Prolonging the Afterimage:

Looking at and Talking about Photographs of Black Montreal

Kelann Currie-Williams

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By: Kelann Currie-Williams

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_____Chair
Dr. Rachel Berger

_____Examiner
Dr. Steven High

_____Examiner
Dr. Monika Gagnon

_____Thesis Supervisor
Dr. Erin Manning

Approved by _____
Dr. Rachel Berger, Graduate Program Director

_____2021 _____
Dr. Effrosyni Diamantoudi, Interim Dean of Graduate Studies

ABSTRACT

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This thesis takes as its focus Black Montreal's history of image-making and image preservation. Engaging primarily with snapshot and vernacular images taken between the 1940s-1980s, this research charts how photography has functioned as an integral force in the formation and production of selfhood, community, and a sense of belonging as well as a practice of resistance and of affirming visibility for Black Montrealers. Guided by the question of whether photography and oral history could be used in tandem to come into encounter with the minor histories and everyday stories of Montreal's Black communities, this thesis comprised of conducting oral history photo-interviews with Black Montrealers and studying several personal collections, Black community-oriented and institutional photographic archives. The interdisciplinary approach of blending of visual culture and oral history speaks directly to the interwovenness and inseparability of photography and orality which is made most evident through the photographs that are included within this research. Moreover, the process of looking, touching, and talking about served to further contextualize the photographs within personal and archival collections, share information regarding practices of vernacular image-making and preservation in black communities in Montreal, as well as highlight the dynamic relationship that exists between memory, photography, orality, and affect.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to three people who passed away within six months of each other during the second year of my undergraduate studies, and who continue to have a powerful influence on my life.

~~~

Wilhel Chambers (1945-2015)

My nana, the first historian I ever met. The most compassionate and gentle woman I have ever known. I hear your voice and laugh in every sound. I miss you more and more every day.

Norma Fay Francis (1943-2015)

My great-aunt, a loving joke teller and my co-conspirator in swiping tamarind balls as a child and vowing never to tell my mum. I miss your cards, our phone calls, and yearly visits.

Marty Allor (1954-2016)

My first professor at university. Introduced me to the work of Stuart Hall and made me truly believe that I had words to share. Because of you, in everything I do I try to "Be good".

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PREFACE

A NOTE ON COMPOSITION

Learning what a citation can be and what it can do was an important element in writing *Prolonging the Afterimage.* The multiple ways of working with citation are, as Saidiya Hartman, Alexis Pauline Gumbs, Dionne Brand, and Katherine McKittrick make clear and teach in their work, ventures into understanding how footnotes, endnotes, and bibliographies hold thought from time before, hold thought in-the-making, and hold thought that can flourish across with the right watering. Their citational practices—all colourful variants of mentions and connections, evidence and encounters—were constant reminders of the openness writing requires of itself. And, also, the play and experimentation inherent to such openness.

While the composition of the thesis might already be discernible, I thought it necessary to provide an explanatory roadmap of sorts. As you will see, the quality and type of citation throughout will be varied in form and will comprise of two types of footnotes: one citational, and the other annotative.

The numbered footnotes refer to bibliographic sources: the writing that I, drawing on Alexis Pauline Gumbs, am constantly thinking "after and with". These notes serve the customary function of keeping the referential thread clear and foregrounded on the page (perhaps this is already obvious, already assumed to be the format a thesis would follow).

1 2 3

However, alongside these numbered footnotes, will be another kind of footnote—another kind of annotation. These notes, in the form of symbol characters, are not necessarily *referring back* to an already-created work but rather *sending forward* to a thinking that parallels what is being seen on the page. They are springboards, intercessors—where another form of thinking lies, spread out on a warm beach.

Let's call these "sendnotes".

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The interlude, “An Infinite Web,” is where the sendnotes live. It is where ideas that leaked and spilled over from the first and second chapters are sited. Fragmentary and gradational, the words in this section take the form that first arrived while trying to write about how oral history and image theory intersect, and how histories of Black life in Canada move through these supposed separate categories (what could, incorrectly, be defined as a categories which centres on one hand, sound and the other, the visual).

The sendnotes do not function as additive or supplementary. They exist in their own right but are to be seen as a sort of intermediary or intercessor that allows for a sideways movement through the meditations of this thesis. The fragments of the interlude feel like an overflow, and they almost always have a formless form or, a form that feels unable to be subsumed within any sort of phrasal totality, with its full sentences and clauses, syntactic adherence, supposedly allergic to the partial.

See page 66

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If what is written in the first and second chapters fails to register in its presented form, then follow the sendnote. If after following the thread of the sendnote to the interlude you want to stay there and linger a bit longer, sit and stay awhile. If you want to find your way back to the two main chapters, the sendnote will also bring you back in the same way it sent you to the interlude. As Dionne Brand writes in the index of *The Blue Clerk*: “Every listing generates a new listing. Every map another road.”

INTRODUCTION

FINDING LIFE IN THE BLACK ARCHIVE

> "What is beauty, if not 'the intense sensation of being pulled toward the animating force of life?' Or the yearning 'to bring things into relation… with a kind of urgency as though one's life depended upon it.' Or the love of the black ordinary?"[1]
> — Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments*

I heard the image before I saw it. It was not the sound of music, contrary to what the photograph suggested. The sound was a movement, or a creaking. Something in motion, anything but stilled. The black and white image was of a woman standing next to a child who was seated at a piano. My captivation with the photograph was immediate, and it was difficult to put the square print down on the table. The image was arresting for two reasons: the first being its physical creases and scratches—the photograph wore its age. The second: both the child and the woman were Black. As I learned from a handwritten annotation on the back of the photograph and from the fonds' archivists, Alexandra Mills and Ellen Gressling, the woman in the photograph was Daisy Sweeney—the exceptionally skilled and beloved piano teacher of the now demolished Negro Community Centre in the neighborhood of Little Burgundy in Montreal, and sister of pianist Oscar Peterson.

Less than four months later, while waiting for a flight from Montreal to visit Halifax for the first time, I found out from my partner (who had been hesitant to tell me a few days prior) that Daisy Sweeney passed away at the age of 97 on August 11th, 2017. The trip, though meant to be a vacation of sorts, was also to be a trip to visit the Africville Museum. With Ms. Sweeney's image continually on my mind throughout the week spent in Halifax, it started to blend and incorporate itself into the photographs I was seeing of a lost Africville—a district driven by community lost to urban renewal, to a violent razing, to a demonstration of a particular instantiation of Canadian anti-Blackness. In many ways it felt as though I was carrying Ms. Sweeney with me, across; she was to accompany me, by way of the photographic image of her at that piano with her young student still imprinted on my mind, to Halifax to see other histories of Black life. Through seeing her enduring image—feeling and carrying it with me—her life felt

[1] Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2019), 236

sustained as though lingering in the memory and on the retina could be an extension of how we see and understand life; evidently a photograph did more than simply capture her image, it created an opening, a cut[2] for an existence beyond, a prolonging of a life world.

It has been three years since my first encounter with the image of Daisy Sweeney and yet, it continues to puncture,[3] animate and reappear before me like a "seething presence".[4] In trying to make sense of the affective experience of seeing this photograph, being *touched* by it, and having it persist even with eyes closed, I was drawn to the concept of the 'afterimage.' The afterimage is defined as a visual occurrence where an image continues to appear in a person's vision for a brief period of time, even after the initial exposure to the image has ended; the memory of the image materializes as a "retinal impression" in the mind which can be seen even in its absence.[5] Said differently, the afterimage can be understood as the persistence of the image to not be forgotten; its persistence to live a type of "afterlife" within the memory of a new onlooker. Despite the increasingly haunting nature of the afterimage, the experience of seeing the image and re-experiencing it through its afterimage, has persisted as a force I want to sustain—a force that must sustain.

My earliest encounters with the everyday or vernacular photographs found within the archival boxes of the Negro Community Centre/Charles H. Este Cultural Centre fonds at Concordia University's Special Collections began in January 2017 while taking an undergraduate history course entitled "Telling Stories: Oral History, Memoryscapes, and Digital Storytelling." I, along with over twenty-five other students, explored the history of the Negro Community Centre (NCC) through original archival research where we engaged with over 100 boxes of textual and graphic material such as newspaper clippings and photographs, correspondences, and programming events as a means to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the centre which had been located in Little Burgundy but was demolished in 2014.[6] These early visits and study sessions were marked by or perhaps met with an impulse for fabulation. The "what could be happening" and the "who is being photographed" but also the "why was it

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[2] As Fred Moten writes, "The meaning of a photograph is cut and augmented by a sound or noise that surrounds it and pierces its frame." In "Black Mo'nin' in the Sound of the Photograph", *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 202.
[3] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photographs* (London: Vintage Books, 1981), 26.
[4] Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 8.
[5] Geoffrey Batchen, *Each Wild Idea: Writing, Photography, History*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), 10.
[6] See Alexandra Mills, Désirée Rochat, and Steven High, "Telling Stories from Montreal's Negro Community Centre Fonds: The Archives as Community-Engaged Classroom," *Archivaria* 89 (2020): 37.

captured" were questions I started with at every appointment, which soon became a practiced exercise. Though aided by the few annotations on the backs of the photographs and the archives' finding aids which, on many an occasion, had details of the time period the photograph was taken along with the names of one or two people who were imaged, the fabulations took on a propelling form. Speculating on what allowed the photograph to come into being, which is to say the conditions prompting the particular moment to be enregistered in time, revealed not to be a solitary activity but rather an enlivened, solidary process. From the very beginning, the speculative force of fabulation felt less like *invention* but instead *recognitio*n—a recognizing that to imagine the unknowable or not-yet-known stories of the photographs called for an attunement to what the images hinted at but could not communicate on their own, what they had always carried with them but also who continued to carry those stories with them in their memories. Fabulation did not happen alone, it happened *across.*

As Langford writes, there is "room in the most ingenuous photograph for information and speculation, objective description and copious 'what if.' In an individual photograph there is, if anything, too much room."[7] This room or roominess (as I feel most accurately describes the feeling) of seeing openings to imagine what else is in the image but also what exceeds it—what simply goes beyond the photograph and the image—allows for the free flowing of possibility and remains to be the impulse driving this project. Through the photograph's roominess, I could begin to vividly imagine the context and story behind, for example, a photograph of young children in leotards, tutus, and pointes receiving direction from their dance teacher by drawing from widely-known histories of Black Montreal that I had been learning, along with the lesser known and everyday ones that were being taught to me every week by way of the fonds. What emerged was the creation of a narrative of children hurriedly packing their bags with clothes needed for their dance rehearsals, maybe forgetting the left foot of their pointes, perhaps dropping bobby pins on the ground before running out the front door and down the street with their coats unzipped and sneakers unexpectedly tied to ensure they are not late.

[7] Martha Langford, *Suspended Conversations: The Afterlife of Memory in Photographic Albums* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 19.

Figure 1: "Scenes from dance classes (with Olga Spencer (ballet and tap teacher) and her sister, Gladys Astwood)", F013-02-360, NCC fonds.

None of these fabulations or extrapolations are present as such in the photographic image; not even the archive and all of its textual documents provide us with the elements needed to construct such a narrative. The urgency of a question posed by Saidiya Hartman is felt at once: "Is it possible to exceed or negotiate the constitutive limits of the archive?"[8] And if it is, what kind of negotiation must we embark on? For Hartman, it is one of rigorously devoted archival research punctuated by speculation and figurative narrativizing which she terms "critical fabulation." It is a negotiation that draws from both within the archive and outside of its "constitutive limits"[9] and one, in the particular case of this study, that looks to negotiate what is in excess of the photographic frame and of the archival box. As such, fabulation not only encourages us to imagine the more-than of what images presents us with, but also to seek out

[8] Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe* 26 (2008): 11.
[9] Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," 11.

the photographic image's stories as they move through the memories of those around us, because if these histories are not sited within the archive itself, where do they reside?

This study of vernacular photography, its preservation in archives, and its relation to histories of Black life in Montreal, came into itself twofold: studying personal photographic collections and institutional fonds and conducting oral history interviews in what is referred to as the "photo-elicitation style" with Black Montrealers who were image-makers during the 1950s to 1980s and life-long preservers of images. This stylistic approach seeks to incorporate photographs into the interview space so that interviewees can rely on images to prompt memory as well as be encouraged "to take the lead in enquiries, but also lead [...] discussions about unfamiliar, unforeseen environments and subjects."[10] It is a way of insisting that looking at, touching, and talking about images are interrelated and inextricable processes within the study of archival photographs. While "Prolonging the Afterimage: Looking at and Talking About Photographs of Black Montreal" is positioned around the fields of Oral History, Visual Culture, Black Canadian Studies, and Cultural Geography, it is the two foremost fields that operate as the thesis' main framing. It is a mediation on what Oral History and Visual Culture can give to us, but also what they give to each other—how visuality is always-already entangled with orality or *aurality* and, as such, are constantly shaping each other. Their entanglement brings us to an understanding that reading images is as much a practice of seeing as it hearing or smelling or feeling but, more pointedly, that these sensory engagements cannot be separated out from each other; they all colour and co-compose our perceptual encounters with photographs in a plethora of ways. Relying on these complementary fields for this study will allow us to see that their reciprocal shapings is the force at work orientating us towards sensing what a photographic image can be, how it moves, how it speaks, and what it lives as. With that in mind, approaching the history of image-making and image preservation through archival photographs and oral history interviews is one that requires us to not parse out the visual from the oral, but to see their shapings as mutual and overlapping affordances that we have been and continue to be gifted with.

In thinking the surplus of the archive and of the image, I became caught in a somewhat heated internal dialogue after reading Allan Sekula's assertion of, "an archive, but not an atlas: the point is not the take the world upon one's shoulders, but to crouch down to the earth, and

[10] Lynda Minnick, "Remembering, Forgetting, and Feeling with Photographs," In *Oral History and Photography,* eds. Alexander Freund and Angela Thiessen (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 78.

dig."[11] His words are undeniably a warning, a loving admonition to those who work in and study archives to not remain at the peripheral layer of the archive—to instead, "dig" and harrow into the files and histories buried within the repository of the past. It is a deeply serious call to both study as well as see past the boxes and the building that contain history so as to reach a point where we leave the locale of the archive to see these histories in the everyday or in the "earth." Though this call is one which I take as necessary counsel, I was stopped by a particular knot that emerged from the initial phrasing: "an archive, but not an atlas." An atlas, in its purest sense, denotes a collection of maps— a book which holds maps to the world but could be seen as stagnant and not in motion. As many who look at atlases, we could stare at this collection of maps and not be compelled to go into the earth and move through it. The atlas holds the potential to remain merely as a set of pathways and borders, and not a vessel or conduit that would compel those who view the atlas to want to follow it. However, his reluctance to situate archive and atlas together as complementary forces and instead to view them as oppositional, eclipses their unique and combined potential. Many archival documents we encounter are not maps or an atlas; sometimes we are not given a direction to follow. The archive is not *always* an atlas. But in rare, unexpectedly beautiful moments, sometimes it is. Sometimes it is a map gesturing to us to follow the hard to perceive traces of energies of the past which fell through preservation, of the excess and surplus of life, and the events which punctuate life in unpredictable ways. A map or atlas does not prevent us from this "dig" into the material and immaterial importance of past events and of history and memory. Instead of seeing an atlas as a stagnant, fixed object that, more often than not, sites idleness and inactivity, can we not frame an atlas as the tool or means through which we can, in the context of archival photographs, locate the image that will serve to activate memory? Seeing, instead, the atlas as the object which allows us—which helps direct and orient and navigate us towards the location where we can truly begin to "crouch down to the earth and dig." Believing in the archive as atlas would mean to see it as the launching pad directing us to an elsewhere: a guide that points us back into the earth so we can begin digging deeper than ever before.

In my case, the Negro Community Centre/Charles H. Este Cultural Centre and Leon Llewellyn archival fonds were the atlases that led me to a collection of community newspapers—*Uhuru, Focus Umoja*, and *Afro-Can* which were circulated from the late 1960s to

[11] Allan Sekula, "Photography and the Limits of National Identity," Grey Room 55 (Spring 2014): 32.

the late 1980s [12]— which in turn directed me to a number of mastheads containing the names of numerous Black photographers across Montreal who actively recorded everyday moments and neighbourhood events for Black communities in the city for decades. The community newspapers were the collection of maps containing the pathways to find the people with whom I could look at and talk about photographs, image-making, and the importance of preservation. The community newspapers were the unexpected maps pointed at and to the excess of the archive and of its photographic images, as well as to the stories and social lives that continue to exist amongst those imaged in the fonds archives and those who carried out the imaging. It is without question that archival photographs are not simply windows unto the past, clearly presenting events as they were—undisturbed, without curation, without intervention; they cannot, on their own, cannot convey the weight of the world. Archival photographs can, however, create openings through which we can begin to feel such a weight. To see photographs as pockets of history would be to see beyond the photographic image—past what it is able to be captured, something fugitive and spectacular and ordinary.

What overwhelmingly comes to mind when speaking and writing about the Black archive is a record of Black life at its most precarious states—a historical repository of Black pain and premature death. However, when a Black archive was first displayed in front me, what became clear was that I as encountering *an-other* Black archive, one that thwarted the characteristics which have always defined it. It was a repository of music recitals, potlucks, summer camp outings, afterschool tutoring, and basketball games; fonds filled with the imagining of deep laughter, of sociality, and of lives lived. In a way, you can call this archive a vessel of anarchy— files which resisted against depictions of pain, opting for joy instead; images whose refusal against the futures promised to Black people insisted upon creating a new script and whose beautiful past that would accept nothing less than to ensure an equally beautiful future. The first time I saw life in the archive, it was not simply assemblage of lives but something closer to interwoven *lifeworlds.* In a single black and white photograph of a Black woman teaching a Black child piano, I lost my bearings; I saw openings to pathways that I had previously believed could only be reach through fabulation but could now be followed through

[12] For a comprehensive history of Black community newspapers and periodicals in Montreal, see Dorothy Williams' doctoral dissertation "Sankofa: Recovering Montreal's Heterogeneous Black Print Serials", McGill University, 2006. See also Samah Affan's Master's thesis "Ethical Gestures: Articulations of Black Life in Montreal's 1960s", Concordia University, 2013.

relational encounters. The archive held within it a photograph and its image, in turn, held entire worlds—worlds that both existed within and beyond its edges and contours.

In the first chapter of the thesis entitled "Makers and Keepers," I will be engaging with oral history interviews conducted with Black Montrealers who were active photographers or image-makers during the 1950s to 1980s as well as those who were not necessarily taking vernacular photographs, but were preserving them by way of personal archives in their homes or overseeing the housing of these photographic materials within community centres, churches, and other institutions. Though the images in question are able to communicate aspects of the past on their own, the stories behind the images—what was happening within and beyond the frame, why the photo was taken, where the photo has been since the scene was captured, who are the people photographed—are largely unknown to those who encounter them within the archive. These interviews with the "makers" of images and the "keepers" of photos, will look to provide contextual frames to the photographs and in doing so, allow for both the images and their stories to be carried forward in time.

This will be followed by an interlude entitled "An Infinite Web" and this is where the content of the "sendnotes" from the first and second chapters are sited. This portion of the thesis could be thought of as an experiment, but it is actually more of an improvisational tangent on photography, archival objects, and how thoughts on these forms have been shared by writers. The free verses and interplay-wordplay with passages are a sort of in-betweening and a fragmentary style that feels more comfortable, more honest to the way thoughts emerge and stick. With a focus on *how* images are spoken and written about—*how* the trace and orality move through images— "An Infinite Web" is oriented around multiplicity and the ecologies that are crafted in the showing and talking about photographic images; it is about the textures and tastes of the words used to describe the mutability of images.

The second chapter is titled "The Image and its Afterimage" and will be centred on the concept of the "afterimage" and its relationship to photography theory, memory, and the physicality or haptic dimension of photographs. Throughout this thesis and specifically in this chapter, I am looking to refigure the concept of the afterimage by expanding its originary formulation as being merely a visual occurrence and bringing it into a broader sensorial engagement. If images are more-than visual and carry with them—as Tina Campt, Geoffrey Batchen, and Martha Langford have implored us to consider and truly believe in—physical, haptic, and sonic qualities, then perhaps the afterimage is not something that we merely *see* but

also what we can *feel* and *hear* and *move-with*. Perhaps the afterimage carries an intensity[13] and an afterlife which lingers in our minds and can take hold of our entire body and our senses, composing and recomposing them over time.

The thesis will conclude with a short coda, entitled "Towards an Aurality". Through a consideration of what exceeds photographs as well as the many temporalities of photography, these final words will focus on the ongoing quality of images. The concept of the afterimage returns here as a way to make sense of how photographic images (and our affective attachments to them) linger over time, the kinds of socialities they produce, as well as highlighting their enduring reach. My final thoughts on Black Montreal's history of vernacular photography and image-preservation will conclude with reaffirming the importance of minor and everyday histories which we come to know through oral history and photography. This coda will also perform the dual role of a springboard for further study into the countless other photographic histories found within Black Canada.

A chorus of questions I continue to ask myself, differently each time: is my life still mine if it tethers itself to another's? Can a life tethered to the lives visualized in a photograph still be a life I call my own? Or, in other words, did a photograph save my life? "Prolonging the Afterimage: Looking At and Talking About Photographs of Black Montreal" is an echoing thought towards activating and reactivating, looking at and never overlooking the potential that lies in a photograph. And, moreover, the energies which exceed the photographic image, such as the afterimage that can only be located and experienced by "looking beyond what we see and attuning our senses to the other affective frequencies through which photographs register".[14] This study is a reminder that we can make our existence within the world of an image—within the worlds that constructed the image and were constructed by it.

[13] "It would appear that the strength or duration of an image's effect is not logically connected to the content in any straightforward way… the strength or duration of the image's effect could be called its *intensity",* Brian Massumi, *Parables For the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002)„ 24.
[14] Tina Campt, *Listening to Images* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 9.

CHAPTER I

MAKERS AND KEEPERS

> "They were photographs of ordinary people in a countryside doing ordinary things, but for a reason that was not at all clear to me the people and the things they were doing looked extraordinary—as if these people and those things had not existed before…The people in the photographs reminded me of people I had known."[15]
> — Jamaica Kincaid, *Lucy*

Storytelling and photography are intricately related events. You could say the latter is a genre of the former while also being an event in its own right. Both, preoccupied with saving pieces of the past for the future, take preservation and prolonging very seriously. Both, in their ability to connect and bring people together, are forms of *encounter*. The elements of storytelling that have always been the most powerful to me are those which exceed words—that conjure a visuality, or rhythm, or texture of the past that can be felt as much as it can be heard. This is what photography can generate. And likewise, the modalities of sharing history which continue to grab me in intense and visceral ways are those that speak from the level of the local—that are concerned with the everyday, the ordinary, the minor histories of a community. This is what oral history gives space to.

The magnetic pull of photography and of oral history are the grounding for *Prolonging the Afterimage.* In my time spent since January 2017 looking at the over 2000 photographs archived within the Negro Community Centre/Charles H. Este Cultural Centre (NCC) fonds at the Special Collections of Concordia University, I found myself searching for those who took up roles as both storytellers and photographers. Reading through textual and graphic materials alike, I looked for community members who turned to cameras to record events, who gathered and collected photographs, and who could—through their own images as well as images taken by others—tell the quotidian stories of 20th century Black Montreal. While the NCC fonds' findings aids provided substantial metatextual information and a large handful of photographs had handwritten annotations on their backs listing who took the image and who was in it, the majority of the photographs in the fonds contain very limited information about who took them and why. With the addition of the Graeme Clyke fonds in June 2017 and the Leon Llewellyn

[15] Jamaica Kincaid, *Lucy*, (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1990), 115.

fonds in January 2019 to Special Collections,[16] the inventory of Black vernacular and street photographs expanded significantly as did the list of identifiable photographers. Through the folders of the Leon Llewellyn fonds as well as those of the NCC fonds, I began reading copies of Black community newspaper issues such as *Uhuru, Focus Umoja*, and *Afro-Can* (all of which were circulated in Montreal from the late 1960s to the late 1980s). It was here that I found the names of Black photographers listed in the newspapers' mastheads. Page after page of these serials laid images of community events, festivals, summer camps, conferences, and workshops taken by Black photographers committed to recording moments of the everyday for their friends, families, and communities.

Figure 2.1: "An information kiosk about the NCC", F013-02-131, NCC fonds

Figure 2.2: "NCC Christmas Party 1977", F013-02-365, NCC fonds

In an attempt to learn more about Black Montreal's history of image-making and image-preservation I began to ask: what if photography and oral history could be used in tandem to come into encounter with the stories of Montreal's Black communities? As historian and archivist Dr. Dorothy Williams emphasizes in her book *Blacks in Montreal*, "the oral history tradition is very much a part of the Black community in Montreal. Local historians and storytellers abound. These elders have within their memories precious familial and community information, that occasionally they share with the younger generations."[17] And taking photographs is but one mode of storytelling taken up by Black Montrealers during the 20th

[16] Breakdown of images and visual material available in the "Blacks in Quebec" archival fonds at Concordia University's Special Collections: NCC (2071 photos), Graeme Clyke (186 photos), Leon Llewellyn (350 photos, 383 negative strips, 45 contact sheets)

[17] Dorothy Williams, *Blacks in Montreal, 1628-1986: An Urban Demography,* (Cowansville: Éditions Yvon Blais, 1989), viii.

century to document everyday living, celebratory events, and memorable occasions. As such, this chapter focuses on a set of oral history interviews I conducted with image-makers, preservers of images, and historians of Black Montreal which include Nancy Oliver-Mackenzie, Margot Blackman, Enid Dixon, Leon Llewellyn, and Dorothy Williams. While these interviews centre on each interviewees' respective relationship to photographic images, the histories they share include conversations about the image-making practices of other Black photographers in Montreal such as Graeme Clyke, Owen Rowe, and Leeroy "The Happy Wanderer" Edwards who were all active practitioners during the mid to late 20th century. These interviews communicate a "resounding affirmation that the image is and will remain a serious matter for black folks."[18] They are accounts of everyday and extraordinary events within Black Montreal's history as told by community members who took on the role of storytellers and keepers of stories, and who took to cameras and images as tools of preservation. This chapter is dedicated to them, to their images, and to the histories they continue to share.

TELLING, LISTENING, FEELING

What are the possible roles and positions taken up within oral history interviews that incorporate photographs? This has been an integral question woven into every meeting and conversation I have had with Black photographers, preservationists, community historians, and storytellers in Montreal. As is often the case in oral history, we attribute two titles to the parties involved in an interview: the interviewer and the interviewee; the person asking questions and listening to responses, the person answering questions and telling stories. However, when oral history interviewers ask participants to bring their own personal or family photographs (which are often images they took themselves or that belong to them) or to comment on a set of photographs that were brought by the interviewer, it expands the possible roles that can be performed. There is a transformation that is set into motion when photographic images are spread out onto tables, photo albums are huddled around or passed from interviewee to interviewer, and—in the rarest of occasions— handfuls of negatives and diapositives are placed on light tables or scanners, their indiscernibility made visible on a screen. The practice of

[18] Campt, *Image Matters: Archive, Photography, and The African Diaspora in Europe,* 198.

bringing photographs into interviews originates outside of the fields of oral and public history. As Lynda Mannik writes in "Remembering, Forgetting and Feeling with Photographs," the practice, which has come to be known as 'photo-elicitation,' was first developed and coined in the mid-twentieth century by John Collier and Malcolm Collier as a methodology in anthropological field research to provoke and prompt emotional responses from interviewees as well as stimulate memory.[19] This image-focused interview method, as they saw it, was a vital tool to researchers seeking to witness the affective responses photographs are capable of producing and moreover, how turning to visual aids and objects transformed what could be gleaned from researcher-participant interactions.[20]

There are a number of elements within this technique that I have consistently found to be both frustrating and exciting. Though described as a stylistic approach that seeks to integrate photographs into the interview space so that interviewees can rely on images to prompt memory as well as be encouraged to "take the lead, tell their own stories, and express subjective meanings and feelings throughout,"[21] the intent and vocabularies used to advocate for the importance of the approach connote an one-sided and transactional quality to the interactions. The words that are typically associated with the method—'prompt', 'elicit', 'provoke', 'trigger'—all carry a particular implication of excavation, of action taken against, and most especially that of an extraction of feeling. What is meant here refers specifically to the ways in which the ethnographic concerns of anthropological research ultimately position people and their responses to various stimulus as data to be recorded and documented by the researcher-interviewer. The moments of intense feeling and overflowing emotion towards the images are met with analytical stiffness. Rather than looking to the potential moments of shared feeling or feeling-across between interviewee and interviewer, people are presented as objects of study and not as participants and co-creators in the work of recalling the past.[22] As I see it, photo-elicitation should not be an experiment to see how people respond to certain stimuli. This particular scientific model is rooted in analytical constraints precisely because the focus is placed on the reaction and not on why *these specific photographs* possess an affect and affective link that connects image-object and person together.

