of my broader quest to conceptualize that reality. Thus, when I began my Master's program, my research objective was shaped primarily by seeking redress for Muslim Black people erased by and from the Quebec political and social sphere. From the time I left Québec's mainstream progressive politics in 2014 until well into the first year of the graduate program, I was on a quest to explore the Muslim Black history of Québec. I wanted to demonstrate − even prove − our presence. Mainly, I found a multilayered history of Muslim Black people doing important activism in the 80s and 90s – more than a decade before Islamophobia became widely talked about, and non-Black Muslim people began to organize against it. What emerged in the course of my research is how much my analysis of anti-Black Islamophobia in Quebec could not be limited to attacks and discourses against Black people who adhered to orthodox Islam and had to take account for the ways in which, in the 90s, anti-Black Islamophobia also targeted Black people who were associated with Islam simply because of their radical Black politics. In other words, anti-Black Islamophobia in 90s Montreal was directed to Muslim and non-Muslim radical Black subjects almost indiscriminately.

At the same time, because the figure of the Muslim in public discourse does not presently imagine the Muslim Black subject as a possibility, I have sought to illuminate the structure of this impossibility. I document that when they came to public attention in the 90s, Muslim Black people were considered an anomaly, and often imagined and described as a threat to dominant racial configurations in Quebec society. Pursuing this aim meant that I spent most of my research going through newspaper archives and official reports, written during or about the 90s, that were concerned with antiblack racism, Black radical organizing, or Muslim Black activism. After much reading, my goal widened. More

than just demonstrating the presence of Muslim Black people in Québec, my aim became to analyze how the Quebec Left helped develop an anti-Black Islamophobic discourse by problematizing the influence that Islam and/or Muslim Black figures had on Black activists in Montreal in the 90s.

Ultimately, it was only in the last stages of my research that I began doing interviews. Through word-of-mouth and social media, I found four people who were actively involved in the radical Black politics of the time and who generously agreed to participate in this research. Each interview made it clearer to me that neither the focus nor the value of my research could lay on responding to white activists and scholars who had previously broached the topic of blackness in Montreal in the 90s. To be more direct, there was an important Black narrative to tell and it would take precedence to settling scores with people who do not care about Black people. Furthermore, Zenzele Isoke eventually encouraged me to develop a specific Black feminist analysis to my research questions. Accordingly, I approached my interviews, especially with Christiane Joachim, a Black woman and former member of the Nation of Islam in Montreal, with great care. The result is that her voice predominates in this research, for I have sought to tell the story of spirituality and resistance in Black Montreal in a manner that not only brings presence to Muslim Black people in the 90s, but accords a particular importance to the experience, reflections, and critiques of a Muslim Black woman.

A LITTLE MATTER OF ENGLISH AND FRENCH

All of the interviews that I conducted for this research took place in French except for my conversation with Bruce Small, which was in English. Christiane Joachim, Gregory St-Elien, and Bruce all speak English and French, but the interviews took place in the language that we turned to without putting much thought into it. Although my conversation with Joseph Léonard, a.k.a. X Khada Lumumba, was in French, he made it clear that he has no affinity for either language and that he decided a few years ago to write only in Haitian Creole. His decision, as well as the manner in which the other interviews occurred, point to a language reality that is particular to the Black community in Montreal. That dilemma is manifest as Black people are compelled, sometimes without other alternatives, to communicate with one another in one, or the other, language of the enslaver/oppressor. It is also a dilemma when we find ourselves blocked from communicating because one person has learned one dominant language, while the other has learned the other dominant language in Québec.

The French language has long been held as the cultural trait that most distinguishes Quebec from the rest of Canada. That the French language in Quebec requires "protection" is a false idea that continues to be propagated while Indigenous community struggle to actually revive their own languages, so many young Black women, men, and children of Haitian origin do not master Creole fully, and large numbers of young Black continental Africans do not speak their mother tongues. Far from being a threatened language, French is a language of power and domination in Québec. That said, even if most of my interviews took place in French, I took the very deliberate decision to write in English as an act of defiance to the ways in which Quebec laws and discourses around the preservation of the French language have been used as strategies to control Black speech and its reach. Indeed, the geographical unruliness of blackness causes great anxiety in Québec, for Black movement in and out of the French sphere of influence (through language and other means) connotes a certain kind of disloyalty to

or betrayal of the Quebec national project. It is also my way to eschew the language divide that is conventionally understood to be the main difference between francophone and anglophone Black peoples in Quebec. One cannot witness large numbers of francophone Black students having to leave French-language universities in order to pursue radical Black graduate research that contest foundational Quebec myths (as I have), and chastise the same students for not producing their work in French.

I translated to English the interview excerpts as well as the news articles and official reports. The fact that Christiane Joachim and I speak with a Québécois accent rather than a more universal French is something that we quickly found to have in common. She often pointed out how, in the Black community, such an accent can signal that we did not grow up learning Black cultural codes. Christiane remembers how she eventually learned to speak Haitian Creole, along with speech patterns characteristic of Haitian youth in Montreal, in order to assert her blackness. There were moments in our first interview when Christiane would switch to a "Haitian in Quebec" form of speech to recount a story or make a point. Unfortunately, I have not been able to capture these differences in my translation.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

When Marcellus François died from his wounds on July 18, 1991, after being shot by a police officer fifteen days earlier, his death signaled for many that Black life in Montreal could no longer be the same. Dissatisfied with the traditional Black leadership that they considered too amenable to white politicians and institutions, Black youth intensified their organizing against racism. Nearly two years later, on July 4, 1993, seventy-five people gathered at the Union United Church on Delisle Street – one of the city's most recognizable Black institution – for a memorial ceremony marking François' life and death. Joseph Pierre Léonard, an *hougan* (vodoo priest) better known as X Khada Lumumba, was the final speaker at the ceremony. He stood at the pulpit and following vodoo practice blessed the four corners of the assembly. Lumumba spoke in French to the primarily Black anglophone audience, repeating three times, "Marcellus François was not assassinated," each time a bit louder than the previous. To this day, he vividly recalls the look of shock that slowly settled unto people's faces. He then exclaimed, "Marcellus François was not assassinated, he was killed. On the battlefield, the enemy is not assassinated but killed. This is war!" When the crowd erupted, Lumumba realized that everybody present understood his words as a call for something radical and new.

Just a year prior to that ceremony, Marcellus François' younger brother Johnny had converted to Islam and joined the Black House, a group headed by Shola Islam that provided security at the memorial. Addressing the media at the end of the event, Shola Islam, formerly known as Shola Paul Martinet, put his arms around Bertha Aurelien, Marcellus François's mother, and introduced himself to the shocked media scrum as the "Minister of Security for Black people in Canada." The memorial service was then followed by several demonstrations in downtown Montreal organized by Also Known as X

(AKAX), a group composed mainly of university students, and influenced by the political work and vision of Malcolm X and Marcus Garvey. These protests brought several Black activists from Toronto, Ottawa, Halifax, Quebec City, and New York City to protest against rampant antiblack violence, and cemented AKAX's status as the radical voice of Black Montreal in the 90s. For many Black activists of that period, Islam was an important part of the political consciousness that infused their response to antiblack violence in the city.

I begin with Marcellus François and the event commemorating the second anniversary of his murder by the police to highlight not only the kind of radical Black politics that shaped 90s Montreal, but to illustrate how spirituality was manifestly political. For Lumumba, several prominent members of AKAX, François's brother, and many other Black Montrealers, spirituality was integral to their politics in the 90s. The anniversary event also pointed to the geographical dimension of Black politics in this period, one where Black activists sought to resist an urban geography that organized the city according to language: a francophone East pitted against an anglophone West. Lumumba's insistence on speaking those powerful words in French, in the bastion of English-speaking Black Montreal, was part of a larger effort to break down the language barrier in the Black community, based on an understanding of blackness[1] that transcended national boundaries. These Black geographies, like Black politics, were entangled with spirituality. In other words, through spirituality, radical Black activists in Montreal reconfigured how and where the community converged and created new modes of belonging to the city and to their society.

Geography is crucial in efforts to resist antiblackness because it allows us to peer into how Black people spend much of their lives searching for ways to halt and/or undo the constraints that en-

[1] Blackness can mean different things to different people; it can be grounded in culture or history or politics – or some mixture of all of these. The four participants to this research expressed slightly different versions of a Black identity (even as this identity was thought to embrace Black people around the world in all of their diversity).

close them in states of unfreedom. The period that spans the end of the 80s to the second half of the 90s is remembered in Black Montreal as a period during which anglophone and francophone Black peoples sought to build and solidify their community on new terms. These social and spatial transformations seemed increasingly urgent as state and white citizen terror quickly escalated during the 80s. The response to radical Black activism on the part of the white Left has required patient analysis. It was, as I explain, a patronizing response that I describe as a manifestation of "anti-Black Islamophobia." This patronizing response, in addition to state and white citizen terror, needed to be contended with by Black activists.

As a Black woman who grew up in white francophone spaces in Quebec during this same period, I am intimately aware of the efforts deployed to integrate me into the nation-building project. By "nation-building project," I do not primarily refer to the project of an independent Quebec nation-state,[2] but to the idea that Quebec is a distinct society within Canada and a member of the family of liberal western societies for it embraces "values" such as diversity, secularism, and so on. That project rests on the mythical history of Quebec victimhood and innocence, hence the teleological frame of Québec's past, present, and future: having been oppressed, French-speaking white Quebecers have now opened themselves to "immigrants" and we all now contribute together to building an open and generous society. The future that Quebec envisions for itself, and the historical narrative that it relies on, are both products of a white Quebec imagination that has no regard for Black bodies. Indeed, I am painfully familiar with the remarkable violence unleashed on Black bodies in Québec, stories such as those I document throughout this study that remind us of the persistence of antiblackness across time and space. We cannot escape it, nor can we live with it. This is something that Muslim Black activists in the 90s

[2] There were referenda in 1980 and 1995 on whether or not Québec should leave Canada and become a sovereign state. Québec politics has largely been based on the sovereigntist versus federalist axis. Although different political options have emerged in the last ten years in Québec, the Left has historically been identified as predominantly sovereigntist, hence why so many Leftist groups and organizations in Québec are associated with the sovereigntist project.

understood. Their struggle matters because they provide us with a critical framework not only of Quebec white society but also of the kind of Black politics that allows us to imagine what a transformed Black community in Montreal might resemble.

This thesis seeks to analyze the connecting political, spatial, and spiritual aims of Black activists like Christiane, Lumumba, Greg, and Bruce, and those of radical Black organizations at the time. Organizing in response to state and white citizen violence, these activists articulated new Black identities and geographies. They transcended the prevailing boundaries of the nation-state, as well as the intra-city boundaries between East and West, to constitute a global Black subject position – and they did this, I argue, partly through a spiritual practice. My interest in (Muslim) Black organizing in the 90s comes, in part, from a desire to trouble the linear understanding of how Quebec society only just arrived at a moment of heightened Islamophobia. This moment is usually depicted in relation to recent projects like the Bouchard-Taylor Commission (2007–2008) and the proposed "Charter of Values" (2013), both of which gave expression to anti-Muslim sentiment in Quebec (Bilge 2012 and 2013; Leroux 2010 and 2013). Contrary to this view, there have clearly been earlier moments of Islamophobia in this province, including what I document in this thesis in terms of the state's and the white Left's treatment of Muslim Black activism in the 90s. During that period, anti-Black Islamophobia was a response to Black radical organizing and served to delegitimize and problematize the influence that Black Muslim figures had on Black youth.

In this introductory chapter, I lay out the literatures, research questions, and methods that informed my research. I begin, in the next section, with a snapshot of Black Montreal in the 90s, as well as a more thorough review of the Black literatures that guided my work. These literatures offer us a way to understand how Black geographies emerge and how they exceed geographies of domination. These literatures also allow us to investigate how Black radical organizing reimagines and transforms

space and place. Finally, Black feminist scholarship on spirituality help us pay attention to how creating space and making community were part of Black activists' spiritual quest. A reflection on my research design rounds out the chapter, and marks a transition to the substantive chapters that follow.

1.1 Black Montreal in the 1990s

From the early twentieth century until the mid to late 60s, Montreal was the centre of Black life in Canada. Yet, the political events tied to the Quiet Revolution in the 60s rapidly changed the portrait of the city's Black community. Within twenty years, a large portion of Black Montrealers migrated across the provincial border to Toronto and the southern Ontario region, while an increased uptake in immigrants and/or refugees from Haiti and French-speaking Africa further transformed its composition. By the 90s, Black people in Montreal were numbered at about 122,320, or just about 4% of city's population. Being Black and francophone in Canada is a reality specific to Quebec, and Montreal in particular. The 1996 national census reveals that only 11% of the Black population in the rest of Canada also spoke French (MCESSP 2001: 27). In Montreal though, Haitian and francophone African descent formed the majority of the Black population in Montreal. The city of Montreal has historically been divided between a francophone East and an anglophone West by St. Laurent Boulevard. The Black community usually occupied space according to this prevailing language divide – Black francophones on the East side, Black anglophones on the West side. This pattern had implications on the relationships that were built among Black people, as well as how they organized and the political possibilities that could be brought to realization. Although examples abound of Haitian women organizing with anglophone Black women in Montreal 1960s and 1970s (Sanders 2013), the fact remains that through the years, it has been challenging for Black people to organize as Black people, rather than linguistically-specific "anglo" and "franco" Black communities.

The murders of 19-year-old Anthony Griffin in 1987 and 24-year-old Marcellus François in 1991, both shot in the head by police officers, often serve to illuminate the relationship between the Quebec state and the Black community (in general) and Black youth in particular. In 1993, Serge Ménard, the former lawyer for the police officer who executed Anthony Griffin, was elected to the Parti Québécois (PQ) government and was named Minister of Public Safety. Representing the PQ, still considered by many in Quebec at the time a "progressive" social-democratic party, Ménard's election acted as further proof to the Black community that neither their suffering nor any potential repair were to be part of the political agenda in Québec. The 90s are also remembered in the Black community for an increase in antiblack violence from the police and other state bodies, as well as acts of everyday terror from the white citizenry. The Ku Klux Klan, Skinheads, and other white supremacist groups became more emboldened in their public actions and open presence during the 90s. For example, on January 18, 1992, the leaders of the KKK in Montreal, Michel Larocque and Alain Roy, were arrested with twenty skinhead youth outside an apartment building in the Hochelaga-Maisonneuve borough after they tried to set fire to an apartment where five young Somali men lived. Not surprisingly, that borough had become among those in Montreal where Black youth from the eastern and western parts of the city converged and organized to protect Black community members from racist attacks.

In the fall of 1989, a group of Black students from Concordia University and McGill University decided to form the Alliance of Afrikan-Canadians and decided to adopt the more political name "Also Known as X" (AKAX) (Bloomfield 1993). They felt that Black community leaders at the time collaborated and compromised too much with the state and other institutions (Bloomfield 1993). Founding member of AKAX, Ariel Deluy put it plainly: "We have a political agenda and that agenda is to bring the community together and to work toward social change" (cited in Ruggles 1996: 244). Their main goals were to organize and bring together the anglophone and francophone Black communities against

police violence, to raise historical and political consciousness, to strengthen cultural identity, and to develop economic autonomy. The group was active for six years and had about 250 active members at its peak. AKAX's office was located in the Côte-des-Neiges/Notre-Dame-de-Grâce borough, which may be due in large part to their origins in the anglophone Black community. That said, they were also located within easy walking distance from Snowdon station, which is a hub on the same subway line that serves the eastern boroughs where many of their francophone counterparts lived. Within a short period, AKAX built a community-based network that, for many, represented the first attempts at organizing across the linguistic divide in the city's Black community. For instance, they created a hotline to call and report racist attacks, a weekend school program, and an annual three-day East/West conference during which francophones and anglophones met to discuss key topics and establish an action plan for the following year.

Contrary to AKAX, Black youth in the south shore borough of Longueuil and the boroughs of Montreal-North and Saint-Michel – primarily French-speaking Haitians – organized quite differently. They had no formal membership or organization, nor did they receive funding. Their sole purpose was to protect Black community members from attacks by white racist gangs. As such, they eschewed any central headquarters; instead, they relied on a geography of movement in their organizing. They regularly travelled as a group to different boroughs where they had been told of KKK or skinhead activity. They sometimes wore t-shirts or baseball cap emblazoned with the letter "X," a fashion that was also popular more broadly in youth culture. They most often "worked" francophone white neighbourhoods in the East, such as Anjou and Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, and the downtown area as well.

Three major events, beyond the murders of Griffin and François, provide additional historical and political context for the emergence of these radical Black activist groups. In October 1987, the French government supported the assassination of Thomas Sankara, the revolutionary President of

Burkina Faso. Sankara's brutal murder came to represent the West's continued support for the subjugation of African peoples in the diaspora. About four years later, in March 1991, four LAPD officers were caught on video severely beating Rodney King. After the officers were acquitted of any crime in 1992, an urban insurrection occurred in Los Angeles, and as far away as Toronto. Finally, in 1992 Spike Lee released his biopic on Malcolm X, and it resonated with Black people worldwide, including in Montreal.[3] These three events figure prominently and repeatedly in material produced by AKAX and other radical Black activists of the period, who saw their experience as part of a broader (global) pattern and solidified their desire for a Montreal Black community that would be based on that shared experience.

A key concern of mine in this study has been to shine a light on how spirituality acted in the service of Black liberation and freedom. Many Black people in the 90s were first introduced to Islam through Malcolm X's writings, and some eventually converted to the faith, while others went on to join the Nation of Islam or navigated around it. What is clear is that they saw their spiritual transformation as an important part of their decolonial practice. Spirituality was a practice of historical memory and building community, and that they favoured grounding Montreal blackness in a transnational Black diaspora instead of dividing it along a language debate that belonged to white Quebec society. Spirituality enabled their bridging of the language divide for the spiritual spaces they created were ones where they met to recount their common history, discuss their shared experience in Montreal, and plan for actions that addressed their own political concerns.

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[3] There was, in the mid 1970s a branch of the "World Community of Islam in the West," led by Warith Deen Mohammed (also known as Wallace D. Muhammad). As the son of Elijah Muhammad, he became the leader of the NOI after his father's death in 1975 and led the vast majority of members at the time into Sunni Islam. Imam W.D. Mohammed had a branch in 1975-76 on Jean-Talon Boulevard, in the neighborhood of Côte-des-Neiges. In 1978, Louis Farrakhan distanced himself from Imam W.D. Mohammed and decided to rebuild the Nation of Islam. It is then that a branch of the NOI was created in Montreal.

One of the many reasons I chose to focus on the 90s and look at the work of AKAX and other Black activists from East Montreal was that, while living in Montreal, I had often heard that many Black people considered that period "their own 1960s." The Black activists who generously participated in this research allow us to think about how Black spirituality provided a source of strength and community in an eminently important political moment. Their statements, added to the extensive Black activist archive of the period, provide us with a trace of how their geographical imagination emerged from their spirituality. By connecting their work to the responses of the state and the white Left, I demonstrate how, on the one hand, anti-Black Islamophobia seeks to manage the "unruliness" presented by Muslim Black subjects, as well as those perceived to be Muslim and Black. On the other hand, anti-Black Islamophobia also opposes Black people's own project of community building for it does not seek to align with Québec's nation-building project. For example, white nationalist gangs, the police, and the white Left all envision and seek to counter disruptions in the social fabric embodied at the intersection of Islam and blackness. In the context of 90s Montreal, anti-Black Islamophobia was therefore a reaction against the competing geographies that emerge between Quebec white society and radical Black activists.

One way that anti-Black Islamophobia is manifested in my research is by demonstrating that white people gave a homogenous name and orientation, "Malcolm X movement," to actions and activists that were, in fact, diverse and often disconnected. What skinheads first called the "Malcolm X of Longueuil," for example, was never the name of an actual group, even if the media, scholars, and white anti-racist groups circulated that allegation as truth. For them, the so-called Malcolm X of Longueuil was an example of how Black youth were being contaminated by radical U.S.-based Black ideologies. Lost on white society was the fact that this "movement" included an incredibly diverse array of political and social tactics and ideologies deployed by Black youth. There were those who had no personal

connection to Islam, but who organized in self-defence against roaming gangs of white racists intent on wreaking havoc on Black life in the city. There were Black youth who had in fact converted to Islam as part of a self-conscious process of grounding their own blackness differently in Montreal. Others joined the Nation of Islam with a vision of collectively strengthening and rebuilding the Montreal Black community on new grounds. In some cases, small groups of Muslim Black youth were formed, such as the Black House, with a more militaristic structure. AKAX, a group with a very large membership that was grounded in a more Afrocentric and pan-Africanist tradition – as opposed to a Black Muslim one – was also said to be part of the so-called "Malcolm X movement." The very fact that Malcolm X was one of many Black political figures that influenced AKAX's political philosophy increased the state, as well as white scholars and Leftist groups' public scrutiny and surveillance of their work. Without a doubt reading the archive today, Black Muslim political philosophies signaled to white Quebec society a form of blackness that could not be tolerated.

The potential responses to oppression (in general) and Islamophobia (in particular) are many. Many non-Black Muslim activists, I noted above, have turned to the state and white society for inclusion and belonging in the face of amplified Islamophobia. This thesis, in contrast, focuses on the more radical strategies and visions that Black activists brought about in the 90s. Instead of turning towards the state and white citizenry, Black activists of that time turned to Black communities locally and in the diaspora. By creating new political spaces for the Montreal Black community, and by organizing with Black activists from Toronto and Halifax for example, they refused being contained within Québec's nation-building imperatives. This response illustrates to me a transformed political imagination that disrupts racial and spatial arrangements in societies like Quebec.

1.2. Literature Review

1.2.1 Black Geography

The question of race as a central determinant in the spatiality of power was more or less occulted until research in the 90s (Anderson 1991; Kobayashi and Peake 1994; Kobayashi and Peake 2000; Kobayashi 2014). In the two short decades since, race, and specifically blackness, have factored into geographical analyses, and conceptions of race and space have become more familiar within a growing body of human, social, cultural, and historical geography. As Laura Pulido (2002) has emphasized, studying race in geography has moved beyond formulaic questions of locating people of colour in urban neighbourhoods or didactic attempts to identify the abstract geographical dimensions of race, to the study of race for its own sake, meaning studying how race spatializes power. Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2002) has called on geography to "develop a research agenda that centers on race as a condition of existence and as a category of analysis, because the territoriality of power is a key to understanding racism" (22). In tandem with these developments, scholars of Black geography have been instrumental in the emergence of a distinct sub-field dedicated to understandings of Black diasporic life in Canada (McKittrick 2006; Beckford-Foster 2008), in the U.S. (Flynn 2011; Isoke 2013; McCutcheon 2013; Chatelain 2015; Cox 2015; Shabazz 2015; Simmons 2015), and in Brazil (Leu 2008; Costa Vargas 2010; Amparo Alves 2012). As this new generation of geographers demonstrates, blackness, space, and power are deeply imbricated.

One of the concerns addressed in this literature – a concern that is essential to my own research – revolves around the spatiality of Black resistance. The work of Katherine McKittrick, in particular, has opened up the field of Black geography in the Canadian context by providing insight into how Black people in Canada are forever engaged in a process of making a place of belonging where none exists. For example, McKittrick's (2015) chapter in her collection on the philosopher Sylvia Wynter

allows us to envisage how Black people organizing from the margins creatively reimagine the spaces that we inhabit and the boundaries of the polity. Black resistance is thus always-already a space-(re)making project, one that seeks to create relationships that are radically different from what she has called previously the "seductive and comfortable geographies of domination and ownership" (McKittrick 2007, 102).

In her work on Black feminist geographies in Canada, McKittrick (2006) develops her vision of the types of liberatory spaces that must be central to Black spatial and territorial demarcations in this country. She writes that, "The claim to place should not be naturally followed by material ownership and black repossession but rather by a grammar of liberation, through which ethical *human*-geographies can be recognized and expressed" (xxiii, emphasis in original). Following McKittrick's lead on black feminist geographies, the transformative *political* possibilities guiding Black geography, whether expressed by scholars or activists, anticipate a continued struggle for Black emancipation. "Racial-geographic liberation," McKittrick explains, "is not a matter of carving out a place, or a comfortable situatedness, or ownership; rather a discomfort with and a compulsion to bring forth new cartographic processes" (106). Careful attention to the mapping practices that Black people mobilize in order to remake their communities, their families, their very lives is central to the work of Black geography.

Joy James' (2013) work on the limits of Black freedom is a useful contribution to the broader conversation about the liveability of Black life. For her, contemporary society, with its post-racial sensibilities, manifests the terms for the continued racial captivity of Black people. In other words, James demonstrates that under the current geo-political formation(s), the position of the Black body remains that of the suspect or the noncitizen; democracy is about setting the contours of that position, contours that are metaphorical as well as physical/spatial. Like McKittrick, James encourages us to consider how

thinking in the familiar terms of visibility/invisibility and exclusion/inclusion limits our *political* imagination to Black incorporation into facile ideals of democracy, ensuring at the same time that black geographies of resistance become captive of geographies of domination. A different political imagination, one that eschews visibility and inclusion as the foremost ends, is evident in the history of Black resistance. As McKittrick (2006) argues,

> Black discourses and sites of contestation, conflict, and displacement advance a different sense of place, which is tied to alternative geographic agendas: exposed are cartographic impossibilities, surprising black geographies, and black geographic subjects who are otherwise understood as beyond the comprehension of traditional Euro-white geographies and geographers; spatialized are different formations of black geographies and new analytical sites of social difference and social justice. (106)

James and McKittrick, in addition to an emerging generation of Black geographers, demonstrate how we must push ourselves to think about transformation rather than inclusion as the answer to the persistent anti-blackness that dominates society.

Building on McKittrick's work on Black feminist geographies, Zenzele Isoke's (2013) study on Black women organizing in Newark, New Jersey, is especially relevant to this research on Black Montreal. It is useful for, as Isoke details, Newark too is a "shifting landscape constituted by diverse and often contradictory discourses of blackness" (67). To analyze Black activism, and particularly Black women's activism, Isoke develops "a political theory of homemaking that attempts to make sense of how space, place, and identity shape Black women's political activism" (78). "Homemaking," as Isoke calls is, is an important mode of Black feminist resistance, a process of creating political place for Black women to care for themselves, each other, and their communities. More particularly, homemaking "entails making space in the community for folks to remember and re-envision earlier modes of black freedom struggle" (80). Black feminist theories on the geographies of resistance are important to this study not only to grasp fully Christiane's life narrative, but also to develop a deeper understanding of the political spaces that Lumumba, Greg, and Bruce helped to create or participated in. Even when

Black men appear to be the leaders of activist groups and political movements, Black women are most often the ones doing the political work and occupying roles that are less visible to the public eye.

1.2.2 Black Montreal

While some scholarly research has been conducted on Black Montreal, most of it takes inclusion as its end goal. Dorothy Williams is likely the historian who has written the most about Montreal's Black community. In her substantial body of scholarship, she documents how 400 years of Black mobility in and across the city have sustained Black life, including through Black institutions as well as through the ways that Black people in Montreal have adapted to white society and the state (Williams 1989, 1998 and 2006). In her most analytical work, Williams (1998) writes in some detail about how anglophone and francophone Black communities each developed their own organizations and relationships, in following the dominant linguistic geography of Quebec society. In this sense, Williams overlays her geographical understanding of Montreal's Black communities along the East/West regions separated by the St. Laurent Boulevard corridor. Of course, where one was located in the city linguistically, also positioned one in relation to the networks of power emanating from white society and its dominant institutions.

Williams' (2006) dissertation, which analyses seventy years (1934–2005) of Black publications in Montreal, provides scholars with an incredible archive of Black life in Montreal. Yet, her continued focus on language in relation to blackness ultimately betrays her commitment to the integration of Black Montrealers among the city's dueling white communities. Absent in her work are the moments when Black Montrealers organized in opposition to the language divide, thereby affirming their place in the city as Black people with shared histories of slavery, migration, segregation, and discrimination.

Along these lines, in his monograph on Black life in Quebec from 1629 to 1900, Daniel Gay (2004) challenged some of the ideas on the formation of Black communities across the province and forced us to reconsider how the geographies of Black presence exceed Montreal. For example, Gay highlights the fact that Haitians did not begin to arrive in Quebec at the end of the 1950s (as is often claimed). Rather, enslaved Black peoples were brought to Quebec City from Saint-Domingue (present-day Haïti) at the eve of the Haitian Revolution in 1791, as well as into the nineteenth century. That fact troubles the widely-held notion that the arrival of the first wave of Haitian immigrants in the 1950s and 1960s created a new Black, French-speaking community. In other words, the Black community in Montreal (as in the rest of Québec) has been shaped by, and has reconfigured itself amidst several concurring historical and political events. More research is clearly needed on the geographies of Black Montreal, yet Gay's work provides the grounds to challenge the normative assumption operating in Montreal that language is a natural line along which the Black community must be built. Other geographies are possible and politically necessary.

In addition to linguistic-geographical divisions, much has been written about the shifting Black leadership in Montreal from anglophone to francophone in the 70s (Williams 1989 and 1997), as well as the Caribbean and African-American influence on Montreal's Black activists (Affan 2013). The political genealogies of radical black activists in Montreal, however, have yet to include an analysis of their spiritual biographies.

1.2.3 On the Intersection of Islamophobia and Blackness

Since this research seeks to contribute to the scholarship on Black Montreal by proposing an investigation of how anti-Black Islamophobia targeted that community in the 90s, I look at previous texts on Islamophobia and explain how I depart from them. Some scholars of Islamophobia (Ramadan 2010; Saeed 2011) identify the attacks of September 11, 2001, as a conjunctural moment that heightened and

legitimized Islamophobic discourses and policies in the U.S. and in Western society more generally. Others date that moment to the original Gulf War in 1990 (Bahçecik 2013; Kenway 2014). Either way, most scholars of and activists against Islamophobia ground their analysis in Edward Said's (1979) seminal work *Orientalism*, which tracked the structure now called Islamophobia back to the colonial period of British and European domination. Essential to this structure, Said suggests, is an enduring "imaginative geography," in which material practices such as mapping, surveying, and partitioning make it possible for Europeans to demarcate familiar spaces that are "ours" from ones that are "theirs" (see Gregory 2004, 18−30).

In other prominent work on the topic of Islamophobia, the Muslim subject is not specified as Arab or South Asian, but is nevertheless treated in a universalistic form that forecloses potential attention to the subject's racialization as Black. For example, Giorgio Agamben (1998) has examined the situation of refugees and even detainees at Guantanamo Bay and identified it as a "state of exception" that represents a temporal and spatial suspension of the rights attributed to the Human. In Canada, Sherene Razack's (2008) work has analyzed how public discourses frame Muslim subjects as a risk to Western civilization and how these discourses then serve to cast them out physically and even legally from the polity. Both Agamben and Razack focus on an abstracted Muslim subject that is implicitly assumed to be non-Black, though one could reasonably deduce that their work applies to all Muslim subjects. Their respective analyses examine how Muslim subjects are "cast out" of the nation or placed in a "state of exception" to the usual State-based procedural and legal protections afforded to its citizens. These arguments, however, ignore the ways that Black people, Muslim or not, are always already cast outside the categories of the Human and the Citizen. What does it mean for a Muslim to be "cast out" when that Muslim is Black? This question cannot be addressed in work that assumes an Arab, South Asian, or an otherwise unspecified Muslim subject.

Notably, there is an emerging body of work that is looking at antiblackness in Muslim communities in Ontario, in Alberta, and in British Columbia (Mendes 2011). A number of Black Muslim public intellectuals and thinkers have also written personal accounts, reflections, and scholarly articles about the antiblackness that is pervasive in non-Black Muslim communities in the United States, Canada, France, and the United Kingdom (Auston 2015; Mehri 2015; Mire 2015). These articles have employed a theological approach, as well as sociological, historical, and political approaches, and many have also analyzed pop culture to make their critiques. What is abundantly clear from that body of work is that there is such a thing as a distinct Black Muslim experience that is denied both within and outside of the Muslim community.

An important part of the history of the Black Muslim presence in North America is the place of pseudo-Islamic groups that emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century. Although they are known for their unorthodox creed, groups such as the Moorish Science Temple and the Nation of Islam have played a central role in revitalizing the Islamic faith among Black communities and continue to be well-known for their Black nationalist politics. Aminah Beverly McCloud's body of work is probably the most comprehensive on the history of Black Islamic groups in the United States. She explains that although these groups emerged right after the formal end of slavery and at periods of increased violence targeting Black communities, we should not assign the turn to Islam to outside factors alone. McCloud (2007) argues that these nascent and proto-Islamic groups were expressing developing forms of Black selfhood and self-sufficiency. Consequently, they have been labeled "cults" and/or "not really Muslim" because of the "consistent tendency to label as 'cultist' or 'nationalistic' almost any effort on the part of Black Americans to reform or move beyond white representations of them" (172).

Part of what makes McCloud's work useful for this study is her analysis of why Muslim Black intellectual and political thought continues to be overlooked and discounted as a legitimate contribution

to religious life. For McCloud (2007), the fact that Black spaces of Muslim worship, practice, or sociality are not open to white people makes them inherently suspicious. "Wherever Black people are, generally speaking, everyone is supposed to know what is going on" (172), explains McCloud. As a matter of fact, "since the arrival of the first African slaves, whites have demanded that Blacks be counted and accountable to the majority society," (172) she writes. What the history of Muslim Black activists also reveals is how Muslim activism has been read differently by the state and white citizenry. What continues to register in the public discourse as "Muslim" activism, or political participation in the very least, is the work of non-Black Muslim subjects (Mugabo 2016).

In Quebec, research on Islamophobia has predominantly examined the experiences and activism of Arab or South Asian Muslims (see Helly 2012 for an example), thus reiterating the problems discussed above. Existing literature on Black Montreal offers clues in addressing this concern. Diahara Traoré's (2014) doctoral dissertation considered how French-speaking West African Muslim women navigate and negotiate spaces of belonging in African mosques in Montreal, pointing to a promising trajectory in future work. It remains my contention that absorbing Black women into the general category of "Muslim" elides the impact of anti-Black Islamophobia in their political life.

1.2.4 Afro-pessimism and Antiblackness

What I call anti-Black Islamophobia emerged from my quest to look more in detail at how Islamophobia specifically targets Black subjects. Antiblackness, to begin with, has become the subject of an extensive literature that seeks to disentangle antiblack subjection from the ostensibly broader category of racialized subjection (see Sexton 2010). In this work, antiblackness is most often conceived as a structure that is foundational to the modern world, a structure that was constituted through racial slavery and that endures into the present, in a period Hartman (2007) calls the "afterlife of slavery." Further, as Hartman (2007), Wilderson (2010), and King (2013) have stated, colonialism started with the Middle

Passage and Black people continue this experience regardless of their origins. As Quebec rewrites its founding myths to add secularism as one of its pillars, it is all the more important that we foreground the place and the role of slavery in the genealogy of these specific settler-colonial politics.

Essential to this approach is a theoretical disposition called Afro-pessimism, a disposition developed in opposition to Marxist, liberal, and/or New Left perspectives on Black life. Black cultural critic Art McGee (personal communication, February 10, 2015) describes Afro-pessimism as follows:

> basically [Afro-pessimism is] the idea that western society is inherently antagonistic to Africanity and Black people, that it is anti-Black at its core, that it cannot be reformed in such a way that would give Black people or African-descendant people full human rights, or that Black people could come to be recognized as being a part of the human family, without any qualifications or contextual requirements.

The central claim here, that Black people are permanently expelled from the category of the Human, is explored by many contributions to the Afro-pessimist literature. In general, the claim rests on the observation that modern conceptions of the Human were forged alongside and through the relations of racial slavery that cast Black people as uniquely enslavable. The characteristics ascribed to humanness were, not coincidently, those denied to Black people. And these characteristics simultaneously protected non-Black people from enslavement and authorized Black enslavement around the world. Structured by an anti-Black ontology, racial slavery produced effects that have outlasted the institution of slavery itself. Conceptions of the Human, Afro-pessimists argue, retain their original antiblack foundations (Sexton, 2014). To be Human is thus to be anything but Black.

One of the consequences of antiblackness explored by Afro-pessimists is perpetual and gratuitous antiblack violence. In other words, Black people are always-already vulnerable to a violence that has no limit and that does not depend on any previous offense. This violence is not only exercised by white people, but it functions alongside civil society's view of itself as peaceful. Everyday forms of gratuitous violence against Black people are thus not a transgression of the norm, but its logical extension. Hence, contemporary society, steeped as it is in antiblackness, effects what Patterson (1982) first

called "social death" among Black peoples. This violence was evident in the slave society, but it continues to be evident as well in "post-slavery's" lynchings, KKK attacks, police executions, mass incarceration, and so on.