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[19] Minnick, "Remembering, Forgetting, and Feeling with Photographs," 78.
[20] Douglas Harper, "Talking about Pictures: A Case for Photo Elicitation." *Visual Studies,* vol. 17, no. 1 (2002): 14.
[21] Minnick, "Remembering, Forgetting, and Feeling with Photographs," 92.
[22] This manner of sharing is similar though not entirely congruent to what Michael Frisch refers to as "a shared authority".

In short, there is not nearly enough emphasis placed on the relational work of looking at photographs *with* an interviewee and the social relations or sociality that emerges from this type of encounter.[23] As such, when an approach of this breadth and of these ethnographic beginnings is translated into the realms of oral history, a necessary restructuring should follow alongside—one that centres not on *how* people react but *that* they are being moved by photography. Attending to the emotional and sensory quality of memory and of images, as Mannik has sought to undertake, is the opening needed to shift photo-elicitation away from a process that involves watching interviewees be moved by memories activated through photographs and instead join them in this affective experience. With this in mind, I have gravitated to the terminology that Penny Tinkler tends to use more often to differentiate between the various kinds of oral history interviewees one can be part of. Writing on the import of using photographs within interviews, Tinkler advances that "photos often stimulate people to talk about what they know, think, experience, feel and remember. Aside from factual information, photo-interviews bring out the personal significance and meaning of what is depicted in photos and, if the photos are personal, sometimes the meanings attached to photo-objects."[24] By simply referring to conversations between a narrator and a listener that incorporate photographs as "photo-interviews" as oppose to those where images are completely absent from the conversation (what she calls "talk-alone interviews"), we come closer to the kinds of collaborations that bringing photographs into the interview space make possible.

Of equal importance to a meditation on the origins of photo-elicitation and the preference given to the phrasing of photo-interviews is the question of what kind of transformation (if any) they can bring to the field of oral history. It is the question of why photos are being brought into the interview space at all. Through their collaborative project *The Family Camera Network,* Thy Phu, Elspeth H. Brown, and Deepali Dewan speak directly to the shortcomings of photo-elicitation by presenting what is often overlooked by researcher-interviewers who use the method. They write: "studies have paired photography with personal narrative, but neither photo-elicitation nor photo-voice projects focus on the narrator's relationship to their own family photographic record, nor how those images were produced,

[23] "The act of looking at photographs is itself embedded in social relations," Elizabeth Edwards, "Photographs and the Sound of History." *Visual Anthropology Review,* vol. 21, No. 1 and 2 (2005): 34.
[24] Penny Tinkler, "Photo-interviews: Listening to Talk about Photos" in *Using Photographs in Social and Historical Research* (London: SAGE, 2013), 178.

circulated, and acquired meanings over time."[25] That photo-interviews seek to engage directly with our various emotional connections to photographs but fail to inquire into these details regarding the "social life"[26] of photographs exposes the less-travelled paths of the method. Adjusting our focus to the other variables of photography such as the "biography"[27] of the photograph which could include its provenance or migration from one album to another, from one family to another's, actually brings us to a place where the photograph—the image-object itself—can be decentred and in turn replaced with a wider conception of all the aspects of photography; it opens up the possibility to imagine what other kinds of outcomes emerge from photographic and image-focused acts. Further to this point, they emphasize the fact that "oral historians most often consider visual artifacts as *aides-memoires*; they rarely pose questions about the history, circulation, materiality, or affective specificity of any specific image or archive."[28] Bringing photographs into the interview space ought to be seen beyond their illustrative purposes. These visual objects are meant to be both instrument and participant in the conversation; an accomplice in the storytelling, if you will. Treating photographs in this manner brings with it the possibility to inquire into the history they possess and narratives both of affiliation and movement that are attached to them.

Returning to the subject of roles in oral history photo-interviews, I take direction from Martha Langford and her work on photography and orality. Writing on how sharing and talking about the contents of photo albums with others enacts an exchange rooted in orality, Langford points precisely at the roles that can be taken up in interviews and conversations. She writes, "The unaccompanied album requires of its viewer both interrogation and performance. Each of us must play the dual role of teller and listener. To understand the album, we need to hear it. To hear it, we must risk a little madness, a little ridicule, and speak it in a chorus of voices."[29] In photo-interviews, you are both viewer and listener—never one more than the other. Your role is to be a witness, an open receptable, a responsive participant in the

[25] Thy Phu, Elspeth H. Brown & Deepali Dewan, "The Family Camera Network," *Photography & Culture* 10, no. 2 (2017): 151-152

[26] Here, I am thinking adjacently to Arjun Appadurai's work on "The Social Life of Things" and the notion that objects, such as photographs, have their own internal lives which can be thought of as an objecthood much like a personhood.

[27] Karen Strassler *Refracted Visions: Popular Photography and National Modernity in Java,* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 27.

[28] Phu, Brown & Dewan, "The Family Camera Network," 151.

[29] Martha Langford, *Suspended Conversations: The Afterlife of Memory in Photographic Albums* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 190.

"performance" of looking at images together. Moreover, in the context of this study, interviewing photographers, photo-enthusiasts, and preservers of photographs alike meant that there were many shifting positions and possible titles for participants. Borrowing from Langford, the titles of interviewee and interviewer—positions that are constantly occupied within the context of the oral history interview—became "teller" and "listener" which places more emphasis on the event at hand: that being telling stories. Moreover, drawing instead on the terminology of "image-making" to describe the act of taking photographs, I settled on referring to the photographers I was meeting as "image-makers." And likewise, as a means to refer to those who have spent their lives as guardians and protectors of images, "image-keepers" felt the most apt. With this, the "tellers" of the photographic histories of Black Montreal were also the "makers" (those who made and created images, as well as imagistic worlds) and the "keepers" (those who have kept images and their worlds protected and preserved).

It should be noted that these two modes of "tellers" are not separate nor are they dissimilar. If anything, they are deeply intertwined. What is a keeper without a maker, and a listener without a teller? The interwovenness and inseparability of photography and orality, for which I will speak in greater detail in the second chapter, is directly illustrated through the positions of listener and teller. The dualities of the oral and the aural, of voice and sound, of talking and listening are all elements which punctuate photo-interviews in uniquely powerful ways and remind us that "acts of looking at photographs are also acts of touching, speaking and listening... Photographs are spoken about and spoken to—the emotional impact articulated through forms of vocalization."[30] When makers and keepers become tellers within oral history photo-interviews, it generates and adds another temporal layer to the images they have made or have preserved. This added layer insinuates that perhaps images are not necessarily fixed in time but rather are able to accumulate new storylines based on new encounters that happen years after the image came into existence. I am reminded here of the phrasing used by Alessandro Portelli to describe his own approach to the field of oral history as possessing this "sense of fluidity, of unfinishedness" and as being "an inexhaustible work in progress."[31] This ongoingness and variability that he notes as inherent to oral history is also present in photography which is made apparent precisely through photo-interviews. Of the many

[30] Elizabeth Edwards, "Photographs and History: Emotion and Materiality" in *Museum Materialities: Objects, Engagements, Interpretations,* ed. Dudley Sandra (New York: Routledge, 2010), 25.
[31] Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany, SUNY Press 1991), vii.

linkages which bind these two forms together, it is their enduring and unending qualities that stand out most prominently.

As such, at the core of looking at and talking about images of Black life in Montreal rests the belief that "the event of photography is never over."[32] This proposition, which can be heard as a refrain in Ariella Azoulay's writing on photographic images, suggests that photography has no end point—no final form nor destination. It should be noted here that Azoulay speaks about photography with a particular kind of specificity. As she suggests in *Civil Imagination*, there is a unique difference between the activity or scene that is captured through a camera (what she refers to as the photographed event) and the acts involving photographer, camera, spectator, and photographed object/subject that can take place at varying moments of time and across multiple spaces (what she refers to as the event of photography). Though related, these two modalities of what we might call The Photographic diverge at the point where one deems the photograph to be the "final product" of the event or act. The photograph, as Azoulay advances, is but "one outcome among others of the event of photography"— a single factor in its never-ending unfolding.[33]

This particular signaling towards the many other variables that construct photography which exceed the photograph, is the direction this study has followed in earnest. Through this framework and line of thought on what photography can be, we are invited to fixate on the particular importance of the *encounters* that surround images rather than solely on the image itself. Moreover, in concert with Langford's proposition that photo albums (and by extension photographs themselves) are connected to the oral and to conversations by their very essence, the question of whether oral history interviews that are concerned with photographic practices and images could be considered part of the event of photography, take root. Photo-interviews, in addition to their ability to proffer other kinds of information and histories to interviews are, as I argue here, integral to sustaining the life of the images, of the socialities they depict, and the narratives that can be shared from photographs. The encounters we have with photographic images prolong the event of photography.[34] Therefore, talking about photographic images and their accompanying stories fulfil the desire for their sustaining reach; it allows for the still image to continue its movement, to linger through time. As the makers and keepers become the

[32] Ariella Azoulay, *Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography* (London: Verso, 2012), 25.
[33] Azoulay, *Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography,* 23-24.
[34] "encounter with the photograph continues the event of photography that happened elsewhere", Azoulay, *Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography,* 23.

"tellers" within the context of the interview, a new encounter within the life or event of photography unfolds. This is a temporality that comes into existence years and sometimes decades after the photographed event took place. The interviews that follow are made part of the event of photography insofar as they are, in themselves, encounters between photographer and spectator that become attached to the biography of the photographs and which operate as a vehicle to bringing the minor histories they depict towards the surface.

Being a listener to the storytelling of a maker or keeper, creates an infinite web of relations. At the various axes and overlappings of this web, what is shared through listening and looking and talking, is never immediately clear. It is almost as unclear as any image seen out of and without context; its meaning is unknown but perhaps yet to come. The affect, however, is nonetheless there. The feeling of being given a gift, one that needs to be kept safe and pushed forward in order to be prolonged, courses through the body that has now been made vessel and receptacle of memory. As the following meetings with the makers and keepers of photographs of Black Montreal life have taught me, photo-interviews are the sites and events that emphasize the intense feelings associated with photographs.[35] Only through returning to the orality of photography do we begin to witness how telling, listening, and feeling through photographs is a mode of storytelling without limits. Through it, "we tell and feel stories (in our hearts), and this telling-feeling tells-feels the empirics of black life."[36]

PICKING UP THE CAMERA

I have wondered for a long time what brings certain people to pick up cameras—what makes them gravitate to a camera and see the object's potential to be a valuable and meaningful instrument. There is an appealing aspect to cameras, clearly, that draws many of us in. There is something that compels us to want to document the scenes of life that we witness and are part of; something that compels us to want to still and freeze certain movements or events that we see before us into a single image. It is as if cameras possess a magnetism that pulls us to them, and an even stronger magnetism that never allows us to truly part ways from them. Perhaps it is click of the shutter or the sound of the film winder, or maybe the weight of the camera's body

[35] Elspeth H. Brown and Thy Phu, "Introduction," in *Feeling Photography* (Durham: Duke University Press), 1.
[36] Katherine McKittrick, *Dear Science and Other Stories* (Durham: Duke University Press), 9.

and the sometimes squared, sometimes rectangular interface of the viewfinder. Whatever the particular pull might be, the camera is picked up, carried around, and accompanies photographers for a plethora of reasons that are indisputably rooted in varying degrees of affection for an instrument that can bring moments of the past into the present. As Shawn Michelle Smith writes, "the camera enables one to see the ordinary and the extraordinary."[37] The stories of when cameras became part of the daily lives of image-makers Enid Dixon, Margot Blackman and Leon Llewellyn and how photography turned into a beloved activity, was invaluable to understanding the importance of photographic images in the history of Black Montreal. Although the question of how they each came to photography was not always explicitly asked in the interviews I had with each person, they all shared the origins of when they began taking photographs and the meaningfulness of their cameras.

My first interview with Enid Dixon took place July 31st, 2019. As a social worker, civil servant, and community animator in Montreal, Enid has been involved in community work in the city since the early 1970s. Born and raised in Montreal, Enid was a long-time photographer for the *Focus Umoja* newspaper beginning in November 1974. We began this interview by focusing on her life story and that of her parents as well as their connections to Jamaica and the community they were made part when they moved to Montreal. It was in these moments of speaking about the history of early 20th century Montreal that Enid describes the approaches and techniques taken by Black Montrealers to create institutions for their communities and families as extraordinary ways of living that had a profound effect on her.

> ED: Their thing was: if something's wrong, we have the fix it. We have to do something. We have to create something and that's what they did. That's what people of that generation did. If there was something wrong or something they needed, they either had to invent it or make do with what they had. So, they got very inventive… and I think that stayed, that stayed with us, with me… that if you need something or you want something you do it, you fix it, you invent it, you find a way. That's it, right! There you go. So I think it makes for… that made me a rather creative person, which was what probably brought me to photography. Among other sorts of creative pursuits. But when I think about it, my mother was always taking pictures. All of the family photos that we have, aside from those very stiff little studio portraits. I would have to say that *every last photo* that we have of our family archive was probably taken by my mother. So, there you go! Photography was there.

[37] Shawn Michelle Smith, *At the Edge of Sight: Photography and the Unseen* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 7

> **KCW: Photography was there, yeah. So it definitely inspired you to take your own photos.**
>
> ED: Yeah, I never thought about it before but that *had* to be part of what… what got me there because— it wasn't just that, there were… in the late 60s and the early 70s, which was when I became interested in photography so… and that was because there were other people around me and at CEGEP there were… there were cameras available that you could borrow. You had to… sometimes projects had to… could involve photos, and that sort of thing—so I just pick up a camera! And there were others around me who were doing the same: Leon Llewellyn, Daniel Saintiche, others who were also taking pictures. 'Oh, this interesting! Let me… I'll try too!' And it was fun and it was, again, it was creative. You take some photos and then of course you had to do the developing, and you're in the darkroom and you start to play with them, the photos, and crop them and those sorts of things.[38]

"Photography was there." This remark was one of many that pointed directly to the way image-making is an activity that begins with relationships and of course with family but is also connected to one's environment. As Enid described how her mother's photo-taking inspired her to take up photography later as a young adult, I could not help but wonder whether photography was always meant to be part of her life. The remark of "photography was there" underscores the fact that images were always-already present, always-already part of her life from as early as she could remember. At home, photographs surrounded her but they also surrounded her at school and within her community. This is not to say that there was an inevitability to her taking up photography as a creative practice of documenting her world, but the conditions were already present to form a love for image-making; the seeds were already planted. In short, images already mattered to her because they mattered to her mother. Sometimes our reasons of coming to photography and picking up a camera are already around us in our immediate vicinity, waiting to be recognized. Additionally, in Enid's case, the primary impulse to her taking-up of photography had to do with her interest in telling visual stories. Towards the end of our interview, I asked what her favourite technique and method was between street photography or event photography, portraits or landscapes to which she replied:

> ED: Oh, I think portraiture like informal portraits and also, stories. When you can capture a story in a photo… it can tell you so much more, it can tell you so much more. I like the informal part of photography, when the camera's there but it's not there. It's just happens to capture something and… studio portraits have

[38] Enid Dixon, interviewed by Kelann Currie-Williams, 31 July 2019 [00:09:05]

a place y'know, the more formal stuff. It also tells you something but it's not what I like to do, it's not what I turned to. I turn to—I used photography more as just, well to tell a story. There you are![39]

Figure 3: "Anti-Apartheid demonstration in downtown Montreal," 197-. Photos taken by Enid Dixon.

[39] Enid Dixon, interviewed by Kelann Currie-Williams, 31 July 2019 [1:40:00]

The second "maker" that I interviewed was Leon Llewellyn who is a visual artist and art educator. Born in Grenville, Grenada, Leon moved to Montreal in November 1963. As a visual artist whose multidimensional and extensive work takes the form of figurative and abstract painting and illustrations, Leon's involvement in Black community life in Montreal and cultivating art spaces and opportunities for youth date back to the late 1960s and early 1970s. It was during this period that he first began creating illustrations rooted in social and political commentary as well as being a community event photographer for *Focus Umoja* newspaper. Learning about Leon's career as an artist and art educator first happened by way of the archival documents he donated to Concordia's Special Collection in January 2019 and later during our photo-interview on July 23, 2019 in the reading room of Vanier Library. It was through both our in-person meeting and looking through his fonds that I learned Leon was an art teacher at Laurier MacDonald High School and was a creative and fine arts instructor at the Black Studies Centre (which was founded in January 1973) for nearly 10 years, and during his time there led the creation of several arts and photography-oriented cultural programs for students and youth. Through this, he ran an afterschool and weekend visual arts programs, which often centred on hybrid image-making techniques such as photo collages and combining illustrations with already-made photographs.

Returning back to why the camera became the tool of choice for the preservation of Black community events in Montreal, this question was explored differently by Leon. In our part life-story interview part photo-interview, Leon spoke about his almost accidental entry into photography that happened as the result of taking an art class in university:

> LL: and speaking of photos, this is how it all started. At Concordia, I had a professor who... I took an art class with a particular professor. She was a photographer and she made us all buy cameras. But she was a very strict, disciplined person. So at the beginning there would be about 30 students registered to that class. She would give them her speech about her expectations and the next class there would be 15 students so anyway, she was quite interesting [...] Susan [unclear last name] was her name and we bought cameras with 2 ¼ inch negatives, like those—
>
> **KCW: Oh, like the medium format cameras.**
>
> LL: yeah... and so we... basically learnt how to take shots. I don't think she did much in terms of composition. It was... what we had to do was—the first assignment was to buy a dozen eggs, paint one half black, take a photograph of

different kinds of arrangements, develop the film ourselves and print. Basically it was about that: how to develop film, how to make prints, and yeah we didn't do any major work in photography. It was just about looking through the.. I guess if it was this time, it would probably be a digital camera you go out there and shoot, just to learn about looking through the lens. Anyways, that's how I got started. I had photographs and because I participated in some of the community activities, I took photographs and I could develop film so I developed my own and printed. I think... I vaguely remember I was asked to create a darkroom [...] There was a darkroom at the NCC but it wasn't functional. That's pretty much it. I had a camera and I was at the heart of a lot of the activities so I took pictures. [40]

Figure 4: "Photographs documenting Carnival", F032-02-566 to F032-02-569, Leon Llewellyn Fonds

[40] Leon Llewellyn, interviewed by Kelann Currie-Williams, 23 July 2019 [00:26:37 – 00:33:00]

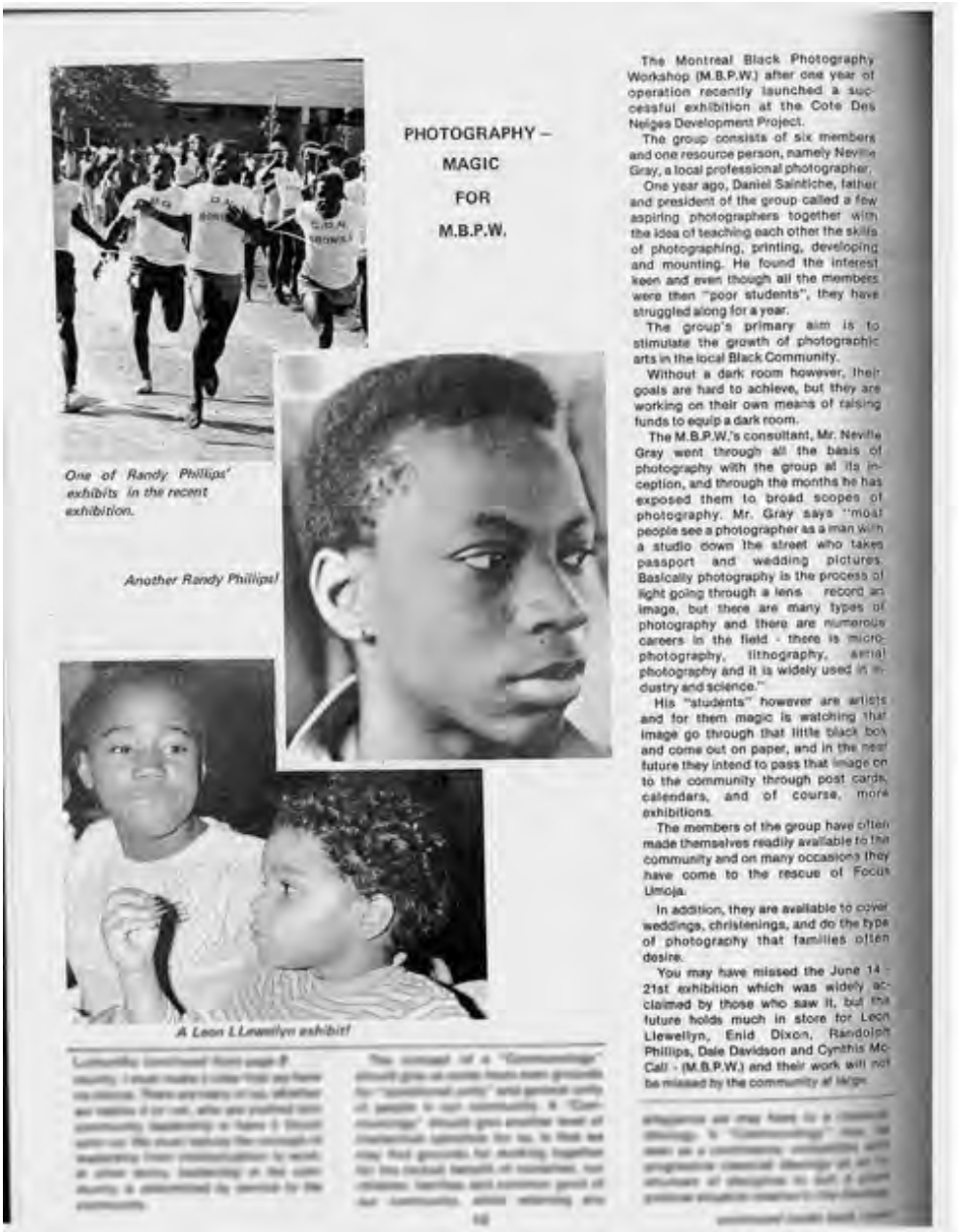
Figure 5: "Photographs documenting Carnival", F032-02-582 & F032-02-583, Leon Llewellyn Fonds

The Leon Llewellyn fonds includes hundreds of his photographs, negatives, and contact sheets as well as massive collection of his illustrations and artwork he created for various organizations and newspapers such as *Uhuru, Focus Umoja*, and the Black Studies Centre. Interestingly, even with the extensive number of images that he took between the late 1960s until the late 1980s, Leon refrained from referring to himself as a photographer many times during our interview. His background and interests were fixed in fine arts and, as such, he speaks of his art practice as deeply preoccupied with illustrations, sketching, and painting. On more than one occasion, he spoke of himself as someone who casually took photographs at events but was nowhere near as committed to photography as his friend Daniel Saintiche who, during the mid 1970s, started a photography collective with other budding Black image-makers called the "Montreal Black Photography Workshop" (MBPW).

During an archival session with Leon's fonds prior to our interview, I came across a brief mention of the group in a document titled "Official Montreal Carifesta." I was desperate to find the name of the Black photography collective again and after reading through several issues of *Focus Umoja,* I finally came across a one-page spread in volume 1, issue 8 from July 1975 about the MBPW.[41] As noted in the article titled "Photography – Magic for MBPW", the group consisted of six members, with Neville Gray and Daniel Saintiche listed as the lead organizers, along with members Leon Llewellyn, Enid Dixon, Randolph "Randy" Phillips, Dale Davidson,

[41] One-page spread of Focus Umoja newspaper article "Photography Magic for M.B.P.W.", July 1975, Folder: F032-005-06, Leon Llewellyn Fonds, Concordia University Special Collections, Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

and Cynthia McCall. From June 14-21st 1975, the group held an exhibition in Côtes-des-Neiges that featured their work and was made public to community members. As was written in the article on MBPW, "The group's primary aim is to stimulate the growth of photographic arts in the local Black Community." To see the name of the collective in print again and to hear Leon speak about its existence, substantiated a belief I had early on of there being a committed and active image-making practice among Black Montrealers during the late 1940s to late 1980s.



PHOTOGRAPHY – MAGIC FOR M.B.P.W.

The Montreal Black Photography Workshop (M.B.P.W.) after one year of operation recently launched a successful exhibition at the Cote Des Neiges Development Project.

The group consists of six members and one resource person, namely Neville Gray, a local professional photographer.

One year ago, Daniel Saintiche, father and president of the group called a few aspiring photographers together with the idea of teaching each other the skills of photographing, printing, developing and mounting. He found the interest keen and even though all the members were then "poor students", they have struggled along for a year.

The group's primary aim is to stimulate the growth of photographic arts in the local Black Community.

Without a dark room however, their goals are hard to achieve, but they are working on their own means of raising funds to equip a dark room.

The M.B.P.W.'s consultant, Mr. Neville Gray went through all the basis of photography with the group at its inception, and through the months he has exposed them to broad scopes of photography. Mr. Gray says "most people see a photographer as a man with a studio down the street who takes passport and wedding pictures. Basically photography is the process of light going through a lens record an image, but there are many types of photography and there are numerous careers in the field - there is micro-photography, lithography, aerial photography and it is widely used in industry and science."

His "students" however are artists and for them magic is watching that image go through that little black box and come out on paper, and in the near future they intend to pass that image on to the community through post cards, calendars, and of course, more exhibitions.

The members of the group have often made themselves readily available to the community and on many occasions they have come to the rescue of Focus Umoja.

In addition, they are available to cover weddings, christenings, and do the type of photography that families often desire.

You may have missed the June 14 - 21st exhibition which was widely acclaimed by those who saw it, but the future holds much in store for Leon Llewellyn, Enid Dixon, Randolph Phillips, Dale Davidson and Cynthis McCall - (M.B.P.W.) and their work will not be missed by the community at large.

One of Randy Phillips' exhibits in the recent exhibition.

Another Randy Phillips!

A Leon Llewellyn exhibit!

Figure 6: "One-page spread of Focus Umoja newspaper article 'Photography Magic for M.B.P.W.'", Leon Llewellyn fonds.

The third image-maker I spoke with about their photographic practice was Margot Blackman who is a retired nurse and educator who taught at Vanier College in Montreal for 25 years. Born in Barbados, she moved to New York in the late 1950s to study nursing and eventually moved to Montreal in 1961 where she attended McGill's nursing program. In addition to her career as nurse, she was a community photographer for several decades, notably for the *Afro-Can* and *Afro-Canadian* newspapers. In our first photo-interview which took place July 24, 2019 at her home, Margot spoke in great detail about when she received her first camera, how she began taking photographs, and why taking images of her community was so important. Our conversation went as follows:

> MB: ... When I came to New York to study nursing, the first camera I received was given to me by one of my classmates because she had bought a better camera and she gave me her old camera [laughs] so I started taking pictures, that would have been in the 1960s... no the 1950s. And, I started [taking] my own pictures from then and I took a lot, everywhere I went and I learnt to use a good camera in the 19-..... would have been in the 1970s I think, uhm... a friend taught me how to use a camera: Mervyn... I don't remember his last name but he saw that I was interested in taking pictures and he taught me how to use what you call the 'real camera' instead of the instant, these instant things. And, after that, I took pictures and I realized that I could take good pictures, my pictures were... very nice. And so I became the photographer for the Afro-Can, the Afro-Canadian, the church—actually [laughing], for Montreal, for the pictures... it seems like if I was the photographer, I was the photographer for the Black community because I took pictures for all the functions that, you know, were going on and I gave a lot of pictures away to people because, you know, they always wanted a picture and I gave them. So, yes. I was a photographer—I was *the* photographer for a long time and it was something that I enjoyed and I was very happy to do that kind of work for our community.[42]

Margot's beginnings in photography differ greatly with those of Leon and Enid, but her eventual image-making practice converge with theirs in the eventual role that photography came to have in her life. As a nursing student at the time, her first exposure to image-making stemmed from being surrounded by photographs when she lived in Barbados. Even before she had her own camera, there was a deep interest in images that only intensified when she was began taking her own images. Her involvement with supporting initiatives and events for Black communities across the city, led her to become the "go-to" photographer. Describing herself as

[42] Margot Blackman, interviewed by Kelann Currie-Williams, 24 July 2019 [00:02:30 – 00:04:00]

quite busy during these decades, Margot would split her time between documenting meetings and conference on Black solidarity during the 1970s, capturing performances and musical presentations held by her congregation at St. Paul Anglican Church in the Côte-des-Neiges neighbourhood, as well as organizing events for Caribbean association of Barbados House (for which she was the President for a brief time), all while teaching nursing full time. Margot began taking photographs of community events for the *Afro-Can Communications* which was first published in 1981 through the Negro Community Centre by editor Dr. Leo Bertley. Its publication run lasted six years and its final issue was published in July 1987. Eventually transforming into the *Afro-Canadian* publication in 1985 until its end in 1994.