Another consequence of antiblackness according to an Afro-pessimist approach is the (im)possibility of political reform. Since the problem of an antiblack world is ontological, in that Black people are cast outside the category of the Human, society cannot simply be reformed. For example, Frank Wilderson III, one of its most prominent proponents, argues that all attempts to reform society are bound to fail for Black people, since society itself is fundamentally antiblack. The only acceptable solution, according to Wilderson (and other Afro-pessimists) is the creation of an entirely new World. In a recent interview, Wilderson (2015) explains what is at stake in rejecting Black incorporation and/or integration: "They're trying to build a better world. What are we trying to do? We're trying to destroy the world. Two irreconcilable projects" (20). As both Wilderson and McGee explain, Black people's experiences can only be transformed through the destruction of the current social order. This echoes both James' and McKittrick's ideas about the spatiality of Black political imagination and resistance.[4] For them too, what makes Black political projects are their transformative possibilities and not their ability to integrate Black communities into racist societies.

A literature produced largely outside the discipline of geography, Afro-pessimism has done little more than hint at the spatiality of anti-blackness and Black resistance. For a geographical enquiry, what Afro-pessimism encourages us to consider is the inability for the Black subject "to translate space into place and time into event" (Wilderson 2010, 357). That is to say, antiblackness entails a permanent placelessness to blackness (Sexton 2014). In other words, there is no land that Black subjects can claim

[4] It is important to note that Katherine McKittrick is not an Afro-pessimist scholar. In a 2015 interview, McKittrick expressed concern with "the ways our analyses of histories and narratives and stories and data can actually honour and repeat and cherish anti-black violence and black death" (Hudson 2014, 240).

that is void of gratuitous violence, nor is there a time we can point to in the past during which we were spared that type of violence. Afro-pessimism pushes Black geographies further by exploring the place-lessness that pre-exists any form of Black resistance.

Helpful in many ways, Afro-pessimism also has certain limits related to its homogenizing tendencies. As a case in point, Afro-pessimist thinkers have been critiqued for overly prioritizing the American context in their analysis, partly eliding the importance of the specific national context of Black diasporic life. In response, some notable scholarship has since developed in Brazil (Costa Vargas 2011; Amparo Alves 2012) and the Netherlands (Martina 2014) that applies Afro-pessimist conceptual-izations to specific national geographies. Another key critique has been that due to its singular focus on blackness, Afro-pessimism does not lend itself well to the task of exploring differences in the multiple social positions that Black subjects occupy. For example, while Afro-pessimism makes clear that Mus-lim Black folks do not experience the world the same way as their other coreligionists, it does not pro-vide the language to elucidate the distinctions between the violence that Muslim Black activists may experience compared to that of Christian Black activists, for instance. Reading Islamophobia through an Afro-pessimist lens allows us to probe some of the specific ways in which Black subjects are evicted from the category of the Human.

1.2.5 Afro-Pessimism meets Islamophobia

An important scholar of Black American Islam, Sherman Jackson (2011), defines Islamophobia as the production of Muslims into "problem peoples" (3). He then explains that it can be manifested through misrepresentation, harassment, intimidation, and continued suspicion from private citizens, government officials, and the many tentacles of the state apparatus. Helpful is Su'ad Abdul-Khabeer's criticism of dominant Left theorizations of Islamophobia that (as she points out) centre antiblackness. For instance, Abdul-Khabeer criticizes the now-common understanding of Islamophobia as having its origins in the

U.S. following the events of 9/11. For her, this understanding feeds into the idea that Islam did not have a history in the United States prior to 9/11, and that Muslims are only now struggling to become citizens. To address this temporal sleight, Abdul-Khabeer prefers the term “anti-Muslim racism,” because “it identifies the religion, but also identifies that racialization is at play” by bringing to the fore the history of state violence against Muslim Black people in the U.S since slavery (cited in Chan-Malik 2014, 26).

Similarly, Junaid Rana’s (2007) endeavours to explain how Islam in particular and religion in general came to be “racialized” specifically for Black Muslims. An important part of the history she recounts is that the initial encounter with Islam in what is now the United States was through enslaved Africans who arrived in the Americas already practicing the Muslim faith, some with a knowledge of the Qur'an and even a mastery of Arabic. “Early on the concept of the African Negro was placed into a logic that paired it with Moors, Indians, and Jews,” she writes, “[thus] in the context of the American colonies and then the formation of the United States, religion was not far from the construction of the logic of nation and race” (153). Rana's argument is useful in that she explains how religion did not supersede race since Muslim Black people were denied an entry into citizenship. On the contrary, it became “part of that continuum that understood Black Muslims as Black” (157) and, I would add, enslavable. Despite Rana’s efforts to specify the experiences of Black Muslims, she eventually falls into the trap of universalizing the racializing tendencies of Islamophobia in the latter part of her work. By doing so, she performs the disappearance of Muslim Black people that is common to discussions of Islamophobia. Without offering an analysis of the specificities of the Muslim Black experience, we risk enacting antiblack modes of thinking.

In a promising theorization that closely follows an Afro-pessimist disposition, Rinaldo Walcott (2011) provides us with the conceptual language to avoid such pitfalls by using the figure of the queer

Black Muslim to question how the "Muslim" figure has been represented since 9/11. For him, "the limits of our imaginations have significant implications for our politics of liberation" (¶4). He offers an oppositional history of Muslim presence in North America, one that challenges Rana's version:

> Kantian, modernist 'Reason,' could not make sense of an enslaved Muslim presence, especially its representativity in Arabic, and in the practice of Islam, which had to be vigilantly denied and invalidated for Christian doctrine to endorse slavery. Thus all enslaved Africans had to be reduced to the non-religious or the African practices of monotheism (in this case Islam) had to be ignored and denied since those practices troubled certain European reasons for African enslavement. (¶6)

What is especially useful in Walcott's argument is that it allows us to understand how Muslim Black people have never occupied the same category of humanity as their Arab co-religionists. Since Religion is one key marker of the Human, Arab Muslim subjects, however much they have been reviled in Western culture in the Saidian sense, have remained intelligible as Human. Black subjects, however, have never been read as properly Muslim, because doing so would make them Human, and thus, unslavable. Walcott insists that we read the Muslim presence in North America based on this centuries-old history, since it is "an intervention that blackens and thus complicates a number of histories, trajectories, and politics" (¶6). Black people's experience of Islamophobia is thus a distinct one. Attempting to capture this specificity, I develop the concept of "anti-Black Islamophobia" in the pages that follow as a fusion of understandings of Islamophobia with Afro-pessimist theorizations of antiblackness.

In a previous study (Mugabo 2016), where I analyze anti-Black Islamophobia in the context of the debates in Quebec that occurred roughly between 2006 and 2014 around the issue of religious symbols (read the hijab) in the public sphere, I argue that the Muslim figure at the center of those discussions was non-Black, and the Muslim Black subject was not only erased, but became unimaginable, s/he was constituted as an impossibility. In the period of 90s Montreal, anti-Black Islamophobia manifested itself quite differently, for the Muslim Black subject figured prominently in white society's anxiety about how Black youth contested and organized against the prevailing racial order. At that time in

Montreal, the Muslim Black subject represented a danger because they refused to embrace inclusion and the Quebec nation project. For the purpose of this study, I approach anti-Black Islamophobia as a response against Black radical politics and very much an attack on Black spirituality, or the practice of community building and collective survival.

I focus on one aspect of anti-Black Islamophobia in particular, which is when it targets Black subjects who are not necessarily Muslim but become associated with Islam or (Black) Muslim groups due to their radical politics. That said, in the course of this study, I found a certain number of articles that reveal discourses and attacks against Somali people living in Montreal in the 90s. It would be important for future research to investigate further the specificities of anti-Black Islamophobia in regards to Somali people in Quebec most notably. Comparing the violence against unorthodox Muslim Black people, to the violence against Somali people, would give us a much-needed understanding of how each group was perceived as constituting a different type of threat to Quebec's nation-building project.

1.2.6 Anti-Black Islamophobia and Spirituality as/and Politics

Since another key theme of my research involves reflecting on the place Islam occupied in the lives and work of Black activists in Montreal, I have turned to theoretical material that explains the place of spirituality in Black life. In Canada, Njoki Nathani Wane and Erica Neegan's (2007) work on how spirituality factors into the lives of African-descendant women has been most productive. Borrowing from Zimbabwean feminist Sibekile Mtetwa, they observe that "the word 'spiritus' describes a force concerned with day-to-day human activity that plays a particularly transformative role in the shaping of human inter-personal relationships" (28). From there, they explain that Black women's spiritual knowledge is not simply about shaping an individual moral universe, but instead, acts as the basis for "a cooperative project of communal survival" (28). Hence, putting spirituality into practice "emphasiz-

es the recovering of a community consciousness that thrives because people feel involved with one another" (29).

What is most notable about Wane and Neegan's research is the importance they give to spirituality for Black political imagination. In fact, Wane and Neegan consider spirituality as a potential anticolonial discourse that is "shaped by the lived realities of colonial subjects who question the concept of a universal standard by recognizing or challenging its limited scope and perspective" (29). Spirituality, in this vision, provides Black subjects with situated knowledge that provides for resistance to antiblackness. Returning to our theme of Black geographies, Wane and Neegan insist that Black spirituality must be revisioned as centrally involved with making our place, wherever that specific place may be, instead of relying on historical geographies related to pre-colonial traditions and practices. Spirituality, in other words, arises from a Black sense of place.

The work of Jacqui Alexander is also productive since she analyzes how spirituality has shaped Black people's migration experiences and struggles. In her seminal book, *Pedagogies of Crossing*, Alexander (2006) focuses on how African spiritual traditions and practices have sustained Black life in the Americas for centuries. She writes at length about how "African-based cosmological systems are complex manifestations of the geographies of crossing and dislocation" that, at the same time, manifest "locatedness, rootedness, and belonging that map individual and collective relationships to the Divine" (290). Much as Wane and Neegan, Alexander argues that we must understand Black experience as both political *and* spiritual: "The designation of the personal as spiritual need not be taken to mean that the social has been evacuated for a domain that is ineluctably private" (295). Instead, Alexander explains that in the spaces of Black migration, spiritual practices are reconfigured at each historical moment.

Building on the key insights in my conceptualization of anti-Black Islamophobia, slavery was without question a key moment during which spirituality played a central role in Black people's re-

sistance, survival, and rebirth. Such is true for Black people in Quebec who, during slavery, were made to convert and assigned new names and identities in the settler, slave holding-society. Therefore, documenting changing spiritual practices allows us to understand in which ways communities were (re)created. For Alexander (cited in Trotz 2012), such spiritual practices provide "a crucial space to address experiences of fracture [and violence]" (¶15).

The writings of Yvonne Bobb-Smith (2007) also provide generative ideas on the place of spiritual biography in research. Her own work explores the ways in which Caribbean women use their spirituality as a strategy of resistance against quotidian antiblack violence. The majority of the women whom she interviewed for her book *I Know Who I Am* were of a Christian background, though most did not practice their spirituality in ways authorized by their Church. Bobb-Smith explains that these women took their spirituality as "a responsibility to think about and create the means to negotiate their own survival as well as that of their communities" (55). I am reminded of Wane and Neegan's assertion that Black women's spirituality acts as a "cooperative project of community survival" that uplifts Black communities. Bobb-Smith's work dovetails most clearly with their argument when she explains that the Black women she interviewed related an ability to circumvent subjugation with the depth of their spiritual commitment: "The extent to which they exceed the boundaries set for them, to confront sexist and racist patriarchal supremacy, is perceived by them to be a result of their ability to access divine intervention" (60). Bobb-Smith's work provides us with several key ideas that challenge normative approaches that conflate religion with spirituality and undermine Black women's spirituality as nothing more than superstitious thoughtlessness, or worse still, delusion.

Wane, Neegan, Alexander, and Bobb-Smith's work reminds us to reflect on the deep history spirituality has had on African diasporic peoples in our daily and collective struggles for justice. Since their work also pays attention to how Black communities have incorporated African traditions into reli-

gious practices, they point to the many ways in which our spirituality is often in transformation as we (re)create ourselves and our communities. Far from being an anomaly or something to be maligned, these processes generate transformative political and social imaginations. Wane, Neegan, Alexander, and Bobb-Smith allow me to make sense of how, for example, Black activists of various religious affiliations and spiritual practices gathered at *Daho Vodoo* celebrations as one way to be in community with both anglophone and francophone Black folks. My research builds on the work of these four Black feminist scholars of spirituality by analyzing how, in the case of Black activists in Montreal 90s, learning about Black and African history became a spiritual practice that taught them new grounds upon which they could (re)organize the Montreal Black community.

1.2.7 Black Radicalism in Québec

The importance given to African history was especially present in the activities organized by AKAX. Because the group was strongly influenced by Afrocentrist ideologies, and even brought to Montreal a number of renowned Afrocentrist scholars such as Amos Wilson, John Henrik Clark, and Yosef Ben-Jochannan, one could be tempted to put in question their radical Black politics. Indeed, as Robin D. G. Kelley (1996) pointed out, Afrocentrism shares much in common with conservatism:

> Molefi Asante, for example, has been sharply criticized for arguing that an Afrocentric lifestyle includes distinct roles for men and women and that homosexuality is a form of deviance. In his words, homosexuality 'is a deviation from Afrocentric thought, because it makes the person evaluate his own physical needs above the teachings of national consciousness.' (111)

Following Kelley's analysis, the work of Black Muslim activists in Montreal could certainly be slotted into the category "conservative" and omitted from any radical history. What emerged from my archival research, however, is that AKAX's "Afrocentrism" served largely to illuminate the importance of Africa and African history, and thereby emphasize the shared roots of the francophone and anglophone Black communities. It served a political purpose, helping to bridge the East/West divide that I dis-

cussed earlier. Teaching and relying on shared African origins also served to highlight a vision of a common future. Since I was not able to secure an interview with Black women who organized with AKAX, it is difficult to speculate on whether any of the conservative ideas on gender and sexuality that Afrocentric thought espouses were also taken up by AKAX. One thing that I learned in my conversation with Bruce Small is that the student association of Lesbian Black women at Concordia University supported AKAX financially. Overall, it is unclear where the Afrocentric influence on AKAX begins and ends.

Through the years, several people have spoken to me informally about how AKAX was sort of a training ground for their activism. For many, it was their first experience of Black organizing in Montreal. For them, AKAX created a supportive space for Black youth who desired to be in community and were figuring out their politics. Kelley (2002) also discusses the kind of political opportunities that Afrocentrism made available to him, writing about how, as a "junior Afrocentrist," the powerful history of Ancient Africa attracted him more than the civil rights movement and how, for many, it served to envision the kind of transformation that they were working towards. He writes:

> We looked back in search of a better future. We wanted to find a refuge where 'black people' exercised power, possessed essential knowledge, educated the West, built monuments, slept under the stars on the banks of the Nile, and never had to worry about the police or poverty or arrogant white people questioning our intelligence. Of course, this meant conveniently ignoring slave labor, class hierarchies, and women's oppression, and it meant projecting backwards in time a twentieth-century conception of race, but to simply criticize us for myth making or essentialism misses the point of our reading. We dreamed the ancient world as a place of freedom, a picture to imagine what we desired and what was possible. (15)

Kelley's memories of how generative Afrocentrism was at the beginning of his own activism illustrates well what emerges from the written archives about AKAX. Indeed, learning about African history and current politics was very much about being able to reference a place where Black freedom and Black power, in some way and for at least some people, did and could again manifest itself fully.

While Afrocentrism offered a history to which Black activists in Montreal could connect, Black nationalism also allowed them to consider what it would mean to understand the Montreal Black community as a nation with a project that is distinct from that of Québec. Though it may seem odd to consider the Nation of Islam (NOI) as part of the Black radical history in Montreal because of their views on gender and sexuality, for example, I do include them in that umbrella because Black nationalism is part of the large tradition of Black radicalism (Dawson 2013). In Michael. C. Dawson's writing about Black people in and out of the American Left, he explains that a consequence of the predominantly white sector of the Left's refusal to take race seriously in its analyses and actions is not only that it understands radical as the purview of the white male worker but it is also "extraordinarily blind" and takes a "crude view of black nationalism" (26). Since the two core tenets of Black nationalism are that Blacks constitute a nation and that race is the foundational analytical category for understanding Black life across the diaspora (222), it is all the more important to analyze how in the 1990s the Montreal chapter of the NOI disrupted Québec's own nation-building project.

1.3 Research Design

1.3.1 Research Questions

The broad aims of this thesis are threefold. I wish to analyze how radical Black activists worked at reconfiguring the Black community in Montreal against the East/West language divide. I also want to examine how the White anti-racist Left developed anti-Black Islamophobic discourses against radical Black activists who were Muslim and/or associated with Islam. Lastly, I want to pay attention to the role of spirituality in the visions that radical Black activists had for the Black community in Montreal. To pursue these broad aims, I focus on three specific research questions:

1. How did activists involved in AKAX and other Black radical activist groups work within and against the prevailing linguistic geography of 1990s Montreal? In which ways did Black activist strategies envision and/or create altogether different geographies?

2. How did the state and white Left respond to these Black activist movements? To what extent can these responses be viewed in terms of anti-black Islamophobia? How is this form of domination to be understood?

3. How did spirituality infuse and shape Black activists' ideas and practices? How did spirituality function as an avenue through which the activists' blackness could be affirmed?

Chapter two, which lays the ground for the rest of the thesis, is where I explore how Black activists made explicit the many ways in which blackness in Quebec is grounded in a history and a geography that exceeds the Quebec nation. Defining the Black community in Montreal outside of the ethnic categories imposed by the state served as the basis to reimagine a map of the community without the East/West linguistic divide. Chapter three then considers how Black youth concretely organized again the prevailing geography of 90s Montreal. I start by giving a portrait of the violence that marked the everyday lives of Black people in that period, and then provide examples of how Black activists organized to create new Black geographies. Chapter four examines white anti-racists' response to Black radical activism and pays particular attention to how it manifested anti-Black Islamophobia. I turn especially to the writings of several scholars and one of the major human rights organizations in the city during the period. Chapter five offers a counterpoint to the work of radical Black activists in 90s Montreal, by demonstrating that spirituality not only shaped Black activists' ideas and practices but that the work of community building and care *is* itself spiritual work. I demonstrate further how spirituality in the context of radical Black organizing in 90s Montreal was about rebuilding the community from East to West and creating spaces for members of the community to care for one another as they survived death by police and daily racist attacks.

This research is salient today for the Black community in Montreal continues to be divided by an East/West language divide. Black activists in the 90s offer us ways to articulate new Black identities and geographies, and encourage us to turn to each other for imagination, and not to the state for inclusion, in developing our "freedom dreams."

1.3.2 Methods

The research methodology consists of three parts. The first part entails archival research of media available in the public realm. I have combed databases containing the four major Montreal dailies (*Montreal Gazette*, *Le Devoir*, *Le Journal de Montréal*, and *La Presse*) and collected all of the articles that covered the work or the actions organized by Black radical activist groups in a period that spans 1989–1996. Bibliothèque et archives nationales du Quebec (BANQ), the provincial archival agency, has a searchable electronic database for the major French-language daily, *La Presse*, that greatly facilitated my preliminary research by narrowing down search parametres. The three other major newspapers are all available on microfilm at BANQ sites in Montreal. Searching them was an arduous task, made more enjoyable by the company of the superb archival support.

Including articles and other material that members and collaborators of activist groups published in local and community newspapers was a key method, especially given the overwhelming antiblack discourse of the dailies. I collected five years' worth (1991−1995) of *Community Contact*, the oldest Black newspaper in Montreal (bi-weekly). I also collected four years' worth of *Revue Images* (1991−1992 and 1994−1995), a now-defunct monthly and bilingual magazine serving Black Montreal, at the offices of the Centre international de documentation et d'information Haïtienne, Caribéenne et Afro-Canadienne (CIDIHCA) in Old Montreal. Finally, the last part of my archival research consisted of consulting Black periodicals and student weeklies. The CIDIHCA provided me with access to rele-

vant documentation from the period during my research time in Montreal, while accessing the archive of *The McGill Daily* (McGill University) provided additional coverage from the period.

In all honesty, it became difficult for me to stop going through news archive. I found myself gathering more and more articles on antiblack attacks that happened in the 90s even while I was writing my analysis. One of the biggest difficulties for me in the writing process was to refrain from listing every story that I found. I am not completely sure if my impulse to do so came from feeling as though I needed as much proof as I could gather to point to the reality of antiblackness in Québec. Perhaps I also wanted this thesis to bear witness to what our community lived through in the 90s – and continues to still today. As I kept writing, and I hope as you read this, I reminded myself of Wilderson's caution about empirical data on Black life. In an antiblack world, the number of attacks against Black people are, by definition, endless. While accounting for them all in this thesis seemed at times to be the only way to recognize that they had happened and to acknowledge those who had survived them (or not), such an accounting can never be exhaustive. Wilderson (2010) explained that empirically-based rejoinders lead us in the wrong direction because they give us the impression that we are on solid ground and that mystifies rather than clarifies the question (10). Indeed, there is no grammar of suffering for Black people. Being concerned with the "unknowable" and the "unspeakable," Saidiya Hartman (2008) elaborated on the difficulty of writing about slavery: "How can narrative embody life in words and at the same time respect what we cannot know? How does one listen for the groans and cries, the undecipherable songs, the crackle of fire in the cane fields, the laments for the dead, and the shouts of victory, and then assign words to all of it" (3)?

The second part of my methodology entailed open-ended interviews with key activists from the period. I conducted interviews with four active members and collaborators of AKAX and the Nation of Islam in early 2016, in order to expand my knowledge about their internal organization and strategy. In

particular, these interviews shed light on the archival record, especially as it relates to the place of Islam and spirituality in Black activist work at the time. They also helped me re-frame how to understand the written record. As the interviews played out over time, my research participants became the central thread holding the entire thesis together. I sought to centre their voices by using their perspectives as the barometer of history. Their reflections feature prominently throughout these pages, as they demonstrate the importance of grassroots activism for the development of theory and practice. I am forever indebted to their commitment to Black radical politics, and especially, for their generosity in sharing their time and energy with me. My project abided by the Tri-Council Guidelines on Ethical Research by having a detailed Ethics Application accepted by the Concordia University Human Research Ethics Committee in April 2016. As per the guidelines, the four research participants opted against anonymity, though all interview transcripts and recordings have remained confidential, except for those excerpts used in the study.

The final part of my methodology entailed an examination of the activist and academic documents available in the public realm that engage with the work of Black radical activists in the period under study. I chose to follow this line of inquiry because of the key role white scholarly discourse played in defining Black radical organizing in the 90s as a problem. As Black sociologist Daniel Gay (1983) astutely pointed out, "the white intelligentsia in Quebec exert a certain leverage in constructing social reality" (47, my translation). As an example, in 1992 the Ligue antifasciste mondiale (LAM), a Montreal-based human rights organization, produced and distributed a 37−page report entitled, "Malcolm X: Le mouvement chez les jeunes noirs." While the booklet was ostensibly directed at white leftist groups that sought to combat white supremacist groups in Québec, it also encouraged leaders in the Black community to denounce Muslim Black activists. The report proved quite influential, since several scholars in Quebec not only referenced and promoted the LAM report and their other initiatives

against Black radical activists, but they also produced their own ideas about the ways in which Muslim Black youth organizing threatened Quebec society. It is indeed notable how the advent of Black radical organizing in Montreal contributed to the emergence of what would later become known as "intercultural" studies in Québec. The scholarly work of sociologists Marie McAndrew and Maryse Potvin are vital to the origins of that field of study, and their "anti-racist" analyses − through the form of scholarly articles and a government report (1996) − provide key documents for my study. These documents serve as empirical material that situate the problems that Black political projects pose to the Quebec progressive agenda.

1.4 Participant Biographies

In the spring of 2016, I interviewed Christiane Joachim, Joseph Léonard (aka X Khada Lumumba), Gregory (Greg) St-Élien, and Bruce Amasi Smalls. While their reflections on 90s activism are discussed at length in this thesis, I want to provide a few biographical details here.

Christiane was born in 1975 in Trois-Pistoles, Quebec by Haitian parents. She lived in various places in Quebec and Canada, and even overseas in her early childhood and then moved to Longueuil where she lived until she got married in 1999. She joined the Nation of Islam in 1995 and was appointed as Secretary of the Montreal chapter in 1997. As part of her role, she managed the finances of the Montreal chapter and travelled frequently to a number of other chapters across the northern U.S. Christiane left the NOI in 2002. Now a mother of two, Christiane works in the public sector and has also recently set up her own translation business in Montreal.

Lumumba arrived in Montreal from Haiti in 1972 at 21 years of age. He immediately started organizing with pan-Africanist groups, various Black radical groups, and later, the Haitian Taxi Drivers' Collective. Born Joseph Léonard, he took the name X Khada Lumumba in honour of the three main figures who shaped his political analysis and gave a pan-African definition to his vision for

blackness: Malcolm X, Muammar Khadaffi, and Patrice Lumumba. He is the author of several poetry collections, essays on antiblack racism in Québec, articles in the official journal of the Haitian Taxi Drivers' Collective, and books on vodoo. He is also known for developing *Daho Vodoo*, a blending of vodoo spirituality and pan-African thought. Lumumba describes *Daho* as "pan-Africanism in its spirituality." Lumumba moved back to Haiti in 2003, and in 2015, he became the first *hougan*, or vodoo priest, officially recognized by the Haitian government (along with Beatrice Daleus, who became the first mambo, or vodoo priestess to receive the official recognition).

Greg was born in Haiti and arrived in Montreal in 1975 on his third birthday, following his father who had immigrated a few years prior. He grew up in the neighbourhood of Montreal-North and, along with a community of nineteen other Black youth, began a journey that led to all of them converting to orthodox Islam in 1992. A later communal process led the group to eventually leave the faith and join the Montreal chapter of the Nation of Islam. After years of involvement and organizing within the NOI, even after internal strife and changes in leadership, he eventually left the NOI in 1998. Now a father of three, he works in the field of communication technologies in Montreal.

Bruce Amasi Small is 58 years old and was born in the Notre-Dame-de-Grâce neighbourhood in the west side of Montreal to a Haitian father and a Guyanese mother who first met as students at McGill University. He moved to Guyana with his mother at a young age, and returned to Montreal when he was 14 years-old. He was a founding member and the external affairs coordinator for the radical "Also Known as X" (AKAX) group until it dissolved in 1996. Today, Bruce's community activism focuses mainly on issues of spiritual awareness, natural food and medicine, and physical health.

The participants in this study all follow the general framework I outline in my study about twentieth-century Black migration to Québec. For instance, Lumumba, Christiane, and Gregory are tied to the wave of post-1960s immigration from Haiti to Québec. Lumumba was among the many working-

class Haitians fleeing the Duvalier regime who were engaged politically in Haiti prior to their departure. Christiane was born in Trois-Pistoles, a small town five hours away from Montreal close to the provincial border with New Brunswick. Her father, however, was among the many engineers who arrived in Quebec from Haiti already employed by the new state/public institutions emerging from the Quiet Revolution. Christiane and the rest of the family moved with him as he received new employment contracts in different cities and small towns in Quebec or even internationally. Greg's father too emigrated from Haiti to Montreal, while Bruce was born in Montreal to a Haitian father and a Guyanese mother.

Both Christiane and Greg were raised in a francophone setting. Christiane grew up in Longueuil, on the south shore of the St. Lawrence across from Montreal, while Greg grew up in Montreal-North, where the large majority of Haitians living in Montreal reside. They both discussed learning English with family members who lived in the United States, and through the influence of American hip hop culture in the era of politically-engaged artists such as Public Enemy. Because of his family setting, Bruce grew up speaking both English and French and felt equally comfortable in anglophone and francophone Black communities. When I asked Lumumba whether he speaks English, he answered in French that he does not. He also made it clear in the interview that he does not much care for the French language. He went on to explain to me that he decided five years ago to only write in Haitian creole, the language that matters most to him. As we move to the next chapter, which frames the following three analytical chapters by considering Montreal's Black geographies, the voices of my research participants echoes in my mind.

CHAPTER TWO

"All Black Everything:" Blackening Quebec's Geography

My father came from a poor background. My mother had family members who were quite wealthy, others were poor. She had very light skin. Her grandfather was white, a French man who settled in Haïti. My mom's family felt that she had married under her class because my father had very dark skin. That's where my history with blackness starts … [my mother] always considered herself superior to my father. I was born into that environment but in 1975 in Trois-Pistoles [pop. 3,500]. We were the first [Black] family there.
—Christiane Joachim

The first time that I spoke with Christiane, we connected on the fact that both of us grew up in almost-entirely white, urban centres in Quebec outside of Montreal Island. In both popular lore as well as in public discourses, regions outside of Montreal represent the spaces of whiteness where real *Québécité* resides. In those initial moments of mutual recognition, we connected over a common understanding of the struggles we endured in our youth. Growing up Black while living outside of a Black community was the main topic of the six-hour interview we had about the 80s and 90s in Longueuil and Montreal. The epigraph represents Christiane's first words during the interview, setting out one of the core themes that I develop throughout this thesis: the signification of blackness in 90s Montreal. Her words testify to the importance of geography in how one learns and understands blackness. For a Black person, it matters *where* you are, especially in relation to blackness and whiteness. For Christiane, this knowledge came from growing up in a hostile, almost-entirely white working-class suburb and away from a Black community that could provide both a cultural reference and some form of protection against antiblack violence.

This chapter frames what follows by looking at the geographies of blackness and offering insight into the particular ways in which 90s Black activism contributed to an understanding of blackness in Montreal through its articulation of a complex geographical imagination. This imagination was about situating oneself within the Black diaspora in relation to Quebec society. What is most

recurrent in their public interventions is how Black youth firmly grounded their blackness in the history of Montreal, while at the same time looking outside the city to the broader African diaspora. There is an interplay here between a localized, Montreal-specific blackness based in part on the peculiarities of language politics in the city on the one hand, and a global, and especially Caribbean blackness whose spatial boundaries were much more fluid and dynamic, on the other. According to these overlapping territorializations, Montreal exists in a Quebec whose imperial past of slavery ensures that Black people continue to struggle. Black youth in Montreal were acting against the fact that the notion of a Black community was not a given due to a linguistic geography that divided the city in two.

Both the Canadian ideology of "multiculturalism" and Québec's resistance to it by way of "interculturalism," block Black communities from thriving because blackness in Montreal exceeds the boundaries of each nation. What continued to be manifest in the ideas and actions of Black youth was how their grounding always expanded outside the limits of Montreal and Québec, and encompassed the connections they made, through organizing and intellectual engagement, with Black thinkers and activists across Canada, in the U.S., and in a variety of African countries. To make sense of this complex geography, I turn to Jemima Pierre (2002 and 2004), whose work on the relationship between race/ethnicity and blackness is instructive, as well as Rinaldo Walcott (1997 and 2004), whose work demonstrates how blackness troubles nation-building projects and the contour of the "nation" itself.

One of the reasons I begin this study with a chapter on blackness and geographical imaginations is that blackness itself is a category whose existence is contested in white "progressive" scholarship and activism in Québec, as I discuss further throughout. It is argued, in various ways, that in order for Black people, particularly those who are French-speaking, to "fit" into the nation-building project, they must not identify as Black, though they may identify in terms of particular ethnicities (Haitian, Congolese, etc.), but not in terms of blackness. The latter, it is argued, is a foreign (primarily US-based)

identification. The erasure of blackness as a category of social and political analysis and struggle, as well as one associated with diasporic community belonging, conveniently facilitates the denial of antiblackness in Québec. Thus, I examine below how radical Black activists affirmed blackness in Montreal, how they lived a Black identity, often by situating it within broad Black diasporic experiences and against the geographical constraints imposed by the predominant, white Quebec nation-building project.

I begin by exploring how one way that Black youth expanded the definition of blackness in Montreal was first by situating it at the core of the history of slavery in Québec. Since slavery is foundational to the province's imperial history with Haiti and the French Antilles, I then analyze how that informs Black life and Black activism in Montreal. Lastly, I examine how discourses on ethnicity in Quebec serve to manage and organize Black people according to the needs of the nation-building project. This chapter sets the basis for understanding the importance of francophone and anglophone Black youth knowing themselves as Black and bringing the community "together as one, regardless if some spoke English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, there should be no segregation by language," as Bruce put it.

2.1 Montreal and the Transnational Politics of Blackness

Christiane's early life illustrates how being Black in 90s Montreal was fraught with tremendous danger. In later chapters, we look more closely at how she resisted the extreme levels of racial violence she encountered as a young Black woman in Longueuil. For the moment, however, I want to focus on the intimate ways that colorism impacted her sense of self *and* her understanding of antiblackness, while also tying her experiences to the transnational history of French imperialism and slavery. To borrow the words from Haitian anthropologist, Michel-Rolph Trouillot, colorism points to the fact that "if race matters, color matters with race" (cited in Pierre 2013, 118). Thus colorism refers to a global racial and

cultural hierarchy that values proximity to whiteness and therefore formalizes white supremacy. As the epigraph illustrates, her family inherited the issue of colorism from Haiti, a society whose social structure has relied on a centuries-old racial hierarchy first developed by French planters in the seventeenth century. The French colony of Saint-Domingue (now Haïti) remains infamous for the brutality of its plantation slavery system, a brutality that set the stage for the first-ever successful slave rebellion from 1791–1804 (James 2001). Nathalie Batraville, a Black feminist scholar of Haiti, explains that, "the first Haitian constitution states that all Haitians are Black. Period." Yet, despite efforts to combat French imperial thinking, "The social and economic inequalities were already drawn along colour lines, and that structure was indeed replicated for generations" (Personal communication, May 25, 2016). In other words, while the Haitian Revolution led to some significant social and political gains for the formerly-enslaved, they were not able to abolish the racial hierarchy based on skin colour that French colonialism had created. As Trouillot (1990) has argued, many of the former slaves were forced to work in a new plantation system run primarily by light-skinned "mulâtre" who would go on to dominate politics (x). Ostensible differences among Black people have continued to be salient in the Haitian class structure for example and in cultural manifestations. Similar hierarchies, the mark of colorism, have been identified by other scholars around the world (see Fanon 1968; Pierre 2004).

As Christiane's comments suggest, blackness as constructed in 90s Montreal must not *only* be understood as a political identity forged in reaction to public forms of racial violence that afflicted Black people. In her case, blackness is also connected to Black people's experience of racism in the private sphere due to their exposure to colorism among family members. For instance, Christiane was clear in her narrative that colorism in her family served as her introduction to race and antiblackness. Colorism helped her trace back the history and impact of antiblackness and white supremacy. Her family history, which would be similar to thousands of Haitians who migrated to Montreal in the

decades preceding the 90s, provides an intimate account of how blackness in Quebec is grounded in a history that exceeds national boundaries. In fact, the intimacy of antiblackness in Christiane's life speaks to the continued influence of racial hierarchies and racial violence developed by French society at a different time and in another space – a time and space that are nevertheless connected to the place now called Québec.

Christiane's life story teaches us quite a deal about Black girls' and Black women's experiences, as well as the lives we imagine for ourselves and for each other. As I sat with her memories of violence and of resistance, I reflected on how Black women, from childhood to adulthood, must constantly work to find and/or create communities of care and resistance in order to survive the forms of antiblackness that visit our beings. The connection between colorism and blackness might seem opaque at first glance, but in following the path of Black geographies, we are able to clarify their relationship.

Christiane's parents left Haiti for Montreal in 1970. Her father was an agrologist and arrived in the throes of the Quiet Revolution, at a time when white francophone Quebec was recruiting Haitian professionals to help them build and sustain their new French-language institutions. Though her sister was born in Montreal, Christiane was born in Trois-Pistoles, a small town in the far east of the province, where her father was working on a new contract. The family moved back to Montreal when she was about three years old. "It was the first time that I saw Black people, so I had a culture shock," remembers Christiane. "My mother told me that I got so afraid the first time that I saw another Black person, that I started running." This points to how her family was not enough to develop a social reference for blackness on their own. After spending a year or two in Montreal, they moved east to the province of New Brunswick, to Israel, and then to Mauritania for a year, where her father had another new contract. She has very fond memories of her time in Mauritania:

> I was seven years old. The moment we arrived there, I started seeing people who looked like me. I started learning to speak Arabic because it's a Muslim-majority country. We sat on the ground with everyone else to eat couscous. I remember the mosque, though I never went inside. People in our village knew us

> very well. I remember Diallo and Diahara. Diahara showed me a lot of love. He brought me into his family and taught me a lot.