Figure 7: Afro-Can newspaper issue featuring the photography of Margot Blackman, March 1983, NCC Fonds.

The commonalities between Enid, Margot, and Leon's respective image-making practices converge at the motivations for taking photographs. Their active involvement with countless Black community organizations and events from the 1970s onwards, meant that the

focus of their images was of Black life. Picking up and bringing their cameras to events and meetings allowed for the intimate moments of Black Montreal community life to be documented and shared with family members, community institutions, and with friends and relatives who lived outside of the city. In a way, the cameras that they each carried around with them in their bags or around their necks were as much tools for preservation as they were companions. Their cameras (a 35mm Pentax for Enid, a 120mm TLR Yashica for Leon, and 35mm Minolta for Margot) attended those events like an invited guest, moving from person to person, framing interactions; never asking for a smile but almost always being met with one— never demanding for it to be noticed and was often overlooked by children deep in play or a mother lost in thought. As Azoulay writes, "the camera was no longer just seen as a tool in the hands of its user, but as an object that creates powerful forms of commotion and communion."[43] The mobility of the camera in various scenes of social life, both minor and major, is said to be its greatest quality. The camera can move into even those most intimate spaces, looking for a way to keep moments going and registering a record of what it *meant to be Black and celebrate like this*.[44] The camera was both witness and participant— a stenographer "stenciling off the real" so that these moments of life that have been captured can be viewed again later.[45]

While rarely describing herself as a photographer but rather as someone who loves photography, Nancy Oliver-Mackenzie is an image-keeper who has spent the last twenty years collecting, caring for and preserving photographic images. Nancy is a retired teacher, alternative education instructor, and community leader in Montreal. Originally from Wolfville, Nova Scotia, Nancy moved to Montreal in 1967 and has been an involved member of the Union United Church in Little Burgundy since the late 1980s. In our first interview, which was conducted November 13th, 2018 as part of a pilot project to "Prolonging the Afterimage" titled "Stilled Motion: Remembering a Black Sense of Place in Little Burgundy Through Photographs," we spent a considerable amount of time on the topic of how Nancy first became interested in preserving images. She noted that this love deepened following the death of her mother when she inherited her photo album, which she had never seen when her mother was alive. She continued by recounting a family reunion that took place in Toronto in the early 2000s where she met filmmaker Sylvia Hamilton, and Nancy shared with her a large collection

[43] Azoulay, *Civil Imagination,* 15.
[44] An indirect reference to Elizabeth Alexander's 1994 essay "'Can you be black and look at this?': Reading the Rodney King Video(s)"
[45] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Picador, 2001), 154.

of photographs of famed Canadian singer Portia White, who was Nancy's aunt on her mother's side. During their meeting, Sylvia encouraged Nancy to preserve the images because of their importance and historical value. This love of collecting and keeping photographs of Black Montreal only intensified when she curated a photo-exhibit on the history of Union United Church which took place in 2018 at City Hall. Our conversation went as follows: [46]

> NOM: Ever since that I've tried to _ _ look at them more carefully _ and try to get some kind of story because I think _ like you're doing, I think that the pictures themselves _ tell a story of the social history of Blacks at the time _ even though it's from only my mother's point of view _ She travelled around a bit with her father because he was minister _ They would go to the different church _ _ associations and she would take photos there
>
> **KCW: And this was in Nova Scotia? In Wolfville?**
>
> NOM: Yeah. In Nova Scotia, yeah. So those are those are the pictures that I have—the albums that I have. That was a lot of my interest in photography came from that, and then the hundredth anniversary [of Union United Church] I thought that really, the history needs to be told and I had been to city hall to see another exhibition—I think it was the Italians that had an exhibition there and I thought: I don't see why Union couldn't put up something like that in City Hall have our story told so I offered to do it and I had nothing to start with ((laughs)) and so you know people were reluctant to it was like pulling teeth a lot _ They were a little more willing now to like some of these ((gestures to a small photo album and folder of family photographs)) these things come without me specifically asking 'well, I don't want this at home anymore, here Nancy take it!' so I'll take it gladly, especially these old ones. They're fantastic. [47]

Speaking about image-makers of Black Montreal would not be complete without evoking the name of street photographer Graeme Clyke. Born in Halifax, Nova Scotia and moving to Montreal as a child, he is the son of the late Emily Clyke (1913-2018) and the Executive Director of the Negro Community Centre from 1949 until 1970, the late Stanley Clyke (1905-1970). Graeme worked as a studio and street photography for decades and is one of the few image-makers whose photographs within the NCC fonds (when they were first acquired, assembled and made public)[48] that can be unambiguously attributed as belonging to him.

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[46] This section was written for a pilot project to this thesis entitled "Stilled Motion"

[47] Nancy Oliver-MacKenzie, interviewed by Kelann Currie-Williams, 13 November 2018 [0:36:00]

[48] During the first NCC archive event "Showcasing Montreal's Negro Community Centre Archives" in April 2017, archivists Alexandra Mills and Ellen Gressling brought hundreds of copies of the photographs from the fonds to the event at the UNIA. In doing so, community members were able to reminisce and see images of themselves or

Graeme's images of Black community events and institutions in the South-west region of Montreal illustrate a history of the unequivocal importance of the Negro Community Centre in Little Burgundy.[49] In what started as the site of the large, comprehensive archival fonds containing textual and graphic materials alike of the NCC history and daily happenings, Concordia's Special Collections was soon gifted with an uniquely photographic archive following Graeme's donation of his photographs in June 2017, for which there is now a fonds in his name. While Graeme Clyke was unfortunately unable to be interviewed for this project, his love of photography and commitment to preserving the history of the NCC through his images were brought up on several occasions by "makers" and "keepers" Dorothy Williams, Enid Dixon, and Nancy Oliver-MacKenzie in our photo-interviews.

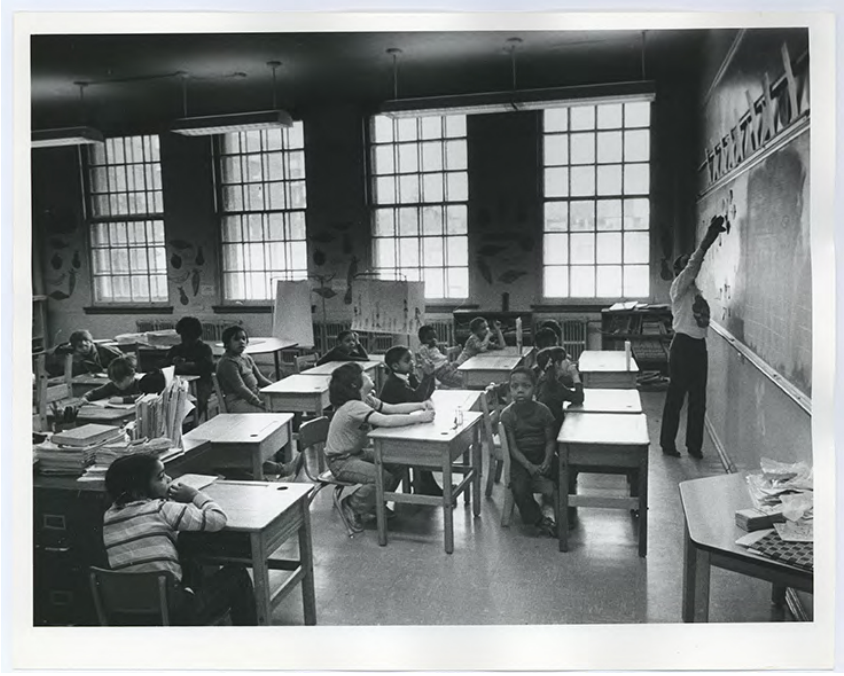

Figure 8: "Children in class at Royal Arthur School," F027-02-045, Graeme Clyke fonds

The photographs that are included here focus primarily on the weeks and months leading up the closure of the Royal Arthur School in 1981 which was located in Little Burgundy. Black protestant children who attended the school attended the NCC on a regularly basis for

of friends/family, but also assist in identifying those who were photographed, the locations of where the images were taken, and the names of the photographers.

[49] Mills, Rochat, and High, "Telling Stories from Montreal's Negro Community Centre Fonds: The Archives as Community-Engaged Classroom," 43.

lunch, after-school programs, and of course Saturday activities such as dance and piano lessons.[50] As such, his images depict more than simply the closure of a neighborhood school but rather the closure of a school that had been at the heart of the Black community in Little Burgundy, which tell (or begin to tell) a larger history of the effects of urban renewal on the Black population of Little Burgundy which dwindled from the 1960s to the 1980s resulting in several school closures.[51]

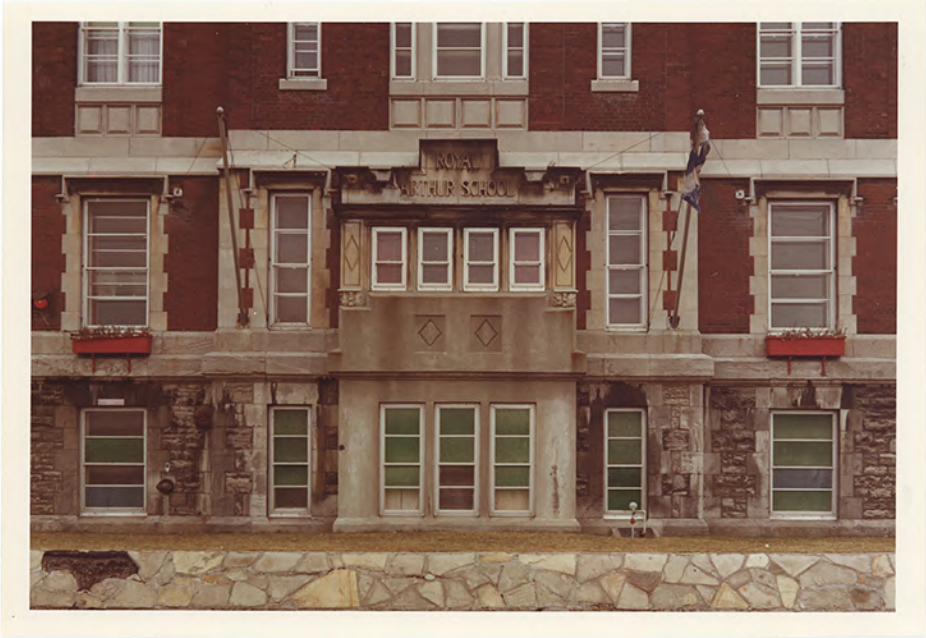

Figure 9: "Photograph of Royal Arthur School," F027-02-056, Graeme Clyke fonds

As part of a pilot project to "Prolonging the Afterimage" titled "Stilled Motion: Remembering a Black Sense of Place in Little Burgundy Through Photographs," I was able to speak with Dr. Dorothy Williams in October 2018 about her memories of Little Burgundy as well as discuss the role of photographs in remembering the past. Dorothy was born and raised in the neighborhood of Little Burgundy during the late 1950s-1970s and as a historian, author, community educator, and librarian she has made it her life's work to collect, share, and preserve the history of Little Burgundy's Black community. The interview was conducted in the reading room of Concordia's Special Collections at Vanier Library in which we spoke for approximately

[50] Steven High, "The Interwoven Histories of Race, Residence, and Work in Twentieth-Century Montreal," *Urban History Review/Revue d'histoire urbaine* 46, no. 1 (Fall 2017): 27.
[51] Williams, *The Road to Now: A History of Blacks in Montreal,* 115; High, "The Interwoven Histories of Race, Residence, and Work in Twentieth-Century Montreal," 39.

an hour and a half and looked at a selection of 15 photographs for our interview beforehand chosen from the Negro Community Centre/Charles H. Este Cultural Centre fonds. It was also through this interview that she shared with me the love of photography that both Leeroy Edwards and Owen Rowe shared, as well as their contributions to Black communities in the city. Our conversation regarding Leeroy Edwards, who was lovingly called the "Happy Wanderer" by many both in his neighborhood and around Montreal went as follows:

Figure 10: "Leeroy Edwards, "the happy wanderer" [1922-2010]," F013-02-134, NCC fonds

KCW: There's another photo here that has always been very interesting to me… it's of Mr. Leeroy Edwards.

DW: Oh, yeah. [picks up photograph] Happy Wanderer, yeah. He's got his back to des Seigneurs street. Boy, he was an institution in and of himself [laughs]. He loved taking pictures.

KCW: I know a few people who, I guess this is during the 2000s, who grew up in Little Burgundy that I know very well now and had mentioned as children they would… he would always try to tell them about the history of the neighborhood—

DW: Oh yeah.

KCW: —just in passing if they were going to get the bus [laughs] or get to school.

> DW: Oh yeah, he was the kind of guy, he always spoke in riddles and he spoke in poems and he had a massive, talk about a photo collection. He had… some people estimated he had close to a million pictures.
>
> **KCW: Wow.**
>
> DW: He had a massive collection. I have no idea where it is. It's gone now. I think it's gone now.[52]

Leeroy Edwards was born 1922 in Trinidad and served in the British Navy. He later moved to Montreal in 1953 and worked at the Montreal Airport for 30 years. He was an avid collector of photographs, a community historian, and a photographer in his own right. When our focus shifted to this image of Leeroy, Dorothy did not speak directly about the context of the scene itself except to note that "he's got his back to Des Seigneurs Street" (a street which runs parallel to Oscar Peterson park in Little Burgundy). Instead, she spoke about Leeroy's love of photographs and images by gesturing to the camera that he had in his hands. Moreover, she spoke about his vast collection of photographs that he kept in his house in Little Burgundy which she speculated might not have been preserved following his death in December 2010. As said in a Montreal Gazette article eulogizing his life, "Edwards loved his poetry and loved taking photos, filling albums with thousands of snapshots of everyone from Nelson Mandela to Pierre Trudeau." Gemma Raeburn-Baynes, a long-time friend of Leeroy, also added in the article that for as long as she had known him, "He whips out the photo album and he can explain every picture in there—from him with Michael Jackson to Muhammad Ali, he tells the story."[53]

I have stared back at this reflexive photograph for over three years. Continually looking for a way to return his gaze and reminding myself that I am not being photographed but are rather looking at a photograph. The saying of "pictures of people taking pictures" took on a new meaning when I saw this image precisely because no matter how many times I look at it, I always forget that my picture is not being taken; whoever took this image was photographed, and I am merely an onlooker.[∅] But there's a pull to stare back nonetheless. To imagine the image that was taken by Leeroy that we will never see. A photograph of someone taking a

[52] Dr. Dorothy Williams, interviewed by Kelann Currie-Williams, 22 October 2018 [0:52:00]
[53] Montreal CTV News, "Happy Wanderer dies at 88", 18 December 2010 [https://montreal.ctvnews.ca/happy-wanderer-dies-at-88-1.587465]
[∅] **TO READ "HAPPY WANDERER", SEE PAGE 69.**

photograph of the person photographing them—we only see one part, despite knowing that there is another half. It is a duet turned solo. With its absence, speculation is the only option to imagine his large photo collection. What sorts of photographs did Leeroy have and carry with him? How did those who were shown these photos react to the images they were seeing? Do they remember the images and Leeroy's telling of the images' stories?

In this same interview with Dorothy, we lingered on the topic of image-making and image preservation after I had made reference to a letter I had read in the Graeme Clyke fonds which had been written by the late Owen Rowe (1922 – 2005) and addressed to Emily Clyke, Graeme's mother. Owen, who was born in Barbados in 1922, served in the Canadian Armed Forces as a flying officer for the Royal Canadian Air force during World War II.[54] After relocating to Montreal following the war, he became a committed community organizer for Black communities in Montreal (namely the NCC where he served as the program director during the 1950s) as well as an avid photographer. In the letter sent to Emily Clyke, Owen reminiscences about when he lived in Montreal as well as how the Negro Community Centre had been profoundly important to him and played a significant role in the lives of many Black Montrealers. Included in the letter were a handful of wallet-sized photographs of youth and adults at various NCC events that he had taken during the 1950s.[55] My conversation with Dorothy went as follows:

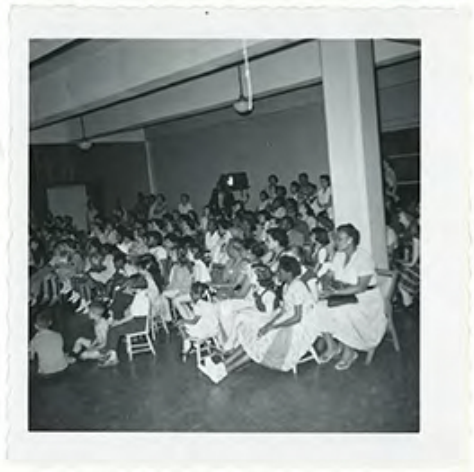

Figure 11.1: F027-02-138, Graeme Clyke fonds

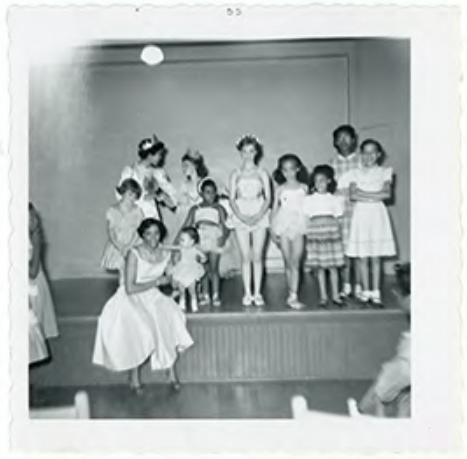

Figure 11.2: F027-02-142, Graeme Clyke fonds

[54] Owen Rowe – A Profile (March 1991), Box: F013-014, Folder: 13 Negro Community Centre/Charles H. Este Cultural Centre fonds, Concordia University Special Collections, Montreal, Quebec, Canada.
[55] Correspondence from Owen Rowe to Emily Clyke, 21 October 1987, Box: F027, Folder: F027-011-13, Graeme Clyke fonds, Concordia University Special Collections, Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

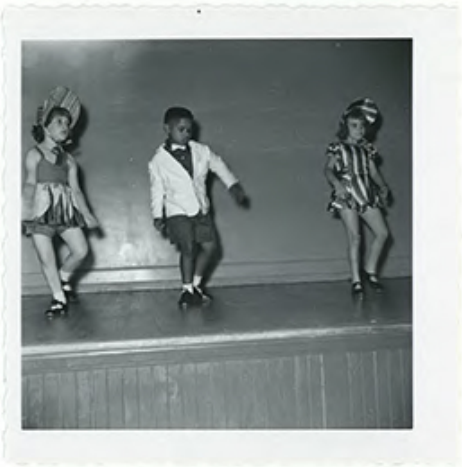

Figure 11.3: F027-02-141, Graeme Clyke fonds

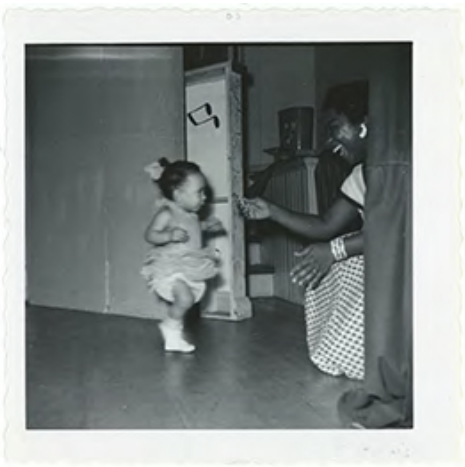

Figure 11.4: F027-02-140, Graeme Clyke fonds

KCW: I guess Owen was trying to talk about an image-making practice that he felt was super unique.

DW: But he really believed in chronicling the history, right. I think he saw it as sort of his mission. He's very, very excited to take a pic-snapshot today, that would be considered historical in the future. He's very much, yeah he saw the value of and the power of the picture... the photograph. And I think he was much more deliberate in them. He put captions on them, he put borders. He made a point of making the picture tell the story, whereas the Happy Wanderer who took hundreds of thousands, I don't know if it was millions, but hundreds of thousands of pictures where they're not identified so they don't have a context and it's very difficult to identify, *would* be very difficult to identify them. He just liked clicking the camera but for Owen it was very deliberate. He was doing a very political and very strategic move and saw his photography and his account, his written word as being a way in which to make a statement. So we have some people in the community who spend their life collecting, they don't contribute but they collect which is an important role. And then you have people like Owen who are very deliberate in what they do because they see something and through their training and expertise they realize it's going to have historical value and they want to capture that permanently, so they put work into it. So they're going to do less but it's going to be higher quality. And then you get others who are so excited about living and so excited about the whole – about everything that's happening it's that they just take – people like Leeroy who just snap pictures because this is what Leeroy does to tell a story. And just won't slow down because I've said to Leeroy many times 'you should write on the back of that' – will not slow down to identity and so there are part of his memoryscape, right but after him they're very difficult to translate into stories of images that are real.[56]

[56] Dr. Dorothy Williams, interviewed by Kelann Currie-Williams, 22 October 2018 [1:05:00]

Margot Blackman, who was a close friend of Owen, spoke fondly of the years they spent taking photographs together at many community events most especially those which celebrated their home country of Barbados. As she and Dorothy mentioned during my respective interviews with each of them, Owen was an avid photographer who took image-making and historical preservation seriously. His photographs were meant to "tell the story" of Black communities living in Montreal and moreover, these photographs were to be shared within the community between family and friends as well as preserved for future generations. Registering the history of mid-century Montreal through images was close to both Owen and Margot's hearts as she told me in our interview:

> MB: "I took these images because I wanted others to know about the work we did for each other back in the 70s [...] It was good to be able to picture what is going on in the community and with people and give them the pictures. They were very grateful and when they saw themselves in the newspapers and their children, they were happy. So I was glad about that too... I took numerous photos [laughs] —so many. And anything that was going on in the community, people expected you to be there and take a picture. And, of course, you had to pay to get them developed but I didn't mind. And people wanted copies of the pictures, which I paid for and I didn't mind doing it and I'm sure they are happy when they look back and they see their children and grandchildren. [...] So I was into photography—Owen Rowe and I were [laughs] the two photographers. After he came back into Montreal, we were the two photographers, but he took far more than I did. He took— I was going to say millions, it was millions but he took numerous photographs of everything. But it's good... it's good that we did but you have his available in the archives and mine are available... everywhere I guess. Here, and everywhere else. And a lot of people have photographs that I took."[57]

In many ways, the photographs that Margot and Owen took especially during the late 1970s and 1980s were of mundane events and ordinary scenes, or perhaps what African-American photographer Gordon Parks might call "moments without proper names." [58] Their images do not always feature the most notable events that were happening in Black Montreal community spaces and beyond, nor do they depict the events that have been written into the larger historical record of Black life and presence in the city. Rather, they are visual imprints of ordinary gatherings and minor activities that filled their lives and caught their attention. Their

[57] Margot Blackman, interviewed by Kelann Currie-Williams, 24 July 2019 [26:00 - 30:25]
[58] *Moments Without Proper Names,* directed by Gordon Parks (1987; New York: PBS), documentary/essay film.

images capture moments of intimate socialities and, as Margot notes, the photographs exist in multiple spaces at once, occupying many different family albums and picture frames. Their photographs do not simply rest within Margot's many boxes and film sleeves or the archival boxes at Concordia's Special Collections but rather live elsewhere and 'everywhere', at once.

READING IMAGES TOGETHER

That vernacular photographs have become valuable tools of insight towards learning about the quotidian and everyday lives of people is not surprising. Images that are taken of ordinary days that are seemingly uneventful are, in actuality, rich with stories and meaning and feeling. Vernacular photography, which has become synonymous with snapshot photography, has said to be a "visual culture of everyday life"[59] precisely because the subject matter of these images take as their focus events or activities that are overlooked for their ordinariness and commonplace quality. What the terminology of vernacular provides as an opening is the possibility to tie it together with what we might call the "minor" and the understated. The majority of the photographs that populate the folders of the NCC archival fonds are snapshots—many of which do not include the name of the photographer or who was photographed, nor the specific significance or complete information regarding its context. However, these vernacular snapshots that depict vernacular events despite the everydayness (perhaps even as a result of it) are far from underwhelming. They are an ocean wave capsizing and covering the land surrounding it. Their commonplaceness is anything but unremarkable. It is worth asking, then, what if minor histories could be told through everyday images? What would telling the minor and quotidian histories *of* these images do in the present?

I borrow from Ann Laura Stoler in my usage of the phrase minor histories, insisting, as she does, that "'minor' histories should not be mistaken for trivial ones [...] Minor history, as I use it here, marks a differential political temper and a critical space. It attends to the structures of feeling and force that in 'major' history might be otherwise displaced."[60] And, drawing back to the very lineage of the conceptual usage of the minor, it was Cindy Katz who writes that "the

[59] "From its inception snapshot photography has been first and foremost, a visual culture of everyday life And it is perhaps for this reason that we have not looked closer at these kinds of images and the tangle of meanings and feelings they convey", Catherine Zuromskis, "Intimate Exposures", *Snapshot Photography: The Lives of Images,* 16.
[60] Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain* (Princeton University Press, 2010), 7.

'minor' is not so much a stable form existing in opposition to something major, but relentlessly transformative and inextricably relational."[61] Shifting attention to the minor is an effort to emphasize how overly consumed we are with major histories, and moreover, by histories that are accessible through traditional entry points. We look for the images and stories that confirm the narratives we already know. In relation to Black Montreal, these narratives always begin and end with the Sleeping Car Train Porters of the early 1900s, the Black Jazz scene of the 1920s to 1960s, Caribbean migrant nurses and the Domestic Immigration Program (or, Domestic Scheme as it is often called) of the 1950s to 1960s, and the periods of increased Caribbean immigration during the 1960s and onwards.[62] These are the histories of Black Montreal which occupy the coveted position of being "noticed" and "registering" as histories that are part or, at the very least, are adjacent to Quebec's historical record. However, the minor histories of Black community in Montreal (or anywhere in Canada) are often siloed because they do not register if you are tuned into or attuned to the major —the major is not the channel this music is playing on. Its resonance cannot be heard or felt or experienced on a station that exiles out the qualitative forces that require deep and attentive listening.[63] An attunement to the register through which vernacular Black images make their sound in the world demands a shift, a change in the dial. Attending to vernacular and quotidian images of Black life and presence in Montreal is a new activation of reading the past through images, as it goes beyond the common propensity of viewing images and photographic records of a past that is already well known. To look for and at (but always across) images which tell stories of everyday celebrations and small community events—recasting our focus through a love of the minor— is a major shift. As Saidiya Hartman advances in her monograph *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments*, for us to delve into the less obvious, less spoken-about histories that bridge the chasm between intimacy and distance, we have to "listen for the secondary rhythms."[64]

The photographs within the NCC, Graeme Clyke, and Leon Llewellyn archival fonds as well as the personal collections of Enid, Margot, and Nancy reveal that there were other events

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[61] Cindy Katz, "Towards Minor Theory," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 14 (1996): 489.
[62] See: Karen Flynn's *Moving Beyond Borders: A History of Black Canadian and Caribbean Women in the Diaspora* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011); Cecil Foster's *They Called Me George: The Untold Story of The Black Train Porters* (Windsor: Biblioasis, 2019).