These early childhood memories vividly illustrate how it was partly through Christiane's experience of nurturing relationships in Mauritania that she developed a transnational understanding of blackness. Mauritanians not only "looked like" her, but also "showed [her] a lot of love." In addition to her experiences in Mauritania, Christiane maintained relationships throughout her life with her extended family along the eastern seaboard of the U.S., and back in Haiti, all of which further territorialized her sense of blackness. Her sense of blackness was not bound to Haiti or Haitian-Montreal, but extended across the globe. This sense of blackness helped her to make sense of racial oppression in Québec. Having a broader definition of her identity led her to interrogate the place reserved for her and other Haitians and Black people.

Having experienced a positive relationship to blackness and having belonged to a thriving Black community in Mauritania, Christiane's return to the Montreal suburb of Longueuil was crushing. Back in an environment where her family were the only Black people in the neighbourhood, she had another culture shock. "We started going to school and we didn't understand why people wanted to attack us," she recalls. "We hadn't done anything to them. We didn't understand why they treated us that way." On the first day of school, Christiane and her sister came home crying, their mouths bloodied, hair ties undone, after a group of high school kids beat them up on school grounds. It was the first and last time that their mother put them in a dress to go to school:

> They were 13 or 14-year-old kids from high school. My dad said to my sister: 'Go get me a telephone cord.' My sister went and got it and he beat us up with it. Then he said: 'This is what will happen to you if you don't defend yourself. When someone calls you a nigger, you fight.' So we said, 'Ok.' So from that moment our experience was a bit different. We fought every day. There's a family with which we're still friends to this day. They moved from Rivière-des-Prairies [a borough on the northern cusp of East Montreal] to Longueuil. The white high school kids came to beat up the children, [but] my sister and I found out. We didn't want them to leave school alone so my sister told me where to wait for her. So we defended them. We fought [the white teenagers] for them. We then escorted them home so that they wouldn't be harassed on their way there. That was our life. We fought every day.

As Christiane's reflections demonstrate, Black children, and Black girls especially, learn that the boundaries between public and private, home and the outside world, do not exist when it comes to the violence that can be unleashed on their bodies at any moment. We also see here how the body is the first site where one learns how antiblackness manifests itself, and what it *feels* like (Yancy 2008). Christiane and her sister have to forego their beautiful dresses and adornments to their hair, widely-held symbols of girlhood and childhood, because of the racist attacks that they face at school and on the streets. While those symbols often serve to inculcate Black girls into normative gender codes and roles, in this case we can see how antiblackness itself is gendered. Young Black girls forego aspects of their childhood and "girlhood" in order to protect themselves from antiblackness. Not only did Christiane and her sister return home dejected and defeated after their beating on the first day of school, but their father used violence both as a way to show his power over them (since they would not have been able nor allowed to fight back against him), as well as the power that white society was ready to unleash on them unless they fought back. The constant threat of antiblack violence in a white society and how it lands on the bodies of Black women and girls is something that remained with Christiane afterwards.

Violence, it should be noted, never fully defined her understanding or experience of blackness. Rather, as Nicholas Brady (2015) puts it, violence provides "a structuring condition for Black life" (¶5). From the point of being attacked on the first day of school in Longueuil, what we begin to see throughout Christiane's life is how defending her Black girl self and then her Black woman self was grounded politically and spiritually (as we will see in chapter five). In many ways, violence shaped Christiane's conception of blackness. That said, violence was joined with the positive experiences in Mauritania, for example, in her understanding of blackness. Thus, blackness was something that united her with people around the world in an embrace, as well as something that she was forced to live with

through violence. In any case, organizing in self-defence against antiblack violence is something that Christiane learned at a very young age.

Christiane's childhood experiences in Longueuil introduced her to a different meaning of blackness – not an experience built on forms of connection and love (as in Mauritania), but an ontology of suffering. Christiane's memories of having to defend herself against older white boys occur in a context where language is presumed to be what organizes the city, and popular discourses tell us that as French-speaking immigrants, Haitians are part of the Québécois family. In actuality, race, and antiblackness in particular, organizes the city, and Black people are constantly told and shown that they are "out of place." Indeed, it is no coincidence that older children from another school went out of their way every day to come find her and her sister to assault them. That other children in her school also took part in this violence speaks to how largely it was understood that they too could participate in making sure that Black people in Longueuil "knew their place." White children experience their neighbourhood and their school as a space of ownership and made it known to the Joachim girls. As Christiane explains, the attacks against her and her sister should not be dismissed as "child's play," as school administrators worked against her too.

> I remember that once I beat up this boy really bad. The school principal called my dad. So my dad showed up at school. The principal looked at him as if he had seen the devil. My dad said: 'What's going on?' The principal was trembling, shaking in front of my father. And then the principal said: 'Listen, take a look at the child's face.' The boy's parents were there and they were outraged. My dad refused. He was wearing a three-piece suit. He then looked at me and said: 'Christiane, why did you beat this child?' I said: 'Dad, he called me a nigger!' So, my dad turned around, folded his arms, and said: 'I have no problem with my daughter's behaviour.' He looked at the boy's parents and said: 'Your boy should know what to say and what not to say to my daughter.' So I didn't get suspended. That was it. That was our daily life.

Aimée Meredith Cox has theorized that Black feminism emerges in the lives of Black girls as they move through their daily lives responding to racially and gender-specific challenges on their own and with each other (cited in Moore 2011). Cox (2015) explores this further, drawing our attention to how Black girls are

> constantly reminded where they do and do not belong, how they should and should not be seen, and the consequences for stepping outside of the boundaries meant to define and contain them as poor Black girls. How they experience their lives is thus inherently political, even while their politics are inaccessible in the narratives that situate them in various, often competing, discourses. (5)

Cox helps us to understand that the violence of the antiblack attacks that Christiane survived in her childhood were consequences of her (and her family) having stepped out of the clear racial boundaries in Longueuil and Montreal. That said, Christiane's early forms of resistance express her refusal to accept that blackness could be defined as a constant state of out-of-placeness.

Christiane's childhood stories about physically fighting off much older and larger white boys are important as a way to understand the self-defence movement organized by Black youth in various neighbourhoods only a few short years later. While many of the stories we will examine in the next chapter may suggest that Christiane's efforts at self-defence depended on appealing to her male cousins and male friends, it is clear that Christiane and her sister also took care of themselves as Black girls. Being isolated as the only Black children in their neighbourhood in Longueuil meant that for a long time, Christiane and her sister could only rely on each other for their survival. When, later on, the other Black family arrived from Rivière-des-Prairies, it created a sense of community for them and they were then able to organize collective forms of self-defence. Christiane was clear throughout her interview that at no time during her childhood in Longueuil did any non-Black neighbourhood kids come to their defence. In that sense, the violence could be normalized as quotidian.

Christiane memories of growing up Black in Longueuil so far revealed to us two aspects that defined blackness for her. First, there was the loving sense of blackness that she discovered during her time in Mauritania, then there was the gratuitous violence that marks Black life and did not spare her as a little girl. She would later come to learn about a third aspect of blackness – one that helped her to grapple with the tensions in Black life: organized resistance to antiblackness. Though the year that she spent in Mauritania cemented her ideas of a global blackness, it was during her adolescence that

Christiane realized what being Black in Quebec would mean:

> Once I entered adolescence, there was a moment, I can't tell you exactly when it happened, but there was a shift and I realized what my experience being Black was going to be. So I had two choices: I could either accept that I am Black or hate my skin, my hair, and all that is different about me. I made my choice. I'm Black, I'm proud and that's it. It was about the same time as we were starting to see music videos and they gave us a window on what Black people were going through in the United States.[5] What was clear about their situation is that it wasn't about them being immigrants. They are a people that have been there for generations and they're telling us things that are even worse than what we're going through.

Through her exposure to African-American culture, Christiane accurately discerns the fact that antiblackness does not dissipate with one's immigration status or long-term residence. At the same time, she begins to identify with the struggles faced by African-Americans, furthering her sense of blackness as a transnational experience. What we learn in the complex geographies of blackness from Christiane's reflections is that she begins to conceptualize a Black community that exceeds Montreal, which brings her to see the East and West linguistic divide as superfluous.

Similar reflections on Black geographies emerged from my interview with X Khada Lumumba. For one thing, he explicitly connected his activism in Montreal to the longer history of Black resistance to the violence of slavery in Quebec and Haiti. He put it bluntly: "I'll tell you what Quebec is about: Marie-Joseph Angélique."[6] Angélique was the enslaved Black woman who, after attempting to escape in 1734, was tried, hung publicly, and burned after being found guilty of setting Montreal on fire. For Lumumba, myths about white Quebec innocence serve to keep Black people captive of a political project that is not their own and to punish those who imagine something else for themselves and their

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[5] In the U.S., the first hip hop video aired in 1978 on MTV. In Canada, MuchMusic, the equivalent of MTV, went on the air in 1984. The television show, RapCity (which was similar to its MTV counterpart, RapCity), began several years later on MuchMusic. The francophone equivalent of MuchMusic was Musique Plus. In 1992, Rap-Cité became the first French-language television show in Québec dedicated to hip hop. Also, it was only in 1997 that Black Entertainment Television (BET) started being distributed in Canada.

[6] There is a number of important writings by Black female scholars on the history of antiblack violence and Black resistance during the slavery era in Québec. For an in-depth analysis of the life of enslaved Black people in Montreal and the trial of Marie-Joseph Angélique, see Cooper 2006. For a critique of Canadian and Québécois selective memory and discourses of tolerance through an investigation of slave ads in New France, see Extian-Babiuk 2006. For a Black feminist critical geographical analysis of the continuities between slavery in Montreal and in Jamaica, see Nelson 2016.

community. Lumumba reiterated that being Haitian means that his blackness has been conditioned by a long history of white domination:

> I come from Haiti. We have lived through Napoleon's fist. Every morning I sing my national anthem. To this day, it lives in me. 'Let there be no traitors in our ranks! Let us be masters of our soil.' It is imprinted in me. I know white people because I have suffered them. I know them. Even with their beautiful words, coated with everything we can imagine. No matter how they present themselves to me, I will recognize them.

Lumumba has a global understanding of whiteness, but also recognizes differences in how it is expressed in particular contexts (like Quebec). When I sat with Lumumba at a café on St-Laurent Boulevard – the street that divides the city linguistically – he made sure to tell me that even when in Haiti he was a "Malcolm X," by which he meant an activist fighting against antiblackness. He arrived in Montreal "ready to fight," but he found that racism in Quebec had a mask and a hypocrisy that required a different strategy. "White people here are beautiful and kind," he remarked, "and it is behind that smile that they slice you." For Lumumba, the way that Quebec minimizes the violence it enacts on Black bodies is directly linked to the public discourse about its history of slavery. Indeed, white historians of slavery in Québec, from Marcel Trudel to Frank Mackey, have minimized the violence of slavery in New France, usually through comparing it favourably that of its U.S. neighbours. The irony was not lost on Lumumba, himself a descendant of slaves who laboured under a barbarous French plantation regime: "White Québécois have a way of distancing themselves to deal with issues," he affirmed. In his story-telling manner heavy on imagery, Lumumba compared the Québécois to a winter sun: "It is there, it is beautiful, it is cold, it is cynical. And if you don't dress well enough, it will freeze you. That's how Quebecers are. They're always kind, beautiful, they shine like the sun." But, he concluded with a spirited hand gesture straight to his heart: "Their coldness will strike you from the inside out."

Lumumba demonstrated his point through an example. "I used to work as a driving instructor. I also used my classroom for my activism after working hours. One day, I was watching the Québécoise

secretary who worked there." At this point in his story, Lumumba began to re-enact the scene: "Ring ring!" Now in the voice of the receptionist: "Lauzon Driving School, Good morniiing! I'm doing well, thank you. No problem. The schedule is Friday to Sunday. The cost is 80 dollars." Lumumba returned to his own voice. "Then she hangs up." He paused again, before shifting back to the receptionist's voice: "Fucking immigrant! Goddam it!" He finished the story: "I saw her myself. That's Québec. Welcome! and Eat shit!" This two-faced action, both cold and warm like the winter sun, exemplifies white racism in Quebec for Lumumba.

Lumumba's observations about blackness in Quebec both diverge and dovetail with those of Christiane. Like Christiane, Lumumba sees a positive content to blackness that transcends national boundaries. He identifies with a global history of struggle. When it comes to antiblackness, however, their understandings depart. For Lumumba, Quebec society manages Black people partly by hiding or masking antiblackness, including even in its representation of its own past commitment to slavery. By no stretch of the imagination, in contrast, could we suggest that what Christiane endured was "subtle." Notwithstanding these differences in understanding, there is a common view in Lumumba's and Christiane's reflections of antiblackness as a fact of life in Quebec. It is something, moreover, that is not hidden from Black people in Quebec, since there has never been a time when race or antiblackness did not organize Quebec society. What some may explain as racism becoming "subtle," is actually part of how, through time and space, each society develops its own forms of antiblackness. "Killing gets more efficient, forms of subjection become more sophisticated or stagnate, collapse, only to become fertile soil for another position," explains Nicholas Brady (2015, ¶6). What Lumumba suggests is "subtle" is therefore one way the specter of violence levelled by the state and white citizenry occurs through the mundane. All that to say that violence never truly ceases to be one of the dimensions that defines Black life.

In sum, what Christiane and Lumumba elucidate for us is that people identified as Black due to their felt connection to other Black people, and their experience of antiblack violence. These identifications with blackness, as I show in the next section, are typically foreclosed by white progressives, who are able to recognize, at best, Black people's ethnic identifications.

2.2 On the Ruse of Ethnicity in Québec

During my interview with Lumumba, I floated the common idea in Québec scholarship that blackness was a category that radical Black youth crafted in the 1990s to rationalize their fight against racism. His facial expression betrayed his reaction; he was clearly unimpressed. He explained to me that that type of explanation sounded like one steeped in white authority about Black people's lives.

One of the key strategies in the erasure of antiblackness in Quebec is to use ethnicity, rather than racial identity, in public discourses and related state-based practices. Ethnicity is the lens through which Quebec officially documents, governs, and regulates Black communities. I would contend that ethnicity has been a generative category for the Quebec nation-building project because it allows the French Québécois to emphasize their francophone and Catholic origins as a cultural marker of distinction from dominant Anglo-Saxon norms. In other words, ethnicity, and the associated categories of language and religion, situate French-Québécois national claims as straightforward claims for justice against the historically dominant Anglo-Saxon population in Quebec and Canada. Given this, speaking in terms of race in Quebec undermines the entire basis of Quebecois national aspirations, since it risks situating people of colour as the oppressed population and white people, including French-Québécois people, as the dominant population. It requires, in other words, that the present French-Québécois be recognized as descendants of white slave-holding settlers, complicating, if not undermining, the neat French-English duality that sustains its nationalism. Quebec nationalism, in this case, must evict "race," and especially blackness, from the body politic. "Ethnicity" steps into the void constituted by

this eviction, effecting how both white people and Black people are (mis)recognized in public discourses and state practices.

The "ethnicization" of Black people takes on several features that are unique to Québec. On the one hand, Quebec has long instrumentalized Haitian people as important to their French-speaking national project. Public discourses in Quebec like to highlight that Haiti is the only sovereign francophone nation in the Americas[7] and this is one important way it becomes assumed that Haitians will naturally adhere to, or work for the Quebec national project. One result of this move is to suggest a kind of linguistic kinship between the French-Québécois and Haitians that makes it harder to describe, and fight against, the oppression experienced by Haitians in Quebec. Although some Haitian people have tried to use this discourse to their advantage, the linguistic kinship proffered by the French-Québécois continues to exist in tension with the general Haitian understanding, expressed by Lumumba above, that both Haitians and French-Québécois have occupied radically different geographies within the French Atlantic.

Another effect of the ethnicization of Haitians in Quebec is to separate them from other Black people. In fact, as the single largest national community in Quebec comprised almost exclusively of African-descendant people, "Haitian" is an easily recognizable marker that stands outside "Black," which is most often attributed to English-speaking peoples from the Caribbean. In the scholarly literature, the racial-linguistic term "Black Anglophones" or its apparent synonym "Jamaican" have long stood in opposition to "Haitian" (see Potvin 1991, 1999, 2007a and 2007b). Not surprisingly, in a society that favours French-language cultural practices, when one reads or hears about the "Black problem" in Montreal, it refers most often to English-speaking Caribbean people, whose blackness is

[7] What is often omitted are the efforts to ensure that Creole is integrated into all public and private institutions in Haiti. After living and organizing in Montreal for two decades, an important part of Adeline Magloire Chancy's work once she returned to Haiti has been the valorization of Creole. In 2014, she became one of the founders of the Akademi Kreyol Ayisyen, the country's language regulator for Haitian creole (Mercéus 2014).

never questioned. Such a process is similar to what Jemima Pierre (2004) identifies in the U.S., where "immigrant" peoples of African-descent are juxtaposed to the native Black population, who are inevitably constructed as debased and deviant (partly through their contrast to immigrant Black people). Cox (2015) importantly points out that "race as historically and spatially formed determines who is both deemed valueless and identified as future failure" (69). Indeed, it is important to recognize that in the white Quebec imagination, Anglophone Black communities inhabit a "pre-known space of failure." They are seen as "valueless" and their "failure" lies partly in the fact that they do not fit into the Quebec nationalist project. The existence of Anglophone Black community therefore represents where the Québec-nation project is obstructed, where it has no future.[8]

The supposed distinction between Haitian and Anglophone Black people in Quebec has shaped (and been reinforced by) the existing scholarship on Black activism in the 1990s. In this literature, produced by white scholars in Quebec (Laperrière 1990; Morin 1993; Potvin 1991, 1999 and 2007b), Haitian youth are contrasted specifically to Jamaican youth.[9] Haitians, in this work, are seen as rejecting the benevolence of Quebec society in favour of a Black identity that stems from, and is

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[8] Montreal is among the oldest chapters of the UNIA. Leo W. Bertley's (1980) doctoral dissertation on the history of the Montreal chapter of the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) from 1917 to 1979 offers an in-depth look at the radical politics within the Anglophone Black community in the city. While UNIA chapters elsewhere in the Americas lost their attractiveness after the founder, Marcus Garvey, was imprisoned in 1923, the Montreal chapter gained traction in the 50s and 60s when "integration" became the key word in Canadian and Québécois politics. "[To the integrationists], the UNIA was a black separatist, even racist, organization which was trying to block 'progress' which they were making towards their dream of an integrated colour-blind society" (111). Undoubtedly, for white Québec society, the UNIA presence and work in Montreal has been an illustration that Anglophone Black people embrace a competing nation-building project. Also, in Clifton Ruggles' (1996) collection of essays, we learn that the 90s were also a period of revival for the UNIA in Montreal. In a 1994 piece, right after Marcus Garvey Jr. visited Montreal and spoke to a crowd of almost 200 people, Ruggles write: "In 1982, the city expropriated the UNIA building for urban renewal, leaving the UNIA homeless. Ever-committed to the cause [then president] Henry Langdon pressed the government for compensation and succeeded in 1992 in getting a new home for the UNIA on Notre-Dame Street. With the acquisition of the new building, the UNIA is rapidly getting back on its feet. Right now the upstairs is being used for low-income housing. Various study groups meet there. The UNIA offers a black history course on Wednesday nights. Tap-dance classes are held Wednesdays and Saturdays. First-aid courses were offered last spring and will continue in the fall" (39).

[9] "Jamaican" seems to have become a generic category in the literature that encompasses anglophone Black youth from various parts of the Caribbean. My sense is that it serves as a trope that is meant to signify criminality and violence, though it also raises the specter of rebelling from slavery, and thus, of an uncontrollable blackness. The founding membership of the UNIA in Montreal being largely Caribbean, and Jamaican particularly, I would argue that this also plays into Quebec's perception of Jamaicans in Montreal of a people that actively contests Quebec's nation building project by having its own.

contaminated by, the English language. Maryse Potvin, lauded as a leader of anti-racism studies in Québec, is among those whose work denies Haitians an authentic Black identity, expressing her failure to consider the dual legacies of French imperialism and slavery on encounters between the French Québécois and Haitians. While Black youth activism largely took the form of self-defence in this context, the larger goal of this political work was to bring to life a new cartography of the Black community in Montreal, one that does not depend on the East/West linguistic divide – the division, that is, of the Black population into ethno-linguistic fragments. Because language grounds the Quebec national project, the political vision of Black activists was therefore a refusal to submit to that project. Yet, Potvin (2007a) contends that Haitian youth's turn towards blackness as an identity and a political category was not a rejection of Québec's nationalist aspirations; it arose, rather, from a lack of understanding of the national project. "Their 'refusal' of a sovereign Quebec is more a refusal of their daily experience of exclusion and less a refusal of the 'project' which they do not grasp on many aspects," contends Potvin (14, my translation).

More than just assimilating Haitians to the Quebec nationalist project, Potvin's work reinforces the assumed differences between Haitian and Anglophone Black communities. Her work re-establishes the linguistic and nationalist basis for geographical divisions in the city. Haitians are aligned with the French language and the East side of the city. Others, especially Jamaicans, are aligned with English and the West side. In her most recent research on the topic, Potvin's (2007b) tone betrays her belief that Haitians share very little in common with Black people:

> Their feeling of rejection sometimes brings them to reject their belonging to a 'Québécois identity' and they tend to invent new syncretic models by drawing from diverse cultural elements. For these youth, Black identity allows them to express the impression they have of sharing an 'experience' and a common destiny. This Black identity makes it easier to determine a conflict around which they seek to articulate an identity, an opposition, and a history (168, my translation).

Like this passage, Potvin's broader research on Haitian youth in 90s Montreal refuses to consider that

Haitians in Quebec may indeed share much more in common with Jamaicans, Somalis, and Trinidadians than with the French Québécois. Part of what this body of scholarly work does not consider are the ways in which blackness in Montreal was grounded in both a local *and* transnational history, and specifically, how Black radical political visions carry their own dreams, independent of white society. But, of course, it has always been preferable to white society that Haitians organize on an ethnic basis that separates them from other Black people and aligns them with the Quebec national project.

Undeniably, blackness in Québec, as in the rest of Canada, troubles and contests how the nation defines itself. It is an "absented presence" (Hudson 2014, 235) that forces one to re-examine the two slave-holding white settler societies. The ways in which white Quebec society encounters Black presence as a surprise or explains it as a contemporary phenomenon elides the history of Black life in the country since slavery. In addition, as Walcott (2004) reminds us, Black people in North America have continuously made both space and place their own – in part, through political struggle. "The political identifications of black peoples are crucial and essential to resistance," he writes. "Making outer-national identifications with other Black peoples is important to the kinds of struggles that might be waged within national boundaries" (278). These "outer-national identifications" are key to Black geographies, because, as we will see in the chapters that follow, when Black activists trace and link their experiences and their histories in Quebec to those of the Black Atlantic, it allows them to ground the Quebec Black experience within a global Black history and politics outside the purview of the Quebec state and its white citizens. In other words, activists in 90s Montreal made Black geographies of belonging that reiterated that their blackness exceeded the space of Quebec, and so could not be contained or eliminated by the politics of white society.

But these "outer-national identifications" were not simply about troubling the nation and

transcending national boundaries. They also allowed activists to bridge smaller-scale divisions: those inscribed at the scale of the city that placed Haitians on the East side and Anglophone Black people on the West. Black activism in the 90s, partly through its embrace of Black (rather than ethno-specific) identity, made it possible to redraw and remap the urban landscape "in order to announce and articulate a black presence that signals defiance, survival and renewal" (279). These efforts, occluded by the ethnicizing prerogatives of Potvin and other white scholars, are important. The work of Black youth in Montreal to organize across the language divide – influenced, as they were, by American and African thinkers and revolutionaries, as well as Black organizers in Toronto – point to the many ways in which Black migrant existence reconfigures actual and figurative landscapes. In so doing, this work redraws prevailing boundaries of knowing, experience, and belonging (Walcott 2009, 279). Contrary to conventional scholarly arguments, these identifications had a purpose; they expressed a deep understanding of white Quebec society that Potvin and other scholars could not understand.

It is not surprising that any shared spaces that French-speaking and English-speaking Black people created tended to evoke scrutiny and anxiety on the part of Quebec society. As Walcott (2004) argues, "nation-centred discourse can only prohibit black folks from sharing 'common feeling,' especially when common actions seem to present themselves, time and again, in and across different space/places/nations" (283). When second-generation Haitian youth emphasized their blackness in the 90s and organized with English-speaking Black youth, they moved away from the ethnic category that was forced upon them (and denoted a false belonging) to a category that more faithfully represented their sense of community with other African-descendant peoples. By stepping outside of the dominant geo-linguistic frames, Haitians in fact de-stabilized the Quebec nation-building project and claimed an autonomy/independence that white Quebecois have always wanted to deny them.

Perhaps more subtly, Black activists' refusal of their ethnicization troubled the ethnic basis of

French Quebecois distinction. It positioned the latter within whiteness, and therefore within a broader historical trajectory of European imperialism and slavery. The connections between the French settlers of present-day Quebec and practices of slavery are far from abstract. Many prominent leaders of New France – celebrated in Quebec through countless town, city, street, building, school, or institution names, as well as public monuments and history lessons – also played a role in governing Haiti, the richest slave colony the world had seen, before its revolution (e.g., Chambly, Vaudreuil, Bégon). In many ways, then, we can read Québec's insistence on the formal use of ethnicity to categorize Haitians outside the category of "Black" as evidence of the nation's "refusal to understand blackness as integral to its own constitution" (Walcott 2008, 255). Concretely, present-day Quebec would not exist as it does, and white Quebecois would not possess the privileges that they do, were it not for the historical and ongoing construction of blackness as the marker of an inferior and enslavable population.

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter explored how asserting blackness contests how Quebec organizes its national space through ethnic categorizations. Insisting on a historical and transnational definition of blackness was one important way for Black activists to resist the politics and practice of dividing the Back community on the basis of language. First, Christiane and Lumumba embraced their blackness because it connected them to Black people around the world and in specific places such as Mauritania for Christiane, and Haiti for Lumumba. Crucially, it also described the violence they experienced as Black people. Second, these identifications undercut a Quebec national project based on ethnicity, a project that distinguishes the French-Quebecois from Anglo-Saxons; aligns Haitians with the French-Quebecois; and separates Haitians from other Black people. In the case of Quebec, it is amply clear that disassociating itself from the racial violence at the basis of its origins in the French Atlantic works against Haitian awareness of racial slavery and white terror. Black activists had to overcome disassociations like these; they had to

constitute “outer-national” forms of belonging and struggle that both transcended the boundaries of the Canadian/Quebec nation and bridged the smaller-scale boundaries between francophone East and anglophone West. This overcoming was a large part of the political work that I will now seek to describe.

CHAPTER THREE

Imagining a Black Montreal without the East/West Divide

I remember once when my aunt came to visit us in Longueuil from New York ... We were driving around and got lost. I don't know what my aunt did but the police stopped us. The officer asked her for her driver's licence but she doesn't speak French so she asked me in English, 'What did he say?' 'He wants your driver's licence,' I told her. The man turned around and said to himself in Québécois [French], 'I hate it when Niggers speak in English!' So I said to him [in Québécois French], 'You better fucking listen to me! Niggers speak French too, ok? Shut your mouth!' That was it. He was in shock. 'Ok, it's all good!' he said.

—Christiane Joachim

In the previous chapter, we saw how blackness in Montreal is shaped through a transnational history and diasporic relationships. The expansive geography of Quebec blackness is sustained in the daily lives of Black people through any number of political manifestations. I also spoke in that chapter about the many ways in which the politics of language are used to demarcate the role and place of Black francophones in the Quebec nation-building project. In the epigraph to this chapter, Christiane recounts a vivid memory from her childhood in which she used her ability to speak Québécois French to defend herself and her aunt. What struck me most when she told me this story was that instead of using her knowledge of linguistic and cultural codes to appeal to the police officer, she opted to use them to resist openly his authority. In this sense, her dissent powerfully undoes the assumption in Quebec that Black francophones collaborate more readily with white society and its institutions than Black anglophones.

This chapter addresses how Black activists worked towards reconfiguring the language divide in Montreal by organizing the Black community on different grounds. It is where I attempt to answer my first research question, that is, the strategies that Black radical activists employed to create altogether different geographies. I will particularly focus on the antiblack violence that was prevalent in East Montreal and demonstrate how Black youth organized in defence of themselves and their commu-

nity. The first section considers the East/West linguistic divide and explains some of the specific ways that it organizes how Black people come into community. The second section questions the common idea about East Montreal being naturally a place of belonging for francophone Black people. I argue that the process of blackening East Montreal was fulfilled by and manifest through Black struggle, not ease. The argument that I make here is that the idea that Montreal is segregated by language erases how race spatializes life in Montreal. Because speaking French did not protect Black youth in the East from antiblack violence, nor did speaking English protect Black youth in the West, Black youth clearly and urgently needed to organize and ground their community across the language divide. It is important to give a portrait of where this desire to transform the Black community on new grounds came from, for it will help us, in chapter four analyze the critiques that white anti-racists made, and in chapter fiver, delve into how community building was tied to a practice of Black spirituality.

3.1 What About the Language Divide in Montreal?

Without a doubt, language politics define much of Quebec society – though this was not always the case. The political conflict between the English and French, dating back to at least the sixteenth-century Wars of Religion in Western Europe, crossed the Atlantic and entered the "Americas" with the development of imperialism. Up until the Seven Years War, which culminated in what is commonly understood as the British Conquest in Quebec in 1760, religion rather than language dominated the imperial contest between these competing European societies. From there, language entered into this ongoing conflict, but its importance tended to wax and wane during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It was not until the last half of the twentieth century that the promotion and use of the French language surely became *the* defining political issue in Québec.

Not surprisingly, post-Conquest (post-1760) Montreal was planned in a way that not only favoured the bourgeois English-speaking class, but also reflected the deep divisions between English- and French-speaking peoples. As such, the dominant English-speaking bourgeois class tended to settle in neighbourhoods developed in and around Mont-Royal, the mountain north and west of the original French settlement, now subordinate, along the St. Lawrence River. Thus, the demographics of the city ended up reflecting the linguistic divide in a straightforward East/West demarcation: the English-speaking elite and middle-class to the West of St-Laurent Boulevard, and the French-speaking majority to the East. It was clear to each party that the Western half of the city was the bastion of elite power, where the French language was not welcome.

Yet, both Black life and Black resistance against antiblackness precede the instantiation of the city's linguistic geography; Black people in Quebec have not always been divided by language. It was not uncommon for enslaved Black people in New France to speak two or three languages. Although some of them were brought directly from Africa (Gay 2004, 82), most survived several crossings or journeys, having been enslaved in the Caribbean and/or in the U.S. before being brought into other parts of New France or Montreal directly. A number of enslaved Black men and women, for example, were bought in Saint-Domingue (now Haiti) and brought to Quebec before the Haitian Revolution (Nelson 2004). They often spoke French, English, Portuguese, German, Dutch, and/or a variety of Indigenous languages. These slaves lived in or adjacent to Montreal, wherever their owners willed. The (aborted) slave revolts that occurred from time to time (Gay 2004), moreover, were most likely organized across linguistic differences. Suffice it to say that the differences around language and geography (East versus West) that now exist in the Montreal Black community were created, if not also maintained, by external forces, and that these divisions are certainly not foundational to Black organizing in Montreal.

Although the historical scope of this study covers almost a decade starting in the late eighties, it is crucial to keep the history of slavery in New France in mind in order to recall that Black people's diasporic consciousness in Quebec does not begin with twentieth-century immigration but with slavery. As Lumumba highlighted in the previous chapter, Black political consciousness of Québec's involvement in historical violence in the French Atlantic remains active. Thus, starting with slavery as the point of departure to talk about Black history in Québec, instead of the various waves of migration that began in the 60s, avoids the erasure of violence that Black people lived through in the province and the important teachings that we inherit from their resistance. Historically, neither language nor geographical location spared Black people in New France from the violence they experienced.

Until the 60s, the Black community in Montreal was formed by descendants of formerly enslaved Black people who arrived from Nova Scotia, the United States, and the Caribbean.[10] They resided primarily in the Little Burgundy and Côte-des-Neiges/Notre-Dame-de-Grâce areas (on the West side of the city) before moving to other parts of the West side of Montreal (Williams 1998). Yet, the political events tied to the Quiet Revolution rapidly changed the portrait of the city's Black community.[11] At the time of the Revolution, the Black community of Montreal was mainly English-speaking. The 60s and 70s, however, saw the first two waves of Haitian migration, as middle to upper-class professionals fleeing the autocratic Duvalier regime relocated north. For the most part, as elite members of Haitian society, the earliest migrants spoke a refined French. Meanwhile, over the next twenty years of the political upheaval in Québec, a large portion of anglophone Black Montrealers migrated across the provincial border to Toronto and the southern Ontario region.

[10] For different hypothesis on what may have happened to the descendants of Black people who were enslaved in Quebec, see Black sociologist, Daniel Gay's (2004) important study on the history of Black people in Quebec from 1629 to 1900.
[11] The Quiet Revolution is the process spanning the 60s and 70s during which white French-speaking Québécois sought (and achieved) control over the major economic, social, and political institutions in the province.

The 80s and 90s marked the arrival to Montreal of a much larger contingent of Haitians and French-speaking Africans. These demographic shifts reconfigured the portrait of the city's Black community, and today Black francophones form the bulk of Montreal's Black community. The 1996 Canadian census reported that there were 122,320 Black people living in Montreal, making it the second largest home to Blacks in Canada, and the largest "visible minority" group in Montreal, meaning 3.7% of the city's population (MCESSP, 2001).[12] Almost 75% of Caribbean Blacks in Montreal in 1996 were born in Haiti. More than one in ten Black people in Montreal was born in a francophone African country. It is important to understand these shifts in Montreal's Black community in conjunction with the transformations that have changed Quebec politics, which have meant that English-speaking and French-speaking Black people have played quite different roles in the Quebec national project. The Quiet Revolution utilized Black francophone professional labour, barely recognizing this contribution, but also implemented an assimilationist policy that made it seem like Black francophones had a place at the table. As Batraville so clearly puts it, "this policy meant that Black people's labour had to serve nation building exclusively. It meant that Black people had to forsake everything else, including their own self-protection" (Personal communication, May 25, 2016).

Despite the fact that they follow the general parameters of the demographic information I outline above, participants in this study all challenged the cartography of the city in their activism. When we talked about how the language divide affects the Black community in Montreal, all four participants expressed that it was an issue that they overcame in their personal lives as well as in their political involvement. For Lumumba, in particular, it was clear that while language may have posed obstacles in terms of communication among Black people, it did not however prevent community building and belonging. "It's the system that tries to make language a problem among Black people, but we transcend-

[12] The Montreal Black Communities Demographics Project reported that in 1996, "about 70% of all Blacks in Canada reside in Toronto (47.9%) and Montreal (21.3%)" (MCESSP 2001, 18)

ed that," he told me. Taking himself as an example, he pointed out how those who spoke English and French became social and political conduits for anglophone and francophone Black folks. As he put it:

> In my case, what happened is that one of my brothers used to live in Jamaica. My [other] brother also lived in Jamaica for a while. So when they arrived in Montreal, they were already bilingual and always found themselves among anglophone Black folks. Building bridges came easily to them. Moreover, every time we got together, we would tell each other what was going on so I felt that we always knew what was happening throughout the community.

Lumumba's testimony highlights three important facts. First, the fact that Black people have constantly had to move on a global scale means that they have also developed tools and an ability to create networks and communities that are outside of their initial circle. Hence, this desire and capacity to build across imposed geographies does not stop once in Montreal. Second, there has long been a pull in Montreal between francophone and anglophone Black folks to know each other, share space, and develop meaningful relationships. Third, even when language posed a concrete barrier, this pull meant that people used their creativity and networks to remain connected; in Lumumba's case, his brothers became the link between two communities.

Space and time shared between francophone and anglophone Black people solidified participants' sense of themselves and of community. Christiane remembers the impact that attending a CÉGEP that had Black students from different neighborhoods in Montreal had on her after high school.[13] Prior to that, she was unable to attend one of the many English-language high schools with large Black student populations because Bill 101, which became law in 1977, made it mandatory for children to attend French-language schools (unless one of their parents attended an English-language school). This law meant that francophone Black children whose parents immigrated to Quebec in the 60s or afterwards had to attend French-language schools, while anglophone Black children who had a longer history in Quebec or in the rest of Canada most likely attended English-language schools. How-

[13] A system specific to Quebec, CÉGEP is the first level of higher education in Quebec. It is referred to as a "General and Vocational College."

ever, since Bill 101 does not apply to post-secondary institutions, students are able to attend college or university in the language of their choice.

Since Christiane had done all of her previous studies in French-language schools that were entirely white (except for her and her sister), her determined switch to an English-language CÉGEP was her first experience of truly being in community with other Black people in her adulthood. Finding and building community became an integral goal of her developing political awakening:

> I went to CÉGEP Champlain [in Longueuil], it was right next to my high school. It was really something. There were Black people from everywhere! There were anglophone Blacks, Haitians … It was 1993, right after [a number of] Black youth had been shot in nightclubs. One was killed at Thunder Dome and it was totally gratuitous. They could've controlled the situation without shooting him to death.[14] So by attending an English-language CÉGEP, I got introduced to a whole new community: the anglophone Black community … So I get introduced to a new community but I also start learning about Black people from Montreal-North and St-Michel [in the francophone East]. I met new people. Before then, the only time I went to Montreal-North was to church with my mom. I learned about all of our struggles with poverty, crime. All I had known until then was white racism. Now I was in an environment where there were a lot of Black people and I was like, 'finally, people like me!'

Reflecting on these experiences nearly thirty years later, Christiane still seems gleeful when she thinks of those years. Her relief and enthusiasm betrays her previous experience that mirrored the politics of language in Montreal, which divided the Black community in ways that limited – but never fully determined – spaces of social and political interaction.

3.2 East Montreal: On Belonging and Containment

3.2.1 Longueuil: Telling Black Women's Spatial Stories

The idea that francophone Black people belong in the East is not inherent to the space itself, nor does Black presence go uncontested by white Québécois. On the contrary, belonging is something with which Black people anywhere in Montreal continuously have to struggle. Yet, the narrative about Mon-

[14] On April 9, 1990, at the Thunder Dome dance club, three white police officers, Sergeant Daniel Pellerin, Constable Daniel Rousseau, and Lieutenant Jean Chatigny, shot eight times at Presley Leslie, twice from a distance of less than 15 centimetres. Four other Black men were also injured and two Black women suffered from gun-powder burns to the face (Poirier 1990).

treal being divided in a francophone East and an anglophone West assumes that white and Black people occupy those parts of the city in the same way. Put differently, if francophone white people can live anywhere in the East, and anglophone white people can live anywhere in the West, Black people can occupy the same linguistic geography. As a matter of fact, when we take stock of the events that occurred in the period under study, what stands out is how Black people's presence *everywhere in the city* was violently contested. Although this study focuses primarily on antiblack incidents in East Montreal, the police killings of Marcellus François, Anthony Griffin, Osmond Seymore Fletcher, Trevor Kelley as well as numerous attacks against Black people in the boroughs of Côte-des-Neiges/Notre-Dame-de-Grâce and Little Burgundy in the West during the same period, confirm that anglophone Black people also faced persistent antiblack violence.[15] The longstanding history of Black radical activism in the West undoubtedly accounts for the many ways in which the anglophone Black community has had to mobilize and "organize for their life," to borrow the words of Black feminist poet Lucille Clifton.

Because political biographies are also "spatial stories" (Isoke 2013), Christiane's story of growing up in Longueuil, a francophone/East suburb on the south shore of Montreal, maps a different set of meanings, norms, and values than those that are commonly told about the southeast in particular and East Montreal in general. Along with her older sister and her mother, she lived in a small apartment. They lived in a relatively poor neighbourhood after her father had left and decided to block her mother's access to their bank accounts, something that was still legal at the time. "It was the 80s," Christiane remembers, "and my mother was in total need so she went on social assistance." Christiane and her sis-

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[15] On November 14, 1991, Police cornered and shot 26-year-old Osmond Seymore Fletcher at an intersection in the heart of Little Burgundy, a working-class neighborhood on the west side of Montreal with a large Black population. The police first claimed that it was a suicide. Philip Thomas witnessed the scene and stated that the officers jumped Fletcher. "After they caught him, they jumped him. I saw a policeman hit him with a staff," said Thomas, clearly shaken by what he had seen. (Canadian Press 1991a)
On January 1, 1993white police officer Richard Massé shot and killed Trevor Kelly in his apartment building in Cote-des-Neiges. Kelly was a 43-year-old Black man living with a mental handicap (Ruggles 1996).

ter went to the neighborhood school. She candidly remembers antiblackness being part of the mundane during her childhood:

> My school was in St-Lambert, on Stephens Road, next to Durocher College, which is the one that most people know of. I had to take the bus to Longueuil Metro [a subway station], and from there I had to take another bus to get home. At Longueuil Metro, no matter how cold it would get outside, the best thing to do was to stay outside and wait at the bus stop. That's because there were always groups of Black youth and groups of skinheads inside. You didn't want to find yourself in that mix. I was a little girl with a school girl's uniform made in crémaline. I wore big glasses, and my hair was braided and tied up. I was a nerd and I didn't want to get involved in things like that. The Black boys didn't know me because I never used to go out. Whenever I went out, it was always with my sister. I lived a very controlled life. So what eventually happened is that a skinhead started following me because he knew that I didn't live too far. He took the same bus as I did. So he would watch me the whole way, wanting to intimidate me. Back in those days, it was a normal experience as a little girl. In a working-class neighbourhood where there are only white people, people called you a nigger when you walked down the street. Even if you didn't bother anyone, you would simply be walking and people would throw things at you. They didn't want to serve you at the corner store, they followed you around in stores thinking that you're about to steal. There comes a time in your life, during your youth, when you start putting together all those experience and then realize what being Black is and what your life will be.

These mundane acts of antiblack violence were an important part of Christiane's childhood and an important, though under-recognized, marker of Black life in Montreal in general. Black women and girls in 90s Montreal developed different strategies to be able to move through the city for otherwise simple tasks such as grocery shopping and going to school and/or to work. Black feminist thinker, Carmel-Antoine Bessard, lived in several neighbourhoods in East and West Montreal during her teenage years and remembers how in the 90s, she shaved her hair, wore baseball caps, and tried to "act like a guy" as a way to protect herself. Her father had also advised her not to wear red in order to avoid bringing attention to herself (Personal communication, April 10, 2016). Clearly, Black women experience Montreal radically different from white women. These accounts speak to how Black women understood that Montreal was both raced and gendered, and that it required them to constantly be aware of their surroundings and the threat of racial *and* sexual violence. Saidiya Hartman (1997) writes that everyday forms of antiblackness have not gotten the same attention as shocking and spectacularized forms of

violence against Black people.[16] This is a problem for it requires violence against Black bodies to always be intense or intensify in order for it to be recognized and this is a trap because violence on Black bodies is never intense enough for Black people to be justified in defending themselves or organizing against it. As we will see in chapter, regardless of the police killings and the daily racist attacks that Black women, men, and children endured, white anti-racists still condemned Black youth for defending themselves and each other against such attacks. Mundane violence against Black people is also crucial to pay attention to because it reveals just how much every aspect of society is structured on anti-Black violence.

As Christiane recalls, there were very few Black people living in Longueuil until the late 80s. It was at this point that a number of Haitian families, seeing an increase in violence and police surveillance in Montreal-North and St-Michel, began leaving and moving to Longueuil. Christiane had cousins who moved to Longueuil as part of that same movement of Black people within the East. Indeed, those who moved to Longueuil from Montreal-North or St-Michel mostly did so because they had a family member who already lived in the area. Christiane vividly remembers when there were so few Black people in Longueuil that they usually all knew each other or went out of their way to meet: "There used to be a time when you could be standing at a bus stop and if a Black person saw you they would go out of their way just to come talk to you and ask 'what's your family name, do I know your family?' And that's because they were the only ones in Longueuil, or at least they thought so."

Despite the increasing number of Black people in Longueuil, everyday forms of antiblackness were on the rise as the 80s came to an end. Neo-nazi skinheads, Ku Klux Klan members, and other

[16] As Nopper and Kaba (2014) astutely pointed out, "Hartman's emphasis on the terror of the mundane and quotidian is her attempt to address the dilemma of black people having their suffering (un)seen and (un)heard by non-blacks – including those who purport to care" (¶8).

white supremacists[17] terrorized Black people throughout the 80s and 90s.[18] In response, Christiane and other Black youth, including some of her family members, eventually organized to defend themselves and assert their belonging to that place. The scale of the violence was partially captured in 1994, for example, when the Montreal police recorded 143 attacks by white racists between January and August alone (see Peritz 1994).[19] As Christiane explained, the reality of living under constant threat made organizing that much more urgent:

> What happened is that in the environment of the time, it became necessary for Black youth to start forming groups in Longueuil. There were skinheads so when I came out of school at the end of the day, there would be skinheads following me. So I would ask myself, 'Do I get off at my usual bus stop? Because if I do, he will know where I live and it won't just be me that is in danger, but my sister and my mother.'

Acts of violence like this were not particular to Longueuil. Greg discussed the situation in Montreal-North, a neighbourhood where the majority of Haitians resided. Though he could not recall if skinheads were formally organized at the time, he did remember seeing some who wandered into his neighborhood and others who were "undercover" and were looking to cause harm. At times, Greg also travelled with his friends to other boroughs in the East such as Anjou, Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, and Ville-Marie in defence of Black youth who were being threatened by skinheads there.

As Christiane explained, the possibilities for self-defence were aided by intra-city migration. Specifically, Black people moving into formerly all-white neighborhoods (like Longueuil) provided some security to the few Black residents who were increasingly being intimidated or attacked by organized white racists. This sense of security was indeed gendered, as young Black men usually took it upon themselves to organize in self-defence of their community. Christiane recalled several instances

[17] While the KKK is U.S. based, it had chapters in Montreal, where several other white supremacist groups were formed in Montreal in the 80s and 90s, such as Aryan Resistance (Baker 1994).
[18] A 1989 Klanwatch Project report holds Skinheads to be the most violent group of white supremacists seen in a quarter century (Klanwatch 1989).
[19] If we pause for a moment on that number – 143 – we realize how, as I pointed out in the introduction, one cannot truly measure or quantify violence against Black people. Quantifying violence offers the illusion that there is a number at which we can arrive where Black life, and Black death, begin to matter.

where being able to count on the young Black men who had recently moved to Longueuil with their families saved her from violent attacks, including a harrowing account of attempted rape:

> The friends I had were the ones I made at school. For many years, my sister and I were the only Black students at our high school, especially because it was a private school. So my friends were white. There was a skinhead that used to follow me. I had a cousin who didn't live too far from us and he was a bit 'thugish,' to use stereotypical language. He knew all those Black guys that I used to see at Longueuil Metro. So what happened once is that my best friend, Marie-Claude, invited me to a house party … She had a boyfriend at the time, a hockey player. She insisted that I go with her: 'C'mon Christiane, I want you to come with me.' I didn't want to because I didn't like beer. Us Black folks, we will dance, we will party, but we're not into just sitting down and drinking. But still, I went. The house party was at her friend's place, but all I told my mom is that I was going to sleep over at Marie-Claude's. She agreed to it because Marie-Claude's mother was also a single mom, so she knew that there wouldn't be anyone else there. So I went to the party.
> What I didn't know was that [the white boys there] had decided that they were going to get themselves a black girl. At a certain point during the party, I asked if I could use the bathroom. Instead of telling me to use the one upstairs, a guy tells me to go to the basement. So I went to the bathroom that was downstairs. When I came out, they were waiting for me. One of them said: "Aaah! I was told that you Black girls are hot down there!" Seriously, Délice, I used to go out with my sister, I had had beer before, but I really had no idea what he was talking about. I had no idea whatsoever. So then a white guy held the door and another held me still. I struggled and resisted like you have no idea. I was 15 years old. I tried to fight them off and they kept slapping me. Meanwhile, when Marie-Claude realized that several of the white boys had disappeared, she came downstairs and heard me screaming. She yelled at them: 'I'm gonna call the police, let her go!' That's how I got away. When I got outside, my clothes were torn, and I had scratches and bruises everywhere. I couldn't go to Marie-Claude's place looking like that and I couldn't go home either because my mom would've punished me for going behind her back. So I decided to go find my cousin. I told him what happened and he called his friends. He asked me if I would be able to find the house and I said yes. His sister handed me clothes to wear and we went back to the house with my cousin and his friends. When we got to the house, my cousin and his friends got into a big fight with the white guys, and I waited in the car. Had these young Black men not come to defend me, it would've been a free-for-all after that. So that moment exemplified how our community was starting to get together. Soon after, more Black people started moving to the South Shore.

The protection that white femininity conferred to her friend Marie-France did not carry on to Christiane. So even if one would argue that the language divide in Montreal means that francophone white and Black folks develop intimate relationships, they still do not cancel out how these relationships are raced. If anything, antiblackness is gendered in a way that violence on the bodies of Black women manifests itself even more in the "private sphere." Additionally, the violence experienced by Christiane fits into a broader pattern. As Joy James astutely points out, sexual violence against Black women is not only about white power manifesting itself in very particular ways on Black women and Black girls'

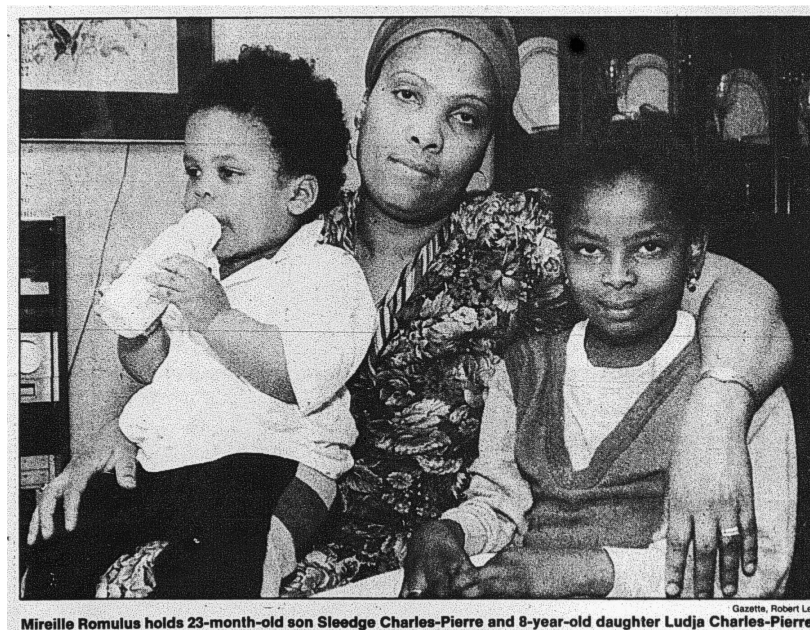
bodies; it is also about the provision of a particular form of enjoyment: a form of sexualized racist violence that is "normative as entertainment" (cited in Yancy 2014). More specifically, it is part of the "libidinal economy; for some, Black suffering is enjoyable as spectacle" (¶22). It is important to keep that in mind as we consider both the actions of the individuals who attacked Christiane in that basement, as well as the individuals who were there helping them and holding her back. There was, for all parties involved, a collective enjoyment in a Black girl's suffering.

As I was going through my archive, I found a clear void around the specific violence that Black women and girls faced. And yet, photographs taken at rallies and demonstrations show large numbers of Black women and often even elderly Black women. A question that these images elicit is: What brought these women to the rallies? Clearly, on some level they were also making a case about their own experiences of antiblack violence. As a further demonstration of Black women's activism in this period, Bruce recalls that AKAX received funding from "the Black lesbian women's group at Concordia." Black women radical organizing is not new in, nor unique to, Montreal, yet the kinds of stories told in the mainstream media focus almost exclusively on the violence against the Black male body and emphasize Black male activists as well. Black women and girls then appear in these stories either as witnesses, or as grieving mothers or widows. Either way, the violence that Black women experience, as in the case of Christiane, is almost always imagined as the result of violence against Black men and Black boys. This way of erasing the specificity of violence against Black women and Black girls ultimately supposes that they do not live under a constant threat of harm. Calling this supposition into question, Jennifer Nash (2016) urges us to "critically interrogate a pervasive racialized iconography where Black women are represented as witnesses of violence and Black men are represented as victims of violence, where Black women raise the dead and Black men are the dead" (752). Attending to the violence experienced by Christiane takes up Nash's call for action.

Christiane's constant encounters with white skinheads were part of a broader attack on Black life in 90s Montreal. Public transportation was one important site of such attacks. The first publicly recorded attack occurred in 1988 outside the Longueuil subway station. On August 4, 1988, a skinhead attacked a Black youth in the parking area of the station. When a transit officer came to intervene, the skinhead slashed him in the leg and escaped. In an interview about the attack, the Montreal Urban Community Transit Corporation's communications director Hubert Sacy attributed these attacks to the fact that 25 percent of metro travellers are "visible minorities whose different patterns of cultural behaviour could lead to misunderstandings" (Kuitenbrouwer 1988). The views of the Transit Corporation seem to have been shared by transit drivers. An editorial a few years later in a Montreal weekly, *Photo-Police,* explained that public transit drivers "bend over backwards not to be assigned bus routes that serve Black communities" (La Direction 1992, 2, my translation). Responsibility for this attitude, according to *Photo-Police*, lay with Black people themselves: "When white citizens no longer dare to go to *La Ronde* [amusement park] by taking the subway, afraid of the violence between rivals, it means that it's time to change things." While it is unclear what they mean by "rivals," their casual expression of antiblackness in the story leaves little doubt that it involved Black youth. As Christiane explained previously, antiblack racism was a Longueuil reality in the 80s when there were only a few Black families living there, and into the 90s when more Black people decided to make that Montreal suburb their home. It was clear from the actions of countless white residents that Longueuil was not a place for Black people. Africa, and not Longueuil, is where Mireille Romulus was told she belonged. Africa is not only an elsewhere but also an out-of-sight. This process of carefully placing Black people out of sight is part a way of "landscaping blackness out of the nation" (McKittrick 2006, 96).

In 1988, Mireille Romulus was attacked by two police officers in her apartment in Longueuil and illustrates what it meant to be a single Black mother with young children in a primarily all-white

setting. It highlights how futile it is to speak in terms of private versus public space for state-based antiblack violence does not make those distinctions. Mireille Romulus was also a friend of Christiane's mother. Christiane remembers Romulus's children fondly, and also about how often her own mother talked with Romulus and other Black women friends about how the police had attacked Romulus. Without a doubt, Romulus's experience illustrated to Black women how living in East Montreal was a raced and gendered experience.


Gazette, Robert Lee
Mireille Romulus holds 23-month-old son Sleedge Charles-Pierre and 8-year-old daughter Ludja Charles-Pierre.

Mireille Romulus and her two young children.
Source: Norris 1988.

On May 17, 1988, white bailiff Claude Forget, his locksmith, and two white police officers – one male and one female – busted into the Longueuil apartment of Mireille Romulus, a Haitian-born mother of two, on the pretext that her sister had an unpaid bill for $425 at the Simpson's department store. After handcuffing her, the white male police officer choked her on the kitchen floor, then kicked and slapped her. Romulus then ran to the balcony to show neighbours that she had been handcuffed and shouted for help. The same officer knocked her on the floor and continued to beat her. Romulus's 8-

year-old daughter, Ludja, witnessed the scene, as did her 23-month-old son, Sleedge. The children reported being traumatised by the ordeal and remembered hearing the male officer calling their mother a "dirty nigger," telling her to "go back to Africa" (*Montreal Gazette* 1988). Speaking with journalists, Romulus' lawyer explained that she was so distraught the day after the incident that she couldn't speak and was afraid of being home alone. It turned out that Romulus's sister was no longer living at that address *and* that Romulus had obtained a court order two years' prior releasing her from a previous seizure for the same debt. The type of police violence that Romulus experienced was fairly commonplace in Montreal in the 80s and 90s. This type of antiblackness, premised on a geographical vision of Montreal as not Black, and on Black Quebec as a "lived unvisibility" (McKittrick 2006, 96) clearly contradicts the common narrative about francophone Black folks belonging to the East on the basis of language, as promoted by most liberal Quebec nationalists.

3.2.2 Hochelaga-Maisonneuve and the Geography of Whiteness.

Other attacks on Black life occurred elsewhere. The summer of 1991 is mainly associated with the police shooting of Marcellus François. A 24 year-old native of St. Lucia and father of two who was shot in the forehead by a police officer in the financial district of Montreal and died two weeks later in the hospital. In a taped conversation played at the coroner's inquest into François's death, we hear a member of the Montreal police surveillance squad involved in François's murder say in French, "As soon as we see the niggers get out (of the car) we'll set ourselves up so we can call the [squad] cars and hit them as quickly as possible" (Canadian Press 1991b). The fact that the police repeatedly referred to him and other passengers who were with him in the car as "niggers" was to many in the Black community a clear indication that they planned on apprehending them with excessive force and violence *because* they were Black. News reports revealed that "the 117 transcribed pages of conversation played in

the courtroom contained about 12 pejorative words – including ‘tam-tam’ – used to describe blacks” (Ibid). As we will see in chapter 5, Marcellus François’s death accelerated Black youth organizing across the city, providing a major impetus for the formation of AKAX.

While the police killing of François attracted the greatest public attention at this time, the summer of 1991 also saw Black people facing down the threat of white terror across the city. White people in the neighbourhood of Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, directly across the St. Lawrence from Longueuil, put the few Black people who lived in the borough on notice. In their official report of racism in Québec, Marie McAndrew and Maryse Potvin (1996) contend that the neighbourhood’s location as a hub in the public transit system explains the high number of incidents between groups of white youth and Black youth. However, McAndrew and Potvin discount the historical and racial significance of Hochelaga-Maisonneuve in white Québécois lore – the reason, perhaps, that white skinsheads felt justified to “defend” the neighbourhood. The authors also ignore the dozens of news reports of antiblackness in the borough that occurred somewhere other than at a transit station.

HoMa, as it is now often called, is home to the Olympic Stadium (built for the 1976 Olympics), and is known today as an almost all-white working-class neighbourhood in East Montreal that holds special significance to the social history of francophone white Quebecers.[20] For instance, Hochelaga-Maisonneuve has been described as “pure Balconville, the mythical francophone, working-class, closely-knit community where the heartbeat of Quebec resides, and which is paid due homage by the province's playwrights and intellectuals” (Mason Lee and Drolet 1991). Indeed, even as Hochelaga-Maisonneuve is home to francophone whites living in poverty, the white intelligentsia and art scene

[20] Due to the gentrification of Hochelaga-Maisonneuve new residents use the name “HoMa” as a way to erase the working-class history of the neighbourhood. “When new people move into the neighbourhood, they find it a little dirty, a little gross … Hochelaga – it’s bikers, prostitutes, drugs, crime. So they say ‘We’re going to change that to HoMa because it sounds more like SoHo. It’s in,” said Jonathan Aspireault-Massé, a housing and tenants’ rights activist in the borough (Vendeville 2014).

have made it a site of national identification and pride, the site that tells the “rags-to-riches” story of francophone Québec.

Given these affective associations with white national identity, it is perhaps no surprise that Black residents of the neighbourhood faced regular attacks. On July 4, 1991, a gang of white youth gathered around a basement apartment where a group of Somali refugees lived in a four-storey apartment block at 4460 Ontario Street East, throwing rocks and bottles (Semenak 1991a). Windows were smashed and another Black man’s car was set on fire. As it escalated, police say that a crowd of about 400 white people formed a melee (Contenta 1991). The “Black refugees,” as they were referred to in some of the news reports, were taken to a police station “for their own protection” and were escorted to a safe house outside the neighborhood afterwards (Contenta 1991). As the police took them away with their pillows and sheets, furnishings, and garbage bags full of clothes (Semenak 1991b), the white crowd chanted “White power! White power!” (Contenta 1991). Only a few days prior, former professional hockey player with the Toronto Maple Leafs and Montreal Canadiens, John Kordic, even joined the fray armed with a baseball bat and chased four Black kids from that same apartment building. Kordic told reporters that the young Black men had moved there several weeks beforehand and had been “harassing neighbours with their loud music and late-night street dancing” (Semenak 1991c).

For white residents, defending Hochelaga-Maisonneuve was also about protecting white women. Indeed, Kordic professed that Black youth “would yell sexual threats at the [white] girls when they walked by with their boyfriends” (Semenak 1991b). It turned out that the car that was set on fire, moreover, belonged to a young white woman who lived with a Black man in the same apartment building and who happened to be friends with the Somalis (Mason Lee and Drolet 1991). On the day of the racial attacks, that Black man and his white girlfriend had avoided the crowd by running from their apartment into a waiting police car (Semenak 1991a). The protection of white women as a motivator

for antiblack violence is a well-documented phenomenon that goes back to the slavery era. Indeed, writing about Ida B. Wells' anti-lynching campaigns in postbellum America, Joy James (1996) highlights how in 1895, Wells had figured out that white men are both prosecutors and executioners, as well as perpetrators of sexual violence (133). White violence in the name of white women's honour is in direct correlation with the idea that Black women are inherently promiscuous and therefore unrapeable (134). This is why these accounts of violent attacks in Hochelaga-Maisonneuve must be read jointly with the sexualized attack at a party that Christiane survived.

The Black residents of "HoMa" were clearly seen as out of place, a "foreign" presence. The eviction of Black residents from Hochelaga-Maisonneuve is a geographical example of domination. It is about spatializing difference and "plac[ing] the world within an ideological order, unevenly" (McKittrick 2006, xv). For example, when the five Somali men were being escorted out of their Hochelaga-Maisonneuve home by the police, a white man and his mother yelled in French out of their kitchen window: "Go back to Haiti." Another white resident told the media that, "All they ever did was play their music and speak some bamboo language" (Semenak 1991c), before adding that, "I wish I'd have been here yesterday to come down myself and beat the shit out of them" (Semenak 1991b). Other residents, clad in their shorts and housecoats, yelled from their balcony, "Leave, you damned niggers!" (Semenak 1991d). News reports reveal that white onlookers "drank beer and Pepsi and spat at two police cruisers full of Ethiopian, Somalian and Jamaican-born men."

A police lieutenant, Pierre Gervais, told *The Montreal Gazette* that the outbreak of racial attacks in the summer of 1991 was the first one that he could recall in Hochelaga-Maisonneuve. "This hasn't happened here before – maybe because there are fewer blacks here than in other areas" (Semenak 1991a), he said. The belief that Hochelaga-Maisonneuve had never had a Black presence works if one conveniently erases the history of slavery in Montreal. Black people were held captive in small num-

bers across Montreal for over a century. White residents did not try to get rid of them back then. On the contrary, owning a Black domestic slave was a sign of wealth and prestige. In the contemporary period, Black people establishing a home in Hochelaga-Maisonneuve and expressing themselves and their joy were clear signs of a free Black subjecthood. It seems that white residents of Hochelaga-Maisonneuve and other predominantly white neighbourhoods in Montreal reacted violently to the expression or possibility of Black freedom. Such a reaction, Tiffany King (2016) reminds us, is part of a broader pattern. Because modes of captivity and violence against Black bodies are always expanding and unfolding, she argues, Black people's desire for and definition and enactment of freedom is also always expanding and unfolding as well.

Violence against Black residents of Hochelaga-Maisonneuve exceeded the summer of 1991. On January 18, 1992, two leaders of the KKK in Montreal, along with another KKK member and 36 skinheads, were caught with Molotov cocktails trying to set fire to an apartment on Cuvilier street where Black people lived (Trottier 1992). They apparently suspected some of the residents of the apartment of beating two young skinheads the previous month. Police officers, it was later revealed, had earlier that day decided to discretely follow about thirty young skinheads that had gathered at L'Assomption subway station. Two hours later, they saw the three KKK members leave a bag on Cuvilier street containing three Molotov cocktails, a can of gasoline, and several knives. The group of skinheads who were now at the Préfontaine subway station, went to Cuvilier street and picked up the package.

A *La Presse* article on the Cuvilier street matter, though condemning the police for denying the racial motivation behind the planned attack, also blames the event on Black youth who apparently beat up some young skinheads. "By the way, about ten young Black men beat up two skinheads on December 15," the article explains. "One of them had to be hospitalized after getting hit on the forehead with a bat" (Trottier 1992). That quotation makes a plain symmetry between white racist attacks and Black

self-defence, despite the fact that the skinheads' very existence revolved around promoting and practicing physical violence in order to maintain their kind of (white) order in Quebec society. Nevertheless, the suspected Black youth are placed in the same category as extreme white supremacist groups. Their efforts to defend themselves from attacks are given no credence. Meanwhile, the *Journal de Montreal*, the highest-circulating French-language daily in North America, went as far as to report that the Black youth perhaps wrongly assumed that the white young men were skinheads simply because they wore Doc Martens boots (Doucet 1992). Not surprisingly, the mainstream, francophone press effectively suggested that Black youth might have been targeting white people indiscriminately or without sound judgement. This trope of Black youth attacking white people in the East with no valid cause not only downplayed the real violence that targeted Black people, but also served to invalidate Black political organizing.

3.2.3 "Push Her! Push Her!:" Displacing Black Women from Montreal

Beyond "HoMa" and Longueuil, white racial terror prevailed in other east-side neighbourhoods as well. On the afternoon of December 13, 1993, Sandra Clervil, a 19-year-old Black girl of Haitian origins, took the #18 bus at the intersection of St-Michel and Beaubien to return home after school. Two skinheads were sitting in the same bus and started monitoring her (Cédilot 1994). When the bus arrived at the Beaubien subway station, Clervil went inside and the skinheads followed her. While she was waiting on the platform, two white women screamed, "Push her! Push her! Black people are evil!" and the two men pushed Sandra Clervil towards the tracks (Hétu 1993a). Her attackers then ran away. Luckily, she did not fall onto the tracks, but found herself lying on the platform with her legs dangling

over the precipice, right above the tracks (Hétu 1993a). Another Black woman present at the same time yelled “Murder!” and helped Clervil back onto the platform.[21]

There were about twenty people who were in the bus with Clervil and her assailants; none of them came forth to the police to help identify the two skinheads. Meanwhile, those who were at the subway station and did talk with the police did not corroborate Clervil’s version of events (Hétu 1993b). In an interview with the *La Presse*, Sandra Clervil explained: “I’m not saying that all Canadians are racists, but I can tell you that I will never take the subway again. I am even afraid of taking the bus” (Hétu 1993a). When Clervil's story broke in the news, Éric Faustin, director of the Bureau de la communauté chrétienne des Haïtiens de Montréal, urged Black people to be prudent in their movement through the city. Black people were vulnerable, his remarks suggested, not just in their homes, but also in public in neighbourhoods like Longueuil or HoMa, and in their movements between neighbourhoods. The East, his comments suggest, needed to be regarded as an unsafe geography.

Although Christiane’s experience in her late teens suggests that protection followed a hetero-patriarchal model, Black women did create and strengthen their own Black feminist communal strategies of self-defence. For instance, on September 21, 1991, AKAX organizer Amuna Baraka and four friends visiting from Toronto, including 21-year-olds Akhajie Worrell and Tereska Nurse, boarded a bus in Old-Montreal. As they boarded the bus, the driver swore at them in French, calling them “Niggers.” Although they did not understand what he said, they recognized the word “nègres” by his tone. “I said, ‘don’t you be talking to me that way. I paid my fare’,” Baraka said. “Then I sat down. I stuck my tongue out at him. I saw him looking at me in his mirror. That’s why I did it” (Lalonde 1991). The driver then stopped the bus and disembarked. At first, Baraka thought he was going on his break, but

[21] I first learned of Clervil’s story from my uncle Lama. He told me that her story remains what he remembers most about the years he spent in Montreal. My mother explained to me that whenever she visits family in Montreal, she still to this day takes the subway fearing that white people may push her onto the train tracks.

ten minutes later, twelve police officers arrived at the scene in a van and several cars (Kendall 1991). When the police told the Black women to get off the bus, Worrell and Nurse refused to do so until they received their transfer tickets since they had already paid their fare. Police first arrested Nurse. “They threw her against the bus, wrenched her arms behind her back and handcuffed her,” said Worrell, who followed the police as they took her friend (Kendall 1991). Baraka reported that police eventually forced Worrell to the ground, handcuffed her and took both Worrell and Nurse to the station. The two were detained for more than five hours during which Nurse was strip-searched (Kendall 1991).

The police’s violent treatment of Worrell and Nurse is yet another example of how antiblack violence is not simply a response to what Black people actually do. The story of Amuna Baraka, Akhajie Worrell, and Tereska Nurse being publicly humiliated and mistreated by the bus driver and the police illustrates how Black women get erased in Montreal and are made visible through and for the spectacle of violence. In other words, we see in their case how a Montreal street and bus were used as open spaces to publicly exhibit and perform violence against Black women’s bodies. That Baraka, Worrell, and Nurse travelled in a group manifests a way of being in Montreal that defies the dominant geography, which required young Black women to go unseen or risk racist and/or sexualized attack. Although Black girls and women advised each other to avoid travelling alone, Baraka, Worrell, and Nurse were together not only for security reasons, but also to map themselves onto Montreal, and insist on making visible a new Black geography. For example, when Baraka talked back to the bus driver, demanding that he speak to them with respect and when she stuck out her tongue at him in the mirror, her actions made it clear that she had no intention of allowing him, and white society in general, to impose on her how to be in a space that they insist is and should remain white.

3.2.4 Reflecting on gendered and sexualized antiblackness

Reflecting on the period of the early 1990s, Christiane remembers how Black people and Black women in particular started moving more carefully around the city and taking certain precautions on public transportation. Word quickly got around in the community that the subway had become unsafe, so Black girls started organizing forms of accompaniment. Decades later, a sense of danger continues to shape how she uses the subway:

> Even today, when I take the subway, I make sure that my back is always against the wall until the train arrives. I had forgotten where that habit came from! So yes, we all became more and more careful. We stood far from the tracks. We tried not to go out alone. We went out during daytime. We avoided being out at night. When we did go out at night, we made sure to be accompanied by many guys. It was about being protected by a group effect. When there's a group of Black people somewhere, white people become more afraid so that protected us. I always hung out with several guys from the basketball team. My sister had moved to Ottawa for her studies and it was a totally different situation there. So I lived alone with my mother and she would always tell me 'Be careful, be careful!' We always looked around us. In the subway we chose our seat carefully to make sure that we couldn't be stuck or cornered. You grow up with that, always aware of what can happen. It made us always on edge. That's how it was.

Christiane reveals to us how antiblack violence also serves to discipline Black bodies in their movement in an antiblack world. The discipline that Christiane embodied speaks to how permanent the terror of antiblack violence can be. This constant terror manifests itself in the most mundane acts, such as where one sits in the subway. The mundane reminds us of the gratuitous violence that is at the center of antiblackness: violence can be unleashed at any moment. Antiblack violence neither has a reason nor a justification. As Christiane illustrates, the violence of the mundane lands on Black women and girls in particular ways, causes physical stress, and requires of that they/we move through space in a specifically organized manner.

These examples suggest how vulnerable Black life in Montreal was in the 90s. Threats to Black life ranged from institutionalized police terror to organized white supremacist terror. They also ranged from organizing attacks on Black individuals (as in KKK or skinhead actions) to encouraging violence against them (as in the two white women who encouraged Clervil's attackers) to preventing Black

members of the community from accessing formal justice (as in the white witnesses who refused to identify her attackers). These threats, moreover, were geographically widespread. While this section has focused exclusively on the east side of the city – the place where francophones were imagined to be "at home" – attacks occurred on the west side as well. One of the major takeaways from my analysis here is that language – in this case, the ability to speak proper, Québécois French – did not offer protection to Black residents of the East side, who were often terrorized by gangs of white supremacists or the police. In fact, Black people's experiences were overdetermined by antiblackness, a phenomenon largely ignored by all segments of white Quebec society. White police/racial terror spread across the supposed divisions of East and West, francophone and Anglophone. So too, in the end, did Black political organizing.