[63] Tina Campt writes in *Listening to Images:* "listening attentively to these mundane details means not accepting what we see as the truth of the image. Attending to their lower frequencies means being attuned to the connections between what we see and how it resonates," 33.
[64] Hartman, *Wayward lives, Beautiful Experiments,* 30.

happening alongside the major events of Black Montreal history that were important and memorable. These images were cherished and kept at the centre and in their homes precisely because they told intimate stories of everyday life and of community activities. These street photographs, snapshots, and vernacular images reveal the continuum of the minor and major, and moreover, they "articulate both the ordinary and the extraordinary texture of Black life."[65]As such, there are two distinct though converging streams within this section: attending to minor histories through photographs and going beyond or exceeding the "frame" of photographs to tell stories. These two streams—the first of which draws from Stoler and Hartman, and the second which draws from Susan Sontag and Marianne Hirsch—are entangled precisely because they both require looking for what is not explicitly given and what requires searching for what is not immediately discernible. Sontag and Hirsch write in their respective works that:

> "The ultimate wisdom of the photographic image is to say: "There is the surface. Now think—or rather feel, intuit—what is beyond it, what the reality must be like if it looks this way." Photographs, which cannot themselves explain anything, are inexhaustible invitations to deduction, speculation, and fantasy."[66]
>
> "Going beyond the surfaces, telling the stories surrounding the images, attempting to open the curtains…"[67]

Moving beyond the "surface"—an act which can be activated within photo-interviews—is an approach that situates photographs as kinds of springboard that can launch and send us to an elsewhere, to what Barthes might call a "subtle beyond."[68] Through this focus on Black Montreal history, reading-beyond, looking at, listening to, and sitting-with one photograph or a set of photographs that illustrate the history of what we might call a minor history can provide another angle or perspective on the intricately intimate and collective histories of Black lives and presence in Montreal. These stories are minor and liminal, and as such require us to work a bit harder to see it and give it the attention that the major always-already demands of us. Doing this work with the image-makers and keepers of Black Montreal first began with a preserver of history and collector photographs who inspired the very term of "maker" for this

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[65] Campt, *Listening to Images*, 7-8.
[66] Sontag, *On Photography,* 23.
[67] Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory,* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 107.
[68] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 59

thesis, Nancy Oliver-MacKenzie. During our first interview in November 2018, Nancy shared with me an extensive collection of historic photographs taken and collected by members of her church congregation at Union United Church. These photographs, many of which have been blown up, framed, and mounted on walls through the church, depict the rich history of Black life in Montreal through one of its most important institution for community and support. Of the many images we discussed, there was one in particular that carried with it the status of "minor" despite its extraordinary significance in the wider history of Black Montreal.

Figure 12: "Negro Theatre Guild cast of *Green Pastures,*"1942. Courtesy of Nancy Oliver-MacKenzie.

> **KCW: When you were saying about the words sometimes can be painful, do you think sometimes pictures or images in general just take that place? It allows either the words to come out in a less painful way or that it—?**
>
> NOM: Absolutely! Because you know, I can't say how proud I am of this [reaches for and grabs Negro Theatre Guild photograph] and yet at the same time, I know what they went through. I know the kind of… there was article in the Montreal Star that told about, how they almost didn't perform sometimes because somebody did something that was very racist… and made the whole group upset.[69]

This photograph, taken in March 1942, was selected by Nancy because of her love for theatre and it in turn led to an emotional conversation about the importance of the Negro Theatre Guild's first major performance which was a mounting of Marc Connelly's play *The*

[69] Nancy Oliver-MacKenzie, interviewed by Kelann Currie-Williams 13 November 2018 [1:06:12—1:11:30]

Green Pastures.[70] As one of the first of its kinds in the city, the Black theatre troupe formed in 1941 and, like most Black institutions of this time, formed in the St. Antoine district of the city which we now know as the neighborhood of Little Burgundy.[71] As noted in an article published in the *Montreal Star* in 1942, the troupe stated that their mandate as an arts and community-oriented ensemble was "to utilize the enthusiasm, sincerity and native talent of colored youth, in the presentation of plays of social value, is the principal aim of our organization. We feel that in the common struggle against fascism and Hitlerism, the Negro has not only his blood and his labor to contribute, but has a distinct cultural contribution to make."[72] For nearly 35 years, the Negro Theatre Guild remained a prominent troupe in the city and provided through its production of *The Emperor Jones* an avenue for ones of its talented members Percy Rodrigues to lead a successful Hollywood career for several decades.[73] However, the Negro Theatre Guild (later renamed to the Negro Theatre Arts Club of Montreal) disbanded in the 1970s due the creation of the Black Theatre Workshop (BTW) in the late 1960s and the BTW's first professional production in 1971.[74]

Our conversation about the image of the Negro Theatre Guild began even before I turned on the audio recorder. Nancy had made reference to it prior to the start of the interview while opening several photo albums and folders, laying out the images before us on the table and it continued during one of our follow-up interviews in 2019. As she mentioned in this second meeting while speaking about Reverend Charles H. Este and his monumental impact in the lives of countless Black Montrealers during the 20th century, very few people know that the theatre troupe before committing to its official name, was previously called the Reverend Este Theatre Guild.[75] Through the stories and histories told to her by members of Union United Church who knew Reverend Este, he had a deep love of the arts and fervently supported the endeavours of the young aspiring actors by allowing them to meet and rehearse in the basement of Union United. It was undeniable that knowing this history—the information that laid

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[70] Robin Breon, "The Growth and Development of Black Theatre in Canada: A Starting Point" *Theatre Research in Canada / Recherches théâtrales Au Canada*, vol.9, no. 2 (1988).
[71] Clarence S. Bayne, "Black Community Submission...Montreal, Quebec into the 1990s (Excerpt from the Black Community Submission on Culture Public Hearing on the Proposition De La Culture Et Des Arts)." Canadian Theatre Review no. 83 (Summer, 1995): 24-27.
[72] S. Morgan Powell, Montreal Daily Star 28 Feb 1942, qtd in Robin Breon's "The Growth and Development of Black Theatre in Canada: A Starting Point".
[73] Williams, *The Road to Now: A History of Blacks in Montreal,* 77; Leo W. Bertley, "Percy Rodrigues" in *Canada and its People of African Descent* (Pierrefonds: Bilongo Publishers, 1977), 19174.
[74] Robin Breon, "The Growth and Development of Black Theatre in Canada: A Starting Point".
[75] Nancy Oliver-MacKenzie, interviewed by Kelann Currie-Williams, 30 May 2019 [00:31:24]

beyond the frame and in excess of the image itself—had an affect not only on how Nancy retold this history to me but also in the particular way she held the photograph in her hand. The care and tenderness with which she held the photograph during our first interview clearly suggested an affective relationship to the image that could not be articulated through words, only through a gestural movement. As was the case while transcribing our interview, there is difficulty in trying to describe the ineffability of a "keeper" and "teller"'s connection to an image that clearly touches them deeply which points to Steven High's assertion that "much is lost in transcription. After all, storytelling is an embodied act: our bodies speaking during the interview through our facial expressions, gestures, sudden changes in body position or stance as well as our voices."[76] Given the emotion that was lost in transcription, I responded to this moment and to this photograph through poetry, resulting in a ekphrastic haibun titled 'Green Pastures'. ≈

My two follow-up interviews with Enid had a distinctively different pace than our first. Given that the photographs that were spoken about during our first meeting were from the NCC archival fonds and as such, were not hers, we decided to try a new approach to talking about photographs together. As she had mentioned to me in July 2019, most of the images she wanted to share with me from the 1970s and 1980s that were directly related to Black communities in the city, were in the form of negatives as oppose to prints. In order for us to see these images we required a film scanner. As such, for Enid to begin speaking about the images, we had to listen to the whirring of the scanner and await its translation of the negatives to viewable images on the computer screen. It was a process wherein aurality gave way to visuality. This experimentation was essentially the decision to allow another source of sound—a mechanical voice, of sorts—to have a place in the conversation. As was noticeable both in the moment of the interview and re-listening to the recording after the fact, there was a kind of sonic competition taking place between Enid's voice and the film scanner. However, since we both depended on the scanner to be able to witness and see the images impressed within the negatives, and I relied on Enid to provide the stories and contextual framing to the images that were appearing before us on the screen, it also meant that mechanical sounds were to be

[76] Steven High, "Going beyond the 'Juicy Quotes Syndrome'," In *Going Public: The Art of Participatory Practice,* ed. Elizabeth Miller, Edward Little, and Steven High (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017), 120.

≈ **FOR "GREEN PASTURES", GO TO PAGE 70.**

inevitable elements of the interviews soundscape. In the discipline of oral history, there is often a propensity towards "sterilizing" the aural field which is to say, ensuring that extraneous sound be absent from the recording of the interview so as not to garble the "tellers" words and render the conversation undecipherable. While this common-sense rule is not without merit, it does close the door to considering how interviews are not siloed from the world around us nor from the cacophony of sounds that are produced within it. Sometimes the peripheral, distant, or even buzzing sounds within the space that an interview is taking place in, need to be present and need to be heard; sometimes the overlapping of sounds create another sonic register for the interview to exist within.[77]

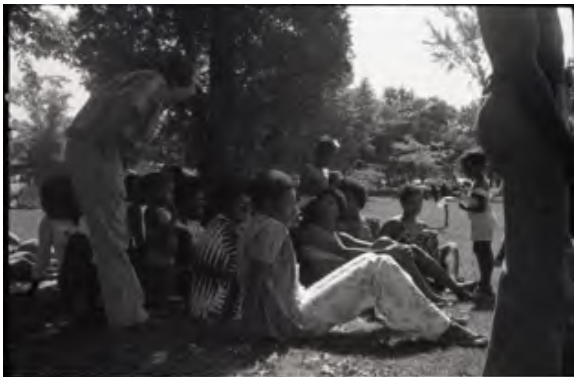
Between the speech-sounds and whirring-sounds, stories were being shared. They each were contributing to the interview in distinct though interrelated ways. Listening back to the recording now, I am reminded of the process and steps we took together to lay the negatives in the holders and onto on the glass of the scanner. The moments spent waiting for each rectangular negative to be scanned and appear on screen in the Epson software were filled with sound. The whirring was a constant reminder that the negative's visibility was coming into being—a constant reminder that sound continued to be part of every moment within the event of photography and that the scanner was continuing the life of the images by making them visible over 40 years later. Elizabeth Edwards speaks directly to unique quality of sitting with another person to share stories and images through the hybrid tactility of holding photographic prints and handling the computer to be able to view the images:

> "The social act of gathering around a computer screen to look at images is markedly different from that of handling photographs, touching them, stroking them and handing them to kin and to friends or sitting alone in quiet contemplation of an image held in the hand. However, while digital images are often desired and produced as material prints, one must not overlook the fact that new ways of looking at photographs demand their own sets of embodied relations with a material culture, as eyes run over the screen and fingers tap the keyboard, and bodies touch, clustered around the computer screen."[78]

As such, the recordings with Enid have interjections and the overlapping of distant conversations, whirring machines, a cough or a sneeze, or the loud sound of a door being closed. These are sonic elements that remain, for me, integral to any interview. They are aural

[77] Campt, *Image Matters: Archive, Photography, and the African Diaspora in Europe,* 18.
[78] Edwards, "Photographs and the Sound of History", 35.

reminders of a simultaneity of living—the echoes of life that go on while the interview is taking place. The first set of images that we spoke about were taken in 1974 during a summer camp field trip. As a community animator at the time, Enid worked at the Cote-de-Neiges Black community centre summer camp organizing daily activities and end of season outings for children such as the trip captured in her photos. Through these images, we were able to have a broader conversation not only about her reason for capturing these moments but also the historical context within which this field trip fits into. Our photo-interview and scanning session started with these three images:



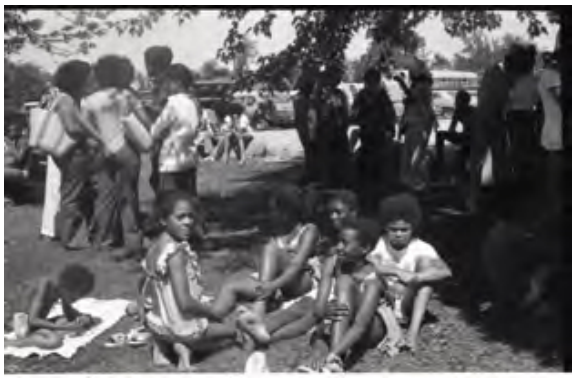


Figure 13: "Children at lake playing on the beach". Taken by Enid Dixon, 1974

> ED: This is connected with, well there is a direct link back to the Negro Community Centre with these ones because by this time — the early 1970s — not only was there a summer day camp at the centre but they had these different day camps in Lasalle, Côte-des-Neiges, NDG [Notre-dame-de-Grâce], I forget where else… Downtown. I don't know if the South Shore — anyway. And so I was working, along with Yvonne Greer and a bunch of others, at the day camp in Lasalle and we were headquartered in [Cecil] Newman School, which was on some little side street in Lasalle. At the end of the summer camp season, which was maybe five or six weeks or however long… because it was end of June until middle of August… something like that… at the end — you may have heard this already — all five camps got together and there was a huge picnic, and so there was this convoy of buses that would go to Long Sault Provincial Park [Long Sault Parkway] in Ontario, just over the border along the St. Lawrence seaway there and it was a gigantic provincial park and so like these, I don't know, how many buses and private cars just loaded with families would go for a picnic, right. And so you were talking about hundreds of people and so this was at the park and the kids and the people that I took pictures of primarily were the kids from Lasalle day camp so, we'll see who we can identify.[79]

As Enid gestures to in our conversation through her framing of the photographs' context, the 1970s period marked a significant shift both in population and in the availability of neighborhood-specific community organizations for Black Montrealers. Dorothy Williams, who has extensively researched and written about in her work on the history of Black life in Montreal, speaks directly to shift and subsequent fracturing. In part because of the damaging and lingering effects of urban renewal on Little Burgundy in the southwest and downtown area, paired with the increasing trend of newly immigrating Black West Indians choosing to live outside of the downtown core, the population of Black Montrealers begun to spread out across the city during the 1960s and 1970s.[80] Through the creation of English-speaking Island Associations for expats from countries such as Jamaica, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, St. Vincent, and Barbados to name a few, residents began living in neighborhoods further West such as Notre Dame de Grâce and Côte-des-Neiges, and to the South such as Lasalle.[81] In turn, they started families in these areas and those with relatives living abroad would sponsor family

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[79] Enid Dixon, interviewed by Kelann Currie-Williams, 6 November 2019 [00:08:46]
[80] Dorothy Williams, *Blacks in Montreal, 1628-1986: An Urban Demography,* 74.
[81] As Dorothy Williams writes, "The movement to certain areas by large numbers of West Indians led to these areas acquiring the misnomer of 'Black district'. Blacks have never been a majority in any district in the Montreal metropolitan area, yet like St. Antoine 50 years earlier, both Côte-des-Neiges and NDG acquired this tag in the early sixties due to the cluster pattern of the early Blacks that moved there," *Blacks in Montreal, 1628-1986: An Urban Demography,* 71.

members for immigration to Canada, leading to the number of Black families living in Little Burgundy to dwindle. This major "intra-city" migration, as Williams has called it, ultimately led to the creation of neighbourhood community centres known as Satellite Organizations, that would take on the role of recreational, educational, and professional support within these newly established Black community hubs.[82] This initiative led by Carl Whittaker and which began in 1972, was termed the Black Community Central Administration of Quebec (BCCAQ).[83] The terminology of "satellite" is two-fold in that it refers directly to the fact the BCCAQ existed alongside and in conjunction with the NCC (which remained at the centre of Black community and social life in Montreal until the late 1980s) and that all neighborhood community associations were interconnected with the driving focus of promoting "unity…for the whole community."[84] As children and teenagers, Enid and long-time friend and lead editor of the *Uhuru* newspaper which circulated in Montreal during the 1970s, Yvonne Greer, both attended the NCC. As they got older, they began assisting as leaders for the NCC as well as the satellite organizations set up under the BCCAQ that were being created across the city. Despite this new diffusion of Black presence across the island, the neighborhood community associations remained closely connected and would create opportunities—such as the summer camp picnic captured in these photos—for children, youth, and adults to continue the tradition of Black gathering and togetherness.[85]

[82] Williams, *Blacks in Montreal, 1628-1986: An Urban Demography*, 61; Williams, *The Road to Now: A History of Blacks in Montreal,* 139.
[83] Williams, *The Road to Now: A History of Blacks in Montreal,* 131-132.
[84] Williams, *The Road to Now: A History of Blacks in Montreal*, 138.
[85] In *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*, Katherine McKittrick speaks directly to the ways that Black togetherness and community ties are illustrations of the "connection between geography and Blackness" and moreover, how the establishing of shops, offices, streets (or, in the case of this thesis, community centres like the NCC) were examples of the production and making of space for Black life, 12-13.

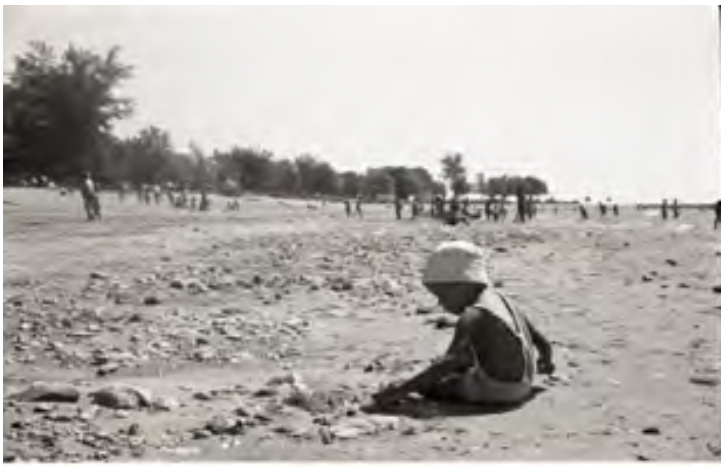

Figure: 14: "Lone child playing in the sand on the beach". Taken by Enid Dixon, 1974.

> ED: Oh! I remember this — I remember taking this. It was just this one little kid sitting there. And you… it was… I think what struck me, I mean clearly, somebody was watching over this child but nobody was hovering, you know. Kid just sat there, played in the sand. That was that. Life was going on about him and this kid just sat there and fiddling with the stones. That's all it was, right. So –
>
> **KCW: I love the little bucket hat [laughs]. It's so sweet!**
>
> ED: Yeah, yeah yeah. Little hat. His beat-up, old shorts. It's just a day at the park. And *all* kinds of people are having—doing *all* kinds of other things but he could be alone in the world, you know. And that was it. That's what I liked about it. I know I made a print of this that I cropped a little bit so that he was just a more off to the side like that. I do have a print somewhere, so it was probably— I probably used this in some exhibition we had at some point. But yeah, I like that photo.
>
> **KCW: It's beautiful. I… he's so in the activity that he's doing, you know.**
>
> ED: Yeah, yeah! Totally unaware of me or anybody else and um, yeah. And quite content and even though the kid's by himself or… it could be a boy or a girl, I don't know and… quite okay with being by themselves and you know that he was not isolated or without somebody caring about him, there's somebody out there caring about him, but they're just not in the frame.[86]

Nothing in these photos make reference to the years where water-related field trips were not permitted among Black community organizations in Montreal. Nothing in these photos point to the 1954 boating accident at the Lake of Two Mountains, where 12 children of the Negro

[86] Enid Dixon, interviewed by Kelann Currie-Williams, 6 November 2019 [00:19:43]

Community Centre drowned, after their boat capsized.[87] We do not see any of that history in the images. This history sits outside the frame.[∞] It does not, however, sit outside the minds of those who *know* what it means for images like this to exist. This event is still within living memory. But the fact that *these* photos exist—that these group of children had been allowed to go on a fieldtrip to a lake and play in the water—is striking. After decades of grief and fear felt by the families and community animators who lost children in the boating accident, outings such as these could not be possible, could never be allowed. These photos, taken in the summer of 1974, come exactly twenty years after the boating accident occurred and it is difficult not to be overcome by competing emotions of sadness and joy. They conjure up a memory of grief without ever showing any evidence of such. They are, in short, photos of a perfect day trip— of a day trip gone according to plan. They are photos of life kept alive, of play, of fear bracketed if only for a moment. As Hartman says, "some things didn't appear in the photographs..."[88] With this in mind, one can only assume and know that there is "somebody out there caring about him" as Enid says, but there is also the fleet of caring older youth and adults watching over the children most likely carrying the vague memory of the boating accident which had been so rarely spoken about in the community due to the extent of the pain from the sudden and tragic loss.[89]

Figure 15: "Two children in baseball uniforms behind a fence". Taken by Enid Dixon, 1974.

[87] An emotional anniversary service was held at Union United Church in 2019 to remember the loss of the twelve children who drowned in the boating accident. See: Marian Scott, "Commemorating a tragedy: Drownings still haunt families 65 years later", *Montreal Gazette,* July 12 2019.

[∞] **TO READ "ANOTHER KIND OF EXISTENCE", LAND ON PAGE 71.**

[88] Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments,* 22.

[89] Marian Scott, "Commemorating a tragedy: Drownings still haunt families 65 years later," *Montreal Gazette,* 12 July 2019.

ED: Yeah, well, I have no idea who the teams were and that of course, you know, it's gone from any memory and it's too bad we can't see the little patches on their uniforms 'cause then we could get an idea of the… you know, who the team was, who sponsored them—I have no idea. I don't know if this was before or after the game, they look pretty clean so maybe it was before the game?

KCW: [laughs] yeah!

ED: [laughs]. Don't know! And um… no, I think it was for me the… well they were interesting and then these layers of fencing in between me and them, and then the fencing on the perimeter as well, you know. There was all of this fencing—they're all hemmed in…[90]

Figure 16.1: "Youth spectator at a baseball game". Taken by Enid Dixon, 1974.

ED: Yeah, same baseball game and people were just on the perimeter—on the outside of the fence and this is—oh yes, see, that's the Ville Marie Expressway and one of the buildings, the housing on that little street just… so the centre would have been off here to the left. Okay, so yeah they were just watching the game, they were just— now, I didn't know them… I just took a picture of the action and could have been on their way somewhere, he's got his bike and… yeah. It was something to watch, and everybody was there. Might they have been using— who knows that they were thinking: 'I want to try that' or 'I don't want to try that'

KCW: [laughs] Yeah!

ED: Who knows, right [laughs]! But they certainly were focused. They didn't pay attention to me.[91]

[90] Enid Dixon, interviewed by Kelann Currie-Williams, 6 November 2019 [00:22:35]
[91] Enid Dixon, interviewed by Kelann Currie-Williams, 6 November 2019 [00:26:28]


Figure 16.2: "Group of youth spectators at a baseball game", Courtesy of Enid Dixon.

> ED: No. These were the four that interested me the most, right. I was really looking at them without considering who else was in the frame but in fact they tell even more of a story…
>
> [whirring of the film scanner]
>
> ED: They tell even more of a story but I just liked the posture of these four guys.
>
> **KCW: Yeah… It's almost kind of like: 'we're too cool to stop and watch the game but we're still going to stop and watch the game' [laughs].**
>
> ED: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah. Exactly, Exactly. And they're a little older than the players so did they perhaps… were they on that same team or another team when they were younger? Did they wish that they wanted to play and they never got a chance? What might they be thinking, you don't know. But their posture was really just… I just thought that was fun.[92]

What struck me during this part of the interview, was Enid's fluidity in the process of fabulation— her commitment to the play that is required to deeply engage with photographs. Despite the fact that these are images she took and remembers taking nearly forty years ago, the full context of the scene was not completely known to her. The lure that brought her to photograph this moment was not based on being privy to all of the information and backstories of the young baseball players or the spectators. This information was outside of her viewfinder and exceeded what could be known by a passerby such as herself. What drew Enid in, as she remarks, was the story it was telling her. All the possible scenarios and reasons behind why these older teens might have stopped to watch the game, what their connection to a youth

[92] Enid Dixon, interviewed by Kelann Currie-Williams, 6 November 2019 [00:30:50]

league might be, and how they might be feeling while watching the younger children playing. For her, the arrangements of bodies communicated a narrative that exceeded what could be seen, what could be known. Looking at these photographs together was an act of attending to the ordinary moments that strike us and "prick" our attention—the moments where life is felt deep in our bones.

As I began to speak about earlier, fabulation is like improvising. It is riffing off of what is given and speculating into all that exceeds what be known. Reading archival photographs—images that are beyond and outside of their time—is and requires a type of riffing. You riff off of what is given by its written description, off what the photographic image communicates, off the knowing that comes to/with the seeing of the image. In the interview, the storytelling and moments of sharing that occur through the processes of looking at and talking about photographs are guided by if not punctuated by seeing across the image and adjusting the focus slightly; allowing the backgrounded to be foregrounded and the foreground to become background, or allowing both of these fields of viewing to sit together and be sited in the midground. Adjusting our focus of the photographic image, much like the turning of the focus ring of a lens, is not only a practice of going-back-and-forth but experimenting with these processes of perception. If what we want to know cannot be seen, then perhaps we must move beyond the visual and towards another path. This is why fabulation is both essential to and inextricable from the reading of archival photographs. To read—which is not merely to *look at,* irrespective of how deeply the looking happens— is to study what is inside, within and outside, what is able to be held and what is slipping out of reach. And, moreover, this riffing has its full potentiality brought out when it becomes collective, that is when the riffing is witnessed by another or by others and is shared together.[∅]

Penny Tinkler, in her book *Using Photographs in Social and Historical Research,* advances the following regarding how integrating photographs within the interview can engender opportunities for interviewee and interviewer to speculate, share knowledge and think together:

> "As the interviewer and interviewee pore over photos together and discuss what they see and what this means, communication is encouraged and rapport and trust are built. While photos decentre the interviewee in terms of the interaction, they simultaneously create space for the interviewee's

[∅] **TO READ "SHARED RIFFING", GO TO PAGE 72.**

> meanings and perspectives: when 'people discuss the meaning of photographs they try to figure out something together, leading sometimes to a negotiated understanding".[93]

Across both of my interviews with Nancy and Enid, there were many moments of 'negotiated understanding', where we each conjectured together about the possible date of the photograph given that it did not have an annotation, was an interesting example of interviewee and interviewer trying to "figure out something together."[94] Furthermore, to draw on Valerie Yow, this moment exemplified her argument of "the stance that there is a researcher and there is a subject [being] replaced by the conviction that two people, each bringing a different kind of knowledge to the interview, share equally in a process of discovery."[95] The photographic image, in this sense, is an atlas or map (to call back to Allan Sekula) much like the archive that housed it. Fabulation assists us to not only direct ourselves to the surplus of the image—what I have thought of as being the *afterimage*—but to those who are also caught within the worlds created by the image. Fabulating together draws out other registers of the photographic image that are not visual nor sonic. They are relational registers, affective qualities of the image that are brought into being through animated conversations.[96] However, in the case of reading images together through an impulse of fabulation and speculation, we do not meditate solely on what we are given (by the photo) but by what intrigues us, what lies outside of the frame, what we will never know but journey to imagine. [97] We meditate on what could be called excess.

Across the photographs present in the NCC, Graeme Clyke and Leon Llewellyn fonds, there is an echoing of the importance and centrality of social events for Black folks throughout Montreal. The history of sociality that is imaged through the photographs evidence very particulars ways that Black Montrealers assembled together to celebrate life—to join collectively amidst the many anti-Black forces attempting to stop and inhibit possibilities to publicly gather together.[98] Through events as commonplace as an end of

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[93] Tinkler, "Photo-interviews: Listening to Talk about Photos," 174-175.
[94] Tinkler, "Photo-interviews: Listening to Talk about Photos," 174.
[95] Valerie Yow, "Ethics and Interpersonal Relationships in Oral History Research," *Oral History Revie*w, 22, no. 1 (1995): 53.
[96] Campt, *Listening to Images,* 42.
[97] Thinking here about Abbas Kiarostami's "swan song" final film *24 Frames* (2017)*,* where his focus was on the moments and scenes that precede and come after the moment that was captured in a still image.