3.3 From Self-Defence to Malcolm X: Antiblack Islamophobia in a Period of Black Organizing

3.3.1 The "Malcolm X de Longueuil:" When Black Self-Defence is Prohibited

An incredible array of radical Black individuals and organizations emerged in 90s Montreal with the aim of fighting back against antiblackness. At times, these groups were organized much as conventional organizations in civil society, while at other times – as in the case of Christiane's early experiences in Longueuil – these efforts were a form of self-defence. Before long, Black youth organizing their self-defence became a public worry for school officials and Longueuil police.[22] As the media equated Black youth fighting off skinheads to the violence that white supremacists inflicted on the Black community, school administrations defined Black students organizing in self-defence as gang activity. For

[22] Former running back for the Carolina Panthers of the National Football League (NFL), Tshimanga Biakabutuka, a native of the Democratic Republic of Congo, immigrated to Longueuil with his family in 1980 when he was 6 years old. In an interview about his rise as a NFL player, Biakabutuka remembered growing up in Longueuil and having to defend himself against white racial violence at his high school: "I went to a predominantly white school, because I'd been in a lot of fights at the previous school. And I came in looking like a rebel, sporting my colours: Malcolm X T-shirts, a jacket with Black Power on it. It was just that period of time when there was a lot of racial tension going around. There were fights in the subway and at school. So I ended up there, and we had five black guys against a bunch of skinheads." (Feschuk 1999)

example, in 1989, a fight broke out at Gérard Filion High School in Longueuil and two white boys were injured. School officials and the police identified "the Fresh" as a gang that was responsible for the violence. A student at the school, Nathalie Lefebvre, was 14 years old at the time and associated with "the Fresh." She wore Adidas sneakers, jogging pants, and a satin sports jacket, which the media identified as the gang's uniform (Kuitenbrouwer 1989a). "The Fresh aren't dangerous," Lefevbre said in an interview. "The fight was not the Fresh's fault." She then explained that "she's a Fresh because she likes New York rap music and hates skinheads" (Kuitenbrouwer 1989a).

Confirming the misrecognition of Black activism in the 90s, Christiane remembers how Black youth who organized to provide safety to community members were then identified as gang members:

> I remember that there were attacks by skinheads in subway stations and we always heard about it. That's when Black girls started being accompanied. The media didn't talk about it that much, so it was really through the community that we knew what was happening. It's easy for people now to talk negatively about so-called street gangs. Those gangs were formed for a reason though. It wasn't to sell drugs but to give us some protection.

The term "gang" was evidently used to speak of groups of young people whose sartorial expression and musical preference was associated with Black youth culture. Antiblackness registers Black self-defence as violence and as a threat to the white social order on those grounds. It must be stamped out.

The context of Black self-defence is likely where the term "Malcolm X de Longueuil" originates. Both Lumumba and Bruce told me that they have never heard Black youth refer to such a group. Even Christiane who lived in Longueuil until the end of the 90s, and Greg, who himself organized against skinheads in East Montreal, knew nothing about the so-called "Malcolm X de Longueuil" so liberally identified as a threat in white Leftist circles at the time. In a 1996 official report for the Minister of Immigration and Cultural Communities, Marie McAndrew and Maryse Potvin, two of the most-respected white scholars of racism in Québec, quoted Alain Dufour, president of the Montreal chapter of the World Anti-Fascist League (LAM), as saying:

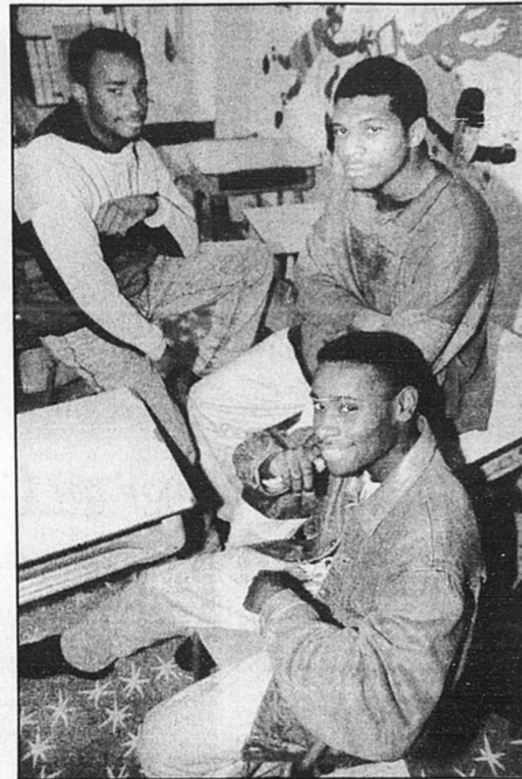
> The Malcolm X de Longueuil, for example, they're not a baseball team. They are racists, 'Black supremacists.' The Black community must denounce them ... Even if racism by the majority is different from racism by minorities, and even if the former is a manifestation of xenophobia and the latter a reaction from being frustrated about being rejected and ghettoized. (McAndrew and Potvin 1996, 47, my translation)

The same perspective was advanced by Maryse Potvin. In a later article, Potvin (1997) seems to support LAM's dubious claims when she refers to the so-called "Malcolm X of Longueuil" as a "self-defence group," in scare quotes, a subtle jab at their legitimacy (91, my translation).

Interestingly, in LAM's report on "the Malcolm X Movement among Black youth," the only evidence that they marshal for the existence of such an organized group is an article in the *Journal de Montréal* about a skinhead who was attacked at a music store in downtown Montreal. On May 7, 1992, a Black teenager allegedly stabbed a skinhead, and his white girlfriend later told reporters that there were "seven boys and three girls in the store when they saw twenty Black boys, some Malcolm Xs from Longueuil, Black supremacists" (*Journal de Montréal* 1992, my translation) enter the store and insult them. To be clear, it appears that the popular idea that Black youth in Longueuil had formed a gang called "Malcolm X" originated with skinheads, and the media, LAM, and white scholars later promoted it *en masse*.

Later that same year, a special series in *La Presse* (November 19, 1992) was published on the day following the release of the biopic film on Malcolm X. It included several articles, among which one on Malcolm X's biography, another on his global influence, and an analysis coinciding with the premiere of Spike Lee's biopic in Montreal. One of the articles included an interview at L'Ouverture, a youth centre in Montreal-North where a large number of Haitian youth hung out. The group of Black youth who were interviewed had converted to Orthodox Islam and spoke at length about what Malcolm X represented to them. It was through the discovery of this newspaper article that I later connected with Greg, one of the four young men who had taken part in that interview.

Greg told me that even though he was twenty years old at the time of the interview with *La Presse,* he remembered that period of his life like it was yesterday, since it left a permanent imprint. He came to Islam through one of his friends who was very active in the Montreal hip hop scene. It was from there that he began reading a lot about Malcolm X and different Black nationalist movements. “We were a group of about 20 guys from L’Ouverture,” Greg explained, “and what we were learning corresponded with our experience [in Montreal].” Eventually, the entire group of friends converted to Islam, but when one of their teachers at the local mosque spoke of Islam as Arab people’s religion, Greg and his friends started to question their place in the faith. After some soul-searching, they decided to look into Black-centered religious traditions. Part of their research focused on the Nation of Islam (NOI) and as the NOI was increasing its popularity among Black youth in Montreal, they all decided to join the group. By doing so, they became its core in the East, since up until then NOI had exclusively been based in the English-speaking west of the city. Their dedicated involvement in the NOI pushed against the East/West divide, breaking down barriers that until then had contained them in Montreal-North.



The photo caption reads: "At L'Ouverture, Gregory, James and Maxime, at the forefront, do not discuss Islam because this youth centre does not support Malcolm X's popularity and is strictly secular" (Bisson 1992).

As they became known in the community for their knowledge of Islam, Black history, and Black politics, other Black youth in the East would often invite them to debates and public discussions and came to rely on them when they were being attacked by white racists. In this sense, their group represented a crucial link in the developing Black geographies of the city, one that brought together teachings about Islam in Africa, African American culture, and the NOI in order to build an expansive notion of blackness. They named themselves the "X Clan." "We really were young wolves," remembers

Greg, “we were like a group of Robin Hoods and we were ready to go into any situation to right the wrong.”

Some of the participants in Potvin’s research on Haitian youth and blackness at the time were also part of the X Clan. They talked at length about how their group was instrumental in strengthening a Black sense of consciousness and developing strategies to defend themselves and their communities against attacks from white supremacists. 19-year-old “M.,” for instance, told Potvin (1999):

> If they come and get me to fight the skins, ok, but not to go and provoke someone, or to go rob houses or a corner store. It’s the same if someone beats up my little sister. I’m not going if it’s not worth it. I’m not going to risk my future if there’s no injustice ... If you stop me from living, you’re going to take a beating ... to deliver us from Evil, even Jesus went to the cross, there had to be blood, there always has to be bloodshed to make things better. If you are a people and you feel oppressed, you’re not going to present yourself to the person and turn the other cheek, you’re going to defend yourself. No question about it. There’s a rapper who talks a lot about Islam ... if, as he says, the negative comes with a 33, the positive must come with a 45, if the negative comes with a 45, etc. It’s a metaphorical way of putting things. If the negative is strong, you have to be stronger than it is. If you’re weaker, you can’t talk with him about negative things. (64)

Another one of the young Black men that Potvin (1997) interviewed between 1992 and 1993, this time an 18-year-old identified as “J.-S.” said that, “There's no need to wait for a hero, each one of us has to become a hero. We should all become Malcolm X, wherever we are. One may be a little Malcolm X, but in the end, when it’s all taken together, it’ll have the effect of a big Malcolm X” (91, my translation).[23] What is unique about Greg’s group was how they worked to create and maintain very precise pathways from orthodox Islam to the Nation of Islam as well as through the roots and routes of Montreal blackness. It is therefore disappointing to see how “J.-S.” and “M.’s” ideas about their political embodiment became an example of Black youth forming “gangs” in Potvin’s research. While it was confusing at first read, it does make perfect sense according to the logics of antiblackness; if the *need* to organize is not recognized, the act of organizing is rendered senseless and even hostile.

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[23] I translated the excerpt from the original article in French instead of using the English-language version of Potvin’s article because of the subtle differences between the two. I translated from French myself.

It is noteworthy that I started this research wanting to find out more about the "Malcolm X of Longueuil" and although I eventually had to stop what turned out to be a wild goose chase, it became clear that Black youth who had become (re)introduced to the ideas of Malcolm X or Islam (orthodox or not) had substantially renegotiated the dominant urban geography, providing glimpses of possible Black geographies. That the "Malcolm X of Longueuil" is a group that may never have existed, but became a fixation among white anti-racists and racists alike, points to the anxiety that radical Black activists caused when they were associated with Black Muslim figures. We can see how, during that period, anti-Black Islamophobia was about managing Black radical activists regardless of whether they were Muslim or not, as their assumed proximity to Islam signalled a blackness that had exceed the limits of the tolerable in the nation.

3.3.2 The Ministry of Security for Black People in Canada

While francophone Black youth organizing against attacks by skinheads was condemned, white Québec's fears increased as Black Muslim groups started to appear on the scene. Shola Paul Martinet, a 27-year-old who goes by the name of Shola Islam, organized a 30–man security team from Montreal out of the Black House, a group established in 1991 in Montreal that supported Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam (Norris 1993a).[24] They provided their security services at the high-profile memorial church service for Marcellus François – the 24-year-old father of two murdered by Montreal police – that attracted scores of outraged Black Montrealers (Norris 1993b). In a show of masculine bravado, speaking with journalists at the end of François's memorial service in the west end borough of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, Shola Islam described himself as the "minister of security for black people in Canada"

[24] One of my sources who knew Shola Islam and frequented the Black House at the time, told me that one reason why Shola Islam never joined the NOI was most likely due to the fact that he had issues submitting to NOI authority and structure.

while wrapping his arm around François's mother shoulders. He later told journalists that the shooting was further proof that Black people in Canada needed an independent state and our own police force (Norris 1993b). Islam's security team was later hired to work for the 1993 edition of Carifête, the largest Caribbean-themed festival in Quebec.

It is significant that Shola Islam and the Black House are consistently identified in the media and in white Leftists' various reports, as *the* example *par excellence* of how Black youth in Montreal turn to violence and chaos once they convert to or get closer to Islam (the religion). For instance, *The Montreal Gazette* ran a story about how Johnny François, Marcellus François' younger brother, "joined Martinet's black-nationalist organization" after Marcellus was shot, presenting radical Black organizing as a form of unreasonable retaliation against white society (Norris 1993b). Journalist Alexander Norris refers to the NOI as "the so-called Nation of Islam," openly demonstrating white society's disdain with the organization's opposition to white domination. As such, Black people's identification with Islam is considered suspicious, if not fraudulent.

Following what seems to have been a spectacular show by Shola Islam's security team at François's memorial service, *The Gazette* published a week later the little information that it had been able to gather about the Black House. The article reports that their members wear Black shades and sports jackets and that their goal is to "free black people from the psychological, political and economic shackles left by the legacy of slavery and oppression" (Norris 1993c). At the time, they had an office located on the second floor of a small brick building on Wiseman Avenue in Parc Extension, a poor neighbourhood on the west side of the city close to the St. Laurent divide. They sold a variety of books and recordings about Black politics, Black history, Black religious and spiritual practices, as well as material from the Nation of Islam. Members of the Black House also described themselves as followers of Louis Farrakhan, a connection brought to light in every subsequent news article about the group.

While located on the West side of the city, Black House is an example of how Black activists pushed against the dominant linguistic geography of the city. According to one of my sources, the founder of the group, Shola Islam, is a Nigerian man who brought together Black people from across the city. The location of Black House's headquarters on the northern end of the central St. Laurent corridor, closer than nearly any other West side neighbourhood to the French-speaking, Haitian neighbourhood of Montreal-North, was no coincidence: Black House existed in part to reimagine the Black geography of Montreal. The opportunity to appear at François' memorial service, held at the west end's most iconic Black institution – Union United Church, the oldest Black congregation in Canada, founded in 1907 – further confirmed the rejection of the externally-imposed language divide. Not surprisingly, Black House had few supporters outside of the Black community. Though, even within the Black community, its overt reliance on hetero-patriarchal modes of organizing made it unappealing to many.[25]

What seemed most out of line to mainstream media in English and French was that the group excluded white people. This exclusion was used as proof that they were unlike "real" Muslim people who actually welcomed "people of all colours."[26] When asked about these so-called "open practices of racial discrimination," and specifically why white journalists were not allowed inside their headquarters, a Black House member identified as Donny Five-X explained that "black people feel uncomforta-

[25] There were also some/sometimes gendered (masculinist) assumptions about politics expressed by my male interview subjects, and that were also present in the archives that I found in other Black groups active in Montreal at the time. Masculinity is an invisible category that universalizes the Black experience, whereas gender is never a marginal category for Black women. That is a topic that I will expand on in future my future writings on the topic of Black radical activism in 90s Montreal.

[26] The Montreal chapter of the NOI actually did have non-Black members who were very active in the 90s. Then-national assistant of the Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan, Khalid Muhamad came to Montreal to give a talk at Concordia University on May 3, 1993. His teachings had gained popularity in Montreal through video appearances with hip hop stars such as Ice Cube, Public Enemy, and Sister Souljah. The title of Muhamad's talk was: "Malcolm X: The Man, His Mentor, His Message, His Meaning, His Murder, and the Movie." In rare footage of the event, we see Khalid Muhamad giving his speech with two people standing with him on the stage for security. Shola Islam is the man on his right, and on his left is Brother Michael, a young Filipino man who was very active in the Montreal NOI chapter at the time. See Muhamad 1993.

ble with expressing themselves completely when the oppressor is in the room. We have been made, over 400 years of slavery, to fear the white man" (Norris 1993c). Similarly, when asked about the "exclusionary nature" of the Black House, Johnny François replied: "We're not against anybody, we're just trying to fight for black people" (Norris 1993c). This centering of Black life and agency is consistent with a long-running strain of Black struggle in the Americas. And yet, the legitimacy of this politics proved hard for the white media to recognize. Media in Quebec tends to ridicule Black organizing that does not explicitly align with the nation-building project of white Québec.

Indeed, the police killings of Anthony Griffin and Marcellus François seem to have generated a white panic around Black youth and their conversion or connection to Islam. When white police office Allan Gosset shot and killed 21-year-old Anthony Griffin on November 11, 1987, it was yet another reminder of the constant threat of violence Black people in Montreal live under. Not only did an all-white jury acquit Constable Gosset of manslaughter, but on July 24, 1989 a Quebec Labor Department arbitrator ordered that he be reinstated. The possibility that Gossett could be working on the streets of Montreal again deeply upset and troubled the Black community. In the afternoon of August 28, 1989, a group called "Black Muslim Youth" sent a letter to three Montreal newspapers – *Journal de Montréal,* the *Montreal Gazette*, and the *Montreal Daily News* – with a warning that Allan Gossett would be killed if he is reinstated (Auger 1989). The authors of the letter said that they were associated with the Fruit of Islam. In their news report, the *Journal de Montréal* said that the "document also contained statements that were of religious nature" without specifying what that even means or citing excerpts to give an example. The Fruit of Islam is the male security wing of the Nation of Islam. The fact that the article mentions that it is the first time they hear about the Fruit of Islam demonstrates how little the media knew about or looked into the NOI before publishing information pertaining to the group. There was no subsequent news coverage of the incident nor did any other news outlet follow-up on that story.

If these "Black Muslim Youth" had posed a serious threat, one would imagine that there would have been more information disseminated in the public. Instead what we continue to see both in the media and material produced by white anti-racists is a growing anti-Black Islamophobic discourse aimed at disparaging all forms of Black radical organizing.

On May 10, 1993, when Sergeant Michel Tremblay testified at Quebec Police Ethics Committee hearing on the shooting François, about six young Black men sat among the crowd. Quickly identified as "Black Muslims," the media described them as "silent, wearing impenetrable black shades, and well dressed." That said, it remains unclear whether or not the young men were Muslim Black youth, or Black Muslims from the Nation of Islam, or had their own group called "Black Muslims." The lack of clarity created confusion, perhaps even purposely, about who those Black youth were and what the mission of their group was. The fact that we do not learn the names of those who apparently gestured towards Tremblay helps paint the whole group with the same brush stroke. Any young Black man "nicely dressed" and wearing dark shades can therefore easily be associated with a group only known as "Black Muslims." Tremblay complained that at some point during the day, either in the hallway or the bathroom, one of the Black youth pointed a finger at him and said "Tremblay boy, watch out!" Another young Black man allegedly took several pictures of Tremblay. When the media reported the story, they referred to the Black youth present at the hearing as "Muslim" in quotation marks, and much emphasis was put on the fact that journalists had not been able to find out what their names were and which group they were really affiliated too. The reporting of the incident helped build the case that Black youth were using Islam as a cover to plan violent outbreaks.

3.3.3 "Also Known as X:" Bridging the Linguistic Divide

Regardless of the tactics employed by various Black Muslim groups, what Black youth across the spectrum could agree on was that it was time for them to organize collectively, from East to West, against antiblack violence in Montreal. Eager to get the community working on a unified political agenda, Black youth set out to form an organization that would have that as its primary mission. AKAX, which stands for "Also Known as X," was formed in the Fall of 1989 through an effort on the part of Black students attending Concordia and McGill universities to bridge the gap between the various Black student organizations, which rarely worked together, and create a link with CÉGEP students so that they may have successful role models and/or mentors to emulate. As Lois Martineau, social and cultural affairs coordinator of AKAX and a founding member explained: "We realized there were a number of issues affecting youth in the community outside the campus, and we didn't feel that there were any community organizations really addressing them" (Bloomfield 1993). Eventually, AKAX made a conscious decision to go outside the Ivory Tower and out into the community. "[Black leaders] were trying to compromise too much with government and other institutions. We said, enough of that. We need action and positive results," explained Martineau in an interview (Bloomfield 1993). Their approach was criticized by some people, and labels such as "radical" and "militant" were liberally thrown in their direction as a way to stigmatize their work. Still their 250 members were neither intimidated nor insulted.

AKAX articulated a Black identity that sought to challenge the prevailing geographical divisions in Montreal. An article by Chantal Thomas, in the February 1993 edition of *Images*[27], explained the origins and goals of AKAX:

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[27] Several Black publications emerged in the period of the 1990s in Montreal, including *Images*. These publications became yet another space for Black radical activists to not only talk about their ideas and their work, but also paint the picture, through poetry and visual art for example, of what they imagined for their community. Black culture in Montreal was very much part of Black activism during that pe-

> AKAX, an organization whose operations were at one time centred around Concordia's downtown campus, is an example of a youth group that draws upon people and resources from across the Black community spectrum. University students, professionals, the unemployed and others, all of varying age, nationality and residential area, work side-by-side in an organization whose guiding philosophy is Afrocentric (emphasizing the centrality of African history and culture to the identity of Black people). The group's key goals are carried out through programs like the Weekend School, offering courses in French, English and Swahili, and events like last spring's 'East-West Conference,' focused on building stronger ties between anglophone and francophone members of Montreal's Black population ... In any case, we seem to be witnessing a gradual meltdown of divisions amongst Black youth as they struggle to define what it means to be African Canadian.

Clearly, the new portrait of Montreal's Black community combined with the sharpness of antiblack violence acted as an impetus for Black youth to organize across the language divide at the dawn of the last decade of the twentieth century. Bruce Small, who was involved in the work of AKAX from its very inception, also emphasized the group's efforts to bridge the East/West divide. "There was a divide-and-conquer and we were trying to bridge that gap," he recalls. Doing this work was enabled by the boundary-crossing lives of group members and the group as a whole. "I'm half Haitian so I'm part East and part West," he remembers. "[And] many students [who were members] lived in the East and many in the West."

AKAX organized an impressive array of community-based activities over its brief history. One of its initiatives was a weekend school program called "Educate to Liberate" for students in grades six to eleven that had three separate sessions during 1992–93. Parents were encouraged to attend bimonthly workshops on topics related to their child's education (e.g., "understanding the Canadian public school system") and were required to volunteer their time at the school. One of the stated objectives of the program was to "promote cultural awareness through the teaching of Afrikan and Afrikan-Canadian history." A unifying thread between the weekend school, and AKAX's other educational activities such as panel presentation and discussion groups was how teaching and discussing Black history was intended to awaken a collective consciousness that would help Black people in Montreal focus

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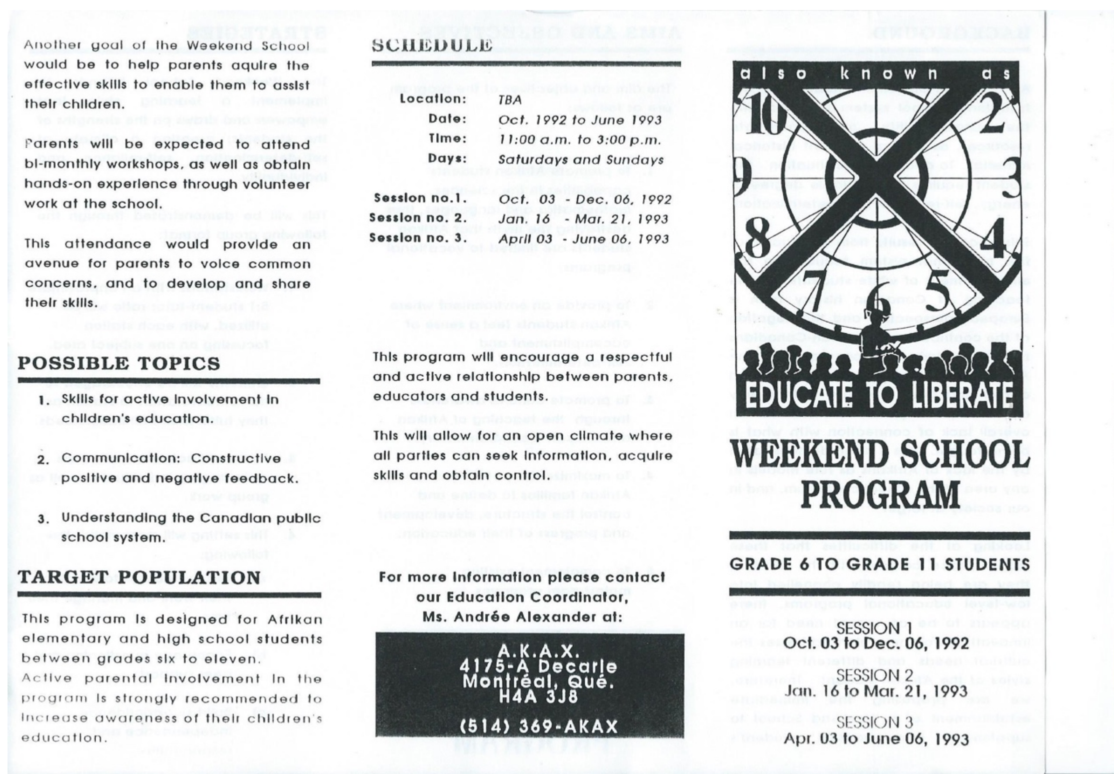
riod and today's Montreal hip hop scene is, in many ways, a legacy from Black radical youth of that time.

more on their common history. Creating spaces in Montreal to teach, share, and discuss Black history counteracted the social, political, and intellectual effects of being taught a Quebec national history that erases, contradicts, or superimposes itself on Black history. In addition to their work with youth, AKAX also organized three annual East-West conferences in an explicit attempt to practice new Black geographies. Anthony Bansfield (1992) wrote an article in the June-July 1992 edition of the bilingual magazine *Images* covering the East-West Conference. In it, we learn that the conference had a line-up of powerful guest speakers, a spacious locale, and even funding from the Ministry of Multiculturalism. On the Sunday morning breakfast panel, a central topic of discussion was that “people of African descent across the globe are still fighting the English-French ‘100 years’ war. They have come to be divided along lines that are European-oriented and of detriment to their fundamental interests.”



Another goal of the Weekend School would be to help parents aquire the effective skills to enable them to assist their children.

Parents will be expected to attend bi-monthly workshops, as well as obtain hands-on experience through volunteer work at the school.

This attendance would provide an avenue for parents to voice common concerns, and to develop and share their skills.

POSSIBLE TOPICS

1. Skills for active involvement in children's education.
2. Communication: Constructive positive and negative feedback.
3. Understanding the Canadian public school system.

TARGET POPULATION

This program is designed for Afrikan elementary and high school students between grades six to eleven.
Active parental involvement in the program is strongly recommended to increase awareness of their children's education.

SCHEDULE

Location: *TBA*
Date: *Oct. 1992 to June 1993*
Time: *11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.*
Days: *Saturdays and Sundays*

Session no.1. *Oct. 03 - Dec. 06, 1992*
Session no. 2. *Jan. 16 - Mar. 21, 1993*
Session no. 3. *April 03 - June 06, 1993*

This program will encourage a respectful and active relationship between parents, educators and students.
This will allow for an open climate where all parties can seek information, acquire skills and obtain control.

For more information please contact our Education Coordinator, Ms. Andrée Alexander at:

A.K.A.X.
4175-A Decarle
Montréal, Qué.
H4A 3J8
(514) 369-AKAX

also known as

EDUCATE TO LIBERATE

WEEKEND SCHOOL PROGRAM

GRADE 6 TO GRADE 11 STUDENTS

SESSION 1
Oct. 03 to Dec. 06, 1992
SESSION 2
Jan. 16 to Mar. 21, 1993
SESSION 3
Apr. 03 to June 06, 1993

BACKGROUND

An Afrikan-Canadian student in the traditional school system is faced with the unavailability of appropriate resources, as well as relevant historical material. To deal with this situation, the student requires a formidable degree of energy, self-reliance, and determination.

This necessity results from the fact that the traditional system focuses on the empowerment of white students (ie. the teaching of Canadian history from a European perspective and the negation of the contributions of Afrikan-Canadians to this country). As a consequence, the Afrikan student must combat a profound covert and overt message of inferiority and incapability, in addition to an overall lack of connection with what is being taught. This is often demonstrated by the lack of Afrikans as role models in any area of the school curriculum, and in our society at large.

Looking at the difficulties that these students face, coupled with the fact that they are being readily chanelled into low-level educational programs, there appears to be an urgent need for an innovative program which addresses the cultural needs and different learning styles of the Afrikan student. Therefore, we are proposing the immediate establishment of a Weekend School to supplement and address student's

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim and objectives of the program are as follows:

1. To promote Afrikan students' capabilities in the sciences, mathematics and languages, thus destroying the myth that Afrikan students are limited to vocational programs.
2. To provide an environment where Afrikan students feel a sense of accomplishment and self-determination.
3. To promote cultural awareness through the teaching of Afrikan and Afrikan-Canadian history.
4. To maximize the potential of Afrikan families to define and control the structure, development and progress of their education.
5. To complement existing mainstream programs.

A.K.A.X.
WEEKEND SCHOOL
PROGRAM

STRATEGIES

The Weekend School intends to implement a learning style that empowers and draws on the strengths of the students; creating a climate of self-determination, self-reliance and individuality.

This will be demonstrated through the following group format:

1. Workstations with an approximate 5:1 student-tutor ratio will be utilized, with each station focussing on one subject area.
2. Students will be encouraged to move from station to station as they fulfill their individual needs.
3. Tutors will act as coordinators encouraging individual as well as group work.
4. This setting will accomplish the following:
   a) Teach students to structure their work and manage their time.
   b) Encourage questioning and peer support.
   c) Build self-confidence, independence and responsibility

Program for AKAX's weekend school program, held in 1992 and 1993. (Uchenna Edeh's files)

Another crucial point was raised in the morning workshop by long-time community activist Keder Hypolite. He observed that in the past, efforts to bridge the English-French cultural, political, and linguistic gaps within Montreal's Black community had often

been obstructed by anglophone Black leaders' frequent tendency to set the agenda unilaterally and then invite Haitian community representatives to the table. During discussion, it was also suggested that the anglophone Black community's hostility towards the French language and, consequently, their inability to communicate with francophone Blacks, was largely due to the association made between French and institutional (i.e., the police, landlords, transportation authority) racism. Bansfield claimed:

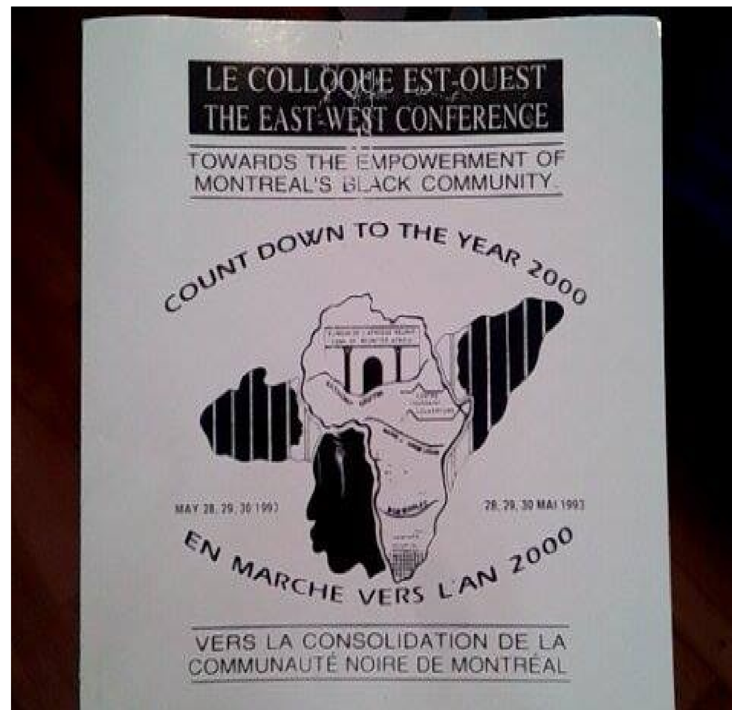
> Overall, the Conference provided a framework for future collaboration between anglophone and francophone Blacks. They enthusiastically took into their own hands the task of translating for those who needed it, and made every effort possible to communicate with others whose mother tongue was not their own. Participants from the francophone 'East' exchanged phone numbers with those from the anglophone 'West,' and [each] vowed to learn each other's language.

In another testament to its efforts to reimagine Black Montreal, one of the questions on the French-language evaluation questionnaire included in the East/West conference package was: "Have you learned anything during the conference regarding East/West relations in the Black community?"

Observing the history of AKAX's East-West Conferences, community historian, Samah Affan noted that the event attested to the wholeness people find in returning to family and/or community: "We are whole together – when you see each other as one community, your knowledge and abilities are shared, as is your wealth and therefore responsibility to one another" (personal communication, April 9, 2016). She finds it ironic that the Quebec nation-building project is rooted in the opposite sentiment for Black people. For her, that project can be summarized as white Quebecers saying to Black people that, "you should imitate us and be grateful for whatever we give you; and if we can't subjugate you, neither of us are whole."

Part of AKAX's refusal to be captive of the Quebec nation-building project is reflected in how they imagined Black Montreal as part of an expanded Black geography. The 1993 conference, for instance, had as its title, "The East-West Conference. Countdown to the year 2000: Towards the Empowerment of Montreal's Black Community." It was a three-day bilingual event held in the spring, after the university year was complete. The promotional flyer was printed in black and white and at the center of the flyer was an image of a map of Africa superimposed on a map of Montreal. The map of Montreal had bars going through it with two Black people behind them. At the forefront of that image was a Black figure next to the map of Africa. The borders and places within the map of Africa were given the names of Anthony Griffin, Marie-J. Angélique, Bob Marley, Centre Toussaint Louverture, Sankara

Hospital, and Bank of Reunited Africa. In this sense, AKAX mapped its own geographic vision of Black Montreal.



Poster of AKAX's second annual East-West Conference held May 28 to the 30, 1993. (Uchenna Edeh's files)

On the cover is a map where Black people occupy all of Montreal and are not confined to a few neighborhoods. The illustration features Black people on the East, West, and South of Montreal and in the middle is a map of Africa. The African map is reimagined and features hills and waterways named after Anthony Griffin, Marie-Joseph Angélique, and Bob Marley. It also includes a central hospital named after Sankara, a "Bank of Reunited Africa," and a "Toussaint L'Ouverture Centre."

Of the activist groups and efforts I have surveyed during this period, AKAX is without a doubt the one that most clearly set out to oppose the dominant linguistic geography of the city. While AKAX did not represent the first efforts to bridge that gap, they did strike me, from my vantage point over two-and-a-half decades later, as having reached a modicum of success. I asked Bruce what he thought was responsible for AKAX's ability to organize against the urban divide, and he believed that it was related to numerous incidents of police brutality and a number of other racist events going into the 90s:

At that present moment, there were certain things that worked. Many things were happening: police

> brutality, [racist] events. So it was a perfect time for the bridging to happen. It bridged the gap with other Black people in Canada. The marches were organized to shed some light on Marcellus François and others killings. There still hasn't been justice. Today you can still kill a Black man and [there's] no justice at the end of the day. The police walks away. We don't win. Nothing comes out of killing a Black man. But we still have to do something. Part of our satisfaction is that we still stood up.

What stands out in Bruce's analysis is that he defines success by effort, not outcome. There is a material (and maybe secular) logic that says if you do not tangibly change something, you have failed. A superficial reading of his recollection would be that they failed because the situation is no different today – Black people in Montreal can still be killed without receiving justice, as the case of Bony Jean-Pierre in Montreal-North in spring 2016 demonstrates. But that misses the point of what Bruce is saying – "we stood up." In other words, success is in our actions, our effort, our willingness to change our position (even metaphorically) from sitting to standing.

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I wanted to trouble the ways that francophone Black people are naturally said to "belong" in the East and demonstrate how that narrative hides the reality of placelessness for Black subjects; "Black geographies" do not align with the physicality of traditional geography. Indeed, the numerous attacks against Black people in the East reveal how much that space falls inside of white control. I demonstrated how Black people moving in and out of the East was met with violent responses from white residents, which reveals the logics of containment that regulate Black mobility and placelessness. Multiple accounts of white racist attacks against Black people occurred at subway stations, on buses, and in neighbourhoods that were historically (almost) only white and francophone. These attacks attempted to restrict or served to punish Black people for, literally, being out of place. From these accounts, it becomes clear that the dominant linguistic geography of the city facilitated the outgrowth of antiblackness in East end Montreal. As in other urban centres in Canada and the U.S., blackness over-

determines Black life, even in a context in which language is said to be *the* most salient (and many would say only) social, geographic, and political category.

In the second part of the chapter, we turned away from stories of Black suffering in order to re-imagine what Katherine McKittrick has called "Black geographies." There were, as I demonstrated, multiple examples of Black organizing during the 1990s. For the most part, Black activist youth met racist violence with a variety of forms of organized self-defence. The core argument of this third chapter has been that amidst threats and violence against Black people in Montreal, young Black women and men organized creatively not only in defense of themselves and their communities but also to reimagine where and how Black life in Montreal could (re)emerge.

White society, whether in the form of news media, Leftist organizations, and/or scholars, most often equated these efforts at self-defence with the racist practices of avowedly white supremacist organizations and groups such as the KKK and skinheads (neo-nazis). As the 80s wore on, the influence of Malcolm X and Islam primarily on groups of young Black men increased, so that the intersection of Islam and blackness came to represent a dangerous threat to white society. The next chapter examines how Black youth organizing created new Black geographies in Montreal that did not seek approval from white society.

CHAPTER FOUR

Black Organizing and the White Left: Two Contesting Geographies

We looked up 'radical' and it means 'anyone wanting change,' so we said, fine, we'll wear that label.
—Lois Martineau, AKAX[28]

Archival records from the 90s reveal several instances where white activists participated in the same events as Black radical groups. For example, various Black and white groups organized a protest on March 21, 1990, to remember the thirtieth anniversary of South Africa's Sharpeville massacre and to celebrate Namibia's recently gained independence. Anne-Marie Clarke, a founding member of AKAX, was among those present at the protest and pointed out in her speech that "we don't have to look to South Africa to find racism" (Worrell 1990). Affirming this view, marchers shouted the names of Black victims of police brutality in Canada, like Anthony Griffin, Sophia Cook, and Michael Wade Lawson,[29] further situating antiblack violence in Quebec and Canada as national and global realities. Expanding Clarke's argument, Audrea Golding, then part of the McGill Black Students' Network, noted "the lack of resistance against the crowd-controlling tactics used by the obviously racist cops" at the event, and lamented that the majority of people at the demonstration were "bleeding heart liberals who weren't taking a strong enough stand" (Worrell 1990). A number of white "anti-racist" groups also took part in the March 21 protest, notably members of the Ligue anti-fasciste mondiale (LAM), a France-based "human rights" organization that had a significant presence in Quebec in the 80s and 90s.

The following year, AKAX organized what became their largest protest on July 26, 1991,

[28] Nathalie Bloomfield, "The AKAX quest: Pathways to empowerment," Community Contact, August 1993, p. 5.
[29] On October 27, 1989, a white police officer in Brampton (Ontario), Cameron Durham, shot Sophia Cook in the back while she was strapped down in the passenger seat of a car. She was left paralyzed and Durham was later acquitted of any wrongdoing (Tyler 1989). On December 8, 1988, two white police officers in Mississauga fired six shots at 17-year-old Michael Wade Lawson as he was driving away in a car. In 1992, an all-white jury found them not guilty on all charges (Rosella 1988).

gathering over 800 people in downtown Montreal. This time, LAM did not attend the protest as a participant but rather went as a "spectator" (Boileau 1991). Speaking for LAM, President Alain Dufour said that he was worried about the protest signs that made the parallel between the police and the Ku Klux Klan. "Such a correspondence is obviously an exaggeration, and only adds to the tension," he said. "If that tension turns into violence [between protesters and the police], as rumours have it, extreme-right groups will then be able to say: we told you so, Blacks are dangerous" (Boileau 1991, my translation). It may seem contradictory for LAM to both criticize Black radical activists and participate in some of the same events, but their action in fact exemplifies how antiblackness can manifest itself in coalition politics. LAM's position against Black radical activists at the protest reveals how white "anti-racist" activists in Quebec pursued a different agenda in regards to the violence that Black people were organizing against. Claiming that position to be the moral one, white anti-racists ultimately opposed Black collective self-determination, including by AKAX and other Black activist groups.

This chapter examines the conflicting visions, ideas, and strategies of Black and white activists in 90s Montreal. I begin with the work of Black activists, detailing their vision for the city's Black community. Central to this vision, I demonstrate, was a Black Montreal without a language divide. Understanding "inclusion" as being about the improvement of society in order to preserve it, I observe how Black activists opted out of "inclusion" and organized instead for transformation. Next, I delve into articles and reports written by white activists and scholars in this period to examine their understanding and critique of contemporary Black activists. This work, I suggest, illustrates how white anti-racist discourse in Quebec was limited to inclusion. Through its emphasis on inclusion, this work was ultimately premised on bringing and keeping Black people into the fold, and constructing those who refused inclusionary politics as threats to civil society. By taking account of the differences between white anti-racism and Black activism, some of the limits and pitfalls of coalition politics

rapidly emerge. The anti-racist white Left, like more conservative formations, envisioned a tightly confined place and role for Black people. In essence, what white anti-racists in Quebec opposed was that Black people may have their own form of politics, grounded in a transnational radical Black history. As a result, the actions of the white Left helped create and propagate a public discourse against radical Black activists and in turn justified police surveillance of various radical Black groups in Montreal.

4.1 Carrying the Montreal Black Radical Imagination into the 90s

The political ideas, visions, and strategies of Black activists in 90s Montreal were part of a much longer history of struggle. While the history of Black activism in Montreal in the 60s has received the most scholarly attention (Williams 1998; Affan 2013), and this study focuses on the decade between the late 80s to the mid 90s, it would be a mistake to assume that the intervening years were dormant ones. Having focused her research on Anglo-Caribbean Black women organizing in Montreal in the 60s, Affan urges us not to succumb to the pressure of identifying what is new or different about Black activists in periods following that key historical time for Black Montreal (Personal communication, January 10, 2016). Furthermore, whatever claims white people in Quebec may make about issues having been resolved in the 60s and 70s Quiet Revolution, Black people continue to struggle against the same antiblack system. That said, Affan insists that one thing we can identify as a continuity between Black activists in the 60s to those in the 90s is their need to locate themselves in a Black community free of the constraints imposed by white society. Indeed, as Grace Louise Sanders (2013) conveys in her research on the history of Haitian women's activism in Montreal and Port-au-Prince, the 70s and 80s were also vibrant periods in the history of Black feminist politics in Montreal and across Québec. This history was explicitly carried forward by Black activists like Lumumba, whose activism stretched from

the 70s to the early 2000s. His political life clearly illustrates how youth in the 90s were engaging with a society and form of racism (antiblackness) that they already understood quite well. In this sense, their activism was not just spatial (making connections within the city and across the diaspora), but also temporal (making links between historical moments). It was only during my interview with Lumumba that I realized how important it would be to get a deep sense of the political ideas that propelled Black activists in the 70s and 80s, and then connect them to the work that was done in the 90s. The ideas of the 70s and 80s were indeed central to the later period, and highlighting these temporal links enables me to refute more effectively the idea – common in Quebec scholarship – that radical Black activism in the 90s was a complete departure from the ideas and strategies of the previous generation (see Potvin 1999).

Côte-des-Neiges (CDN) was one site in Montreal where Black activism in the 70s and 80s bequeathed ideas and practices that would come to influence groups like AKAX. The neighbourhood, located on the city's West side, is home to a sizeable South Asian and Filipino community today, but it has also historically been home to a large proportion of the Anglo-Caribbean Black community. Starting in 1968 when Little Burgundy was "revitalized" (read: gentrified), a great many Black people relocated to CDN, just as Black women arriving from the Caribbean through domestic worker schemes moved to CDN as well. In summary, as Dorothy Williams explained, "both the domestic scheme and the relocation of other residents established new demographic trends: the predominantly anglophone West Indian community moved into areas like NDG and Côte-des-Neiges" (cited in Bromberg 2009, ¶7). While CDN is most often automatically associated with anglophone Black people, its history with francophone Black activists must be outlined. For example, Max Chancy and Adeline Magloire Chancy left Haiti in 1966 and lived in CDN as they organized against the Duvalier regime with other Haitians in exile. Their organizing focused on the political struggle in Haiti, as well as issues specific to the Hai-

tian diaspora across the Americas. They became integral members of Montreal's Black community, both in anglophone and francophone circles. The pair eventually co-founded Maison d'Haïti in the East-side neighbourhood of Saint-Michel, a pivotal Black institution still thriving today, and their work remains a reference for several generations of Black men and women doing community work in the city. Making their home in CDN, Max and Adeline Chancy were part of a vibrant community of francophone Black people living and/or organizing in the West part of Montreal.[30]

Lumumba was another Black francophone who also organized in CDN, and his involvement in activist circles in the 80s provided him with ideas and practices that he carried into the next decade. One idea that was central to his work in the 80s and 90s concerned the limits of inclusionary politics. The possibilities and limits of inclusion could be sited on the CDN landscape. Though largely working-class, the neighbourhood is also home to the Université de Montréal, including its prestigious engineering and business schools, and the students and professors who frequent those institutions are frequent sights on CDN streets. Just east of CDN, meanwhile, is the affluent neighbourhood of Outremont, where much of the francophone white Montreal elite and intelligentsia live. West of CDN, finally, is Westmount, the home of the historical white anglophone elite and the wealthiest urban neighbourhood in Canada, while to its north lies the Town of Mount-Royal, another anglophone elite stronghold. The geographical position of CDN, encircled by spaces of white wealth and power, was significant to Lumumba. He specifically remembers evoking this geography during a large protest in CDN in the early 90s. He still remembers the speech that he gave at the end of the march:

> I told them: 'Brothers and sisters, I see that you are wet with sweat. You had a long walk. But you're still going against the current. When will you stop marching? Look behind me. See what

[30] Chancy's example, along with those of other francophone Black activists in the city's West side, clearly refutes the claim that when Haitian youth in the 90s sought to work in closer relationship with anglophone Black youth, it was not a novel occurrence. Potvin and other Québécois scholars miss the historical interconnections between francophone and anglophone Black communities. For a more in depth analysis of Haitian women organizing in Montreal across the language divide, see Sanders 2013.

> it looks like to live. Did you see how behind me white people were in a pool, swimming? But here you are, always sweating, marching. It will take something different for things to change. We need something else.' Then a journalist asked me what I meant by that. I said: 'Whether it's a glass of juice or a glass of milk, we need something else. Marching will not bring us what we want.' The march ended on that note and it didn't take long for the media to slander me. The local Member of Parliament came towards me after the march and said: 'I understand you, Lumumba. We should go out for dinner and talk about it.' My answer to him was: 'I've been in Montreal for a long time now but now you want to sit with me?' I didn't go to his dinner.

Lumumba understood CDN as an example of how the white citizenry could live in spatial proximity to Black people, see them regularly denounce the violence that was inflicted on their bodies, and still not take a stand in solidarity. This spatial proximity revealed to him how inclusion does not solve the problem of antiblack violence because the problem was not that white people did not encounter enough Black people or that they were ignorant of Black people's reality. Lumumba was faced with the question of what other form of Black organizing would avoid asking white Quebec society to hear, see, and accept Black people. For Lumumba, the white elected official asked him out to dinner because he too had understood that he was calling for a new mode of Black political organizing. Refusing the invitation to dinner was another way that Lumumba reiterated his refusal of the politics of inclusion on the grounds that they are used to pacify Black people.

More than just expressed in the speech above, Lumumba's critique of inclusion was recurrent in the articles that he published in a monthly newsletter, *Le Collectif*, produced by the Haitian Taxi Drivers Collective. In 1983, Lumumba wrote that Black people could not expect to transform their reality by working within state institutions nor by collaborating with white liberals. "I can name for you a list of institutions, but not one of them will sincerely engage in a direct action struggle to help us," he explained. "They will entrap you just like they did Indigenous people" (Léonard, 1983a, my translation). Rejecting inclusion, Lumumba advanced a different politics. He encouraged Black people in Montreal to build their own movements and not to fear responding with force because racism – contrary to the assumption of inclusionary politics – is too powerful to be tamed with "smiles." "We have to play hard

and alone. As long as Black people don't go beyond the permissible, they will not go far in their struggle," he wrote (Lumumba 1983, my translation). In the editorial column of the *Le Collectif*, Lumumba, writing under his given name (Joseph Pierre Léonard), made it clear that Black activists had to avoid supporting political projects that were not their own.

The same focus on self-reliance appeared in Lumumba's other articles in *Le Collectif*. In an example of his masculinist writing style, Lumumba explained that, "A man, wherever he is, has to know where to plug in, how to identify himself, identify the right oxygen tank in order to avoid pollution, contagion, even asphyxia" (Léonard 1983b, my translation). Writing a year later, Lumumba explained that it was obvious that none of the current mechanisms set in place for Black people to advocate for themselves could ever work:

> When they offer you roses, remember that they bear thorns, and then ask yourself: did they offer me the roses or the thorns? The grounds upon which you defend your rights are the same grounds that they built to defeat you. Can you really afford to follow their processes or go through their channels, knowing that it will lead you nowhere? Inquiries, conferences, briefs, reports, subsidies are all elegant and hypocritical ways to drown you. Ask yourself, whether a fish is in a tank or a pot, is it not already dead? Act outside the norms, that's where you'll find success. Otherwise, you will be put in your place, and the so-called progressives will offer you succor by handing you crumbs for your survival. The future belongs to those who dream and want power, both in quantity and quality. Down with the opportunists and the *patatistes* (Léonard 1984, my translation).

Patatiste comes from the word *patate*, which is French for potato. In his articles in the *Collectif* newsletter, Lumumba often wrote about the *patatiste.* For him, a *patatiste* is someone who will not engage in Black struggle because they are "assimilated, often a literate imbecile, a vile person who cannot or will not tell his/her enemy what he/she thinks of them" (Léonard 1983c:9), my translation). For Lumumba, the context of Quebec requires that Black people be vigilant about political processes that seek to water down the demands that Black people make, and worse of all deter Black activists from grounding their work in radical Black politics. Lumumba also offers a clear warning against white progressives in Quebec in that they offer a moderate version of the present and not a transformed vision for the future.

The years Lumumba spent organizing within the Haitian Taxi-Drivers Collective were formative for him, as he learned to strategize politically in a context where the police as much as other state institutions sought to contain Black political action. He especially recalls a protest that Haitian taxi drivers had organized in Montreal-North, a neighbourhood known even then for its large population of Haitians and other Black francophones. Though Black people were numerous in the neighbourhood, Lumumba recalls, they still required permission to protest publicly in that space:

> I remember a demonstration that we organized in Montreal-North once. I can't remember on which street exactly, but it was in front of a taxi company, SOS-Taxi or something like that. It was a demonstration that took a long time to organize because people were afraid. They would say, 'We need to get a permit first,' and I replied, 'No, we don't need a permit. We will get the permit when they arrest us. They will put is in jail and then we'll have our permit.' So we held the demonstration without a permit. I had just returned from Paris at the time and I had met with many Black organizations there. We worked and we exchanged ideas. So I brought back slogans from them. 'Canada-South Africa, same thing!' That was our slogan. But there were people who were scared. When the police arrived, they asked, 'Who organized this demonstration?' Those who were afraid pointed in my direction. So I said, 'It was me' and the officer came to see me. 'You don't have a permit. What you did is illegal.' I said to him, 'I know that it's not legal. What the taxi companies are doing is not legal either. I'm not responsible for any of this. All of us here are responsible. We wish you would arrest us. Arrest me. By doing so, I will become who I truly want to be.' They stepped back, blocked the street, and our demonstration continued on. We then went to Anjou, to the office of the Justice Minister, then under a *Parti Québécois* government. We occupied his office. After a while, he spoke to me on the phone and a delegation went to meet him in Quebec City. I didn't go. I wasn't interested in conversing with any of those people. I didn't go.

The Montreal-North protest provided Lumumba with another example of the limits of existing institutions and (white) political frameworks. It showed, in particular, how independent black organizing is met with repression, pacified through inclusionary politics, or both. Further, what Lumumba also makes apparent in his example of a protest by Haitian taxi drivers is how they located themselves within a global struggle against antiblackess: they compared Quebec to South Africa and learned from Black organizers in France. That Lumumba learned from, and with, Black activists in France illustrates how the political map of Black activists in Montreal stretched well beyond the boundaries of Québec. As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, in a protest that AKAX participated in in 1990, they too made parallels between antiblack violence in Quebec and in South Africa. Looking at the analyses that

Haitian taxi drivers in the 70s and 80s, and AKAX activists in the 90s put forth we see a refusal to spatially constrict how Black people in Montreal understand and struggle against the violence that they experience.

This is a photo of an editorial image that was published in the magazine CROC, in 1985.[31]

I want to flag these early critiques of inclusionary politics because they were essential to the politics of the 90s and because a recurrent complaint that white scholars and activists made about radical Black youth in the latter decade was that they organized too little with existing white groups – a departure, these scholars and activist have claimed, from the Black politics of an earlier period. The anti-inclusion tenets of 90s Black activism, however, were clearly present in earlier periods. The tenets car-

[31] In an interview last year commemorating the purported "legacy" of the magazine, co-founder Hélène Fleury explained that, "Quebecers needed to laugh about things that were particular to their society. No sexism, no racism, but everything else was fair game" (Maher 2015). On the contrary, the magazine *did* publish racist depictions of Black taxi drivers. In the photo-montage above, the title reads "Lasalle Taxis: Where can we take you?" Below the title is a "Dead-End" street sign and parked in front of it is a taxi cab with Stevie Wonder as the driver. In the early 80s, the majority of taxi companies in the Montreal region did not hire Haitian drivers. La Salle was among those that did have a number of Haitians among its staff (Roy 1982). Hence, this collage mocks Haitian taxi drivers, suggesting that when one calls La Salle Taxi, they will be sent a Black taxi driver who cannot drive, much less take them anywhere.

ried into later periods, moreover, because of their political salience. For Lumumba, when dominant institutions attempt to incorporate Black subjects in one way or another, it gives the illusion of a stabilization or diminution of antiblack violence. It suggests a certain "calming," a sense that antiblack violence can be tempered by political acceptance and integration from the mainstream. However, heralding Afro-pessimist arguments, Lumumba explained to me just how *structurally* unstable and vulnerable Black life is in Montreal and in Quebec as a whole. Like Frank Wilderson and other Afro-pessimist thinkers, Lumumba emphasizes the gratuitous violence that is a defining characteristic of antiblackness, a violence that does not require a reason or justification – a violence impervious to offers of integration or inclusion. Indeed, Lumumba reminds us that antiblackness manifests itself even, or especially, when the political climate seems to be at his calmest:

> I remember once, members of the NDP[32] came to ask me to run for their party. I told them: 'I carry my ideas in my heart. I cannot preach and advocate for something that is not in my heart.' So I declined their offer. To me integration is about seeing clearly. It's not confusion. It's the ability to understand your environment. Knowing who you're dealing with, and not being taken by surprise. When a police officer shoots one of our children, there is no surprise. That officer makes no distinction between our children. We are all under threat, no one is immune. They always unleash their anger on us. What people need to understand is that each society has its own rites, songs that it keeps stored in a drawer for every phase that it goes through. For example, we won't hear Christmas songs today because it's not that time of year. Well, when everything's going well, you'll hear songs that celebrate that. But when things go badly, there will be songs about that and they will eat us up. The songs are there, the rituals exist. When things are not calm anymore, what will happen to us. You don't know. A simple misstep could sink us into an abyss.

In place of liberal integration, Lumumba stresses the merits of "radical integration," a project that he connects to the idea of freedom. In liberal societies such as Québec, integration is a broad term that refers to a desire to have non-white subjects adopt normative white values and goals. To be "integrated" is also measured by the degree to which a non-white person contributes economically and culturally to white society's political project. Because in Québec, "integration" has become an injunction for non-white people to assimilate – Lumumba explained that assimilating into white society is actually not

[32] In Québec, the New Democratic Party is a federal political party. It presents itself as the progressive alternative for Canadian voters.

possible when one lives in a Black body; he also points out that it would be detrimental to Black people's struggle for freedom. For Lumumba, "radical integration" is about understanding fully Quebec society's continued history of gratuitous violence against Black bodies. It is about knowing that white society can always rely on antiblack violence to maintain order. The police killing of Anthony Griffin in 1987 and Marcellus François in 1991 are therefore neither a surprise nor a departure from how race is organized or managed in Québec. We see how Lumumba makes the connection between how in the early eighties politicians had tried to tame Haitian taxi driver activists and how more Black people getting "integrated" into conventional Quebec politics did not prevent the continued violence unleashed on the Black community well after that period (and still today). While a liberal definition of integration in Quebec is about taming blackness and incorporating it into the nation-building project, Lumumba argues that a more radical integration makes black life as it is the basis for political action and change. Radical integration, as he explains it, allows him not only to know Quebec well, but also to remain aware of his condition and his place in it and prioritize his own freedom. In other words, it builds freedom in the place that Black people inhabit. In contrast to the freedom available through radical integration, a liberal form of integration is more akin to entrapment:

> Their recognition didn't bring me anything. Their world didn't bring me anything. So why stay there? It's true that we're still here, and in a certain way we're still in their home. So here's the thing: the prisoner who doesn't think about freedom while he's in prison is already dead. I'm in prison. I'm constantly planning my exit though. The idea of prison is inside me, not in the prison guard. He cannot bring me happiness either. Even when I seem to be nice to him, I behave that way in order to survive in prison. I participate in the system so that I can survive prison. But the dream that resides in me, about breaking the walls or finding any other way to escape, that never leaves me. When a prisoner escapes, the warden doesn't say, 'I knew it!' Instead, they say, 'What happened?' and that's because they hadn't seen that potential in [the prisoner].

Antithetical to real freedom, Lumumba argues that we must escape the politics of liberal integration. Lumumba's argument is reminiscent of Joy James' work on the maroons and democracy. James (2013) explored how democracy became "idealized through the rise of white citizenship, and portrayed as the manifestation of freedom" (143). Since the norms of democratic citizenship are racially defined, de-

mocracy sets specific boundaries to what it is to be free. For James, a maroon philosophy witnesses this racial captivity and in response defines freedom as flight.

Lumumba's call for an "escape" applies as much to dominant Quebec institutions as it does to the white Left in Quebec. As Lumumba recalls, white activists often accused Black youth of being too violent in their organizing and considered their violence to be just as reprehensible as the forms practiced by skinheads and other white supremacist groups. Claims like these, for Lumumba, attempt to contain and control Black activism. They operate as a form of entrapment:

> Once I told a journalist that whether we're 'violent' or 'non-violent,' our ending will be the same. Martin Luther King and Malcolm X both ended up assassinated. So what does it mean? It means that being violent or non-violent is not important. What's important is that our mind stays alert. We will continue to keep watch. There's a saying in Haiti that goes like this: 'How they knock on the door is how you answer the door.' That's what matters. We [Black people] are like the Danbala snake in Haitian vodoo. It doesn't attack. It's not dangerous, it's not dangerous. It's not violent, it's not non-violent. It goes its own way. You stand in front of it, it stands in front of you. You make the wrong move, it attacks you. That is an existential response. That's the real answer. Also remember that when people say that they're non-violent, they're trying to control the situation in order to hide the pain and suffering they carry inside. You can fight the enemy even with a smile, but you first have to recognize that he's an enemy.

Lumumba's evocation of a Haitian proverb about the Danbala snake mirrors the excerpt from "M," one of Potvin's young Haitian interviewees in chapter three. As I discussed, "M" described how, when push comes to shove, he would meet physical violence in kind should a situation call for it, though he did not favour searching for that kind of trouble. Tracing the genealogy of these ideas allows us to further respond to the common notion that blackness was a category that only emerged for Haitians in 90s Montreal. Because Black activism contours the geographical space of the Black diaspora, the work and the ideas of Black activists in Montreal underscored the place of Montreal within that space. A geographical impetus therefore lies at the heart of Black activism.

The Black diaspora is not only about where Black people are, but it also represents where Black people resist. A scholar of Caribbean women literature, Myriam Chancy (1993), has written beautifully about how Black women writers in Canada resist erasure and separation from one another by writing

about what has been forgotten. These forms of resistance are necessary, because, as Chancy spells out, "survival in this New World demands that we leave each other behind again and again" (15). I would argue that Black activism has been a way for Black people throughout the diaspora to remain connected through struggle. That said, I cannot help but out point out that, in the context of Quebec, white society's own project of nation building is what has demanded "that we leave each other behind again and again." Christiane's experience in particular is an example of how survival in Montreal has demanded that we *find* each other again and again. This work of "finding each other again and again" is what francophone and anglophone Black activists in Montreal, from East to West, one generation after the other, have worked to concretize. My sense is that one of the main unifying threads between Black activists from the 70s and 80s to the 90s is not only a refusal of the politics of inclusion, but also very much about finding each other over and over again.

Radical Black thought in Montreal was not an innovation of Black youth in the 90s, since they were part of an established history of Black political thought that proposed not only a counter narrative about Quebec, but also redefined how the Black community in Montreal understood itself and its place and role in the Black diaspora. In the 1990s, Black youth had a project that turned its back on the Quebec nation, opting instead to focus on Black freedom.

4.2 With Friends like These: Antiblackness in "Anti-Racist" Activism

4.2.1 White Scholars and Activists Against Black Youth

The ideas and practices of Lumumba and other Black activists found little support among white Leftists, even those ostensibly committed to anti-racism. For the white Left, Black activism failed to conform to the proper, colour-blind version of democracy that they (white anti-racists) were working towards. Consistently, Black youth activists were described by white Leftists as too impatient, too radi-

cal, too violent, or too "anti-white" in their approach. To analyze white activists' responses to Black radical organizing, I focus primarily on documents produced by the Ligue anti-fasciste mondiale (LAM), which is the most prominent anti-racist organization to have a public archive of its work from the period. LAM was founded in 1989 in Montreal by anti-fascists skinheads who organized against Nazi skinheads who had been planning attacks against them at a concert by the French anti-racist rock group Berurier Noir (Kuitenbrouwer 1989b). The group rapidly became known for its research on and organizing against skinheads and all other white supremacist groups across Québec. They were the main source of information and analysis on anti-racist issues for the police, various official institutions, academics, and other Leftists.[33] The group fell from grace in white Leftist circles around a decade after its quick ascent once rumours circulated about it having ties with Zionist groups, receiving tens of thousands of dollars in government subsidies, and being infiltrated by the police, among other suspicions (see Dupuis-Déri 1996; Jean-François 2004).

Although LAM was considered the main organization working against the rise of right-extremist and neo-nazis groups, it did not take much time for them to turn their attention to Black youth activists. For example, in their 1993 annual report highlighting the main racist attacks that occurred that year, they include an altercation that occurred between "two rival Haitian gangs" at a high school in Montreal-North, reflecting LAM's (1994a) new focus on "Black-on-Black crime," without any explanation of how these youth fit the description of far-right extremism (43). The report also casually mentions that in the early morning of December 9, 1993, "12 youth between the ages of thirteen and sixteen were arrested in relation to their involvement with the Black Panthers, a group of petty

[33] In a brief submitted in 1994 to the Public Security Committee of the City of Montreal, LAM (1994b) gives more details on the network they created for themselves and the respect that their work has gained. "[LAM has given] training sessions on the phenomenon of gangs and organized racism, to professionals and groups of teachers in the Protestant School Board of greater Montreal. Recently, we met with Anglophone youth from the Rivières-des-Prairies Youth Centre's program for juvenile reintegration" (2, my translation).

criminals" (47). The way LAM's focus broadened to include various acts committed by Black people, and Black youth in particular, signalled how the group was now positioning itself as a guardian of the Quebec racial order. One of LAM's preferred targets were Black Muslims. Before long, Muslim Black activists were held up as evidence of a radicalized and/or excessive blackness in Quebec society. It signaled to LAM and their associates, a blackness that had overstepped the boundaries that could be tolerated in Quebec.

As I want to demonstrate, LAM's targeting of Black Muslims manifested an intersection of anti-blackness and Islamophobia. This intersection, which I term anti-Black Islamophobia, contests where Black Muslim people belong, as well as the types of politics they engage in and communities they imagine and/or build. Therefore, anti-Black Islamophobia in 90s Montreal sought to manage the "unruliness" represented by Muslim Black subjects, their refusal to fit into the national boundaries, and take part in Québec's nation-building project. While anti-Black Islamophobia in the last decade has erased the Muslim Black subject in Québec, during the 90s in Montreal, it most often took the form of vilification/pathologization, denigrating Black people who identify and organize as Muslims.

One of LAM's most important engagements with Muslim Black activism occurred in 1992, when it published a report titled, "Malcolm X: The Movement among Black Youth" (LAM 1992, my translation). In the introduction, LAM explains that their research was prompted by the numerous phone calls they had been receiving on their tip line (1-800-INFO-LAM) from people who had been attacked, beaten, or stabbed by groups of Black youth wearing T-shirts or baseball caps emblazoned with the letter X. Some of the complaints, according to LAM, referred to the "Malcolm X gang" (LAM 1992). Acknowledging these complaints, LAM outlined a new direction for its work in the report's introduction: "Since the founding of LAM, our research has always focused on neo-nazi and extreme-right groups. Reality now forces us to go further and orient our research on racism in a broader

manner” (LAM 1992, my translation). After mentioning that racism from the majority group is not equivalent to racism from a minority, LAM nonetheless describes Black people’s actions toward white people as “racist” and stresses that all forms of racism must be condemned.

An appendix to the 1992 report features an interview that Alain Dufour, LAM’s President, conducted with Michel Wieviorka, a French sociologist whose work focuses on violence, racism, and terrorism. Dufour begins his interview by telling Wieviorka that his group felt compelled to do research on radical Black activism once he realized that these activists were actually “Black supremacists:”

> In the past, we used to denounce acts committed by groups of white supremacists, but now there are acts committed by groups of Black supremacists. So now, all of a sudden, white supremacist groups come to us and say: why don’t you denounce them! So, if we don’t denounce those acts, police will denounce them, I mean Latino and Black supremacist groups. And we know very well that when the police do the denouncing, it often has much more dangerous consequences than when community groups do the denouncing (LAM 1992, Appendix 2, my translation).

The arrogance in Dufour’s statement is glaring. He evokes the spectre of police brutality – if LAM does not denounce Black activists (often acting in self-defence), the police will do so in a much more violent manner – to justify its position. LAM therefore positions itself as arbiter of/for racial justice in Montreal. In reality, the fact that a whole report is dedicated to Black radical activism does point to the fact that LAM understood Black folks who were identified with or engaged in Black radical politics as being in the same category as white supremacists who were active in Montreal, such as skinheads and the Ku Klux Klan. Moreover, LAM considers its role to be one of denouncing not only the self-defence methods used by Black youth, but more importantly, Black political thought – Black criticism of white people and white-controlled institutions – as it develops and manifests itself.

Asked whether some kind of action should be taken about “Black supremacists,” Wieviorka explains that, in societies such as Quebec and France, to allow “racism from minorities” to flourish would foster a multiplicity of identities and that such a situation would amount to living in a “jungle” (LAM 1992, Appendix 2, my translation). In the same vein, when LAM found out that Spike Lee’s

biopic of Malcolm X would be released later in 1992, they feared that it would give "the Malcolm X movement" further momentum and multiply racist attacks against French-Québécois people in the province:

> People are afraid. It's a powerful symbol and it's everywhere. It's on full pages of magazines, newspapers, and billboards. There are also baseball caps, shirts, watches, pins, board games, jewellery, magnets, air fresheners. Spike Lee even has his own store. Yes, the X is frightening. The X is more than a movie, more than a fashion. For some, it's a movement, a liberation. It's scary to see youth revolting against an oppressor that is often perceived as being white, the one who owned all Black slaves. We're now facing a social crisis and the unemployment rate among Black youth is proof of that (LAM 1992, 34, my translation).

In order for Quebec society not to descend into a racist "jungle" led by Black supremacists, the priority, according to LAM, is to "go further than mere denunciation [of racist white people and 'racist' Black people] and create the conditions for intercultural understanding" (LAM 1992, 4, my translation). By this they refer to part of LAM's mission statement, which aims to "improve relationships between the majority and the diverse ethnic groups that are part of our society. LAM also raises awareness among youth and the general population about the problems that racist and fascist behaviour cause" (LAM 1994b, 3, my translation). I would point out that in this context, the goal of "raising awareness" reiterates the myth of Quebec's innocence in forms of racial violence. For Black youth in 90s Montreal, as we saw in chapter two, antiblackness was not specific to skinheads but was part of Quebec's continued history of antiblack violence. Undoubtedly, the strategies and discourses deployed by Black activists contested LAM's vision of Quebec as a model liberal western society.

Seeking to distinguish between good and bad Black activism, the report gives a superficial portrait of Malcolm X and explains that the major difference between X and Martin Luther King Jr. was that the former advocated violence while the latter did not. It then moves on to talk about the Nation of Islam and the accusations of anti-Semitism against them. To demonstrate the kind of menace that the NOI represents to white people in North America, the report points to the relationship the group developed with Muammar Khaddafi in the 80s. These claims, focused on U.S.-based activists,

proved difficult to link to Montreal Black activists. While LAM makes a direct link between Malcolm X's teachings and his time with the Nation of Islam, they find that information about the NOI in Montreal, even getting a copy of their newsletter, was nearly impossible. Keep in mind that in the next chapter, we find out that as early as 1992, members of the NOI, including Greg and his friends, were regularly handing out copies of the NOI newsletter outside of several main subway stations in Montreal. This idea that the NOI in Montreal was mysterious and impenetrable, rather than weakening LAM's claims to knowledge about the group, served instead to heighten suspicion of the group and support the idea that they were conspiring against white society.

LAM's concerns ultimately exceeded the NOI and its ostensible promotion of violence. The core target of the report is indeed the broader "Malcolm X movement." The specificity of this movement, for LAM (1994b), is that "it is unique and the first of its kind that can bring young Haitians and young Jamaicans closer together" (4, my translation). LAM's greatest worry is thus the building of a Black community across the language divide, a worry that illuminates its plainly white nationalist politics. Enabling this united Black community, for LAM, is the alluring figure of Malcolm X, the new figurehead, LAM claims, of francophone and anglophone Black youth in Montreal. Many young Black folks, the report claims, have said to LAM (1992): "Really, we are all little Malcolm Xs. Each one of us has to wage their own struggle" (23, my translation). LAM's concerns about Black radical youth "waging their own struggle" clearly mirror those disseminated in white scholarly writing in the same period. In Potvin's (1997) original research on Haitian youth, "J.S." supposedly told her: "There's no need to wait for a hero, each one of us has to become a hero. We should all become Malcolm X, wherever we are. One may be a little Malcolm X, but in the end, when it's all taken together, it'll have the effect of a big Malcolm X" (91, my translation). Knowing that Potvin conducted her interviews in 1991 and 1992, around the same time LAM was conducted their own research, one is left to wonder

about the precise relationship between white activist and scholarly production in the development and promotion of antiblack, Islamophobic critiques of Black activism in Québec.

When it comes to Islam and Haitian youth, LAM's report explains that many Black youth progress from learning about Malcolm X to orthodox Islam, without necessarily converting or joining the Nation of Islam. According to LAM, the reason why Haitian youth turn to Islam rather than remain faithfully Catholic like their parents is because of how racism narrows their professional and social opportunities. The supposed familial crisis among Haitians in Quebec creates a context that makes it nearly impossible for parents to communicate with their children or transmit Haitian "traditional values." In such a climate, Haitian youth turn towards an American model of being Black in Québec. As this suggests, LAM's arguments presuppose a "traditional Haitian" identity that is not Black, not radical, and therefore easily assimilable to white Quebec society. The ways in which Haiti is firmly grounded in a long history of radical Black history and politics conveniently eludes LAM's analysis.

LAM was also very interested in the influence that Black activist group such as AKAX had on Haitian youth. To the question of whether the "Malcolm X movement" is an underground one or if it operates openly, LAM points to AKAX as an example of a radical Black group that not only organizes events and rallies but also has an office, a telephone line, and a membership list. LAM (1992) writes that Haitian youth are not key organizers with AKAX because "the culture and the standards of young Haitians are different" (24, my translation). Still, they recognize that there is a growing francophone membership and that AKAX publishes a regular newsletter in French and English, and even offers French-language courses at no charge. It is AKAX's focus on Black history and Black politics that seems to raise a red flag in LAM's work on "Black supremacy." LAM explains that the fact that Black youth take "X" as a symbol of how they relate to the state and white society and how they want to (re)build their community, symbolizes a specific kind of threat that Black youth may unleash on white

Quebec society unless the state and its institutions take action against racism. "Anti-racism" then becomes a measure of Black control, a response to Black politics, and a remedy against Black organizing.

Afro-pessimist theorists contend that Left politics do not actually consider the terms in which Black people suffer because their conception of community is *a priori* antiblack (Wilderson 2015). That means, as Michael Dumas (2015) explains, that, "antiblackness does not signify a mere racial conflict that might be resolved through organized political struggle and appeals to the state and to the citizenry for redress. Instead, antiblackness marks an irreconcilability between the Black and any sense of social or cultural regard" (3). In sum, LAM's anti-racist organizing could not address antiblack violence because anti-racism adheres to the figure of the Citizen, a concept from which Black subjects are always already evicted.

In addition to their report on the "Malcolm X movement," LAM published a monthly newsletter and an annual review in which they talked about their work and their events, and also surveyed racial incidents that had occurred during corresponding periods of time. Their research proved to be invaluable to scholars and state officials alike.[34] In June 1994, the Centre d'études ethniques de l'Université de Montréal (CEETUM) submitted a 183−page report to the Government of Quebec's Department of Immigration and Cultural Communities[35] that was intended as a "diagnostic" on the situation of racism in Québec. The report's principal authors were Marie McAndrew and Maryse Potvin, thought to be experts on anti-racism and Quebec's Haitian community. They analyzed over 200 provincial and national studies and interviewed a number of stakeholders.