[98] I think back to the city of Montreal's proposed demolition of Union United Church in the late 1970s to allow for the construction and expansion of the metro line near the Lionel Groulx station, which of course never occurred. This particular city planning initiative would have uniquely affected the possibility for the city's older Black

the school year party for young students or a potluck following a community basketball game, or as remarkable as a city-wide event highlighting Caribbean culture, there was and continues to be a particular impulse to preserve celebratory events of Caribbean culture in Montreal, which is especially present in Leon's photographs. During an archival session in early 2019, I came across a remarkable three-part folder titled "Carnival" in the Leon Llewellyn fonds that filled with his street photographs of the 1976 Carnival, which took place from one end to another of St. Catherine's street. The images in this folder were shot on 120mm film in square format (6 cm x 6 cm) and are mostly black and white, however there is a considerable amount of colour images such as these.

Figure 17: Photographs documenting Carnival, Leon Llewellyn fonds, F032-02-644 to F032-02-655, Leon Llewellyn fonds.

congregation to gather for weekly services in the building they had worked so tirelessly and fearlessly to establish.

Black images of festive and community events are quite possibly the images that stir up the most emotion for me. Nothing compares to looking upon photographs of large groups of Black folks walking together (and being *allowed* to walk together) in the streets celebrating life, culture, and community.[99] These images, which are scanned contact sheets from Leon's negatives, articulate the importance and centrality of social events within Black communities across the city. Moreover, they reveal a longer history of Black Montrealers gathering together to celebrate life and to join collectively despite the many anti-Black forces attempting to inhibit possibilities to create, claim, act upon, and take up space in public.[100] As such, these images reflect this struggle for public sociality and in turn, suggest that perhaps snapshot, vernacular, and street photography are modes of image-making intimately tethered to making and witnessing-of sociality. Put differently, it would seem that photography is more than simply a social activity but also a means to record sociality in its fullness. This slight refiguring is an attempt towards underlining how photography is a deeply social act that carries a multiplicity by virtue of the fact that the image-taker is in always-already in relation with all those who are within the frame and even those who lie outside and beyond it. Often, the act of taking a photograph is conceived as a practice or act of singularity, which is to say a view that the person behind the frame takes the photography autonomously, on their own. By doing-away with the notion of discrete positionality, and instead embracing the thought of multiplicity, I am positing that even when one person is behind the frame, perhaps they are not taking that image alone. Rather, the act of clicking the shutter situates an image-maker within an infinite web of other relational connections (which they carry with and within themselves) and, in turn, become part of the event of taking the image and the very construct of the image.

[99] See M. NourbeSe Philip's "Caribana: African Roots and Continuities," In *Blank: Essays and Interviews,* 215-245. Toronto: Book*hug, 2017.
[100] McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*, 92.

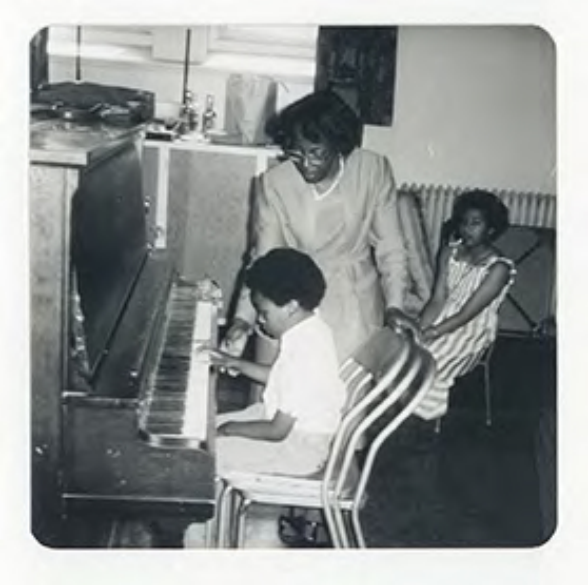

Figure 18: "Daisy Sweeney giving music lessons to children", F013-02-059, NCC fonds.

> DW: And this is probably the most iconic one which would be Daisy Sweeney… with a child. If you think about what the NCC was about…
>
> **KCW: It kind of encompasses –**
>
> DW: I'm sorry?
>
> **KCW: It kind of encompasses –**
>
> DW: Yeah, I think so. I think most people who were from the neighborhood as part of the Black community if in fact you showed them this they would immediately know [laughs]…[101]

The photograph that sparked this study—the black and white image of Daisy Sweeney teaching piano to a child—extends both this thread of Black sociality and community in Montreal but also speaks to the ineffable and affective quality of images. As has been the case for the last three years, describing the prolonged lingering of Ms. Daisy Peterson-Sweeney's photograph is never easy. It is always in excess of words—both because the *words don't go there,*[102] but also because the sensation is not sited in one place nor does it take on one form. Remembering with eyes shut Ms. Sweeney's photo, I can hear my conversation with archivists Ellen Gressling and Alexandra Mills from 2017, where they explained its context as clearly as I

[101] Dr. Dorothy Williams, interviewed by Kelann Currie-Williams, 22 October 2018 [0:55:00]
[102] Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition,* 52.

see the image (or, rather afterimage) before me.[103] And this is what we see in and beyond the photograph: the care, the discipline, the nurturing, the belief in her young Black students.[104] As Dorothy mentioned earlier in our conversation:

> DW: music was always a part of the community and it was one of the skillsets that parents you know wanted their children to succeed, to attain people loved Daisy Sweeney [laughs]. She was a fabulous teacher and she was wasn't just about her reputation she was very- she was one of those adults that really believed about molding children and that through piano much the same way coaches would think of having kids on a team and molding them into adulthood through the values that come from that sport and that they're trying to build teamwork and all of these kinds of things. Her, she very much sought/thought that the discipline that was required for piano would also do the same thing [...] She lived by example, she was a woman of grace and... I never ever ever heard anybody in my whole life say anything negative about her. Not ever. Not personally, not professionally. She really was revered and considered to be the one of the matriarchs of the entire community.[105]

What ties the image-makers and keepers together beyond specifically all being Black Montrealers, is their respective connections to the Negro Community Centre and by extension, their connect to its archival fonds. Dorothy attended, volunteered, worked, and became the executive director of the centre in the 1980s; Enid volunteered as a community animator for activities and events and grew up attending the NCC weekly, as did Leon as a teenager and young adult; Margot would volunteer and served as a photographer and writer for Afro-Can which was based out of the NCC; and Nancy served as board members from the late 1990s until the demolition of the NCC building in 2014. The Negro Community Centre and its archival fonds connect them all in various ways and across several decades. Interestingly though not surprising, the Special Collections reading room at Vanier library was an important site for this project. In the months and years leading up to this study, it was where I looked through dozens of archival boxes and files, taking notes and bookmarking documents to be photocopied. While this space was primarily where the "research" took place, it also became the perfect location to conduct the majority of the interviews with makers and keepers— it transformed into a

---

[103] I am reminded here of Ann Laura Stoler in *Along the Archival Grain* where she writes that "archivists are the first to note that to understand an archive, one needs to understand the institutions that it served", 25.
[104] Arlene Campbell, "Life Notations of Daisy Sweeney: Reflections of Othermothering, Musicianship and Montreal," PhD diss., (York University, 2012), 28.
[105] Dr. Dorothy Williams, interviewed by Kelann Currie-Williams, 22 October 2018 [0:28:00—0:30:00]

doubling of the room's potential and purpose: to read the history and also talk about it. Beginning in 2018, I was able to interview Dorothy, Enid, and Leon in this room, while the two other interviews (and their follow ups) took place with Margot at her home, and with Nancy at Union United Church.

The laying out of photographs on tables or the back-and-forth passing of prints or albums is an experience that happens not only at given time but also in a given place. While this is perhaps obvious, that interviews take place within a location, it is worth emphasizing how locale affects and is affected by the conversations between listener and teller. Writing on the topic of space within the act of storytelling and coming into encounter with photographs in oral history interviews, Elizabeth Edwards advances that, "what is important here is that the experiential conditions of viewing photographs are not neutral, but integral to the telling of history."[106] I have taken experiential conditions to refer specifically to location. Telling stories and the histories of community can happen both in and outside of the physical borders of the community and as such, they are a plethora of conditions that frame the conversation. The setting as well as the time of day or time of year impact how the activity of sharing stories occurs. What I am reminded of when listening to recordings of these interviews or remembering the photographs we poured over together is that it was important that our conversations about images and their stories took place where they did. For Nancy—the "church historian"—to speak about the photographs of Union United Church history *within* the church, for Margot to share with me photographs in the same room she would organize prints to share with friends and community members, and for Enid, Dorothy, and Leon to speak about the images from their childhood community centre in the same building that houses the archival documents of an institution that was so important to their lives speaks precisely to the importance of setting, the experiential, and the conditions that make telling history possibility. As poet Susan Howe wrote, "in research libraries and special collections words and objects come into their own and have their place again. This known world. This exact moment – a little afterwards—not quite."[107]

[106] Edwards, "Photographs and the Sound of History," 34.
[107] Susan Howe, *Spontaneous Particulars: The Telepathy of Archives* (New York: New Directions, 2014), 59.

AFRO-CAN, April 1984 11

NCC Meeting Place of Black Literature Society

Sitting, left to right, are: Mr. Belay Rameto, Ethiopian student studying in Montreal, Mrs. Lucille Cuevas, school librarian of the PSBGM and Miss Ermine Campbell, volunteer librarian at the Stanley Clyke Memorial Library of the Negro Community Centre. They attended the March 3 meeting of the Black Literature Society. Next meeting will be held on April 7 at 5:30 p.m. at the N.C.C. Photo: Margot Blackman.

Mr. Oswald Bartolo, **Afro-Can** *Editorial Committee Member, left and Mr. Nigel Thomas, centre, listen attentively to Dr. Daniel Kabasele, who was the guest speaker at the March meeting of the Black Literature Society of Quebec. His topic was Frantz Fanon's famous book:* **The Wretched of the Earth.** *Photo: Margot Blackman.*

Young Volunteers at NCC

Mr. Mark Odle, centre, background, Concordia University student, leads a group of young people in Arts and Crafts at the Negro Community Centre. This youthful leader has volunteered his services to the NCC where he spends two nights per week imparting skills and knowledge to several individuals. This is the type of community spirit which will make Montreal a better city. Seated at Mark's left is Miss Judy Gilbert, well-known talented dancer, university student and volunteer worker of the NCC. Photo: Margot Blackman.

Support Afro-Can:
TAKE A SUBSCRIPTION

Singh . . .

Continued from page 3

Labour Development (AIFLD). This is a United States agency which offers courses at its training school in Virginia to large

It is in fact alleged that prostitution, which was virtually eliminated under the Bishop government, is now on the increase. The situation is reminiscent of what obtained in Trinidad during the bad old days when the Americans had their base at

Figure 19: "Three-photograph spread of NCC volunteers and members of the Black Literature Society of Quebec featured in the April 1984 issue of Afro-Can newspaper", NCC fonds. Photographs taken by Margot Blackman.

At the heart of any oral history interview is the desire to keep narratives of the past present *within* the present, however unique they are given away and shared. Whether through small photo albums, negative strips and contact sheets, prints under mylar casings or loosely kept in photo finishing & developing envelopes, these images entered into my life in singular moments that are to remain with me, etched into my memory as listener. And so, through the blending of photography and oral history, it became unmistakable how telling stories is a practice of gift-giving.[≈] It is a process of sharing and exchange—a way of touching the past together, relationally. Edwards, again, writing on the kind of relational dynamism that is part of encountering images with others, posits that "the relational view is not simply different people bringing different readings to images. Rather, it is an engagement with the whole social dynamic of photographs over space and time, in which photographs become entities acting and mediating between peoples. The engagement with photographs as socially salient objects both

[≈] **FOR "A REPLY TO KAIE KELLOUGH", JUMP TO PAGE 74.**

encapsulates and defines relations between people."[108] It can be said, then, that being a listener of stories and viewer of images places you in an interesting social union. Occupying this position means filling your life with the fullness of a set of stories, of a set of images that shaped a life (always a multiplicity) into what it was and how it might be remembered. You are becoming a chorus member alongside the many other voices who, audibly and sometimes inaudibly, are speaking the photograph's history and the history it depicts. You are to embrace the "madness" of orality and visuality's merging.[109] Storytellers and photographers are committed to recounting the past as they experienced it (or sometimes as it was relayed to them), as they remember it, as it affected and moved them in that moment. They hold together fragments and pieces of a past that often proves itself to not truly be past. They are engaged in connecting one world to another.

"WE CARRY THESE MEMORIES INSIDE OF WE" [110]

The history of Black Montreal exists, as every story of community and place in the Black Diaspora does, in fragments. These pieces take the form of personal life stories, shared memories, photographs, letters, articles from community newspapers, cassettes and mixtapes, recipes, leaflets and other ephemera.[111] And this history, these everyday stories that are laid out and weaved together through words and images are only able to be retold in such a way because someone decided to use their camera to take photographs. Not only did they take these images, they kept and preserved them for decades knowing what it would mean for future generations. Marianne Hirsch writes that, "photographs offer a prism through which to study the postmodern spaces of cultural memory composed of leftovers, debris, single items that are left to be collected and assembled in many ways, to tell a variety of stories, from a variety of often

[108] Edwards, "Photographs and the Sound of History", 31.
[109] Langford, *Suspended Conversations: The Afterlife of Memory in Photographic Albums,* 190.
[110] The title of this section is a direct reference to Julie Dash's film *Daughters of the Dust* (1991), and a particular scene between the matriarch of the Peazant family, Nana Peazant, and her son: "Eli! There's a thought… a recollection…something somebody remembers. We carry these memories inside of we. Do you believe that hundreds of Africans brought here on this other side would forget everything they once knew? We don't know where the recollections come from. Sometimes we dream them. But we carry these memories inside of we."
[111] Mills, Rochat, and High, "Telling Stories from Montreal's Negro Community Centre Fonds: The Archives as Community-Engaged Classroom," 51.

competing perspectives."[112] The affective link between person and photograph, between families and albums, and between communities and archives was an important element to consider throughout the life of this study. The NCC, Leon Llewellyn, and Graeme Clyke archival fonds as well as the other personal collections that were spoken about hold together an infinite amount of narratives and histories. Moreover, they demonstrate the work taken up by community volunteers, church members, and devout historians to gather, preserve, and take-care of the records which illustrate their collective history as Black Montrealers. The contents of these collections and their very existence is evidence of life-long labour and joint efforts to carry forward histories into the always-extending future. As such, in my interviews with Nancy, Leon, and Enid I asked them each what archiving has meant to them:

> **KCW: Do you feel, in a way, you've become [your own] archivist for the church sometimes?**
>
> NOM: Well, yeah, I do because I have all those file cabinets down there [in Union United] is all stuff I've collected over the last… maybe fifteen years because when it came up to the 100th anniversary, I realized there were a lot of gaps. There were things that nobody knew […] Yeah… I really like trying to follow through on the history of things…[113]

~ ~ ~

> **KCW: … and of course all these photographs, and the illustrations and the paperwork within the fonds now, kind of range from late 60s all the way to the 80s. When did you start realizing that you were you creating your own archive?**
>
> LL: I didn't think of myself as a collector of archival material but I knew I had it. Part of it is that over the years while teaching, I've done projects which involved the use of archival photography. And so the idea of understanding the significance of old photographs and the stories that they tell was not something new to me. It puts an idea… that I think, again, to be put in context and shared and that's basically what I wanted to do."[114]
>
> **KCW: What are you hoping that people can gather from being able to access the fonds?**

[112] Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory,* 13.
[113] Nancy Oliver-MacKenzie, interviewed by Kelann Currie-Williams, 30 May 2019 [00:27:04]
[114] Leon Llewellyn, interview by Kelann Currie-Williams, 24 July 2019 [02:11:04]

LL: I think it's important that, again, it's about context. It's important that people understand the context of their own lives because everything is connected. There is a connection to… everything is related to everything else. And it's important to understand that relationship and to help us see more clearly where we come from and where we're going… to understand that we all come from somewhere and things happen in the past which are connected to the future and it's still connected to the present. We don't always have to start from scratch. We can look back and try to see how we all connect to the people who came before us and make some sense of our reality […] It's important to remember, you know because memory is transient. It eventually goes way and there's a need to keep certain things—not alive but to bring a little of the past forward.[115]

~ ~ ~

KCW: What does it mean to have an archive like this?

ED: Ohhh [raised inflection] I… It's important I think. I've always had an interest in history just, I'm not a student of history or anything but I think it's important to… understand what went before and for that to… for there to be a more cohesive kind of a picture and so this I think is a way to pull a much larger story together of a group of people who have done some really quite interesting things but… that wouldn't be documented anywhere else y'know. And actually preserved. And I think that has really impressed me about the project is that from the very beginning, the very first time that I saw you and other students and your professor and the staff from the archives at the UNIA, one of the things that all of you were saying was: 'we want people to know…we want people to come here and learn and we want these stories to be open, and this information be made available to everybody'. And that really impressed me because I think… knowledge is power and it's apart of understanding why things are the way they are now, how they got to that, and what they can be, and what you… what we *carry* from the past into who you are now. I think all of that is important. So, that's what it means to me. It's important.[116]

[115] Leon Llewellyn, interview by Kelann Currie-Williams, 24 July 2019 [02:14:12]
[116] Enid Dixon, interviewed by Kelann Currie-Williams, 31 July 2019 [1:34:55]

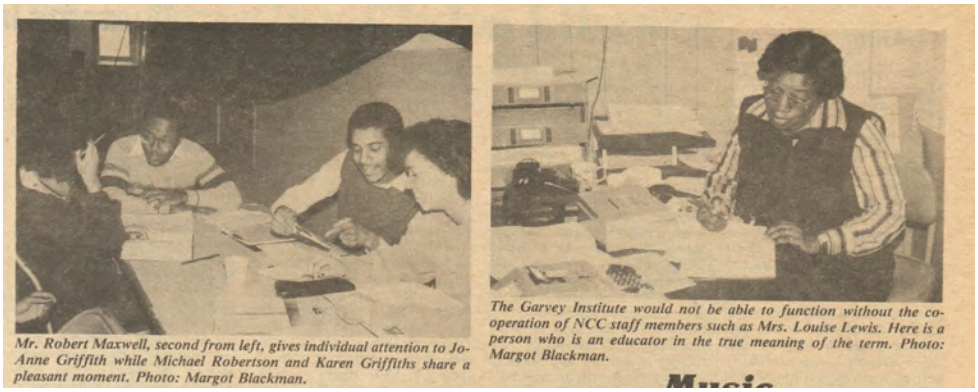

Figure 20: "Students being tutored at The Garvey Institute by Mr. Robert Maxwell and Mrs. Louise Lewis featured in the March 1984 issue of Afro-Can newspaper", NCC fonds. Photographs taken by Margot Blackman.

While archival collections are able to hold these materials and documents, they are not the only receptables of memory. As all the interviews reminded me of continuously: the memory of images taken and seen—images treasured and lost—remain in the body. As image-makers and record-keepers, they carry the history of Black Montreal with them and share the stories and histories of the life in the 20th century for Black folks through their photographs as well as through conversations. It perhaps goes without saying that these stories are not *my* memories; they are not moments of the past that I experienced directly. However, I do know of these memories, know of their intimate and sometimes less-intimate contexts, know how they are threaded to other stories and moments carried by many generations of Black Montrealers. Moreover, I know precisely because they were shared with me by Enid, Nancy, Leon, Margot, and Dorothy, the emotional and gripping attachments they each have to the memories that are captured or perhaps gestured to in their photographs. However, despite this indirect experience, the ability of their stories and images to persist over time and linger, and for their affect to carry-across illustrates the very command photographic images are able to exercise when we encounter them. This type of indirect experience that I am gesturing to here is connected to what Walter Benjamin (drawing on Marcel Proust) has called "mémoire involontaire". Posited as a form of memory that is not "mutually exclusive" to direct or lived memory (that is "mémoire volontaire") but rather exists adjacently, Benjamin defines mémoire involontaire as "what has not been experienced explicitly and consciously, what has not happened to the subject as an experience".[117]

[117] Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations,* 160-161.

The affect or abundance of feeling and of sensation towards photographs has, as countless scholars have interrogated, been most famously taken up by Roland Barthes who termed such quality as being the "punctum"—the indelible and ineffable power of certain images to "prick", "puncture", and "wound" us.[118] As E.L. McCallum writes, "the punctum is precisely where narrative intersects with the photograph; what grabs or strikes us about a particular image is where we start to speculate on a host of other interpretive relations extending from the photograph. Narrative enters where the visual transubstantiates into the felt."[119] As such, the concept of the punctum—of the puncture and prick of images—presents an interesting interplay with a mode of remembering such as mémoire involontaire. What does it mean to be affected by images and stories we have not lived directly? How does feeling take form when it is activated (or animated, to borrow from Barthes) relationally—through telling, sharing, and describing? As Kathleen M. Ryan writes, there is an irrefutable connection that lies between mémoire involontaire (as Benjamin has taken it up), the punctum (as Barthes has theorized), and the concept of the afterimage—a term which I have, so far, only mentioned briefly in passing. It is not only that some photographs prick and wound us, but rather that their affect and effect on us lingers. This is at the core of Ryan's proposition on mémoire involontaire's intensity: the fact that "it is the afterimage or trace of something that gets stuck in our brain."[120] And it is perhaps for this reason that I have gravitated to the afterimage more than the punctum in this meditation on the affective registers of images.

Within the fields of science, the afterimage is used to describe an occurrence wherein an image continues to manifest in a person's vision like a "retinal impression" even when the eye's exposure to the image has ceased.[121] Like a type of residue, it is "an incessant invasion of the present moment by the past, the inability of the eye to relinquish an impression once it is made".[122] In essence, the image's determination and insistence on not being forgotten through its persisting across time, is what qualifies the afterimage. Ultimately, tying together mémoire

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[118] Barthes, *Camera Lucida,* 26-27; Shawn Michelle Smith, "Photography between Desire and Grief: Roland Barthes and F. Holland Day," In *Feeling Photography,* ed. by Elspeth H. Brown and Thy Phu (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 34.
[119] E.L. McCallum, "Towards a Photography of Love: The Tain of the Photograph in Anne Carson's *Autobiography of Red,* #28.
[120] Kathleen M Ryan, "From Propaganda to the Personal: WAVES, Memory, and the 'Prick' of Photography," In *Oral History and Photography,* ed. Alexander Freund and Angela Thiessen (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 134.
[121] Geoffrey Batchen, *Each Wild Idea: Writing, Photography, History* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), 10.
[122] Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, The Archive* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 76.

involontaire with the afterimage is an attempt to underscore the felt and persistent quality of photographs—the "*feeling*" of photography, to draw on Phu and Brown's phrasing— that is made most evident through relational encounters and thinking in excess of what is visible within the image-object's frame. As the second chapter of this thesis takes up in full, afterimages ought to be considered as a "factor" or "outcome" within the event of photography, one that remains and endures in our collective memories precisely because they "do the work of memory over and against the possibilities of disappearance or forgetting, shaping the very matter of memory and photography through their embodied forms".[123] The afterimage transforms the durational capacity of the image. It interrupts. It lingers.

Much of this thesis was written in the absence of constantly gazing at the photographs in question. I made a point of looking at the photographs during the writing process only when absolutely necessary. Instead, I relied primarily on my memory of the images and tried to allow their lingering afterimages to guide both the writing and reading of the photographs as well as compose with the oral stories that I had heard and recorded. How else to theorize the afterimage than to allow it to be more than a concept but also a *practice* of writing history and feeling the past in the now? How does working with the memory of an image, which is to say its afterimage, craft one's writing and thinking? The particular focus I placed on the photograph's oral trace—the sound of and inherent to the image as well as the recorded event of "speaking the album" in the form of the oral history interview—was not simply a methodological exercise. It is, as this chapter has attempted to emphasize, a real belief that photography and oral history's interwovenness generates a plethora of avenues through which to feel the minor moments and construct (and, in some cases, prolong) socialities. It is a belief that listening to the images (being spoken about) and feeling their afterimages, and in turn writing from that particular place, maps a new path within the event of photography.

[123] Krista Thompson, *Shine: The Visual Economy of Light in African Diasporic Aesthetic Practice* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 14-16

INTERLUDE

AN INFINITE WEB

"this is what it takes. the strength of no separation. the bravery of flow. the audacity of never saying this is me, this is not you. This is mine, this is not yours. this is now, this was not ever before".
— Alexis Pauline Gumbs, *M Archive: After the End of the World*

Figure 21.1: "Children and grown-ups gathering in a park," F013-02-553, NCC fonds, 197-,

Figure 21.2: “Photo taken at an evening service in the winter. Rev. Charles H. Este and Congregation; Ushers: Messrs. Clem and Art Watson”. Courtesy of Nancy Oliver-MacKenzie, 194-.

happy wanderer

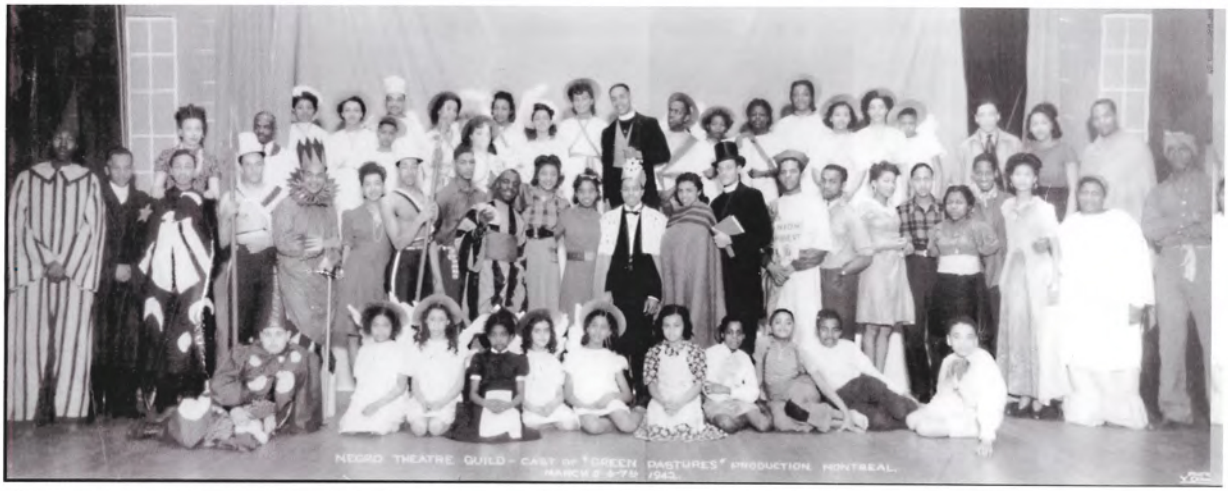
"Boy, he was an institution in and of himself", you say looking closer and smiling wider. "He loved taking pictures". Either a camera around his neck or his hands full of photos. He wanted to be there for every moment, for every laugh. "He was the kind of guy… he always spoke in riddles and he spoke in poems and he had a massive, talk about a photo collection. He had… some people estimated he had close to a million pictures."

on des seigneurs street
let's go on living our lives
and never hold back

A picture of me taking a picture of you: a picturing of how I picture everything and everyone. I celebrate our being together, our community, our people. I celebrate now so we have a future. It's right there: do you see it? Do you see it further down the road? Can you see them seeing us? Can you see us further on, past ourselves but still *ourselves*. They're looking at us and we're looking right back.

frame an endless life
our home is where *we* are and
where we'll always be

green pastures



Looking out before me, I see a sea of faces much like my own. With soft, beaming smiles they look at me, at you, at us, with a love deeper than I've ever known. They are here to see us, to watch us tell a story. To be part of a dream that we've created together. *It's your line*, I say, with my eyes. And with quiet recognition, you take my cue and stand tall, ready to deliver. You begin to thread the next thread of our story, and I soon take up where you left off.

a knotted stomach
words lingering in the air
breathe deep and exhale

"They almost didn't perform sometimes", you say. "Because somebody did something that was very racist... and made the whole group upset." I look at their faces: a flurry of smiles, of limitless excitement, of disquieted hesitation look back at me. I am in awe. I imagine in them a strength I cannot begin to describe. You look at their faces once more, the photograph held tightly between your hands and you tell me, "I can't say just how proud I am of this".

1942
sits at the back of my throat
I can still feel your pain

The incredible rush from the stage travels from my body to yours to hers and onwards. We share a single energy, a love for words and stories. A love for laughter and movement. But, where do we place? How do we figure in? I suppose we figure *together.*

with our hands held and
our spirits ready to soar
We fell out of time

always read saidiya hartman sideways and across and all at once—
waywardly, experimentally.[i]

pg. 15

exceed the frame, and
the capture

pg. 18

elude the visibility, at the
edge of the frame

pg. 22

not all there is,
appears in photographs,
something always slips away

pg. 25

in the wake of
what precedes
and follows
the image

pg. 30

where is the path to the
photo's beyond?
beyond any path we know.
latent path, runaway path to

<u>"another kind of existence"</u>

Type 1 of shared riffing:

> listening to an interviewee fabulate, quietly letting the fabulation travel through the room, translating itself into an auditory record to be listened to later. Being witness to the fabulation, where riffing is not adding to the words already being spoken but rather not letting them drop off into the world, unheard and not felt. The responsive yet silent witness contributes exactly that: a responsive silence, an engaged silence.

Type 2 of shared riffing:

> listening to an interviewee fabulate, and meeting them in that particular mode of inquiry and imagining. you follow them, adding-to when the moment calls for it. this requires deep listening, deeper feeling-with. This modality is one of call and response, where what is "laid down" is "taken up" so that the imagining of the lifeworlds outside of the frame is held together by two people embarking on something collective.

we might call these photographic socialities...

kaie kellough writes,

"i know 2.5 generations, and creased photographic evidence. i fall oral history." [ii]

i have glimpsed the blistered, fermented sugar has spooked the

glimpse
blister
crease
ferment
spook

i know
i have
i fall

photographic evidence
oral history

i know (i) glimpsed oral history

and fermented photographed evidence

spooked 2.5 generations

i have sugar, blistered and creased

i fall

time, sounded and torn

fragmented edge
sworn to time
and is time, is trace
edged fragmentary touch
what else is torn from time
traced from shutter
touched for sounding frame
at the edge of what can be seen
fragmenting sight
feel an edge
beyond its corners
beyond its excess

how else is time torn and bound
where else is time born of sound

TACTILE TRACE

traces

"of an event"[iii]

"of shade and form"[iv]

"of material ephemerality"[v]

"of teeming life"[vi]

"of what remains to be discovered"[vii]

"of

time"[viii]
time

holds a

trace[ix]

tactile

traces[x]

time holds a tactile trace

to reach

[[[[

"The proposition is that touch—every act of **reaching toward**—enables the **creation of worlds.** This production is relational. I **reach out to touch** you in order to invent a relation that will, in turn, invent me."[xi]

"Photography is privileged within modern culture because… the camera does more than just see the world; it is also **touched by the world**. Light bounces off an object or a body and into the camera, activating a light-sensitive emulsion and **creating an image.** Photographs are therefore designated as indexical signs, images produced as a consequence of being directly affected by the objects to which they refer. It is as if those **objects reached out and impressed themselves on the surface of a photograph**, leaving their visual imprint…"[xii]

Touch is an act of reaching toward.
Reaching out is to touch.
Objects/Subjects reach out to be imprinted/impressed
Reaching out leaves a visual imprint
The camera is touched by the world
Touch enables the creation of worlds
Light through a camera creating an image

Objects touch to leave their imprint,
The imprint is a trace of reaching out
Light touches to enable creation

]]]]

“imagememory”[xiii]

“you didn’t mention ‘memory’ in yours but I guess, instead, you use ‘image’”
“they're the same, yeah.”
“they are, aren’t they”
“yeah, they’re the same.”
“are they the same?”
“the same? yeah they are”

…

“what’s the same?”
“memory… I didn’t mention it but I used, instead, ‘image’”
“they’re the same, yeah.”
“yeah…”
“the same”

the way black life touches the surface of film...

adjust the aperture. let in enough light.
tune the shutter. let in enough speed.
but not too fast, or else we won't see—
and not too much light, or else we won't see—

not too much,
just right.

enough speed,
and enough light.

the film's slow,

so we need light.
we need longer time.
we need a steadiness we don't have.

choose between darkness or blur

too dark to see, too blurred to make it out.

what am I seeing?

a life, in motion
a body, sounding
a face, beaming

what do I choose?

the darkness or the blur? The shadows or the un-focused?

Figure 22.1: "Morning service at Union United Church." Taken by Enid Dixon

Figure 22.2: "African Liberation Day demonstration march held in Toronto." Taken by Enid Dixon.

[i] All quotes and page numbers are from Saidiya Hartman's *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments:*

> "a life that exceeded the frame in which she was captures" (15)
>
> "they clustered at the edge of the photos… they refused the terms of visibility imposed on them. they eluded the frame and remained fugitives…" (18)
>
> "some things didn't appear in the photographs…" (22)
>
> "it is hard to look at the photograph and not think about the images that preceded it and the images that would follow in its wake." (25)
>
> "I had to move beyond the photograph and find another path to her. how might this still life yield a latent image capable of articulating another kind of existence, a runaway image that conveys the riot inside?" (30)

[ii] Kaie Kellough, *Magnetic Equator, 13.*

[iii] Ariella Azoulay, *Civil Contract of Photography,* 190.
[iv] Shawn Michelle Smith, *At the Edge of Sight: Photography and the Unseen,* 3.
[v] E. L. McCallum, "Towards a Photography of Love: The Tain of the Photograph in Anne Carson's *Autobiography of Red*", # 19.
[vi] Azoulay, *Civil Contract of Photography,* 386.
[vii] Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition,* 198.
[viii] Azoulay, *Civil Contract of Photography,* 392.
[ix] Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition,* 119.
[x] Tina Campt, *image Matters: Archive, Photography, and the African Diaspora in Europe,* 28.

[xi] Erin Manning, *Politics of Touch: Sense, Movement, Sovereignty,* xv.
[xii] Geoffrey Batchen, *Forget me Not: Photography and Remembrance,* 31.

[xiii] "The memory work that the image is required to do seems familiar—a history shaped by longings and emotions, as much as remembered facts," Christopher Wright, *The Echo of Things: The Lives of Photographs in the Solomon Islands,* 106/

This free verse dialogue was based on a comment Steven High made during a study meeting with a group of graduate History and Interdisciplinary Humanities students in February 2020. The first line of the verse is his, but the rest is sort of a riff on it as I imagined the conversation going if I had been able to reply in the moment.

CHAPTER II

THE IMAGE AND ITS AFTERIMAGE

> "I'm haunted, just as one of the characters is said to be in the book's penultimate paragraph, by that 'arc,' by the humming I can all but hear and a visual image I can all but see, an afterimage described as lingering 'like a wreath of smoke'."[124]
> — Nathaniel Mackey, *Bass Cathedral*

There are images that we encounter which never leave us. Whether their "staying" takes the form of remaining in our immediate possession (a creased wallet photo, an album turned family heirloom) or lingering in our memories despite their physical absence, there are images that dwell with/in us without any chance of departing. These two forms—one of *material* remaining, the other of *immaterial* lingering—makes "staying" a kind of persistent holding- or grasping-unto that which can too easily slip away. For the images that stay with us and never leave, their persistence is as striking as the powerful force that grabbed our attention in the first place. The immaterial lingering of images is the type of staying and never leaving that most intrigues me and which drew to me to the concept of the afterimage in relation to photographs. Returning back its origin and definition, an afterimage is considered to be an "optical illusion" rooted in persistence which is to say, a visual event where the image that was previously seen remains visible and "insists on occupying vision even if one looks away."[125] However, without fail, the afterimage is continually spoken about as a *visual* lingering, where the designation of being a phenomenon that is part of a broader sensorium is seldom reached or sufficiently given attention. Why does the vocabulary used to speak about afterimages remain uni-sensorial and only-ever anchored to the visual?

What this chapter has as its aim is a refiguring of the afterimage by expanding it beyond the limits of the visual realm and repositioning it as a deeply cross- and intersensorial occurrence. By attending to the physical, haptic, and aural qualities of photographic images, it can perhaps become clear how the afterimage carries these same qualities that allow us to not merely *see* the image linger, but also to *feel*, *hear* and be *moved-by* its sustaining intensity.[126] As

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[124] Nathaniel Mackey, *Bass Cathedral* (New York: New Directions Publishing, 2008), 56.
[125] Krista Thompson, *Shine: The Visual Economy of Light in African Diasporic Aesthetic Practice* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 14-16
[126] Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, 24.

such, to understand the afterimage and its relationship to the photographic image, there are four paths or perhaps corners to be followed which, collectively, point to the unfolding dynamism of the image: trace, sensation, excess, and time. These four corners, not unlike the four corners of a photograph, are reliant on each other. They are each necessary to make sense of the force that courses through and around images in all its many polyphonic and allochronic directions.[∞]

TRACES (OR, SOMETHING LIKE INDEXICALITY)

> **Trace:**
> *(n.) Vestiges or marks remaining and indicating the former presence, existence, or action of something; an indication; impression or sketch of an object or of a piece of work*
> *(v.) To discern, to decipher; to discover, find out, or ascertain by investigation; to find out step by step; to search out; to mark*
> — OED

It is not a coincidence that Dionne Brand begins her short story "Photograph" with the figure of the trace or, rather, the lack of trace. Before we are properly introduced to the beloved matriarch on whom this story centres, we are given but one way that memory and likeness can be recorded and preserved: that is through the photographic image. However, it seems as though this imagistic form is punctuated by a degree of lack. In the opening lines of the story, Brand writes: "My grandmother has left no trace, no sign of herself. There is no photograph, except one which she took with much trouble for her identity card".[127] What is most striking about this introduction is the somewhat hesitant way in which the photograph is described. There is caution taken towards labelling the photograph as a trace and, moreover, an even deeper caution taken towards labelling the image used for the identity card as a photograph. The hesitation registers as a "*there is, but there is not*"—an approximation to what it is that is not quite *it*. While there does exist an image that presumably holds a resemblance to the story's grandmother (enough that it fulfilled its purpose for the identity card), there is an underlying supposition that the photograph insufficiently traces her fullness.

[∞] **FOR 'TIME, SOUNDED AND TORN', SEE PAGE 75.**
[127] Dionne Brand, "Photograph," in *Sans Souci and Other Stories* (Stratford: Williams-Wallace, 1988), 53.

> *"We were all full of my grandmother, she had left us full and empty of her... We dreamed in my grandmother and we woke up in her, bleary-eyed and gesturing for her lap, her arms, her elbows, her smell, the fat flesh of her arms".* [128]

The resonating quality of the story and its connection to photography more broadly lies in the trace that is stated to not exist—a trace that points more directly to what it is in excess *of* and what it can no longer communicate of its subject, rather than what *is* impressed upon its surface. The photograph which is described as "wrinkled and chewed," "creased and distant," "grey and pained," despite the fact that the grandmother was, in actuality, "round and comfortable" with a "full lap and beautiful arms" suggests this dissonance between the fullness of a life and what of that life can be reproduced in the form of an image. The photograph's paper-thin skin has withered to time despite the memories doing exactly the opposite. What remains of the grandmother is not the photographic image which bears a faded mark of her in a single moment in time, but rather the objects and stories remembered and memorialized by her grandchildren—all said to be infused with an overflowing aura.[129]

This early centering of the word 'trace' begets the question: what does a trace do? Or, said differently, how is a trace acted upon? Across its many meanings and grammatical tenses, trace is both the evidence of something having happened or existed when in the form of a noun, while also being the act of finding something that is lost or making one's way across a path when used as a verb. In essence, a trace is what remains, what is evidenced but it is also the action taken to search for and follow what is no longer present. The word is able to "simultaneously designate both a mark and the act of marking, both a path and its traversal, both the original inscription and its copy, both that which is and that which is left behind, both a plan and its decipherment".[130] The relationship trace has to itself—its duality of grammars, pulled on both ends— is akin to what Wu Tsang and Fred Moten might call "bothandedness."[131] Noun and verb, being and action, always both at once. This relationship inherent to trace, one of complication and intricacy, is perhaps what constitutes the photograph's prismatic nature.

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[128] Brand, "Photograph," in *Sans Souci and Other Stories*, 74-75.
[129] Brand, "Photograph," in *Sans Souci and Other Stories*, 54.
[130] Geoffrey Batchen, *Each Wild Idea: Writing, Photography, History,* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 161.
[131] Wu Tsang & Fred Moten, "Who Touched Me?" in *If I Can't Dance, I Don't Want To Be Part Of Your Revolution* (Amsterdam: If I Can't Dance, I Don't Want To Be Part Of Your Revolution, 2016), 20.

Photographic images are all about traces. The traces of what was caught in the instant of a flash, traces of what is not visible but is present, nonetheless. The trace of a life, the "trace of what remains to be discovered,"[132] the trace of time now gone— time to either be remembered or forgotten. The trace is an impression and, inversely, the trace gives us the impression of a certain form of pastness. Above all, traces articulate what is able to register and what slips out of reach.[≈] Ariella Azoulay skilfully plays with trace across both *The Civil Contract of Photography* and *Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography* (not wordplay, something much more elusive). The play is not with the word but with the way the word opens unto itself new paths for thinking. She writes, "The photograph is out there, an object in the world, and anyone, always (at least in principle), can pull at one of its threads and trace it in such a way as to reopen the image and renegotiate what it shows, possibly even completely overturning what was seen in it before".[133] Here, trace is a verb. Here, also, trace is a noun. In its doubling of meaning, something is activated. With that—same word, at once verb and noun bouncing off itself—what she proposes an engagement with a photograph is able to provide an onlooker is the chance to 'trace it in such a way as to reopen the trace'. Said otherwise, coming into contact with the image is an act of searching (and potentially finding) all that remains, marks, and has left vestiges of a single moment in time.

In seeing photographs as a type of trace, an inevitable slippage (perhaps a rightful slippage) occurs through taking its definitional and related terms "remains" and "vestiges", to connect to something both residual and fragmentary. In a sense, what remains within and as the trace is a fragment of what has fallen off or *overflowed* from the richness of what is no longer there. And it begs the question, can the fullness of Black life reside within a visual image? Perhaps indirectly, this is what Brand's narrating character questions and remarks on throughout her recollection of her grandmother and of the story behind the only photograph she and her cousins have of her: the thought that perhaps only a particular *form* of a trace of the woman for whom their hearts beat, could be carried within or simply exist within the photograph. If, somehow, the smell of her grandmother's limacol and green smelling salts, and softness of her "cocoa brown skin" and the sound of her stern but always caring voice could carry within a trace, would it only appear as a visual impression (as a photograph) or would it

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[132] Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*, 198.

[≈] **TO READ "TACTILE TRACE", JUMP OVER TO PAGE 76.**

[133] Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography* (New York: Zone Books, 2008), 13.

have to be something else, something more. These qualities are the traces of an excess of life which the image points to but cannot fully hold, an excess of life that slips out of capture. Despite the fragmentary quality of the photographic trace, there endures nonetheless an opening where the connection that emerged from the encounter of the imaging can be beheld. This opening (not unlike the aperture of a camera) shifts and slides and adjusts over time. At some moments it is so clear what the general context and contours of a photograph are—a child catching a ball in mid-motion: a game is in process, in what seems to be a gymnasium— while at other moments the context is imprecise and staring more intensely at the image will not bring clarity. Again, like the aperture mechanism of a camera, the clarity of what is seen can be foregrounded, midgrounded and backgrounded with a minor sliding or shifting from left to right. The variance of the widening and the narrowing of what has been imaged expresses the depth of the trace and moreover, the temporalities at play that mark photographic excess.

Figure 23: "Untitled", F013-02-540, NCC fonds

Returning to the connection engendered by photographic encounters, it has been posited that such a connection is marked by a "physical or existential relation to its object,"[134]

[134] Mary Ann Doane, "Indexicality: Trace and Sign: Introduction," *differences: a journal of feminist cultural studies* 18, no. 1 (2007): 2.

which has been defined as an "index" within Charles S. Peirce's tripartite classification of signs. The tangible and material association by "contiguity" between the index and what it refers to—its reverent—exist in a plethora of forms.[135] Zahid Chaudhary, citing Peirce, lists "the footprint, the weathervane, the hand of a clock, the bullet hole, the sundial" [136] and Christopher Wright, citing Rosalind Krauss, lists "a fingerprint or the rings of water left on tables by cold glasses, or the tracks of birds of beaches"[137]; the indices' referents would be, in turn: "foot, wind, time, bullet, sun's movement,"[138] finger, cold glasses, and birds on beaches. And among these many indexical instantiations lies the photographic image: an index which refers to "light bouncing off objects". Indices and their objects or reverents, though obvious in their attachment to each other, also produce what could be seen as a point of divergence away from a focus on contiguity and instead one towards content. In its directness and singularity, the index is marked by a uniqueness particular to itself.[139] It's not merely that, for example, *a* footprint was left in the sand or in the mud but that *this* footprint, of *this* particular size, in *this* particular spot, and at *this* particular moment in time was left in the place where a foot once stepped. While the photograph as index does not speak for itself—of itself, it does, however, serve as a spark for other traces than remain of those who have passed away and things that are in the past. The suggestion here is that the "*this*ness" of indexicality says nothing while also saying everything.[140] Traces speak or perhaps scream all that was before through the residual forces that are carried across. The curious quality of a photograph lies in its ability to hold intensities of an event or of a life or of an encounter, while still being unable to carry it all on its own. It is reminiscence if it not illustrative of the way Brand infers of the photograph and of its capacity to be a trace as a *there is, but there is not.* It carries but it cannot contain, it holds but also spills.

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[135] Mary Ann Doane, "The Indexical and the Concept of Medium Specificity," *differences: a journal of feminist cultural studies,* 18, no. 1 (2007): 133.
[136] Zahid Chaudhary, *Afterimage of Empire: Photography in Nineteenth-Century India* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 67.
[137] Rosalind Krauss [1985, 110], qtd in Christopher Wright, *The Echo of Things: The Lives of Photographs in the Solomon Islands* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 72.
[138] Chaudhary, *Afterimage of Empire: Photography in Nineteenth-Century India,* 67.
[139] Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, The Archive* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002)*,* 92.
[140] As Erin Manning writes, "on the one hand, there is the thisness of an occasion's resolution. This resolution (or concrescence) depends on an event singling itself out from the larger field of experience. Yet this singularity cannot tell the whole story… we are here talking about a half second or less of experience", *Always More Than One: Individuation's Dance*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 21.

> *"But the photograph does not really prompt you to remember people the way you might otherwise remember them—the way they moved, the manner of their speech, the sound of their voice, that lift of the eyebrow when they made a joke, their smell, the rasp of their skin on yours, the emotions they stirred."*[141]

The spill-over or teeming nature of a photographic image does not suggest that we should stop looking to it for insight. Its tendency towards spillage is but a dynamism perhaps *the* dynamism that gives form to our very interest and love for photographs. With the notion that the index is physically, materially, and existentially connected to its referent in mind, while the photograph's objecthood is unable to hold (as Batchen suggests) all the gestures that defines a person's way of being, it nonetheless is able to point to an affective link between who is imaged and who is engaging with the image. What if indexicality has more to do with the relation forged-between than with the trace itself? This would mean that trace is not the connection as such but rather the evidence that a connection or encounter took place. It is not presumed to carry or articulate the fullness of the encounter, it never could. The photographic image as indexical object is only ever the impression or imprint of a force that continually exceeds a material form, an objecthood limited to the photographic print or negative strip.

The photograph with its objecthood and visuality that is always more-than visual communicates that the trace, which constitutes photographic images and specifically photo chemical images, did more than record the scene but actually held it allowing for the creation of a link. Thinking 'link' flows into a thinking of a 'chain', which now becomes a 'cable'—something like a 'cord'. Roland Barthes follows a similar line of association by his usage of cord specifically an "umbilical cord" through which he attempts to illustrate the elemental quality connecting the image (and all that it contains) with the onlooker.[142] Similarly, Doane writes that "the index is sutured to its object by a physical cause, a material connection…"[143] If we re-situate the umbilical cord in its unmetaphorical context, its signification is one of a material almost maternal connection.[144] A sort of life-giving force operating between person and person and person-object-person, suturing them together where they are bound by touch. It is difficult in

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[141] Geoffrey Batchen, *Forget Me Not: Photography and Remembrance* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004), 15.
[142] As Roland Barthes writes, "A sort of umbilical cord links the body of the photographed thing to my gaze: light, though impalpable, is here a carnal medium, a skin I share with anyone who has been photographed", *Camera Lucida: Reflections of Photography,* 81.
[143] Doane, "Indexicality: Trace and Sign," 4.
[144] "Material trace of the maternal", Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*, 18.

thinking trace to not also be carried to a thinking on touch. Similarly to the polysemous quality of 'trace', touch, too, can have a plurality of meanings. In its "bothandedness" of noun and verb, touch centres on tactility, on the haptic, on affect, but also on contact. At its core, touch suggests a connection, irrespective of its magnitude. Moreover, the commonality between touch and trace—its five-letteredness aside—lies in how often the two words fold into each other. When we speak about a gentle brush or a winding stroke on someone's skin, it is often referred to as *tracing my fingertips across your skin;* we know this tracing to be an act of touch.

The inseparability of trace and touch is carefully considered by Tina Campt in her book *Image Matters: Archive, Photography, and the African Diaspora in Europe* through what she terms "an indexical touch". As a component of what she describes as "haptic images" — "objects whose effects are structured by a tripartite sense of touch"— an indexical touch refers to "images touched by the subjects they capture."[145] Alongside this first component lie two other senses of touch—being physical touch ("touched by those who view or encounter them") and affective touch (image-objects that "touch those who view them). What draws me into the indexical touch and its being-part of a tending towards the haptic is its suggestion that touch was a crucial factor in producing the image in its moment of capture, of impression. It is a touch that precedes the onlooker's touching of the photograph, and the being-touched that comes after. By linking the index and the indexical to touch, it re-involves the film strip and its emulsion within the event of photography as an actant that is itself touched by light. Ultimately, the indexical touch points to the before and the during of the creation of the image; it is an emphasis on the "pre", whereas the other two types of touch all centre on the photograph as it already exists as an object in the world. In its thrust, the indexical touch cites our unfamiliarity with a kind of touch that does not begin or emerge from the site of a person's body—the place where the body does not take precedent within an understanding of touch. Here, at the level of the indexical which is to say at the level of the trace, light does the initial touching.[146] Within the event of photography, light must touch those being photographed and, again, light must touch the emulsion, chemically altering its halide crystals to register the image.[147] The very

[145] Campt, *Image Matters: Archive, Photography, and The African Diaspora in Europe,* 43.
[146] "the light rays reflected from the object 'touch' the film", Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time,* 92.
[147] Shawn Michelle Smith, *At the Edge of Sight: Photography and the Unseen*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 29.

moment of the image's coming-into-the-world—what we often call the moment of capture— is, in actuality, the moment of touch begetting image.

Again, Campt takes this up directly through her writing on the haptic. Across *Image Matters* and *Listening to Images*, she speaks of two formations of the haptic—Haptic Images and Haptic Temporalities. The former, as has already been mentioned, are "images touched by the subjects they capture,"[148] while the latter refers to "moments of contact when photographs touch us and animate reflections and responses", where its first element is "the moment of photographic capture".[149] The commonality between these two formations of course resides in their relation to the 'haptic' but it also resides in the use of the word 'capture' as an important component of their relationship to a sense of touch. What capture refers to is a holding (often forceful in nature) as well as a grasping, both which are involved within degrees of touching. It is not simply that the camera seizes a moment in time, literally grasping at it and pulling it out from its wider field of experience, but also that it holds that moment in place allowing for, through its touching, the creation of an imprint. What this would mean is that the moment of capture is a moment of touch, of impression, of creation, of a reaching-toward or reaching out. Two passages come to mind here—one from Erin Manning and the other from Geoffrey Batchen where they write the following: ∞

> "The proposition is that touch—every act of reaching toward—enables the creation of worlds. This production is relational. I reach out to touch you in order to invent a relation that will, in turn, invent me".[150]

> "The camera does more than just see the world; it is also touched by the world. Light bounces off an object or a body and into the camera, activating a light-sensitive emulsion and creating an image. Photographs are therefore designated as indexical signs, images produced as a consequence of being directly affected by the objects to which they refer. It is as if those objects reached out and impressed themselves on the surface of a photograph, leaving their visual imprint…"[151]

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[148] Campt, *Image Matters: Archive, Photography, and The African Diaspora in Europe,* 43.
[149] Campt, *Listening to Images*, 72.
∞ **FOR "TO REACH", LAND ON PAGE 77.**
[150] Erin Manning, *Politics of Touch: Sense, Movement, Sovereignty* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), xv.
[151] Batchen, *Forget me Not: Photography and Remembrance,* 31.

To see touch as an act of reaching-toward and, similarly, photographs as marking the act of reaching out instigated by that which was photographed, suggests that contact is but another element which bounds touch and the image together. And even more, it suggests that indexicality does not end at the trace or the impression or the mark. Said differently, the trace that becomes imprinted on the surface of a photograph leaves not only a visual imprint but also a *more-than visual imprint*—an impression of sensations that existed within and around the event, person, object or environment that "reached out" during the moment of capture, in hopes of being registered in a lingering, physical form. The question, then, is what else can be registered in the moment when light and closure, lens and body, viewfinder and shutter occupied a single space? In the tornado of what is the taking of a photograph, an entire range of sensation is carried over— a multisensorial fullness that spills out past its edges.

IMAGE AS SENSATION

The image and the afterimage's connection to Black social life cannot be written without a focus on sensation.[152] Fingertip touches, hold it by its corners, "*oh boy, you want to hear the story about this one?",* keep that safe under the plastic, "*that's my grandfather... with a kid on his lap"*: this is the feeling of photographs (and the feeling in photography)—feeling the world and its essence and movement through an image[153]— as it exists for Black image-makers and thinkers of Black photography. So much is felt through photographs and this feeling emerges from the oral as much as it emerges from the visual.[154] The photographs seen in the first chapter hold histories of Black Montrealers during the latter half of the 20th century—stories that often do not make themselves present by looking at the image but rather by *listening to it*. I take direction here from Tina Campt whose proposition of "listening to images" frames and guides her encounters with and study of photographs. For Campt, attending to the sound that lies in and outside the photograph's frame creates the conditions necessary to locate the qualities of an

[152] "What Is beauty, if not 'the intense sensation of being pulled toward the animating force of life?' Or the yearning 'to bring things into relation... with a kind of urgency as though one's life depended upon it.' Or the love of the black ordinary?", Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval,* 236.
[153] "those... possessed, to the essence of every thing... possessed by the movement of every thing", Aimé Césaire, *Cahier d'un Retour du Pays Natal* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 127.
[154] As Elspeth H. Brown and Thy Phu write in their introduction to *Feeling Photography*, "That we feel photography can hardly be doubted", 1.

image that exceed vision. Listening to images is, as she writes, "a sensibility that begins with vision and sight, with *what we see,* but it certainly does not end there."[155]

Within the shift in prioritization from the visual to the sonic in relation to images, Campt is not alone. In his analysis of the infamous photograph taken of Emmett Till, Fred Moten is deeply attentive and committed to how the image of Till's death carries with it the sound of his bereft mother, Mamie Till, —her cry turn scream turn moan—which punctuates, literally punctures the image with its sound. To know the details of Till's murder, to know his mother's request for an open casket funeral and the photograph taken of his body, to know the sound her of lament—how do you separate out his mother's moan from the unbearable sight of his broken face? Where are the edges of vision and sound that cut without leaking over? And here is where I want to start: at the place where sight and visuality are not the beginning and end of our engagements with photographic images but instead a single point or modality within a larger ensemble of possible engagements.