[34] LAM developed close ties with white scholars in Québec. For example, in 1994, they collaborated with a research project at the Faculty of Law at the Université de Montréal. In a brief submitted to Montreal Police, LAM explains that "this collaboration resulted in a research project on 'racism and law,' which received funding from the Québec Ministry of Higher Education and Science" (LAM 1994b, 2).

[35] Ministère des Affaires internationales, de l'immigration et des Communautés culturelles. That Department is now called Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Diversité et de l'Inclusion (Ministry of Immigration, Diversity and Inclusion).

The McAndrew-Potvin report was submitted a year before the second referendum in Québec, when voters in the province were asked whether or not Quebec should leave Canada and become a sovereign country, though it would not be published until one year after the 1995 referendum in 1996. Consistent with the political climate into which it was submitted, it quickly becomes apparent that one of the priorities of the report was to maintain two of the central myths of Quebec nation-building: that of national unity and that of historical benevolence (see Leroux 2013). McAndrew and Potvin (1996) make clear that, contrary to some European countries, racism has no historical founding in the province: "At least in regards to racial minorities who immigrated here, Quebec does not practice a racial domination that is the result of a national history aimed at territorial expansion" (18, my translation). Furthermore, the authors insist that Quebec nationalism is not a vector of racism, and argue that the loss of momentum for the independence movement may actually have created a context favourable to racism. Yet, the idea that racism in Quebec is not founded on an expansionist history is plainly false. French settlers in New France claimed growing swaths of territory as part of their thirst for wealth. So committed to the literal expansion of their territory were French colonists that at one point in the mid-eighteenth century, they claimed nearly two thirds of present-day Canada and the continental U.S., from Nova Scotia in the East to James Bay in the North to Wisconsin in the West to Louisiana in the South. Slavery in those French territories, as well as in the French Antilles, was also crucial to the building of Quebec society (Leroux 2011). Racism has always been essential to the pursuit of French settler territorial expansion and domination.

Approaching the topic of racism in Quebec from a different angle, Maryse Potvin's own academic research in the 90s makes the case for the need for anti-racist policies and programs to reverse Haitian youth's sense of exclusion in Quebec. Racism in Quebec, though disavowed in the 1996 report, is subtly acknowledged in other studies by Potvin. In her own study published a year later,

Potvin's (1997) research participants speak at length about how forming community is an important survival skill in Montreal. The groups they formed were instrumental in strengthening their Black sense of self and developing strategies to defend themselves and their community against attacks from white supremacists. One participant, "M," who I first introduced in chapter three and then again in the previous section, provides an insightful analysis of antiblack racism in the English-language version of Potvin's (1999) study. The police, "M" explains, understand Black sociality only through the lens of violence and disruption: "There could be seventy-five skinheads meeting in a park, and they [the police] couldn't care less. But if thirteen Black kids wearing glasses and carrying books sit down to take notes and have discussions, they totally panic" (50). I use Potvin's interviews, in a sense, to challenge her own interpretation, which I deem harmful to the Black youth who participated in her work.

What is glaring in the writings of Dufour, Potvin, and McAndrew is that even though they acknowledge the existence of racism and believe that it must be combatted, they cannot tolerate Black people challenging it on their own terms. When white scholars and activists express apprehensions about the political decisions that Haitian youth make, particularly when they make them in conjunction with anglophone Black youth, they manifest white society's discomfort with a politics that centers blackness. Though ostensibly "anti-racist," these scholars and activists consistently evaluated Black activism through the demands of Quebec's own nation-building project, based in a narrow politics of inclusion. Indeed, revisiting the interviews she conducted with Haitian youth in the early 1990s, Potvin (2007a) eventually claimed that the young men and women she spoke with "practiced a 'reverse racism' and looked for alternative identities that were symbolically more 'offensive'" (12, my translation). Even as Potvin recognizes that antiblack racism exists and has concrete consequences on people's lives, she does not acknowledge the possibility of organizing solely and fully against it.

Rather, she casts autonomous Black activism as a form of reverse racism.

Like LAM, Potvin consistently argues that liberal integration and inclusion are the only real pathways to racial justice. Promoting this approach ultimately means rejecting the views of her own research participants, who often expressed a critique of integration and inclusion. “S.,” a 22-year-old participant in her research, provides an exemplary analysis:

> They try to make everyone the same, to assimilate us, to make us into robots in the same way. They want us all to speak Québécois, so that we don't fall behind, so that we don’t speak our language, you know, so that we are all the same. But when they see that we are integrated without being assimilated, they wonder why we are in Québec, we speak French, we go to school, yet we still hang on to our origins, and they wonder why. (Potvin 2007b: 50)

For Potvin, what “S.” considers to be assimilation is a manifestation of “cultural proximity” that actually demonstrates how much Quebecois Haitian youth are (2007b: 50). “Feeling in and out” of Quebec society, “they respond to this tension by resisting ‘cultural assimilation,’ which they perceive as racism” (2007b: 50). Convinced that inclusion is the answer, Potvin can only see Muslim Black activism as a mistake. Her research consistently treats Muslim Black Haitian youth’s religiosity as being an example of their fictive relationship with Black people in the U.S., and particularly with Malcolm X. Their embrace of Islam, for Potvin, is a form of “religious isolation,” a move that severs them from the possibility of generative discussions with white people or the police. That argument in itself is revealing of the political project through which Potvin seeks to integrate Haitian youth. This appears most clearly in her article on “Blackness, Haitianess, and Quebecness” in which she sets out to demonstrate how regardless of second-generation Haitian youth’s discourses of an expansive blackness, they are actually much more rooted in Quebec society than they realize (Potvin 2007b). She is so invested in her own argument that she appears to try and convince her research participants of it as well. As part of the research, Potvin explains that she organized several sessions for them to meet with various interlocutors, including police officers, anti-racist activists, public servants, and members of the Parti Québécois (PQ, the leading provincial sovereigntist party in Quebec). Though several statements made by these

interlocutors caused me to pause, for the purpose of my argument here, I focus only on her section on political participation. Assessing their views on Quebec politics, Potvin reports that Black youth employed "reverse racism" by "fusing all white people and political institutions" (157, my translation). "Some even see a conspiracy that seeks to maintain white domination," anguishes Potvin (157, my translation). As the exchange with a former PQ candidate, herself Haitian, progresses, Potvin challenges the Black youth as to how they engage politically on issues that concern them but are "beyond" race. Potvin's question presupposes that there are issues that are not framed by race and anti-Blackness, and also hints at the fact that Black people must each demonstrate how a particular issue affects them differently from the rest of society for their political stance to make sense to people. For Potvin, even if Quebec has further work to do to better include Black people into its institutions, Black youth cannot respond to this problem by further excluding themselves.

By framing racism as a problem of exclusion, inclusion is almost always bound to be its solution. Inclusionary politics are part of what Saidiya Hartman considers to be simple "additive models of domination" This type of ideological work is an example of what Rinaldo Walcott (2009) explains as part of the liberal "rights talk:" "Citizen practices and their state bestowal call for knowable identities – that is how the managerialism of citizenship works" (15). I would add that "rights talk" is very much connected to a particular kind of *nation talk* that continues to guide Quebec's nation-building project. Potvin's analytical framework ensures that she is unable to see how youth are trying to "destroy" Québec, as Frank Wilderson (2014) would say, and not merely fix it. One could also say that Potvin is unwilling to accept it, but at a subconscious level recognizes the position of Black activists as destructive to a reality she holds dear; and so she continues to deny the legitimacy of their belief. For Wilderson (2003), the solution to antiblackness is a "program of complete disorder" (25) to change the order of

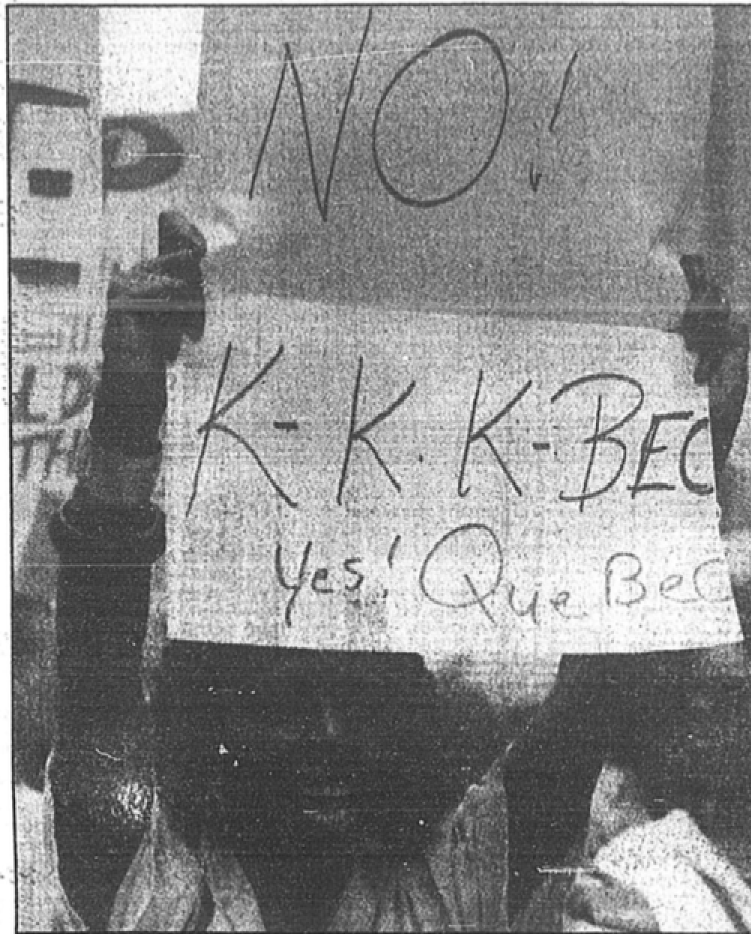
the world. Without using these precise words, Black activists were clearly pursuing a kind of disorder, and this is part of what disturbed white "anti-racists" like Potvin.

LAM's and Potvin's desire for Black youth to turn away from Black radical organizing and take part in more conventional liberal politics also reverberated in the media during this period. White journalists openly spoke of Black youth as too radical, and presented them as breaking with the conventional and "consensual" type of politics to which other Black "leaders" had accustomed them. The next section brings together white Quebec society's reaction – especially the news media – to several of AKAX's most prominent actions.

4.2.2 Police Brutality and White Resistance to AKAX

On Friday, July 26, 1991, 800 people, mostly Black youth, marched in downtown Montreal, near McGill University. AKAX had called for the march only three days before, in order to protest the fact that Marcellus François had been gunned down by a police officer earlier in the month. Members of Toronto's Black community were also present and spoke at the march. *Le Devoir* covered the story by pointing out the fact that there were chants in English and that posters had French spelling mistakes, proof that the march was organized by Black anglophones and that the Haitian community was not properly represented. According to Josée Boileau (1991), the protestors' messages lacked the proper nuance because a sign with a drawing of a KKK member and a police officer read "different uniforms, same mentality." Right after writing that anglophone Black youth dominated the event, Boileau complained about a message in French that also lacked nuance, without any sign of irony. Again, we see how in the French Québécois imagination anglophone Black youth represent chaos, uncivility, and dissent, while Black francophones are praised for a presumed passivity. In his speech at the end of the protest, AKAX member Orin Bristol thanked the dozens of white activists present and told them that "the best work they could do is among their white friends" (Wells 1991). Probably one of the "friends"

that needed to be worked on, Alain Dufour of the LAM, did not take part in the march and instead watched it from the sidelines. He told Boileau that the parallel made between the police and the KKK worried him, “That kind of connection is obviously an exaggeration and it only fuels the tension” (my translation). The July 1991 protest was not the first one that AKAX organized against police brutality in Montreal. Their first massive rally was held on Remembrance Day, November 11, 1989, to remember Anthony Griffin (Ruggles 1993b). That event set the tone for the kind of leadership that Black youth were looking for and made AKAX highly visible. In a 1993 interview, Ariel Deluy explained the effects of the demonstration: “The dynamic within the community changed with that



CONTRE LE RACISME

Une femme montre sa désapprobation d'un Québec raciste au cours de la manifestation qui a rassemblé plus de 500 personnes hier au centre-ville.
Nos informations en page A3

PHOTO LUC SIMON PERRAULT, *La Presse*

The photo caption reads: "A woman shows her disapproval of a racist Quebec during a protest that assembled over 500 people downtown yesterday."

Earlier that month, on July 3, police shot Marcellus François and he later died from his wounds. More than 500 people took part in the protest, which ended in a 90-minute sit-in. Other protest signs read for example, "Bang Bang, Sorry Wrong Nigger," "If we don't Fight, Who Will?" and "Must this City Burn Again? Je me souviens de Marie-Joseph Angélique, avril 1734" in reference to the enslaved Black woman tried, hung, and immolated for burning Montreal. As the march went through downtown, the crowd grew to 800 people and tied up traffic during rush hour. Black activists from Halifax, Ottawa, Quebec City, New York City, and Toronto also came to lend their support (Presse canadienne 1991; Canadian Press 1991c).

demonstration. We began challenging the position of certain community leaders, demanding that they be more accountable to the community" (Ruggles 1993b).

Similarly, Bruce remembers how important it was for AKAX to do things differently than established black "leaders:"

> At the time, Black groups in Montreal didn't want anything to do with us. Most of the Black organizations in Montreal used Black youth in name only and for their own interest. It had no substance, they only did it for money. They thought we were too loud and we were in their way. They had no love for us. They accused us of being a bunch of loud mouths from university.

I did find in the archives several examples of initiatives that "leaders" in the Black community took that stood in contrast to the radical Black politics that Black activists engaged in. For example, while they condemned the work of AKAX, LAM worked closely with Dan Philip of the Black Coalition of Quebec (BCQ). For example, both Phillip *and* the BCQ are cited as collaborators in "Intolerance 93," LAM's annual review of racist events in Québec, Canada, and the world. We learn in that document that in December 1993, the BCQ formed a research committee on "crimes committed by Black people" and that LAM would be joining them in their work (LAM 1994a, 47). The review also reports that Philip participated in a project that consisted of sending "people from ethnic communities to regions in Quebec that are homogenous." To praise the success of the project, LAM quotes Philip saying upon his return: "People are so welcoming, it's as if we were born here. It makes me wonder why we waited so long before having these kinds of exchange. It's a good start" (37).

Critics of traditional Black "leaders" in Montreal were numerous. In an interview during the 1992 East-West Conference, Bruce made his concerns clear to a reporter from the *Gazette*: "Every time we have a situation, like a black man getting killed, you have Leith Hamilton, Noel Alexander, and Dan Philip coming in to use the situation to get money" (Lalonde 1992). Deluy echoed his analysis and spoke of the kind of leadership that the he believed the community truly needed: "We have a new kind of leadership (emerging) that will be composed of the entire black community rather than on a Jamaican or Haitian or Somalian level" (Lalonde 1992). Speaking with Clifton Ruggles, Deluy told him too that "AKAX came into being as a response to fragmentation in the black community and what young people perceived as a lack of effective leadership. We noticed that there was a lot of animosity between the different black student groups. The Black-consciousness movement of the 1960s had died

out. The Caribbean association split even further, with the Haitians having their own association" (as cited in Ruggles 1993b). This suggests that Anglophone and Francophone Black youth coming together and modelling a radically different set of politics brought panic among white "allies."

Early in 1993, CJAD, Montreal's main English-language news talk radio station, held a discussion on "why children hate and perpetrate acts of violence" (Ruggles 1993a). Host Jim Duff brought up AKAX as an example of such behaviour and introduced them as a black youth group that "urged the black community to refuse to co-operate with police until the officer responsible for the killing of Trevor Kelly was punished." Duff later chastised AKAX for "pulling bridges down at a time of great racial unrest" (Ruggles 1993a). These claims directly mirror Potvin's (1999) later discussion of AKAX:

> Despite a participation which is becoming stable, no political project is being constructed [by AKAX]. 'represented' community, with its struggles and its heroes, does not allow for the elaboration of concrete means of action to fight unemployment or to function in society. It acts as a shield against negative images. For its part, the 'real' community provides neither combative representation for struggle nor a collective consciousness which in their eyes is sufficient. They thus develop an imaginary solidarity – past and future – among Blacks. (61)

Black activism appears, to both Potvin and CJAD, as pathology. It mistakenly seeks an objective that white society cannot comprehend.

For white Leftists, Black activists were not doing anti-racism work the right way (if they were doing anti-racism work at all). By developing a discourse that rendered Black youth as either violent or misguided, white society reinforced the idea that Black youth were destabilizing the Quebec nation-building project by building castles in the sand. Meanwhile, AKAX's impressive reach and mobilizing capacity injected a new consciousness among Black youth and made way for them to transform politics in Black Montreal. Indeed, Black activists rejected the male-centered and hierarchical forms of leader-ship and political action that were prevalent in the Black community at the time. They also turned their back on the state and state actors, whose promise of inclusion appeared more and more empty. Finally,

and perhaps most problematically for their critics, they re-oriented the Black community spatially in a manner that resisted the East/West language divide and the politics of inclusion.

4.3 Conclusion

As Lumumba clearly demonstrated, and contrary to white society's claims on the matter, Black activists in 70s and 80s Montreal did strongly critique the integrationist goals of white progressives in Quebec. Inclusion politics were not unanimously accepted as the solution to antiblack violence before Black youth mobilized in the 90s. The idea that Black activists were engaging in a politics that was detrimental to their purported goal served in fact to delegitimize their vision. Anti-racist scholars and activists considered inclusion the political horizon to which Black people, and Black youth in particular, can and must aspire. White anti-racists relied on inclusionary politics as a way to hold Black people within the defined limits of the Quebec nation. In opposition, the discourses and actions from Black youth demanded a new set of Black geographies. Research and reports about Black activists in 90s Montreal convey that outside of the white imagination lies the pathological. However, Black radical political projects exceeded the white imagination. Quebec intelligentsia's stance that Black activists had no project nor structure underlines their inability to understand that Black radical politics did not follow liberal prerequisites. Quebec's white political imagination "offers blackness no way in," to borrow the words of Rinaldo Walcott (2016). The dissonance between the critiques from white activists and scholars, and the work that Black activists accomplished in Montreal during the 90s illustrate their clear opposition. Walcott defines inclusion as "police and expand." This applies to our study, for the white Left sought to police the boundaries of Black politics and expand the Quebec nation to bring into their fold francophone Black youth who should leave their purview.

CHAPTER FIVE

Spirituality and/as Politics

Like any feeling people, we grieved – as a group and as individuals. Once we could pass that stage, we strategized and learned. At first, we had demonstrations and mass rallies, and that was great spiritually. It helped us to vent some of our anger. It empowered us because we saw there were other people who cared. We realized the need to speak with Marcellus François' family. Often people don't realize that the system affects individual people also. So we reached out to the family, to help them through their grief and let them knows that to us they weren't just an issue, or a case of police brutality. We understood there were lives there at stake.
—AKAX organizer, Amuna Baraka, on the shooting of Black folks by Montreal police[36]

Baraka's words are crucial, for they speak directly to black radicalism as spirituality in action. In the context of permanent violence and the constant threat of death, healing and collective care become a spiritual practice. Caring for the dead by bearing witness through community organizing. Caring for the living as they continue to face daily violence. If we return to Wane and Neegan's (2007) theorization, spirituality is "a force concerned with day-to-day human activity that plays a particularly transformative role in the shaping of human inter-personal relationships" and acts as the basis for "a cooperative project of communal survival" (28). Black spirituality, then, needs to be seen as a practice that facilitates paying attention to and taking care of Black life, both the living and the dead – those who live on after their physical death. According to Baraka, spirituality lives in moments when the community comes together. It appears at demonstrations and mass rallies, but also when AKAX reaches out to the Marcellus François family to attend to their concrete needs. In this, we see echoes of Wane and Neegan's view that spirituality entails "the recovering of a community consciousness that thrives because people feel involved with one another" (29). This is the spirituality that animated 90s Black Muslim

[36] Ted Runcie, "AKAX," *The McGill Daily*, December 3, 1991, p.11.

activism in Montreal. Black radical politics as community care. Community care as spiritual. In a world intent on eliminating Black life, is it any wonder that Black people caring for one another could be radical?

I want to consider how anti-Black Islamophobia in 90s Montreal was also one way to refuse Black spirituality as/and practices of community building and care. With such a broad conceptualization, which necessarily goes beyond the religion-spirituality nexus, I understand anti-Black Islamophobia partly as a form of violence against Black spirituality writ large. As in the cases in previous chapters, Black youth who were seen as sympathetic to Malcolm X, regardless of their religious affiliation, were considered as getting aberrantly close to Islam, or at least, close to an aberrant form of Islam. Potvin's (2007a and 2007b) research reduces Black youth conversion to Islam as part of their process to identify with an "imagined" global community and does not consider how, far from being an imaginary projection (as we will see in Greg's experience), their conversion progressed from their quest to understand their life as Black youth in Quebec and to building and strengthening a sense of community in Montreal. The media and white anti-racist activists such as LAM gave alarming accounts of the ideas and actions of various Black Muslim groups, notably the NOI. Emphasizing that they adhered to an unorthodox version of Islam served to signal to white society not only that their lack of orthodoxy signified illegitimacy, but that their blackness had exceeded the limits imposed upon them. These examples illustrate how it becomes necessary to theorize anti-Black Islamophobia as not only centrally targeting Muslim religionists, but also Black people who are perceived to be close to Islam. In an anti-Black Islamophobic context, Black spirituality is a struggle and must be maintained in the face of the violence that necessitates their activism, as well as the violence that conflates their activism with a pathological spirituality.

As the above suggests, it is the *perceived* closeness to Islam that structures anti-Black Islamophobia. For the purpose of this study, there is little need to distinguish between Black people who adhere to more orthodox forms of Islam or to the proto forms of Islam that emerged out of historical Black communities in the Americas. Had the research participants been different people or the period examined not been the 90s, there certainly might be grounds for making a distinction between Black Sunni Muslims and members of the Nation of Islam. Indeed, anti-Black Islamophobia emerges from a social and political environment in which the constant surveillance and policing of Black life, including of religious and spiritual practices, continues to thrive – often regardless of the form that these religious and spiritual practices take. Drawing distinctions between different forms of Black spirituality participates at times in the normative distinctions made familiar through anti-Black Islamophobia itself. In actuality, Muslim Black people, even orthodox Muslim Black people, are repeatedly scrutinized about their true commitment to Islam, by their co-religionists surely, and also by white society. As Joy James (1999), whose work on spirituality has been instrumental to my learning, has written, "pragmatism and 'unorthodox' spirituality reflects the needs (and demands) for vision, language, and action that further survival and freedom" (40). Anti-Black conceptions of "orthodox" and "unorthodox" need to be undermined, rather than reasserted in critical scholarship.

Like the distinction between orthodox and unorthodox, the line between the spiritual and the political needs to be questioned. Audre Lorde (1984), among others, has written about the false dichotomy between the political and spirituality realms. In a context of Black suffering, she explains, Black people's spirituality is always political, since simply bringing us together in order to effect change resists the constraints on Black life. Black spirituality is grounded in a politics that refuses containment and is constantly seeking and creating new spaces and new ways for Black life to emerge. That is what I find inspiring in how NourbeSe Philip (1998) tied Black people's movement in place and in time to

how our spirituality was also affected by multiple displacements and our subsequent longing for community:

> ever since the holds of the slave ship, the european attempts to curtail the every moving of the african:
> the moving in time
> the moving in space
> the moving into their own spirituality
> the european forbids the african language; forbids her her spirituality; forbids her her
> gods; forbids her her singing and drumming; forbids her the natural impulse to cling to mother, father,
> child, sister and brother—forbids her family. leaves her no space. but that of the body.

This excerpt from Philip's piece on race relations in 90s Canada resonated with my observations of the same period in Montreal. It was a time when Black activists criticized for defining antiblack violence in 90s Montreal as the "afterlife" (Hartman 2007, 6) of Québec's slavery. It was a period marked by impeding Black people's movements within and between East and West and delegitimizing their desire to transform their community beyond the language divide. And last but not least anti-Black Islamophobic discourses was one way of curtailing Black people from moving into their own spirituality. As we conclude our Black geographical study of Montreal in the 90s, NourbeSe Philip's helps us see more clearly how Black activists' vision of a Black community without a language divide speaks to how captivity is spatialized in Montreal, and how the spiritual is political in an antiblack world.

NourbeSe Philip's poem also brings me to consider the relationship between between Black culture and spirituality. Amuna Baraka, key organizer with AKAX, was also an actor and a poet, member of DAP (Diasporic African Poets). In a 1993 staging of "The Brothers," a play about the impact of racism and sexism on six Black women after their brothers came back from World War II, Baraka played the role of Marietta (Colman 1993). Later that year, Baraka would say more about how art creates ways and space to heal, nurture and (re)imagine Black life amidst a context of antiblack violence and death. She read a number of her poems, including some that she wrote while attending a funeral of a Black youth shot by police (Nazarali 1993). She presented her piece, "Emotional," on "the need to feel sorrow and grief at the losses of our brothers and sisters. Remembering those who have

fought and died can give us strength to continue the fight against a society hostile to people of colour" Nazarali 1993). These two examples of Baraka's artistic work during the 90s illustrate how, for instace, theater and poetry sessions were creative spaces where Black people in Montreal could gather to reflect on important issues in the community, but also develop expressive forms of community (be)longing, as well as life with and beyond trauma. While further research on Black culture in 1990s Montreal is needed to help us fully grasp the relationship between Black spirituality and culture, we can already see how, for radical Black activists, the creative spaces they built allowed them to multiply to places and moments where Black people could gather, be in community, and see and imagine themselves differently.

In this chapter, I take Lorde's words seriously and contemplate the connection between my research participant's spiritual grounding and their activism in the 1990s. To analyze how Black politics in Montreal 1990s was a practice of spirituality intent on community building, I focus my attention primarily on the life stories of Lumumba, Greg, and Christiane. The organizing work of Lumumba in the 1980s and 1990s in Montreal illustrates how he was able to expand and create spaces where various members of the community came together to learn about history, share political ideas, and essentially lay the groundwork for a new community. Greg and Christiane, both former members of the Nation of Islam (NOI) in Montreal, each tell us in their own way how they came to join the NOI and how organizing the Black community from East to West is both something that motivated the group but also led to its demise. Together, these stories illustrate how the spiritual and the political were wedded together. In the context of Québec, because Black activists referred to transnational Black history/experience to reconfigure the Montreal Black community and affirm its place in the Black diaspora, I understand Black spirituality in Montreal as part of a continued process of community building.

5.1 Black Spirituality as Community Building

In this last chapter of the thesis, I want to bring into focus how, for some, spirituality provided a basis for formal political involvement/activism. Indeed, Bruce explained to me how organizing with AKAX made it possible, even crucial, to develop his Black consciousness. Though he grew up in the church, he still needed to raise his consciousness and develop a stronger spiritual base to which his political work could be connected. For him, Black people had to first learn their common history in order to realize that "we are one, from one vein," Bruce told me. The "divide-and-conquer" politics of language in Quebec have affected the Black community and AKAX sought to bridge that gap, he reiterated. Part of his political work consisted of raising consciousness and encouraging people to reconnect spiritually. Doing that work was also very beneficial to him. In particular, it led him to build a spiritual foundation that would better ground both his life and his activism.

> I grew up in the church. I was always a spiritualist. One spirituality led me to another. One of the biggest problems for Black people is that we are everything, we don't know who our God is. A lot of people in AKAX didn't know who they were. Your God is supposed to look like you. No other ethnicity has that problem, they all have their own God/religion. My mother looks like me, my father looks like me, if I'm going to pray to a God, he's gonna have to look like me. In African teachings, all the Gods were African Gods. We pray to everything that we're not supposed to pray to. A lion cannot praise a tiger. AKAX helped me to live my consciousness a lot higher because we brought several prominent scholars to speak. It helped me a great deal to evolve to higher levels of spirituality. It brought to me that we were able to organize and help a lot of people to grow and progress in many ways.

Trained in several Indigenous spiritual practices, and a student of world religions, Bruce's point cannot simply be reduced to a sweeping critique of all the different faiths to which Black people adhere. The important aspect of Bruce's commentary is about how AKAX's political work brought people in the community to resist individualistic notions of spirituality and instead understand how spiritual practices can allow for Black people to engage in a practice of community care. In an interview with the main English-language Black newspaper in Montreal, *Community Contact*, Bruce explains that spirituality and relationships with the Divine, take their full meaning when they bring us back to one another.

“Every weekend we go out to worship, but we have no trust nor love for each other,” he says, “We forget that the force and energy we bring as a group is more powerful than the strongest individual” (cited in Gaye 2015, ¶10). As we will see in Lumumba, Greg, and Christiane’s recollections of the 90s, for them too spirituality was defined by a practice of memory and community building.

Like Bruce, Lumumba was very clear about how important it is that Black people ground their spirituality in their history, which is precisely what *Daho Vodoo* is about. For him, spirituality can only provide a solid ground for radical politics if it allows Black activists to engage in what he calls “memory work.” In line with what Bruce also tried to convey to me, Lumumba told me that “spirituality is about the memory of our ancestors, so it’s about celebrating ourselves. Our rituals must celebrate us.” Putting this commitment into practice, towards the end of the 70s Lumumba and other pan-Africanists started a reflection process on Black spirituality. The first Sunday that they started “celebrating pan-Africanism in its spirituality” was on April 10, 1983. This involved various rituals of invoking ancestral spirits and it also included discussions on a range of issues concerning the Black community. As one of the contributors to *Le Collectif*, the monthly newsletter of the Haitian Taxi Drivers’ Collective, Lumumba at times also used that literary space to promote *Daho*, a de-colonial and pan-Africanist version of Haitian vodoo that he developed. Later, in October 1987, Lumumba became one of the editors of *Le Péristyle*, a monthly bulletin that focused on pan-Africanism and spirituality (Williams 2006, 135). *Peristyle*’s motto was “Liberate the Sacred.” In 1990, he self-published his first book, *Le Daho*. All of these projects were ways of manifesting his vision of spirituality as practices that build local community and also ground that community in the broader history of the Black diaspora.

As Lumumba created physical and literary spaces for his spiritual-political work, the white media took notice and so did the police. In February 1990, the daily *La Presse* published a series of articles on Haitian vodoo in Montreal. This Black spiritual practice was approached as an object of curiosity. In a

short feature on his book during which Lumumba presents the source of *Daho Vodoo*, the journalist derided the fact that *Daho* seeks to "eject colonialism from the Black soul" (Brunet 1990, my translation).

> *Wearing a jewish-like small cap on this head*, Joseph Léonard calls himself a priest and founder of a *cult* that *professes* to return to the mystical sources of Africa, and partially inspired by vodoo. *According to him*, the Christian dimension of any religion that Black people have adopted is the result of colonial. And it is important to eject colonialism from the Black soul. *See the spiel?* (my translation, emphasis mine, A6)

This is reminiscent of how Aminah Beverly McCloud (2007) explained that white society has consistently defined as a "cult" any effort from Black people "to reform or move beyond white representations of them" (172). Brunet ended his article by further mocking Lumumba when he asked his readers whether a prophet would really work as an instructor at a driving school. Indeed, as you may remember from chapter two, Lumumba was working at a driving school at the time and used his classroom as a community and activist space after business hours. Black community members would come to the space for *Daho* celebrations. Then, with other *Daho* practitioners, Lumumba taught children about Black Egyptology and the history of pre-colonial Africa. There were also times allocated to tutor school children with learning disabilities.

As these examples of Lumumba's work attest, he practiced the principles of Black spirituality by creating and expanding spaces for collective transformation. This work, derided by *La Presse,* received a different kind of scorn from the authorities. As he recalls:

> I once gave an interview to the TV show, *Black Iz*. At that time, every Sunday we had a *Daho* celebration in a nightclub at the corner of St-Michel and Jarry [in the heart of the Haitian community]. So on Sundays, very early in the morning, a team of us would go in, clean the place, and burn incense. Once that was done, we would have a *Daho* celebration. It wasn't *Daho Vodoo* yet at that time. It was *Daho*. That same week after the *Black Iz* interview, the police showed up at our celebration. They said that my speech inflamed passions and that while they were trying to reconcile people I was doing the opposite. I remember that day. It was on Easter Sunday.

Media attention and police surveillance of Lumumba's writings, public speeches, and celebrations of *Daho Vodoo* are important for us to keep in mind for they further exemplify how problematizing Black

spirituality is not something that happened in a vacuum during the 90s, there is a history of controlling Black people's faith and beliefs in Quebec. Nevertheless, that intervention made it clear to Lumumba that the authorities were not only tracking Black media and his own interventions in the community, but were concerned principally with controlling the spaces of community created through Black radical politics. Indeed, I understand Lumumba's *Daho* celebration in a nightclub and the driving school as expanding the spaces of/for blackness in general and Black spirituality in particular. They were also about actively imagining and transforming a space that was not meant to hold and care for Black life, into a space where the spirit finds restoration and is nourished towards a renewed political vision.

Focused on building community, *Daho* celebrations were never limited to any particular spiritual background. Indeed, the celebrations were unique in that Black radical activists of various faiths and beliefs attended them. Lumumba and Black Muslims would often attend each other's gatherings:

> We talked and exchanged ideas. It wasn't Islam that interested me but pan-Africanism. Our political paths and our journeys were most important to me. I sometimes went to their meetings and they came to our *Daho* celebrations on Sundays. We converged somehow. We were close because our struggle made us one. They thought they would convert me but, have mercy!

For his series on Haitian vodoo in Montreal, Brunet, the journalist, attended a vodoo ceremony that had some Catholic references. The fact that Lumumba was also present at the celebration made him question Lumumba's stance against "colonial religions." However, because Lumumba considers spirituality as a community in practice, there was nothing contradictory about wanting to be in connection with other Black people. "I affirm my contradictions and I take my inspiration from my people," Lumumba proudly told *La Presse* (Brunet 1990, my translation).

Lumumba not only welcomed Black people of various faith to *Daho Vodoo* celebrations, but he was also invited to speak at a number of religious community events. Lumumba did not shy away from attending community events and speaking out on the nature of violence against Black people in Montreal. On July 4, 1993, seventy-five people gathered at the Union United Church on Delisle Street for a

memorial ceremony marking two years since Marcellus François' death. Lumumba was the final speaker at the ceremony. He stood at the pulpit and, following vodoo practice, blessed the four corners of the assembly. Lumumba spoke in French to the primarily Black anglophone audience, repeating three times, "Marcellus François was not assassinated." To this day, he vividly recalls the shock in people's faces. Then he said: "Steve Biko was not assassinated. Martin Luther King was not assassinated. Malcolm X was not assassinated. They were killed. Marcellus François was not assassinated, but killed. On the battlefield, the enemy is not assassinated but killed. This is war!" When the crowd erupted, Lumumba realized that everybody present understood his words as a call to something radical and new. Much as the article in *La Presse* had portrayed Lumumba and *Daho Vodoo* as suspect, and the police had later evicted him from the location where *Daho Vodoo* celebrations took place, journalists present at the memorial also found his discourse unsettling. They flooded him with questions after the ceremony and the next day in the news Lumumba was labelled as a "dangerous" man.

I brought forward the commemoration of the two-year anniversary of Marcellus François' death not only to highlight the kind of radical Black politics that shaped 90s Montreal, but also to illustrate, following Audre Lorde's directive, how the spiritual was manifestly political. The commemoration event was held at the Union United Church, in Little Burgundy, the historical home of the Black community until the 1960s (Williams 2006, xxiii). Founded in 1907 by Black railway porters and founding members of the Coloured Women's Club, the church rapidly became the site of Black organizing in the city. For example, in the 1920s, Union United hosted most of the UNIA events (Mathieu 2010, 158). As a sacred place of community building and political action, it was fitting to host the Marcellus François commemorative ceremony there. I would say that the commemoration was a spiritual event that was manifestly politically because it is part of what Christina Sharpe has termed "wake work," which are "practices of self and communal care" (cited in Lacy 2015, ¶2). Such practices are about

mourning the dead but also "bringing breath back into the body" of the individuals and the community that remain behind still living under the violence of antiblackness, in a state of imminent death (¶4).