As Campt and Moten elucidate in their writings and what this study of photography and oral history take as its focus, is the proposition that something happens to the photographic image when it is spoken about, spoken to, picked up, held, and passed from one's hand to another's. In the speaking and the touching, there is an activation of the sensate qualities inherent within the image. I say inherent to suggest that something is brought out of the image—a *thing* some might call its aurality/orality or haptic essence or, as Campt and Moten call it, its "phonic substance"[156]—that remains latent when it is not brought into the midst of an encounter. This elusive but not imperceptible quality within images and specifically images of Black diasporic life, is the sonic sounding the lies at its very core and requires an attentiveness that foregrounds what is heard over what is seen. The "musics" or "mo'nin'" or "hum"[157]—the aural vibrations that tie the time of the photograph to our time now— is what makes the photographic image register beyond its visuality. Photographic images, most especially Black vernacular photographs, contain a visuality that is at once haptic and aural and visual—a multiplicity that only multiplies in its reach. As such, what oral history gifts to photographs is this activation of many senses at once. Recalling back to Langford who positions the oral as the

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[155] Campt, *Image Matters*: *Archive, Photography, and The African Diaspora in Europe*, 13.
[156] Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition,* 197; Tina Campt, "Black visuality and the practice of refusal," *Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory* 29, no. 1 (2019), 81.
[157] Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition,* 200-202; Campt, *Image Matters: Archive, Photography, and The African Diaspora in Europe,* 134.

photograph's "ordering principle", also describes our encounters with images at the moments where "we are taken up in the seeing, just as sound penetrates us to the very core."[158] In the acts of storytelling and sharing between teller and listener, the rhythm of the voices, the sound of the interview space, the slow turning of photo album pages or of a film scanner whirring in the background, are all in motion and point to the sonic qualities already part of what makes up the image.

Placing the sensorial at the centre of a discussion on photography unavoidably elicits conversations of the relationship between photographs and memory as well as the limits of the photograph to contain other senses beyond the visual. Following Barthes' particular interpretation of the connection between photography and memory—one which views each as separate and distinct forces—Geoffrey Batchen, in his book *Forget Me Not,* looks to where sensation situates between photography and memory. For Barthes, as Batchen argues, the distinction lies in a presupposition that involuntary memory is simply incompatible with photography due to the image's supposed coherence and predictability of the 'that-has-been". While this section on the image as sensation is centrally concerned with the question of Black life and history in relation to these variables, it draws its title nonetheless from Batchen's words: "For Barthes, it seems, memory is not so much image as sensation. The challenge, then, is to make photography the visual equivalent of smell and taste, something you can feel as well as see."[159] Batchen's reading of Barthes, supplemented here by my adding of a slight parenthetical, suggests that: *memory is not so much image as (it is) sensation,* which is to posit memory as distinct from the image, where memory holds a connection to sensation and if memory is distinct from the image then sensation cannot be sited there. His proposition as equation follows this:

$$\textit{memory} \neq \textit{image}$$
$$\textit{memory} = \textit{sensation}$$

$$\textit{image} \neq \textit{sensation}$$

While the passage is primarily concerned with insisting upon memory's capacity to store experiences seeped in sensation, it fails to acknowledge how objects are, in themselves, containers of and participants in what Nadia Serementakis calls "sensory memory". Contrary to Barthes' conclusion, the photographic image as object has shown itself to be capable of

[158] Langford, *Suspended Conversations: The Afterlife of Memory in Photographic,* 139.
[159] Batchen, *Forget Me Not: Photography and Remembrance,* 15.

containing sensory elements and scenes of the past much like the brain. Ultimately, then, the act of separating memory from image is a presumption that memory is particular to the body and not a *form* of holding and storing which is also able to be performed by more-than human entities like photographs. As Serementakis writes, "memory is the horizon of sensory experiences, storing and restoring the experience of each sensory dimension in another, as well as dispersing and finding sensory records outside the body in a surround of entangling objects and places."[160] Dislodging sensation or the sensory from the site of the somatic is, I contend, an argument towards seeing memory and image as containers or pockets for sensation. Reframing the equation from memory = sensation ≠ image, to, memory = sensation = image, maps if not illustrates precisely Christopher Wright's proposition that "the memory work that the image is required to do seems familiar—a history shaped by longings and emotions, as much as remembered facts."[161] ≈

Without question, objects or artifacts share memories differently than people do, and it is precisely this difference that needs to be attended to. Image-objects are often the inciting variable that allow us to experience a memory (or re-experience the moment of the memory) and its intensity because "as a sensory form in itself, the artifact can provoke the emergence, the awakening of the layered memories, and thus the senses contained within it."[162] Thus, the "challenge" that Batchen writes of might not be a challenge at all. Perhaps photography is already—*has* already existed as a form that was involved in smelling, tasting, feeling, that it was presumed to be unable to do. Perhaps it has always been doing this work and it simply needed us to become attuned to it.[163] The question, then, of whether the image can be sensation should actually be a question of *how* the image's multisensoriality is attained, where it comes from, and why it must be sustained and prolonged. Moreover, the openness required to truly move-with images and take in their complexity must involve considering that if images are created within environments that are intersensorial (teeming with sound and texture and scent), how can we

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[160] Nadia Seremetakis, *The Senses Still: Perception and Memory as Material Culture in Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 9.
[161] Christopher Wright, *The Echo of Things: The Lives of Photographs in the Solomon Islands* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 106.
≈ **FOR "IMAGEMEMORY", GO TO PAGE 78.**
[162] Seremetakis, *The Senses Still: Perception and Memory as Material Culture in Modernity,* 11.
[163] As Fred Moten writes, "And perhaps whatever speech and writing come after or over a photograph or a performance should deal with this epistemological and methodological problem: how to listen to (and touch, taste, and smell) a photograph or a performance, how to attune oneself to a moan or shout that animates the photograph with an intentionality of the outside", *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition,* 208.

claim with surety that the photographic image does not carry with it the impression of a multi-sensate world? [164] Photographic images and specifically photo-chemical images embody the "environments they were part of."[165] Here, the referent of the photo is not the subject alone which is to say the intended focal point decided by the photographer. In actuality, the reverent comprises of the sensorial forces floating in and around the moment of capture, and even the relations between those pictured and other onlookers who are at the "edge of sight" who sit outside the frame but not outside of the time of the image.[166] As such, by being part of the intersensorial environment from which they emerge, it would make sense that those intensities would adhere, like a "sticky residue" clinging to the surface of the emulsion leaves its impression.[167]

Figure 24: "Children standing around a table with candles and exotic fruits and vegetables, F013-02-200, NCC fonds

[164] Sarah Pink, "Sensory Digital Photography: Re-thinking 'moving' and the image," *Visual Studies* 26, no. 1 (2011): 4.
[165] Pink, "Sensory Digital Photography: Re-thinking 'moving' and the image, 7.
[166] Smith, *At the Edge of Sight: Photography and the Unseen,* 19.
[167] As Roland Barthes writes "the reverent adheres," *Camera Lucida,* 6; Tina Campt writes similarly that "such a question recenters what I think of as the sticky residue of memory and history that makes us cling to certain photographs and that affectively affixes them to us and to our memories," *Image Matters: Archive, Photography, and the African Diaspora in Europe*, 14-15.

The approach towards attuning to the aural and the haptic in relation to photography is also, in itself, an approach towards what could be called the synaesthesia of the image.[168] What allows for such a seamless movement to the sonic qualities of photographs, as seen through Campt and Moten, is a recognition that it is not simply that the image contains a plethora of sensory dimensions but rather that the various sensations we feel when looking at images are not as separate, as clear cut, or as distinct as we might think. As Manning reminds us, "sensation is multiplicitous, multi-identificatory, multifaceted. There is never linearity in sensation: we have all experienced the way a sound can lead to a smell, to a memory of a touch, to a taste. The senses combine, layered, infused into one into another."[169] And not only do photographs invoke these layered sensorial responses, they contain them—their intersensorality is embedded and impressed on their surface and in their essence. There are many who do not and cannot parse out qualities of sensing —who, instead, experience the textures and colours and aurality of seeing, feeling, tasting, hearing, and smelling as one act across several modes of perception. For synaesthetes, it is always all-at-once. More often than not, however, customary engagements with photographs are occularcentric ones that, in their linearity, occlude and prevent us from experiencing how "vision only actually functions in a mixed or intermodal state. It is always fed into other senses and feeds out to them."[170]

When I am taking a photograph, it is difficult to separate out what I am hearing from what I am seeing. A considerable amount of time is spent allowing the sounds of the environment I am in and am making, as well as allowing either the song or rhythm that is without a doubt stuck in my head at the moment, to shape how I frame what I am seeing. The seeing and hearing blur and weave; knowing which one was which seems out of reach and no longer of importance. It is all becomes an "inflexional latticework."[171] Likewise, it is nearly impossible to separate the seeing from the hearing when looking at archival photographs; the sound in and around and surrounding them is felt and heard almost immediately, as if literally carried alongside the photograph or the negative like the audio strip on a roll of 16mm or 35mm film. When I am taking a photograph, the decision to frame someone or something, is an effort to record as many qualities of the encounter-in-the-making as I am able to in that given

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[168] Dana Luciano, "Touching Seeing," *American Literary History* 28, no. 1 (2016): 140.
[169] Manning, *Politics of Touch: Sense, Movement, Sovereignty,* 44.
[170] Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation,* 154.
[171] Nathaniel Mackey, *Bedouin Hornbook,* Vol. 1, *From A Broken Bottle Traces of Perfume Still Emanate* (New York: New Directions, 2010), 17.

moment. It is an effort to record—not to capture or contain but to prolong—"the imprint of a moment, a person, an object, a movement",[172] a gesture, a sound, a hue, a touch, a shifting, a breathing, a feeling, a bend, a breeze, a warmth, a posture for as long as possible. The see-hearing of photography is an "sensual ensemble,"[173] synaesthesia in pure form.

To parse out and in turn demarcate the qualities of the photographic image as if they could ever stand as separate or as if they do not all merge and intersect, giving each other contours while making each category porous and permeable, reduces the command of the image itself. As such, image as sensation is a signaling-to the fact that categorical separation of the senses threatens the range of their reach. It cursorily postulates detachment as if the seeing stops where the hearing begins, and the feeling and smelling all have their own distinct moments of activation, all nonconcurrent from the other within sensory encounters and immersions. Photographs and the event of photography beautifully illustrates the blending and rolling-into-one that the sensory does. And this is no better illustrated than in Roy DeCarava's jazz photography series, *The Sound I Saw.* In his photographs of various musicians during the 1940s and 1950s Black jazz scene, the sound of the image is precisely what is imaged: the pushing of a note past its breaking point, the bending of a string under calloused fingers, the clenched face dripped in sweat and lost in song. What emanates from the photograph is not only the rich depth in contrast skillfully yielded from the black and white film (what Christina Sharpe describes as the "care and light and shadow" in DeCarava's images),[174] but also the music being played by those whom DeCarava felt so drawn to— Ornette Coleman, Jimmy Garrison, Billie Holiday. Looking at and listening to images reveal that sound and vision are not only intertwined, but that they blur at their edges and collapse into one another. Like Ian Walker argues of our engagements with photographs, "it may be hard to define exactly what part our eyes and our brain, our sense of sight and our sense of touch, our knowledge and our imagination each contribute to this process, but it's evident that we understand photographs only by bringing all those faculties into play."[175]

The general oversight of the image's intersensorial energy brings us back to the photographs of Black life in Montreal seen in chapter one, as they make evident that the image

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[172] Mary Ann Doane, "Indexicality: Trace and Sign, 2.
[173] Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition,* 210.
[174] Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2016), 133.
[175] Ian Walker, "Through the Picture Plane: On Looking into Photographs," in *Image & Imagination,* ed. Martha Langford (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), 25.

is and always has been sensation and is, moreover, deeply connected to relationality. As is said throughout "Makers and Keepers," incorporating photographs into the interview space is an act of affixing orality to visuality. Listening to stories while looking at the images, listening to stories with eyes shut, listening to stories while holding and handling the photograph and its weightiness, marks the way that the visual leads into the oral and how what we hear gives form to what we see. This type of approach could be likened to what Martha Langford calls "speaking the album" in that what emerges through the integration of the visual object into the space of the oral interview is a realization that image has always already been "linked to sound"— it is its foundation.[176] To speak the album is not to simply speak *about* it but to activate another register of the image. By bringing the photo album into the conversation—where the words spoken are centered on the context, meaning, and impact of the images in question— the stories that have, until this point, been suspended are able to resume; their hovering in time waiting to speak again, no longer an impossibility. The image is thus tethered to the oral from its inception and brought back to the oral through the interview.

Photography, though framed and positioned within the realm of the visual, exceeds the category through its ability to evoke feeling and sensation that stand separately from seeing. [177] My suggestion here is that visuality is actually an *accompanist* to the other registers which punctuate the image. That the image comes to us foremost in its visual form truly feels like a bonus (a treat, if you will), where the record of these everyday encounters and moments of relationality are given as something we can look at. To acknowledge the visuality of an image as but one of its aspects which accompanies other sensorial registers, sends me to a passage from *Camera Lucida* where Barthes insists on closing and averting your eyes away from photographs in order to actually see them better. He writes, "Ultimately—or at the limit— in order to see a photograph well, it is best to look away or close your eyes [...] (shutting your eyes is to make the image speak in silence). The photograph touches me if I withdraw it from its usual blah-blah: "Technique," "Reality," "Reportage," "Art," etc.: to say nothing, to shut my eyes, to allow the detail to rise of its own accord into affective consciousness."[178] This pivoting-away from a prioritization of the ocular and the implication that 'seeing' could actually limit the

[176] Martha Langford, "Speaking the Album: An Application of the Oral-Photographic Framework," in *Locating Memory: Photographic Acts,* ed. Annette Kuhn and Kirsten Emiko McAllister (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 224; See also, Elizabeth Edwards, "Photographs and the Sound of History," *Visual Anthropology Review* 21, No. 1 and 2 (2005), 29.
[177] Chaudhary, *Afterimage of Empire: Photography in Nineteenth-Century India,* 1.
[178] Barthes, *Camera Lucida,* 53-55.

photographic image's reach, remains both integral to this intersensorial approach to images and to their afterimages. As Barthes suggest, a shift takes place when eyes are closed *in order* to take in what lies before us. It is the necessitation of a new multiplicitous process in our encounters with photographs.

The all-at-once quality of intersensorality and synaesthesia in photography, is sadly only taken up by a small community of photo and image theorists. Despite this, what does exist of their writing proffers the necessary ground on which to speak about the merging and spill-over of the senses.[179] One moment in particular where such a focus is placed, is the moment of capture—what I think, also, as the moment of touch begetting image. While it is known that the camera's shutter is the mechanism that instigates the capturing of the moment that is visible before the lens, it is worth repeating that the shutter is also a haptic mechanism producing a sonic output. The shutter, which is the final component of what Ariella Azoulay would call the "photographed event,"[180] serves as the sign to those who slowed and stilled their movements for a fraction of a second to begin moving again. It is also the sign that whatever was seen in the viewfinder—the camera's line of sight—was pleasing and deserved to be recorded. However, in order for the sound of the shutter to be activated, the shutter needs to be touched and pressed down on. Here, touch begets sound or, perhaps more accurately, touch becomes the operator of and for sound; the pressing down and the hearing now rolled into one. The shutter is punctuated by its sound and by its touch. A sound of sharpness signaling a cessation; a touch that leads to and allows for a seeing. E.L. McCallum, Martha Langford, and Roland Barthes uniquely isolate in their respective writings both the importance of the shutter and its multisensorial qualities, which I believe should be reproduced in their entireties:

> "If in the narrative of the taking of the picture what strikes us is the click of the shutter, a click we can hear no more than we can see the scene before us, that click is also the moment when in the making of the photograph a narrative is sutured."[181]

> "Click the shutter. Click the mouse. However you choose the frame, however oiled the apparatus, there is a click (a noise, a vibration) that marks the conjunction of stimulation and decision which has taken, or made, the photograph. The act is, and then it is over. Sound, like the photographic

[179] Luciano, "Touching Seeing," 142.
[180] Azoulay, *Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography,* 21.
[181] E. L. McCallum, "Toward a Photography of Love: The Tain of the Photograph in Anne Carson's *Autobiography of Red", Postmodern Culture* 17, no. 3 (May 2007), #47.

> moment, is fugitive. Its utterance coincides with its disappearance. Recitation revives the original utterance, bringing it into a continuous present, just as the making and viewing of a photograph create a continuum with the past."[182]

> "Hence, strangely, the only thing that I tolerate, that I like, that is familiar to me, when I am photographed, is the sound of the camera. For me, the Photographer's organ is not his eye (which terrifies me) but his finger: what is linked to the trigger of the lens, to the metallic shifting of the plates (when the camera still has such things). I love these mechanical sounds in an almost voluptuous way, as if, in the Photograph, they were the very thing—and the only thing—to which my desire clings, their abrupt click breaking through the mortiferous layer of the Pose. For me the noise of Time is not sad: I love bells, clocks, watches and I recall that at first photographic implements were related to techniques of cabinetmaking and the machinery of precision: cameras, in short, were clocks for seeing, and perhaps in me someone very old still hears in the photographic mechanism the living sound of the wood."[183]

Their respective attentions given to the physical, haptic, and aural qualities of the shutter are signals to how the moment of capture crosses many senses at once, involving feeling and hearing and seeing into the performance of image-making. As such, both the event of photography and photographic images are tied into a sensorial meshwork. In what registers as synaesthetic views of the camera's shutter lies (in a sort of adjacent way) a secondary focus on how the sound of the shutter, though somewhat ephemeral, persists within its supposed absence. The persistence and lingering of the camera's intersensorial mechanism for capture draws similarities to the enduring qualities of the afterimage which allow us to not merely *see* the image linger, but also to *feel*, *hear* and be *moved-by* its sustaining intensity.[184] As Doane writes, "afterimages are the results of very strong, powerful forces—bright lights rather than dim ones, impressions that assault the senses and are often described in terms of reminiscent of the phenomenon of 'shock' in discourses on modernity".[185] The phrasing of "assault the senses" would presume that the afterimage takes on the powerful quality of forces that strike and affect us, as if formed by them through the absorbing of their strength. Like a trace, the afterimage would, through its indexicality, operate as a type of impression not of what had happened (the "that-has-been") but of the multiplicity and plurality of sensation within these "very strong, powerful forces".

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[182] Langford, *Suspended Conversations: The Afterlife of Memory in Photographic Albums*, 122.
[183] Barthes, *Camera Lucida,* 15.
[184] Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation,* 24.
[185] Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, The Archive,* 77.

I am reminded of the way Nathaniel Mackey speaks of the afterimage in a passage from *Bass Cathedral.* Mackey's 'N' character in the book (as well as the entire *From a Broken Bottle Traces of Perfume Still Emanate* epistolary series) is writing to Angel of Dust, describing the sustaining affect a passage from a book he is reading has had on him. He writes, "I'm haunted, just as one of the characters is said to be in the book's penultimate paragraph, by that 'arc,' by the humming I can all but hear and a visual image I can all but see, an afterimage described as lingering 'like a wreath of smoke'."[186] Mackey's taking up of the word afterimage, here, remains among the few instances in the word's usage in various fields, where its intersensorial quality is made central. For him, the afterimage is a type of lingering or persistence that stretches across vision and the auditory all at once. But what is especially striking about Mackey's writing of the afterimage is the sort of negation that lies within it. The repetition of the "I can all but" before both the hearing and seeing, suggests that neither modality can happen through the senses we have typically associated them with. By this I mean, the "humming" is no longer to be heard nor is the "visual image" to ever be seen — the hearing and seeing are now sensory experiences that are everything but what they suggest. The arc that haunts Mackey's N character, vacillates as a phenomenon of sight or of sound or of feeling—an approximation of sensory singularity. It illustrates Mackey's rejection of a purity of sensation and instead calls for an inversion of it all together, where the senses can be transposed, are unable to be sited, are unable to be fixed or become predictable.

To describe the afterimage is to describe all of its sides, its contours, and its ways of being that exceed what is seen and must, above all else, be taken up through a confluence of descriptors of sensation. What this would mean is to begin relying on vocabularies that weave into and across sensory modalities beyond their presumed boundaries allowing, as Mackey does, the framing of an afterimage that holds interweaving visual and sonic qualities. The afterimage is to be seen as a leaking-over of the sensory, confuddled excess lingering across time. The image and its afterimage are intersensorial for me; the synaesthesia of it all clouds a clear description of its visuality on one end, and its aurality on the other. What lingers is not the visual impression of the photographic image, but the emotional, sonic, and haptic registers that have sustained over time.

[186] Mackey, *Bass Cathedral,* 56.

OF EXCESS AND EDGES

Something always spills out beyond the edges of an image. The many unknowns, the endless who/what/where/when/why questions— all questions that are often unanswerable and outside of the inside of the photograph, elsewhere than within the image itself. We can call this *more-than* or *excess*, even *overflow*. The very focus on the afterimage and its qualities that I keep returning to, stems from a recognition that so much of what can be gleaned from photographic images are actually beyond and *past* photographic images, residing on the fringes.[187] This is not to say that photographs are not important in themselves and cannot provide information on their own or reflect the world in some capacity, quite the opposite. Rather, the fullness of life—its uniqueness and unpredictability and singularity—is never able to be sufficiently contained within the four sides of a photo-object. As Stuart Hall writes, the still image "is not complete—it can't, in the end, 'speak for itself'. What signifies is not the photographic text in isolation but the way it is caught up in a network of chains of signification which 'overprint' it, its inscription into the currency of other discourses, which bring out different meanings. It's meaning can only be completed by the ways we interrogate it."[188] What Hall is emphasizing here is that photographs do their work in *relation* with other forces not in isolation; images are part of an intricate ecology that inform their meanings and significances.

This particular focus on excess is a rearticulation or perhaps extending-of the proposition put forth in "Makers and Keepers" of oral history's connection to photographic images. This connection, one that is ecological and relational in shape, is a way of engaging with the past that "brings out" the elements of signification in images. As a conduit of recovery, oral history proffers answers to the endless questions we have about particular photographs that are not of our time— a gifting of a sense of clarity regarding the past, a tangibility of the intangibility of another's experience.[189] Through the orality of storytelling, another surface is revealed of the imagistic fragments we keep and share with others. Moreover, this focus highlights oral history's unique attunement to excess, especially in the context of photographs. All of these realizations have made the feeling of looking beyond, after, and in excess of the image and its

[187] Shawn Michelle Smith, "Photography between Desire and Grief: Roland Barthes and F. Holland Day", in *Feeling Photography,* eds. Thy Phu and Elspeth H. Brown (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 44.
[188] Stuart Hall, Preface to *Black Britain: A Photographic History,* ed. Paul Gilroy (London: Saqi Books, 2007), 9.
[189] Patricia Keller, "From Afterlife to Afterimage: History Happens with Photography, *Arizona Jounral of Hispanic Cultural Studies* 20 (2016): 59.

frame a necessary shift.[190] It is the only way to experience the image for what it is, what was intended through it, and what it does in the present. Looking sideways to another place that the image gestures to means residing on the periphery, doing the work from the fringes.

Figure 25: "7:30am from Gaspé", courtesy of Nancy Oliver-MacKenzie.

This photograph taken in 1930 by Helena White, mother of Nancy Oliver-MacKenzie, grabbed me the first time I saw it. I cannot recall the amount of time spent staring at Helena's handwritten annotation at the back that reads "7:30 am from Gaspé" and the stamp from a Moncton camera store noting that the photograph was developed and printed on June 18, 1930. In a visual capacity, the simultaneity of motion and stillness apparent in the image is dizzying. The shrubbery in blur and the slightly bent train tracks leading off towards an unknown point, along with the canted positioning of the frame points so beautifully to the abundance of movement in train travel; it feels impossible not to get lost in the slant. In a more-than visual capacity, this photograph remains one of the most illustrative examples of excess and overflow in the Black vernacular images of Montreal I have been shown. Past the edges of the photograph is the train itself that Helena and her father Reverend William White (who was an itinerant minister) are on, travelling throughout the Atlantic Canada visiting Baptist churches. On the fringes, there is a young twenty-two-year-old Black woman seeing and moving with landscapes, often through the viewfinder of her accordion camera. Beyond this image, a place that literally extends off the sides of the photograph much like the train tracks, is a beautiful Black family in Halifax waiting for a father and husband, a daughter and a sister to return home.

[190] Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory,* 107.

None of these "excesses" would have been imaginable without being told the family histories and life stories by Nancy during our many conversations. Her carrying-of these inherited memories transformed the image for me, changed everything about how it registered. On its own, the photographic meaning was stuck at the level of the visual. The onlooker of the image is proffered an "assurance of an existence" but not "insight into the nature" of the indexical object before them.[191] However, when brought into the space of the interview, an abundance of personal details and stories of the lives behind the lens and at the edge of the frame were made evident. Entering into an interview meant entering into a space where we can "move beyond the photograph and find another path…another kind of existence."[192] In essence this would position the photographic image as the indication that something happened here and at this time in the past, which can only be fully activated in the present (and future) through talking and sharing with those who were present at the time so that we can be let in on the full story. Conversation provides the "insight" that photographs are unable to completely provide. Said differently, where the visuality of the photograph lacks, orality and storytelling fill in. Part of the wonder of this photograph lies in the fact that despite knowing the geographic distance separating Helena from home, her family are nonetheless closely connected to it. They compose her image-making even from afar, which is to say that the familial ecology informs the image without being in frame. Though she clicked the shutter and controlled the angle and framing, the *making* of the image was a collective one. Image-making and the very event of photography is not without a multiplicity, a more-than oneness; to echo Margaret Olin, "the taking of a picture acts out a relationship."[193] My point here is that the relational is present *in* and *beyond* this image.[194] It populates what we might call the "interior exteriority of the photograph."[195] Though it is not visually observable (it rarely is) its gestures are felt, sending out a constant buzzing and vibrational edge that is impossible to close ourselves off from.

Helena's photograph is not alone in requiring other tools like oral history to bring out its meaning and contours. A commonality among vernacular photographs is the often overwhelming presence of unknowns and the lack of clarity about the events they trace. Their everydayness often hinders a clear reading; their commonplaceness leaves many openings for

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[191] Mary Ann Doane, "The Indexical and the Concept of Medium Specificity," 135.
[192] Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval,* 30
[193] Margaret Olin, *Touching Photographs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 11-12.
[194] Edwards, "Photographs and the Sound of History,"30.
[195] Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition,* 197.

explanation. Strangely, despite their recondite nature, photographs are repeatedly taken as objects capable of recounting the entirety of the past rather than as objects that record the single trace of an encounter. This way of thinking is taken up and interrogated by Geoffrey Batchen and Marianne Hirsch in their respective deploying of the notion of 'coherency' in images. They write:

> "Photography, he argues, captures too much information to function as memory. It is too coherent and too linear in its articulation of time and space. It obeys the rules of nonfiction. Memory, in contrast, is selective, fuzzy in outline, intensively subjective, often incoherent, and invariably changes over time—a conveniently malleable form of fiction".[196]
>
> "In addition, the photograph… reinforces for the subject an imaginary sense of coherence and plentitude. The still picture freezes one moment and enshrines it as a timeless icon with determinative definitional power".[197]

I have been dwelling on these two passages for quite some time, focusing on their shared vocabularies: *coherence, time, information, definitional, linear, plentitude.* The most striking of these words is the presence of coherent/coherence, which has led me to question how coherency figures into an understanding of photographs and their function as objects that trace the past. The linearity and coherency that is often perfunctorily ascribed to photographic images is another way of insisting upon their capacity to carry a totality of the past; they are rarely imagined to possess the same fuzzy, malleable and incoherent variability attributed to memory. However, as any of us who spend time with photographs know, nothing of an image is ever completely clear. There are always pieces missing that compose the objects we study, and which linger in our bodies following our encounters with them. They are are anything but coherent, anything but clear, linear and easily understandable. While there is a certain thrill to uncovering the context and relevance of photographic images, this thrill also exists in the not knowing—in the siting-with all that cannot be fully recovered and remains obscure. The beauty of photography is that even in its semblance of being a perfect reflection of a past moment, it takes on so many forms and variations of the moments it refers to. Not seeing photographs as a totalizing totality would mean to be content with the opacities it produces and the ones which produce it.

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[196] Batchen, *Forget Me Not: Photography and Remembrance*, 16.
[197] Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory,* 197.

Photographs are blurry, which means less that they are out of focus but more that they are in-between clarity and a lack of clarity. They are not quite evidentiary nor carry an exactness or clearness. Photographs are approximations of the past, single records of moments or events that are partial fragments of the "that-has-been" of experience.[198] They act more as "springboard[s] for memory" than as evidence.[199] Returning back to the thinking on indexicality that began this chapter, if photographs are said to be indices—objects that both create and leave a trace—which reproduce the image of people, or objects or the world, how could it ever be a coherent object? As referents, they are unstable. The constant state of flux, along with the very opacities and incomprehensibility of the world would make its capturing almost impossible, even with a tool as magical as the camera. Why then would we expect a single frame to be able to communicate the plentitude of a lifeworld or field of existence? Why ask so much of images? What does it mean to continue "depend[ing] on these tiny fragments to hold import they cannot contain"?[200] Ultimately, entertaining this view of totality—one, also, of power—not only undercuts life as we know it to be, but also places too large of a burden on an object that is and should be taken as partial. To use Batchen's wording, does photography truly capture "too much" information? Is it "too" coherent? In the context of reading and listening to vernacular photos, it is difficult to accuse them of anything of the kind. The too-muchness of a photograph is not in what it captures or what it conveys but rather what it evokes and what eludes capture. There is so much, too much that overflows and spills over from the edges of photographs. What spills over could be described as intensity and affect rolled into one—the excess intensity of stillness, of visuality, of sound, of relation, and all the other ecologies that constitute photographic images and their afterimages. As such, the afterimage could be described as the excess of the image—an overflow, a type of surplus.

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[198] Barthes, *Camera Lucida,* 77.
[199] Michelle Caswell, "'The archive' is not an archives: acknowledging the intellectual contributions of archival studies," *Reconstruction: Studies in Contemporary Culture* 16, no. 1 (2016), #10.
[200] Smith, *Photographic Returns: Racial Justice and the Time of Photography,* 124.

"HOWEVER THE IMAGE ENTERS, ITS FORCE REMAINS"

There is endless room for play in the morphology of the afterimage. Its 'after' prefix is as slippery as it is capacious. Where 'after' refers to a period of time following the time in question, the *afterimage* refers to a period of time following the image— the next (part of the) image to come, the (other side of the) image that comes later. Put differently, what the 'after' of the afterimage points to is a certainty that something (most likely an aspect of the image) will arrive later, at another time. Not all the sides and dimensions of the photographic image are obvious and revealed in their first or even tenth viewing. Often—as many will say of their own family albums or of the photo-oriented fonds they are studying at an archive—a detail so striking and yet unseen during the first encounters with the images, becomes apparent only years later. Despite some photographs affecting us immediately, others take time to register in their fullness. Photography is a force that can, as Campt writes, "arrest us in ways that diminish our capacity to respond, and they provoke us in ways that augment our capacity to engage. They are objects that engender experiences of intensity that we can often only identify, locate, excavate, and order after the fact".[201]

As is often described by those who experience them, afterimages are powerful and sticky in their ability of lingering persistently as intensely in the body as in the memory. The afterimage ultimately exists as "a temporal aberration, an incessant invasion of the present moment by the past."[202] While the afterimage incites sensory responses—a visual occurrence in its most traditional definition and an intersensorial one as proposed in this study—it is also a time-oriented phenomenon. Audre Lorde, in a poem aptly titled "Afterimage" both dedicated to and haunted by the murder of Emmett Till, speaks to the afterimage's temporality and multisensoriality. While the image of Till described as "flickering" continued to sit before her eyes, linger on her skin, and vibrate at the back of her throat—taking over her entire body and saturating her entire memory— the afterimage does not simply appear before her as a faded impression, but rather it *lingers* and *persists.* The image's afterimage takes up its own time and unfolding. To this, Lorde writes "however the image enters, its force remains."[203] It is the image

[201] Campt, *Image Matters: Archive, Photography, and the African Diaspora in Europe*, 16.
[202] Doane, "The Afterimage, the Index, and the Present", *The Emergence of Cinematic Time,* 76.
[203] Audre Lorde, "Afterimages", In *Collected Poems of Audre Lorde*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company), 1997.

that sees itself over and over again, no fading or leaving or weakening of its intensity.[204] There is no more seeing without the image's impression superimposed on top. It has become a feeling and tingling like goosebumps, a trace of sensation that lingers and prolongs. Despite the passing of time between Till's murder and the time of Lorde's writing of the poem, the photograph is remembered and, as she says, is "etched into my visions." The lingering of the afterimage points to its innate temporality, where the 'after' assuredly points not only to the time surrounding the image (the time between its creation and the next time it is seen) but also the time *within* the image. Said differently, the slipperiness of the prefix and by extension of the whole word itself opens up the possibility to speak about the still photographic image anew, where a focus on its often-neglected connection to time can be reprioritized.

For still photographs, the time elapsed during their creation is not visible unless the image maker is able to recall the shutter speed used during the moment of capture. If the note of the duration that light was allowed to leak onto the surface of the celluloid was not recorded, it is easy to forget that time of any length went into the image's moment of becoming. For many years, I have kept a journal to record details about every shot taken with my film cameras. While it started as a means to keep track of where and what was being photographed in each exposure of 120mm and 35mm rolls, it soon became a way of documenting and keeping track of exposure times, the selected aperture, and lens type for each shot. With the journal, I could see how a slower or faster shutter impacted the image, how it could make an activity that was moving so quickly before seem as if such motion did not exist, how it could blur movement and faces past an ability to make out what was seen in the image. The sharp and the blur were qualities reflective of time—an amount that shifted depending on a number of factors while adjusting the camera settings. Still images, unlike moving images, cannot show the differential of time, of time elapsed, and of duration at mere glance. As such, photographs and moving images are placed into two separate mediatic groups: light-based and time-based. This distinction, though helpful for quick categorical purposes, leads to an overlooking of time in its relation to still photographic images. How, then, can we return to time, to the durational, to the temporal when speaking about still photographic images?

Though an image is the result of the coalescing of a single moment, its stillness does not negate nor suspend its ongoing relationship to the temporal. The moment before and after the

[204] "This indexing fixes the determinate qualities of the image; the strength or duration of the image's effect could be called its *intensity",* Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation,* 24.

moment of capture does not simply fall off following the sound of the shutter. On the contrary, these moments and their temporality begin to expand in unforeseen directions. As Shawn Michelle Smith writes, "the photograph records the often imperceptible increment of time in which a camera shutter opens to expose a negative or sensor to reflected light, and in this way it seems to stop time, or to wrest a moment out of the flow of time. It makes visible a constellation of forces and things… But this stopping of time is also the starting of another time, the temporal trajectory of the photograph itself, and that time is multiple."[205] Her thoughts, here, lead me to think: in the intensities given by photographs of Black life in Montreal—of lives still in the making and in movement—how can the photograph be truly "stilled" if so much motion and force continues to course through?[206]

Figure 26: Enid Dixon, "Group of people marching during the African Liberation Day demonstration in Toronto." Taken by Enid Dixon.[≈]

In the case of photographer Enid Dixon, all of the images she shared with me during our follow up interviews in November 2019 were in the form of negatives which needed to be scanned. When we were setting up our meetings as well as during the interviews, Enid mentioned frequently how she had not seen these images since she had taken them back in the 1970s. With the exception of a few prints she had developed from a handful of negatives, the

[205] Smith, *Photographic Return: Racial Justice and the Time of Photography,* 4-5.
[206] "Stillness is always on its way to movement", Erin Manning, *Relationscapes,* 43.
[≈] **FOR "TOO MUCH, JUST ENOUGH", TURN TO PAGE 79.**

images never became seeable photo-objects. The uniqueness of our photo-interview turned scanning sessions, as mentioned in "Makers and Keepers", was dwelling on the time that stood between the moment of capture, when the film rolls were developed, and the time between that moment and now. Though the events imaged in her negatives had ended, the event of photography itself had nowhere neared completion. Her images were still unfolding through our encounters with them. It felt almost like a forty-year old exposure, as if it literally took forty years for the images to appear—until the event could near a conclusion (though a true "end" could of course never actually be met). Returning to the temporal reveals how still images continue to whirl through and across time because as Barthes writes, time is another 'punctum' that sits alongside the 'detail' and its form; time is a puncturing intensity that precisely makes felt the whirling that affects us so deeply.[207] Time is carried in the stillness of a photograph.

Our readings of and encounters with images are, for the most part, guided by differing though closely related slants. The way we approach photographs, both in and outside of archives, is set through how we believe images register. *Looking* at images has historically been a consistent default—yet another instance of the "primacy of vision" within visual culture. [208] This mode, however, is challenged and reinvented by other approaches that open up and proffer additional dimensions of the photographic image that cannot be attained through the visual. For Ariella Azoulay, the occularcentric must be backgrounded to reach the more hidden elements of photography and instead, a focus on *watching* and examining the image is needed. She writes, "the photograph bears the seal of the photographic event, and reconstructing this event requires more than just identifying what is shown in the photograph. One needs to stop looking at the photograph and instead start watching it."[209] In another mode, one that, too, brackets the visual is the central proposition of Tina Campt's work which is *listening* to the image. She writes, "redirecting Ariella Azoulay's evocative proposal to 'watch' rather than look at photographs, the choice to 'listen to' rather than simply 'look at' images is a conscious decision to challenge the equation of vision with knowledge by engaging photography through a sensory register that is critical to Black Atlantic cultural formations: sound".[210] Similarly, Martha Langford writes of the import of the oral in relation to images and sitting with the

[207] Barthes, *Camera Lucida,* 96.
[208] Elizabeth Edwards, "Objects of Affect: Photography Beyond the Image," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 41 (2012): 228.
[209] Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography,* 14.
[210] Campt, *Listening to Images,* 6.

history they hold. She writes, "in the thrall of the written language, we speak always of reading the photograph; what I want to suggest instead is that we pause in the still of our photographic vaults and try just for a moment to listen."[211]

What we have here is a two-part approach of watching and listening to the image for insight into its life, its force, and the reasons why these elements have sustained over time. These slants, of which this study draws its footing from, are transformative in their ability to emphasize the plethora of entry points required to truly speak about the photographic image sufficiently. What a focus on the time of the image and its afterimage leads me to propose alongside Azoulay, Campt, and Langford's approaches, is a move towards *waiting* for the image (and by extension the afterimage). Waiting does not centralize *seeing* images as the only way to engage with them, rather it suggests a temporally preoccupied proposition. It is an insistence on the necessity of giving time to images to resurge, for their energies and multisensorial registers to both activate and reactivate once more. [212] Often, this can take decades. The image's afterimage serves as but one sign pointing to the dynamism of the photo-object but also of its context, of its time and extension and prolongation into the now. Waiting is a shift that begins with the body and not simply with the eyes; you wait with all your faculties, you wait for the photographic image to reveal itself— to reveal its connections across. You wait to see more, hear more—more than what has already been heard and to feel what has always already been moving.

Among the many nodes of the afterimage, time and duration are forces that speak most directly to an image's variation and of its singularity. Much like the trace, the temporality of a photograph points to its moment of capture as much as it points to the time *before* and *after* that moment. What took place in the pre and post of the shutter's clicking holds considerable importance to not simply understanding the photograph as it is but also understanding how it exists within and a part of something bigger than itself —a piece of a wholeness. Put differently, photographs gesture to multiple temporalities (the past being the most obvious among them) while also communicating it is only a sliver of that past, one momentary instant within a

[211] Langford, *Suspended Conversation: The Afterlife of Memory in Photographic Albums*, viii.
[212] Brian Massumi writes "The heightening of energies is sustained long enough to leave a kind of afterimage of its dynamism that can be reactivated or injected into other activities, creating a fabric of intensive states between which any number of connecting routes could exist.","Translator's Foreword: Pleasures of Philosophy, *A Thousand Plateaus,* xiv.

lifetime. These qualities of the durational and the fractional are interwoven through the words of Smith and Manning:

> "The photograph carries a tiny shard of reflected light into the moment of its viewing, offering a tiny flash of a past to a viewer who needs it."[213]

> "This resolution (or concrescence) depends on an event singling itself out from the larger field of experience. Yet this singularity cannot tell the whole story… we are here talking about a half second or less of experience."[214]

I have this vision of sea glass (or "driftglass" as Samuel Delany calls it) when I think about photographs-as-objects and about afterimages. These small shards of glass, broken and fragmented from larger, once whole bottles and jars move through the ocean for decades until rounded. We find them drifting along beaches, at the edge between sand and water. They are forever altered not simply by the ocean itself but by time. The process of their smoothing can take a lifetime to complete and their resurfacing from sea to shore is unpredictable—we never know when they will return, if they will return and how they will be changed by their duration underwater. Sea glass is the outcome of a glass object's encounter with the ocean and its chemistry. Photographs often feel like sea glass. The momentary seizing of time—of impression and of touch—happens amid a wider expanse of temporality. The photograph's coming-into-the-world is like a shard that broke off from a larger whole, which is to say the moment of capture itself broke off from a "larger field of experience". The image we encounter is what occurred in a fraction of a second, the result of a particular moment excised "from the stream or continuum of experience".[215] A photograph is a piece of life in its unfolding, a literal fragment of the fullness of life-living.[216] In a way, the glass bottle turned driftglass exists as a sort of trace of its former form—its fragmentation pointing to an excess, a more-than, a cut and breaking that needed to happen in order for it to exist.

What the shard of glass (in the case of sea glass) and the shard of life (in the case photographs) evidence, is that our time with each carry their own temporal multiplicities. Between the time of the sea glass' initial fragmentation and the time between the image's

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[213] Smith, *Photographic Returns,* 5.
[214] Manning, *Always More Than One: Individuation's Dance*, 21.
[215] McCallum "Towards a Photography of Love", #12
[216] "Photographed images do not seem to be statements about the world so much as pieces of it", Susan Sontag, *On Photography,* 4; See also: Manning, *Always More Than One: Individuation's Dance*, 25.

creation, entire worlds are created. In studying photographs as well as sea glass, we are often left imagining the context of the moment of capture as well as the shard's previous form and its in-between states towards smoothing. We feel and imagine their pasts, presents, and futures through their weightiness in our hands; we come right into encounter with its multiple temporalities.[217] The same waiting that is required for the formation of seaglass extends to the study of photographs precisely due to the fact that images (especially archival ones) are always fragmented, always slowly disclosing their history and significance over time.[218] This is why the phenomenon of the afterimage is perpetually tethered to my understanding of photography and image-making. There is a slowness through which images register—in how the afterimage emerges, and in the waiting that is necessary to see the plenitude of a photograph. In these slow and gradual movements of images and afterimages, the modalities of listening, watching, and waiting become crucial to witnessing how images endure and become durational.[219] Moreover, waiting on the image and staying with the fragmentary brings us to a place where we can [see] in what ways the image is always more than itself, always part of a meshwork, always in relation with a plethora of other forces across time. In a shifting-towards slowness and waiting, perhaps we can begin to consider how, as fragments, images are always pointing to an excess.

The photographs that I have been shown in interviews throughout this project were all taken during a common time period of the 1940s to 1980s. However, despite their common temporality, they have each faced singular trajectories and more so have had vastly distinctive meanings for and effects on onlookers at one point in time than in another. The image, as Smith writes, "persists, and as it does so, it opens onto new possibilities and enters into new configurations. As the image endures, its meaning changes. A photograph may snap into focus years after its production; it may be seen and understood in a new way at a new time, by a different viewer. This [is the] unending aftereffect of the photograph…".[220] As I learned from Nancy, Margot, Leon and Enid, time *changes* the image and, in turn, the image extends time.[221] Whether left untouched, dormant, or out of view in albums, or boxes, or archival sleeves, images come to us (or, perhaps, we come to them) always in ways that differ from how they first impact those present at their moments of inception or initial circulation. The image's impact

[217] Campt, *Image Matters*, 20; Shawn Michelle Smith, *Photographic Returns,* 4-5.
[218] McCallum "Towards a Photography of Love", #11.
[219] Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments,* 27.
[220] Smith, *Photographic Returns: Racial Justice and the Time of Photography,* 8.
[221] Edwards, "Photographs and the Sound of History," 31.

over time changes according to who encounters it. Its ability to vary over time also activates in its onlookers a variety of responses and affinities. As such, photographs can be seen as "objects-in-variation,"[222] in that they hold the potential to shift, to renew, to generate a liveliness that is without end. The mobility of these Black vernacular photographs that are in and out time, across and transversally in the memories of others, is a variation internal to the object. Contrary the assumed terseness of objects and artefacts, their ability to enact a variance of aftereffects rests in how photo-objects always exist in multiple folding temporalities[223]—a sort of "backward and forward movement inherent to the medium."[224]

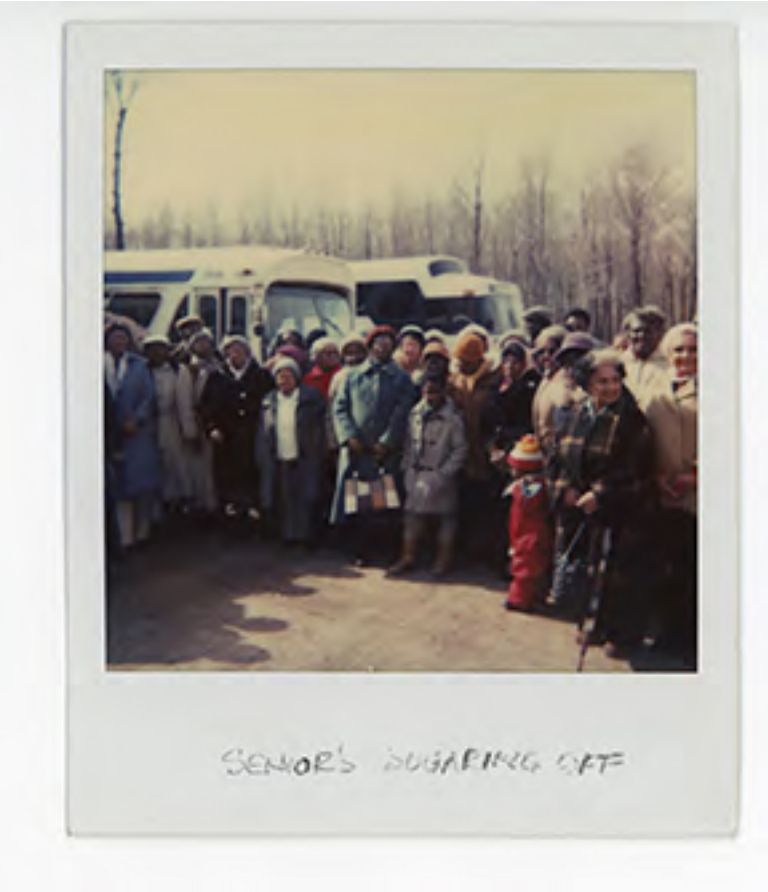

Figure 27: "NCC Seniors' Sugaring Off," F013-02-019, NCC Fonds

[222] Erin Manning, *The Minor Gesture* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2016), 75.
[223] Manning, *The Minor Gesture*, 68.
[224] Smith, *Photographic Returns: Racial Justice and the Time of Photography,* 1.

Waiting for and in the image requires a patience. Moreover, it requires a belief that due to the ways time bends and multiplies, we might not always be on the same frequency as the photographic image that lies before us. The temporalities of photographic images are all at once rolled into each other and in flux— a variability that generates a surplus of possibilities for encounters.[225] Sometimes we might only get fleeting glimpses and small openings, where photographic meanings "snap into focus."[226] Ultimately, what waiting for the image and its afterimage ignites the possibility to experience is "the unintended historical after-effects of the artefact's presence *or* absence", to borrow Serementakis' phrasing.[227] These aftereffects (not unlike an afterlife or afterimage) arrive in unexpected forms and need the perceptual slants of *listening* rather than *looking.* Riffing off of Langford's proposition to "pause in the still of our photographic vaults", waiting for the image is a call to "pause in the still"—the in-motion stillness of photographs—to experience all the registers of the image and its afterimage. It is a call to embrace a slowness when we hold and think about images, because it is in this slowness and patience that prolongation becomes possible. The waiting and the stilling (and the slowness within each) is, quite possibly, the necessary technique needed to perceive the afterimages of black vernacular photography. By waiting, we prolong the image; in the waiting, the duration and intensity of the afterimage extends.

[225] Keller, "From Afterlife to Afterimage: History Happens with Photography," 52.
[226] Smith, *Photographic Returns: Racial Justice and the Time of Photography,* 8.
[227] Seremetakis, *The Senses Still,* 11.

CODA

TOWARDS AN AURALITY

> "Story is theoretical, dance, poem, sound, song, geography, affect, photograph, painting, sculpture, and more. Maybe the story is one way to express and fall in love with black life".[228]
> — Katherine McKittrick, *Dear Science and Other Stories*

Susan Sontag was not exaggerating for dramatic or mystical flair when she wrote: "our irrepressible feeling that the photographic process is something magical has a genuine basis."[229] In every encounter, at every moment, through every touch, across every glance and every lingering memory of photographic images, we are dealing with extraordinary pieces of the world. These are pieces that are out of their own time and space, which we encounter not as objects *about* something but rather the objects *of* something. Photographs or, more aptly, photo-objects reflect a plethora of narratives about people and places. They are prisms of varying kind presenting us elements of the world—sometimes the world as we know it, most often the world of previous generations. And this is a form of magic.

This thesis, which focused on the image-making and image preservation practices of Black Montrealers from the 1940s until the 1980s, speaks directly to the lingering memory of images and the ordinary-extraordinary and magical quality of photographs. As witnessed in the two main chapters "Makers and Keepers" and "The Image and its Afterimage" along with their in-betweening interlude "An Infinite Web," this thesis centred on Black life and Black sociality. In this vein, what I have chosen to feature, to strategically place at the centre of this study are narratives that illustrate the minor, celebratory, quotidian moments that define Black Montreal's history during the 20th century. In the first chapter, "Makers and Keepers," the oral history photo-interviews I conducted with Black image-makers and image-keepers centred around the everyday and minor histories of Black Montreal, as captured during the mid to late 20th century through vernacular and snapshot photographs. The conversations I had with Enid Dixon, Nancy Oliver-MacKenzie, Margot Blackman, Leon Llewellyn and Dr. Dorothy Williams could only be described as history-telling events that blended spoken word with image—encounters with "makers" and "keepers" who spoke about the histories of their communities

[228] McKittrick, *Dear Science and Other Stories*, 8.
[229] Sontag, *On Photography,* 155.

imagistically, pushing past the fixity of words to arrive at the expansiveness of photographs. Furthermore, our photo-interviews demonstrate that their images—historic, artistic or otherwise—as well as the stories affixed to these images, are carried forward in time through their presence in the archival fonds at Concordia University and of course, by way of this study. Through this chapter, I additionally sought to emphasize the relational work that is integral to photo-interviews and by extension, integral to the field of Oral History. The processes of looking at and talking about images construct new socialities between the makers and keepers turned tellers, and the listener. And it through this creation of a kind of sociality that the life of the photograph and the event of photography prolongs and can linger over time. It speaks directly to the affective links that are forged and sustained between people and photographs, and how this affect can be shared through talking about images and reanimating memories through storytelling. What this chapter has sought to emphasize through oral stories and photographs of Black Montreal is that "images *matter* to black folks".[230]

The second chapter, "The Image and its Afterimage", takes up in depth the preliminary dive into the concept of the afterimage brought up at the end of the first chapter. Serving as the integral questions to this chapter as well as the crux of the entire thesis was asking whether prolonging the images and *afterimages* of Black life, prolong Black life in the process? And, moreover, whether oral history interviews can contribute to ensuring that images of Black life and the histories rooted within them, be carried forward, preserved, and linger throughout time? These questions regarding the affective intensities of photographic images and their connection to Black image-makers and -keepers in Montreal, are tethered to afterimages. By recasting the original understanding of an afterimage by insisting that the phenomenon exceeds the visual and its, in actuality, and intersensorial occurrence, I sought to present how encounters with images stay with us in powerful ways and across many senses. As illustrated through the slants of trace, sensation, excess, and time, photographic images carry, what I refer to earlier as, a 'more-than visual imprint' or 'multisensorial fullness.' The afterimage serves as a means to think more broadly about the orality of oral history and the visuality of photographic images, where neither force is particular to any one field but are rather interwoven together. Attending to images by fixating on their capacity to extend beyond themselves, to prolong their own event that is always still in the making, also gives space to consider photographic images

[230] Campt, *Image Matters: Archive, Photography, and The African Diaspora in Europe,* 5. [my emphasis added]

as haptic and aural objects able to move us over and over again. Retuning to a question I posed in this second chapter: can the fullness of Black life reside within a visual image? If not, what spills out and overflows beyond its frame, and how do we prolong it?

This study could not have been taken up simply by *looking* at images in isolation. There is too much swirling within, around, and beyond photographic images to reduce our engagements with them to the visual alone. Instead, encountering and reading images is one that involves conversations with others, sharing stories and "speaking the album"[231]—all modalities of engaging with the past that remain at the heart of oral history. Moreover, it involves a sensory engagement that listens to and feels images, for all their aural, sonic, and haptic qualities. As such, presenting how images and their stories can be carried forward in time, and how the melding of oral history with photography gifts us with a rich way to experience the history of Black social life has remained central.

And, there is more. There is always more to storytelling, more to photographic images. There is more to the conversations of Black image-making and image-keeping that exceed this study and which go beyond the geography of Montreal. This was revealed to me during a follow-up oral history interview conducted in July 2019 with Nancy Oliver-MacKenzie, where she showed me several large photo albums and photo collages assembled by her mother in Halifax during the 1920s. Within the tall stack of delicately aged photo album pages that she brought to the interview laid images of a Black Nova Scotian family laughing, and their young children playing in backyards and open fields; of social outings with friends near rivers and parks; of countryside views from neighbouring towns and churches across the Maritimes—the majority of which were taken by the family's eldest daughter. As Nancy told me by recounting how she came to find her mother's photographs and the album, as well as some of the context behind the images:

> NOM: It told me the story of not just… the family and not just the social things but also how important it was for her to record these things and how important people were in her life […] But mostly she was very social [laughs] and that's what a lot of her photos show because she… I have photos of her and I wish we had a map of Nova Scotia I could show you all the different places that she travelled with her dad… took photos and I suppose that's how her father met his wife, because he was an itinerant minister.[232]… I just find they are so much in photos…

[231] Langford, "Speaking the Album: An Application of the Oral-Photographic Framework," in *Locating Memory: Photographic Acts,* ed. Annette Kuhn and Kirsten Emiko McAllister (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 224
[232] Nancy Oliver-MacKenzie, interviewed by Kelann Currie-Williams, 30 May 2019 [00:02:40 – 00:06:48]

> the more I look at... especially my mother's photos with her mother and father, and maybe a couple of kids in the backyard. You can see the closeness, the love... just by the way her hand is on his shoulder or he has his cane and one the kids in his lap or, you know. It just tells so much.[233]

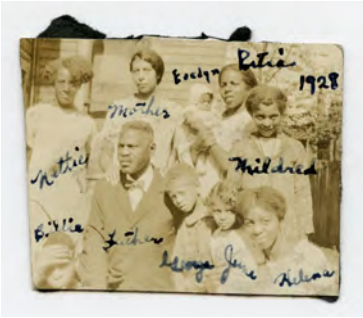

Figure: 28.1: "Helena White's family in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Each of their names are handwritten on the print", 1928.

Figure 28.2: "Friends and siblings of Helena White playing the ukulele in Point Pleasant Park, Halifax", 192-.

Enraptured by the photographs for what they depicted and the intricacy with which they were arranged—many were cut, spliced together, and had names of family members written directly on the prints to create beautiful storytelling collages—I kept thinking: when we imagine the figure of an avid and dedicated travelling photographer of early 20th century Canada, why have we never imagined that such a figure could be a Black teenage girl living in Halifax, Nova Scotia who, while accompanying her father (an itinerant minister) travelled across Atlantic Canada? What has stopped the possibility of imagining a life like this? Why is this not part of our knowledge of early photographic practices in Canada? Over the course of this interview and the many others I have had with Black Montreal photographers and community historians, it became clear that a commitment to image-making, love of images, and treasuring of photo albums that I was witnessing in Montreal could not be unique to the city alone but rather aboundingly present across Canada in other Black communities. And I have been left with a pressing question: what if the history of Black Canada could be told and written through photographs? To do this, not only would we have to be attuned to how images linger, move, and affect us—the import of the afterimage— but also begin to ask what is the sound, force, and atmosphere that surrounds photographic images or, said differently, ask: what is the aura and aurality of images?

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[233] Nancy Oliver-MacKenzie, interviewed by Kelann Currie-Williams, 30 May 2019 [0:20:42]

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