The anniversary event also provides more evidence of the radical Black political geography of the period, one that sought to overcome, among other things, the city's traditional East/West divide. These Black geographies, like Black politics, were entangled with spirituality. Spirituality sustained the creation of spaces where prevalent racial geographies could be contested and new ones emerged. In other words, through spirituality, radical Black activists in Montreal reconfigured how and where the community converged and created new modes of belonging to the city and to their society.

Police repression of Black spirituality and Black sacred spaces, as Lumumba's experience testify to, were prevalent throughout the nineties. Anti-Black Islamophobic discourses that also became prevalent in public discourses were also a form of repression of Black spirituality. In the following section, I turn to Greg's experience from Sunni Islam to the Nation of Islam to look further into how spirituality as a practice of community building sought a geographical transformation of the Black community in Montreal.

5.2 From Sunni Islam to the Nation

As I explained previously, it was the 1992 interview with Greg published in *La Presse* that first informed me that he had converted to Islam a year prior. When I was preparing my own interview with Greg nearly twenty-five years later, among the things I really wanted to find out was how he had come to Islam and what his journey in the faith had been like over that period. The two hours that Greg and I spoke were particularly illuminating for me, as he immersed himself in what he still considers the most formative years of his life. His trajectory is especially important as it allows us to see how community building was central to young radical Black activists in Montreal. His reflections are in line to those of

Lumumba in the way that spirituality made sense to him at time only if it affirmed his role and place within the Black community in Montreal and was a link with other Black people across the diaspora.

Greg's passage to orthodox Islam, and later to the NOI was a collective process and it highlights the importance he placed on finding and/creating spaces that allow for anglophone and francophone Black political and creative life. In 1991, when one of Greg's friends began talking to them about Malcolm X, Black nationalist movements, and orthodox Islam, the rest of the group (about twenty young men, all Haitian except for one Cameroonian) started to do their own research on Islam and its relevance to their reality as Black youth living in Montreal. They read, for example, books by Ahmed Deedat, as well as Yusuf Ali's translation of the Qur'an at the public library. They were already very skilled academically and were always looking for material that could quench their thirst for knowledge. They began to make sense of their new teachings and before they even realized it, they started going to the mosque and visiting the imam regularly. Their local imam assigned someone to provide them with information, offer classes, and so on. About half the group converted to Islam within six months and the rest did so within the following six months.

Looking back to those early days, Greg considers that what cemented their bond as a group was the fact they were always together, playing basketball, going to the same parties. Even though they did not all attend the same high school, they would either meet either at Maison de jeunes l'Ouverture for leisure activities, at their favourite basketball court, or at the mosque. They saw the mosque as an open space for believers and Islam as a religion that "does not do race" (Manley 2011). These beliefs, Greg remembers, were soon put to the test:

> As time passed, things changed. The people that taught us at the mosque always had a colonialist penchant in their take on orthodox Islam. It started with one of them who used to always tell us that Islam is a universal religion and actually everyone's natural religion, so on and so forth. Later on, another one of our instructors gave us a session on hygiene fundamentals in Islam. He said in his introduction: 'Today, I welcome you in my religion.' Really, he flatly said: 'Today, I welcome you in my religion.' So then I said: 'Really?! This religion is not your property. I thought it was universal! It's not yours. You don't own it, you didn't create

> it.' What he said wasn't something prevalent in that mosque but it raised a lot of doubts in us. We started to wonder: 'If he thinks that way, is he alone? Do other people think like that?'

Experiences like these clashes were the reasons that Greg and his friends had turned to Islam in the first place, and eventually compelled him to explore spiritual spaces outside the mosque. When the doubts in their mind became too great, there was no turning back.

Seeking spiritual alternatives to the mosque, Greg and his friends, started doing more research on Black Egyptology, the Nation of Islam, Black nationalism, Five Percenters,[37] and numerous texts on Black history and world religions. Soon, the books that were available at their neighbourhood library were not enough. They met a Haitian man named Jean Robert, who had access to the books that interested them. He sold them books on vodoo, about peoples of the Dahomey kingdom, and much more. "There was really too much information," Greg remembers, "so we organized our group in three and distributed the readings." They had quite a meticulous and organized approach to these materials, an approach that eventually fuelled more explicitly political forms of organizing.

> One group was going to focus on the NOI. Another on the Five Percenters. A third one would focus on Egyptology and other systems of thought that are less well known. We agreed that after each group had completed their research, we would reconvene and each present a synthesis of our findings. The goal was to focus on the information that was most relevant to our lived reality and present it to the group. It was great in theory but in turned out differently in practice. What ended up happening in reality is that there was a 'perfect storm' with the NOI. The movement towards the 1995 Million Man March (MMM) had started [on January 24, 1994] and it created quite a bit of momentum for the NOI in Montreal. So our three groups joined that banner. It felt like a tidal wave had swept over Montreal. The MMM and the NOI was all that everybody was talking about. We were selling newspapers at subway stations, we went door-to-door to people's homes. That's the kind of proselytising we did for the NOI. That was the beginning.

Among the things that stood out for me when Greg recounted that process, was that it was understood that the final decision would be for the whole group, it was not about each individual finding his own preference. What Greg's story makes clear is how spirituality for him and his group of friends was less about individual introspection, and much more about finding a spiritual space where the group's expe-

[37] The Five-Percent Nation was created in 1964 by a former member of the Nation of Islam. The main tenet of the group is that the Black man is God. Their name comes from their belief that 85% of people live in ignorance, 10% know the truth but work to keep the masses under their rule, and the remaining 5% work at elevating the masses.

rience as young black men from Montreal-North would be affirmed. While the group agreed on a collective process, the final decision was decision on what the broader Black community were moving towards: the NOI. In that sense, the group was guided by the larger desires, needs, and goals of their community.

Before hearing Greg's story, I had yet to encounter Black folks who had left orthodox Islam to join the NOI. His is a particular experience that speaks to how central his blackness and community building were in his spiritual journey. The moment that a coreligionist at the mosque implied that Black people were guests in Islam, it raised doubts and propelled Greg to seek out a faith and a spiritual practice that emerged out of Black people's history and experiences. Throughout our interview, Greg insisted that it was NOI's political work within the Black community that had the biggest impact on him.

> Our group grew a lot from the original twenty. We felt that orthodox Islam didn't speak to our reality. Firstly, the fact that Arabic was the language of the Qur'an made it seem all the more foreign to us, whereas NOI material was much more accessible. There was no translation necessary, neither in term of language, or lived reality. That said, the NOI was very centered on the Black American experience, slavery in the U.S., and antiblack racism in America. Still, the fact that it wasn't an experience that was far from [Black] people's reality [here], it made the NOI that much more relevant than orthodox Islam. The NOI was about Black people's daily reality, not allegories.

The work and the message of the NOI made sense to Greg for it was not only born directly from the history of Black people in North America but the organization also helped them to see themselves as part of a global blackness. The geographical link that it made between the U.S and Canada, fit well within how Black youth in the 1990s imagined a geographical movement across East-West division.

Connecting to a global sense of blackness was just one of the geographical moves enabled by the NOI. As the organization grew in popularity, its Montreal chapter became another space that Black youth reconfigured to deconstruct the city's East/West divide. "The NOI's base was predominantly in the west of Montreal, so before [our group] arrived, there were probably only one or two francophones there," remembers Greg. With arrival of Greg and his friends, the composition of the NOI changed:

> When we arrived, the ratio went from about 90–10 to 60–40 in favour of francophones. But we were bilingual, so that wasn't something that was a problem for us. We were bilingual, we grew up in the 80s with hip hop, Black American arts and culture was a big influence on us. So we actually grew up in English too. We speak French and English, so really the anglophone aspect of the NOI was not difficult for us. But most people in Montreal-North didn't really speak English. They could understand a few words, they could get around, they may speak a broken English but in the state that that person is in, you can't give him a book on astrophysics in English. If you're presenting a topic that is heavy and it's not written in a language that comes naturally to the person, it's highly unlikely that that they will understand it fully … So we always had to translate verbally the information contained in the newspaper that we distributed on the street. I would say that 75% of the people we gave it to [in East Montreal] could not understand it all by themselves.

What Greg makes clear is that there is something here about how the East-West divide is *real*; it lives in people's different linguistic capacities. But, through concrete work like that described above, it can be overcome.

For Greg, the fact that the NOI in Montreal had managed to bring francophone and anglophone Black youth together was an important accomplishment. That said, because these groups had a shared experience coming of age in hip hop culture, joining forces in political action came relatively easy. As I was trying to assess the effect that anti-Black Islamophobia in public discourses had on their ability to reach out to other Black people in the community, Greg maintained that language was much more a defining factor getting people to engage with the issues that the NOI was bring forth. "Some of our elders in the community did feel like our positions were too radical, but the most overwhelming critique [of the NOI in East Montreal] was that our ideas weren't accessible to French-speaking folks," Greg told me.[38] He realized quickly that the fact that the majority of Black people in Montreal are either French-speaking Haitians or continental Africans meant that francophone Blacks must also be enabled through action to participate in discussions on Black life in the city. Thus, the work of Greg and his friends – work conducted in English – needed to be translated and made available to Black francophones:

[38] The 1996 national census reported that only a third of Black people in Montreal were bilingual at the time, compared to 50% of the city's general population. The Montreal Black Communities Demographics project noted that "an ability to speak English and French also impacts on Black identity at the national level as well. Outside Quebec, most Blacks in Canada do not speak French. Only 10.2% were bilingual and 0.7% spoke French only" (MCESSP 2001, 27).

> The reality is this: when I meet someone, talk with them and tell them about the newspaper and what's in it, I will give them an overview of what I read. After we each go our separate ways, all you'll have to rely on is the material I gave you. If they don't fully understand the language in which it is written, they'll misunderstand certain things, reinterpret other parts based on their own assumptions and misconceptions. They'll remember only half the things I said, they will mix it with things they learned elsewhere, and in the end the message and the ideas will be deformed. That's just reality.

Greg points to how the effects of not fully mastering a language in which political ideas are discussed and decisions are made has an alienating and multiplying effect especially in a context like Montreal where language has factored so much in which, how and where Black institutions are created.

It is important to understand Greg's position on the challenges and limits of translation not as a move to maintain the language divide in the Montreal Black community, but rather, as a reflection on how to reconfigure the Black community in ways that do not disadvantage some more than others. Indeed, ensuring that Black political ideas (expressed in English) also circulated in French and finding or creating ways to do so was meant to enable francophone Black communities to be able to participate and contribute to Black political ideas that can resonated across the continent and throughout the diaspora. In that sense, rather than affirming white Quebec prerogatives concerning language, was meant to carry Black people beyond these prerogatives and boundaries altogether. For example, it is because francophone members of the NOI could fully understand the material produced by the NOI that they were in turn able to engage with it by connecting it to the Black Quebec experience, organizing and/or participating in political actions and initiatives in the community. The NOI's work in local prisons is an example. Making the NOI material available in French for francophone Black people living offers possibilities to create or remodel other programs that are in place in East Montreal. Greg and other francophones in the organization argued that because language factored into the lives of so many Black people around them – and not because of white Quebec prerogatives concerning language – their work in the francophone East should be adapted to that population. "The problem was that the material and the newspapers didn't come from Montreal," Greg explained, "they came from Chicago and for them only

one message could circulate." Making these ideas available to francophone Black communities required ongoing work.

Eventually, problems emerged between Montreal activists and the Chicago-based headquarters of the NOI. Perhaps because they could not understand the specific context of the Black community in Montreal, or most likely because it was important for the NOI to ensure the uniformity of the organization's message in all its chapters, members in Montreal did not have all the resources nor the leeway necessary to do their outreach in French in East Montreal. Chicago mistook the members' request as a sign of brewing dissent. It was at this point that Greg explained that disagreements with headquarters in Chicago began to simmer:

> The NOI leadership assigned someone from the U.S. to oversee our Montreal chapter but that figure had ulterior motives. Instead of adhering to NOI teachings, he used his status as a leader to exploit a great many people monetarily, financially, and spiritually. Many of us then started abandoning the history, the spiritual or political aspect of the NOI message. Selling the newspaper began to feel like a job. From the twenty of us who had joined the NOI together, ten were left because they were like, 'this is not the NOI anymore, it's more like a sect.'

When the rift within the Montreal chapter of the NOI became irreparable, some members decided to stay in the organization and attempted to do their work by remaining under the leadership of Louis Farrakhan in Chicago, while others left those ranks and created the Nation of Islam of Canada (NOIC), under the leadership of Hon. Minister Linwood X in the summer of 1997. NOIC was set up as an independent branch not affiliated with the NOI (Bennet Muhammad 2008, 66).

The splintering of the NOI was difficult for Greg and rendered vulnerable all the work that he and other NOI members had been doing. Greg, who stayed with the NOI, reflects on this difficult period:

> It discouraged a lot of people. The fact that it was an internal battle disillusioned folks. Those looking from the outside in would say: 'See! You tell us to stand together and now you're fighting!' And it wasn't a small disagreement either like, 'I don't like the color of your shirt but let's sit down and talk about it.' That wasn't it. It almost killed us. It was fratricidal. It was something that disconnected people from the message that most people in the NOI wanted to convey.

Although they came to the organization differently, both Greg and Christiane were members of the NOI during the same period. For Greg, more than anything, reconfiguring the Black community by bringing together the francophone East and the anglophone West entailed tackling very concrete challenges, language not being the least of them. The NOI, for Greg, was a venue where this community building work could be done. For Christiane, who became a member of the NOI during the same period, the NOI served a similar purpose. For her, however, community building took on a slightly different guise.

5.3 "Homemaking" in the Nation of Islam

Christiane's involvement in NOI differed in important ways from Greg's, and these differences have much to do with the characteristics of her life before she joined. To understand how Black women arrive to Islam, Aminah McCloud (1995) reminds us, it is important to know their life story. This is true, I would add, when it comes to women joining proto-Islamic groups as well. Christiane's own story, I want to suggest in this section, sheds light on her experience in the Montreal chapter of the NOI, as well as her important analysis of how the group's full potential as a space to rethink and reshape Black Montreal never fully came to fruition.

From her childhood to early adulthood, we see how spirituality was often a vector to find and/or create community for Christiane as well as other women in her life. Growing up in Longueuil where the Black population was tiny, Black spiritual gatherings and celebrations were where Christiane, her mother, and sister experienced being in community with other Black people:

> We went to church a lot during my childhood. Religion, God, the priest, they were all very present in our lives growing up. We were Catholics. We celebrated everything: baptism, first communion, confirmation. I remember that the dress I wore for my first communion looked like a wedding gown! It was a big deal. People travelled from all over to attend the event. Religious rituals were a big part of my life … I spent part of my childhood going to Protestant churches. That's because at a certain point, my mother stopped going to the neighbourhood Catholic church and started going to church with her friends who mostly lived in St-Michel [north of Longueuil]. We frequented a Haitian church in St-Michel and for a

> while my mother preferred to go there. I sometimes wonder why. Was she really a Protestant or was she looking to be with her community since we lived so far from them? That's what it was. It was social. My mother was a bit more isolated. We attended that church from the age of 8 to about 11 or 12. It was much stricter than Catholicism, but my mother never fully converted. She was never baptized there. We still attended weddings and other baptisms there. We went to all their events. At a certain point my sister and I decided to stop going to that church. There was a lot going on in that church. This brother was sleeping with this sister, this son started doing drugs. People pretended to be godly but really, they weren't any better than our neighbours. I saw how men at church touched little girls and even abused them.

The fact that Christiane attended evangelical Black churches in St-Michel but always remained a Catholic emphasized how important being in community and sharing a Black spiritual space was more important than being with other co-religionists in a context where those co-religionists were (almost) entirely white. Similar to Lumumba's experience, Christiane's mother also did not feel like sharing Black spiritual spaces with other members of the community, and participating in spiritual celebrations, did not require her to convert. That said, Christiane's memories reveal that she discovered, at a young age, that Black spiritual spaces were also gendered and thus, Black girls navigated those spaces differently, aware of the violence that was also present there. These experiences are significant.

While Montreal is understood as being divided East and West by language, and while Black radical activists illuminate prevailing racial divisions in the city. What Christiane brings to our attention is how Montreal is gendered. Hence, at the same as she experienced spiritual connection through being in community with other Black people, she also learned that being in community does not naturally shelter Black women and girls from gender violence. Community is not a given and it is not automatically a positive space for Black women. As Zenzele Isoke (2013) explains, faced with heteropatriarchal violence, Black girls and women often transform their own pain "into spatial agency" (120). Indeed, in the case of Christiane and her sister, leaving that church community was an act of spatial agency premised on the refusal of the violence that Black girls experienced or witnessed there.

The theme of Black girls and Black women reshaping Black spaces and recreating Black communities, what Isoke called "homemaking," is a recurring one throughout Christiane's life. It was first

through a friend that Christiane started paying attention to what Black activists were doing in Montreal. When she was about 18 years old, in 1993, her friend's sister introduced her to AKAX and she attended two of their meetings at Dawson College. She remembers that the meeting was well attended and animated by a jarring political message that she did not immediately accept: "I had also started listening to Malcolm X's speeches. I liked the group's message but it sounded dangerous to me so I stopped going to their meetings. It was a bit extreme. They said things like 'the white man is the devil' and I was like, 'let's calm down'!" Christiane did not return to AKAX's other weekly Friday meetings at Dawson.

While AKAX's political positions seemed too radical to her, Christiane became involved with the Nation of Islam two years later. Christiane still remembers how she first found out about the NOI in Montreal. It was through her friend Danielle.

> She had a really wild personality! There wasn't anything that she wouldn't do! Then, Danielle started wearing skirts that got longer and longer. I asked myself, 'What's going on with my friend?' She also kept wearing baseball caps all the time. 'What is she doing? Maybe she has a new boyfriend that I haven't met. What's going on with Danielle?' I kept wondering. Well, Danielle had met a guy from the Nation of Islam … She said to me, 'Listen, Christiane. I started going out with guy and he's in the NOI.' I was like, 'What's that?' She explained, 'Those who sell newspapers! They dress a bit weird too.' She had also joined the group so I asked her to take me to one of their meetings. Remember that I was a big nerd at the time, I read a book every week.

It was on Danielle's urging that Christiane eventually attended an NOI meeting. "She brought me with her," remembers Christiane, "it was a Friday and the meeting was at the UNIA (United Negro Improvement Association), right next to the Lionel-Groulx subway station."

The tone of Christiane's first NOI meeting set the stage for her work within the organization; it also played a role in determining how issues of gender and power would figure predominantly in her years with the NOI:

> I got there and a sister greeted me: 'Salam alaikum.' 'Wa alaikum salam,' I replied. Everyone stopped and looked at me: 'Where did she come from?' 'You know the greeting?' they asked. 'Yes, I do,' I told them. But I was very standoffish. Men were sitting on one side, women were facing them. They couldn't mix. There was a study group leader. He introduced a topic and then everyone gave their opinion. There were less brothers who attended the meetings then. So there I was, a wandering soul, a bit broken, but that wasn't showing. Still, I wanted to be accepted. I was gung ho! When the study group leader spoke, I kept interrupting him: 'No, no, no, Prophet Muhammad said this, Prophet Muhammad said that!' I still

> remembered some of the things I learned in Mauritania, but I was also basing my remarks on the many books I read. 'No, no, that's not true. There's this about women, that that that.' I just knew a lot about the topic. I often went to the library and picked out books on several topics and just read them all. I love reading. So I would throw things at them and they all wanted to reply to me. And whenever someone made their point, I was like: 'No, no, no, brother! You better get your facts straight! This happened, that happened…' We often went an hour past the schedule. The study group leader then asked me if I would be back the following week because I brought a lot to them. Well, since they were giving me so much attention, I said: 'Yes, I'll come back! Yeah Yeah!' I went back the following Friday. There were not enough chairs for people to sit! It was now them against me, I tell you! 'No, no, Prophet Muhammad said this, He said that!' During the week I had gone to the library, selected a few books, and verified my facts! They loved it when I went to the study groups. That's the story of my introduction to the Nation.

Christiane vivid recollection of her first time at an NOI meeting illustrates how asserting her knowledge of Islam, and a range of political and historical topics, was also part of how she worked to reconfigure the dynamics of that space. In a sense, her process of "homemaking" – transforming the NOI chapter in Montreal into a space where Black women defied normative gender codes, actively engaged with discussions about their community, and took leadership in decided the collective direction – started at that meeting. The leadership skills that exhibited at that meeting, even without officially having joined the NOI, also point to how she saw Black spiritual-political spaces as a place where Black folks in Montreal could fully participate in transforming the community, whether they were NOI members or not.

As she was entering adulthood, Christiane experienced a number of challenges in her familial and personal life, the death of her father in Haiti in 1992 due to political strife not being the least. Despite a turbulent introduction, Christiane found in the NOI a group of Black people who seemed to encourage her to express herself in a manner that supported her spiritual awareness and growth:

> I had started taking ecstasy, I drank a lot, I was always going out. I worked 53 hours per week but I got back into the habit of partying. I didn't know what else to do. I couldn't see my options. There was nobody to teach me how to be a woman, an independent individual … I had a lot of childhood trauma to deal with … The Nation showed me that I didn't have to do what everyone else was doing. In my process in the Nation, I felt like I was in a cocoon for many years where I could explore who I really was. It's funny that I say that because they required me to act in a very specific way. They put me in a mould. But I don't see it as a [strong] mould compared to all the other ones that exist out there. I always spoke, always gave my opinion. I didn't change, my personality didn't really change. I asserted myself even more in the Nation than before, and they respected me too. I used to work a lot for the Nation, and the men I met appreciated me because I stood on my two feet.

Christiane's life story illuminates the complexities of Black women's life in Montreal. In the spaces that they created or gave shape to, they sought healing for their collective suffering and for multiple forms of trauma they continue to survive. The potential for community transformation they found in those spaces is what they worked to maintain and expand.

When Christiane joined the Nation, Linwood X was already in Montreal, but he was also the Minister of a mosque in Albany, New York and oversaw the mosques in Ottawa and Toronto as well. Since Toronto was closer to Buffalo, the NOI eventually assigned them another Minister from there. As Christiane recalls, since Linwood was not a constant presence in Montreal when she first arrived, she was able to get settled in the group without him influencing her image of the group much. "Honestly," confessed Christiane, "had Linwood been leading the group when I first joined, I would've ran the other way!" Still, the influence that Linwood X had on the Montreal chapter of the NOI was such that it created obstacles in Black women's desire to build sisterhood within the Nation. His leadership also added difficulties to the group's objectives of creating deep connections within and outside the community. In both cases, it was the quasi-authoritarianism of Linwood X that proved problematic.

> I'm a survivor. My father was the scariest person I've ever met in my life. Still, whenever our family needed something, I'm the one who went to ask him for it. I'm the one who went to get the police when he hurt my mother. But my father respected me. Everyone else was afraid of him though. I used to look at Lynwood straight in the eyes, I wasn't scared. I never disrespected him but I wasn't afraid of him. So he hated me. He even asked women in the Nation not to socialize with me, not to talk with me. Yes, he did. He told them: 'I don't like the defiance that I see in her eyes.'

The patriarchal character of Linwood X's leadership was expressed again and again, defying one of the principles that attracted Christiane to the NOI in the first place, she told me. And yet, it was not a space that she was ready nor willing to yield to him. I would argue that what he considered Christiane to be defiant because her "homemaking" process was in direct contradiction with his vision of how the group should function and the rules that should govern it. Christiane's defiance was a refusal of the gendered captivity that he wanted to turn into a norm.

These negative experiences mirrored other events in Christiane's life where being in community with other Black folks required her to witness and experience several forms violence against Black women and girls. In her childhood as in her adulthood, Christiane had come learned how Black community and spiritual spaces that reproduce violence the same kinds of violence under which Black girls and women already live, are not transformative. This experience, and response to it, highlights certain aspects of spiritual-political community that only a gendered analysis can bring to light.

Spaces of/for community building and spiritual affirmation are also political spaces where power is brokered. In heteropatriarchal arrangements, this means that power is levelled against women through sexual violence and/or by contesting their authority and limiting its scope. When the institutions and the communities that we build do not account for the many ways in which Black life is gendered, their critiques of race become simply a project to realign power instead of transforming it. Christiane's response to this situation, meanwhile, suggests how resistance to gendered violence is entangled with the struggle against antiblackness.

> Respect for women is very important in the NOI. The Nation elevates Black women to the status of Queen, of royalty. What we realized is that Linwood X had taken advantage of our lack of knowledge, our ignorance, to teach us what he wanted. When he started [the NOIC], he would even tell women exactly what kind of underwear they are allowed to wear and which ones they're not allowed to. It was truly something else.

Christiane broke ties Linwood's group in 1997, organized with others to rebuild an NOI chapter in Montreal in which the exploitation of Black women would not be tolerated. Reorganizing the NOI in Montreal was another exercise in "spatial agency," for she and others only ceded that space to members who would pursue the values and objectives of community building. Following Isoke's concept of "homemaking," Christiane's experience in the NOI during Linwood X's tenure fits into the wider history of Black institutions in Montreal that rested heavily on the shoulders of Black women while also requiring them to endure gendered violence. Often, that abuse led to these institutions' demise. Even though they were few in number, Christiane's group maintained their chapter of NOI for several years,

a testament to how Black women work to create and preserve radical spaces where transformative relationships and communities can emerge. To echo Rachel Zellars (2015), Black women organizing is very much about making "a community more liveable for the lives of the Black women and girls in it, particularly those of us that live beyond, yet with personal histories of sexual and intimate violence." Indeed, the history of the NOI in 90s Montreal is important to share because it exemplifies a broader pattern in which "Black community work comes undone when Black women's lives and bodies are not valued penultimately, as sacred community bodies, yet are nonetheless centered as community grounding bodies – that is, as bodies who carry the weight, labour, brunt, and excess within our organizing spaces" (Zellars 2015).

In her memoir about her time in the Black Panther Party, Elaine Brown (1992) writes poignantly about how gendered violence is also very much a part of that group's history. In the case of Québec, Rachel Zellars' research on Black institutions in Montreal has led her to investigate how the Alfie Roberts Institute was dismantled after it was revealed that Roberts used to beat his wife. Instead of facing up to this reality, the organization's founders preferred to shut it down than deal publicly with the history of Black violence against women in radical activist spaces. There needs to be a gendered analysis of how Black institutions are formed and come apart. In the case of the NOI, what Christiane's story allows us to analyze is the centrality of gender to Black spiritual modes of organizing. A large part of why the story of the NOI in 90s Montreal is key to document is because it provides one of the clearest examples of the importance of spirituality in the burgeoning Black community of Montreal at the time and helps us to demonstrates how francophone and anglophone Black youth came together with the express goal of creating a shared Black community institution. We need this history, but we need to remember how gendered violence was part of it.

Despite her different experience of the NOI, Christiane shares the community-centred view of spirituality articulated by Lumumba and Greg. Among the many lessons that Christiane kept from her time in the Nation, the importance of community building is central. “Whenever I see a Black woman or a Black man, I call them sister or brother,” Christiane shared with me. “I love my people very much. I learned to know our people in all of its aspects. I come from that world.” She also appreciates how her time organizing with NOI led her to love herself in her blackness:

> I learned in the Nation that my blackness is not a curse. My blackness is something beautiful. The Nation reprogrammed me. It wasn’t a bad thing, as long as we didn’t fall on someone who wanted to take advantage of that. I learned that our history starts before slavery. We were a people before slavery. Slavery is not something that we should be ashamed of. It’s part of our history. I learned that Black people are a people that are suffering … People think that one gets indoctrinated in the Nation. They think that the Nation is a cult, just like any other religious group that’s outside the norms. Nevertheless, everything concerning self-image, about Jesus being white, I now understand why it’s important to question things.

I presented in this thesis how spirituality is about community building. For Christiane, this was primarily about connecting to a global sense of blackness: transcending the national boundaries within which blackness could be recognized only as a pathology potentially on its way to cleansing through integration.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

The broad aims of this thesis were first to investigate how Black radical activists created different geographies of 90s Montreal; second, to examine anti-Black Islamophobia in state and white Left responses to Black activist movements; and third, to explore how spirituality infused and shaped Black activists' ideas and practice.

To frame the context for this thesis, in chapter two I demonstrated – with Christiane and Lumumba in the forefront – how blackness in Quebec is very much grounded in a history of slavery, as well as subsequent Black diasporic movements through and between other Atlantic territories. Another important element that set the background for the study was my refusal to accept the normative manner in which ethnicity serves to mask blackness in Québec. Ethnicity serves to erase race in Quebec. Because ethnicity is the category through which the French-speaking-white-catholic Quebec subject emerges and lays the foundation of the Quebec nation-building project, ethnicity is the only acceptable, category through which Black and other non-white subjects can become legible.

To elaborate on my first research question – how activists involved in AKAX and other Black radical activist groups worked within and against the prevailing linguistic geography of Montreal – I relied primarily on Christiane's narrative. Christiane's life story in Longueuil, and other accounts by Black women who experienced multiple forms of violence in East Montreal, provided us with a compelling counter spatial history that illustrated how race, and not language, organizes the city's geography. Most importantly, we learned how urban space is both raced and gendered, and how Black girls and women organize in defence of themselves and their communities, in order to combat against Black placelessness.

Indeed, as chapter three opened by testifying to the violence that Black francophones in the East have endured, it proceeded by presenting how Black youth organized to make space for Black life *against* the dominant East/West linguistic divide. A number of Black groups and organizations emerged to denounce antiblack violence in Montreal during the 90s. The work that AKAX accomplished in the 90s consisted of bringing together Black francophones and anglophones through, for example, discussion groups on several college and university campuses, a weekend school program, protests against police violence, and an annual East-West conference to discuss a range of political and social issues that concerned the Black community. The important argument in that chapter is that while white society mapped Montreal with antiblack violence, radical Black youth activists sought to create a Black geography that would allow Black people to move differently through East and West.

In chapter four, I examined how the white Left responded to radical Black activist movements at the time. I started by outlining the continuity between radical Black activism in the 70s and 80s and into the 90s, mostly through Lumumba's reflections. What became apparent in his narrative and in the white Left's response to radical Black thought was that inclusionary politics were the measure to which white anti-racists evaluated the political work of Black youth in 90s Montreal. One of the primary ways that white anti-racists represented Black youth was through what I have termed "anti-Black Islamophobia." By analyzing white intelligentsia's critique of AKAX, as well as their discourse against Muslim Black youth, I found that in that context, anti-Black Islamophobia is expressed as a sign that blackness has exceeded not only the limits of the tolerable, but also of the territory itself. Conversely, radical Black activists – many of whom identified as Muslim, though some were simply conflated with Islam – defied Quebec's own nation-building project by building Black geographies that rejected the empty promise of inclusion. These Black geographies remained illegible and unacceptable to the white anti-racists who wrote extensively about these same Black activists.

In chapter five, I opted to return to the inner workings of the Black community, by focusing on how spirituality infused and shaped Black activists' ideas and practices. To do so, I started by demonstrating that antiblack violence attacked Black people's spiritual well-being. By defining spirituality as a practice of community building and care, we saw how, in the case of Greg, his path from orthodox Islam to the NOI was very much about his focus on (re)building the Black community in Montreal across the language divide. Christiane's experience with the NOI, especially "through the storm," demonstrated her resolve to practice "homemaking," or the creation of a spiritual-political space where Black women and Black people can be affirmed and their spirits restored. While spirituality did not provide shelter from the incredible racial violence enacted on Black Montrealers, it certainly played an important role in building surprising Black geographies that built alternative geographic agendas, as McKittrick explained.

Overall, this thesis gave spatial stories not only of antiblack violence in 90s Montreal but of creative Black resistance. I argued that grounding their blackness in a history and a geography that exceeds Quebec is central to how Black activists sought to reconfigure the map of the Black community outside of the East/West language divide. Amidst a context of anti-Black Islamophobia bolstered by state and white anti-racists' discourses, Black activists continued to create spiritual spaces of community building and care.

This work engages with and builds upon a series of emerging literatures. In one of my major engagements, I drew from the important work of Rinaldo Walcott on how Black communities continuously trouble and push against the concept of nation in Canada and Jemima Pierre on discourses in the U.S. that oppose "immigrant" Black communities to African Americans. Both of them helped me to make sense of how Quebec opposes Haitians to other Black communities. The innovative work of Black feminist geographers such as Katherine McKittrick, Zenzele Isoke, and Aimée Meredith Cox

guided me as I not only deconstructed the many ways in which Black women's experiences of violence shape their relationship to space and place, but even more importantly, how Black women and girls organize, on various scales, their own resistance and that of their communities. In particular, I am forever indebted to Christiane Joachim for sharing her story with me, as her narrative provides a rare glimpse into the remarkable struggle that was growing up as a Black girl in 80s and 90s Montreal. Documenting and explaining her experience is without a doubt one of the major contributions of my study. It was through talking to Christiane and sustaining written communication that Black women's spatial stories of Montreal became central to how I understand my own experiences and organizing in Montreal.

I also engaged significantly with literatures on antiblackness and Black spiritual practice. The ideas of Saidiya Hartman, Joy James, and Frank Wilderson III were particularly important to me as I analyzed the contrasting geographies between white anti-racist activists and scholars, and Black radical activists. While I did not provide an exhaustive overview of the level of antiblackness in the white Left, I did tackle the bulk of the available literature from the period in question, manifesting the ways that "anti-Black Islamophobia" is normalized in "progressive" circles. Finally, Black feminist scholars of spirituality such as Jacqui Alexander, Njoki Wane, Erica Neegan, and Yvonne Bobb-Smith provided me with a way to understand how Black spirituality guides community care. This allowed me in turn to pay attention to the specific ways that Greg, Christiane, Lumumba, and Bruce integrated spirituality into their political work. I have contributed to the literature on Black spirituality by exploring it in the context of activism and in 90s Montreal in particular.

While contributing to discussions of Black activism in Quebec and elsewhere, this thesis also gestures toward further work that can and must be taken up. I purposefully ended the preceding chapter on spirituality with the moment that Christiane and others separate from Minister Linwood X to realign the NOI chapter in Montreal with the NOI led by Minister Louis Farrakhan. I began my research in

2015 with the goal of finding the young Black activists that I heard had converted to Sunni Islam in the 90s. When I found Greg and later interviewed him, his story of coming to and leaving orthodox Islam to join the Nation of Islam took me by surprise. I had no prior knowledge of the working of the NOI in Montreal before my interview with Greg, though I was well-versed in its history in the U.S. The story of how and why he eventually left the NOI presented me with a new set of questions that I had not anticipated. I was first struck by how many francophone and anglophone Black youth came together with the goal of organizing across the language divide, and then by how their lives did not unfold as they had planned. Learning about the difficulties they faced raised concrete questions about how *exactly* we may start to transform our community against the East/West divide. The challenges in organizing francophone and anglophone Black people together are often explained by language, but what does that explanation hide or not address? I ask that because what was so clear in the interviews that I conducted and the archival traces of Black activism in 90s Montreal is that Black people desired new Black geographies to emerge.

A friend of mine who happens to work for the same employer as Christiane first introduced us. My friend told me that Christiane was a member of the NOI for several years and I was eager to know the story of a Black woman who was an activist in Montreal during the 90s. She spoke to me even more in details about the break with Min. Linwood X but also of the years that followed and the issues that were prevalent during her tenure in the role of Secretary. Not only did the tension with Linwood X's group not cease after the break, but there are also issues of the NOI Montreal chapter being surveilled by the police and continued tensions about how to organize beyond the East/West divide. I ended chapter five with Christiane for she brought me to consider ways to pursue this research to look more in detail to study the history of the NOI in Montreal as an institution that continues to grapple not only with the issue of the language divide in the Black community but also how power operates in that

context. More work is needed, I would suggest, on the operation of power within Black institutions in Montreal and elsewhere.

While interviewing Christiane, Greg, Lumumba, and Bruce, it became evident that I had come into this research with my own assumptions of who built and formed the Black community in Montreal and who could identify as Black in the city. Although myself of Rwandese origin, I had not anticipated learning about the impact that continental African people have had in defining Black radical politics in Montreal and influencing their Caribbean and Antillean brothers and sisters. It also raised questions about how and why Haitians and francophone continental Africans occupy different roles and positions in the Québec nation-building project. This is a topic that demands attention. There is a need for further research, in particular, that addresses the role and the work of continental Africans within the Nation of Islam in Montreal (certainly) and elsewhere (I would suggest). Still today, Black organizers of African origin occupy leadership position in the NOI in Montreal. Consequently, although this research does seem to replicate the idea that blackness in Montreal is outlined by Caribeanness, or that Blackness *begins* with Caribeanness, I want to at least to assert that those who were at the forefront of organizing in defense and in celebration of the Black community in the 1990s had an experience that is quite different.

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