

**Getting To The Trane:
Relating History and the Politics of Race and Jazz in Toronto
through the Lived Experiences of 5 African Canadian Musicians**

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Foreword

This paper is a report on the research project I have undertaken for graduate work for a Master's Degree in Environment Studies. It documents a slice of the history of five African Canadian Jazz musicians in Toronto with a particular attention to the ways in which racism has affected the development of the music in the city. At another level, it is also an attempt to understand my own personal motivation behind opening and running a Jazz club and restaurant in Toronto for nearly 10 years, and why I felt the urge to present Jazz music in the city for now nearly 20 years. Through this project, I wanted to get a sense of the root of the music in the city and to better understand why it seemed so challenging to open and sustain an African Canadian owned and operated Jazz space in the city.

Also included in this project (and submitted electronically) is an edited documented video interviews with 2 musicians and rough footage (80 minutes of the 500 minutes) of all five interviews.

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A special thank you to a pioneering spirit, friend and mentor, Doug Richardson, whom we also lost just a few short years ago. Doug was one those musicians and special people who would always call in to check in with me when then The Trane was running or if he was in town would stop in and pay for a drink to support to spirit of the space. He would just call to ask how things were going... just to see and ask if there was anything he could do... We miss him. There was also Washington Savage. He was that kind of person as well. There are so many more incredible people I could thank--musicians, friends, family and other loved ones who have been extremely generous of spirit both directly and indirectly, but this section would be a project in and of itself. I thank you all just the same. Your names and spirits are all here even if not written. It always takes so many to make a good thing happen.

Introduction

People are trapped in history and history is trapped in them
(James Baldwin 1955).

In this project, I am looking at Jazz, and its roots and history with respect to African Canadian Musicians in Toronto. My intention with this project report is to continue the process of releasing history, albeit one burdened by a (neo)colonial past and its kin and bed fellow, white privilege. Through film footage and written narrative, I hope to demonstrate that African Jazz musicians are here and always have been -- they have a voice and can speak and educate about their history and experiences as musicians in Toronto. Their stories have not been told so what is recorded here begins the process of narrating a side of Canadian history that is often rendered invisible.

One late summer afternoon in 1996 I was presenting a concert honouring John Coltrane and his music. I offered a 19-year old “brother” a promotional invite with a sharp black and white photo of Coltrane. Considering now, I must have asked him his age. Anyhow, this young “brother” took the card and immediately asked “Who is this?” Honest enough of a question, being that most young African Canadians are not listening or for *whatever the reason* seemed not to have an appreciation of Jazz, so one expects and accepts a degree of unawareness as to who some of these players are. I am sure if I were quizzed then with an image of Buddy Bolden, I probably would have a similar reaction. But it wasn't a test or anything of the sort. I might say that many 19 year old African Canadians in Toronto might not know who some of these greats are, and there is a good enough *reason* for this.

“John Coltrane”, I answered. Then he asked me another big question “What kind of music is that?” Not surprised as much with this second question, which might be logical considering the first, I said, “Jazz”. Looking back, I was happy that at least questions were being asked. Asking questions beats taking the card and then tossing it later in the trash. Yet, the most surprising element of our brief conversation with this young brother was to follow: “man, that’s *white folk’s* music!”

I was tied up by this statement. I admit I was a bit confused and may have even been embarrassed. I cannot recall. The statement stuck with me for many years only again to surface in an ever more profound way when I decided to explore this history

and contexts of the music in the city of Toronto. In other words, for years the memory of this statement has been at the forefront of my thoughts when considering race and Jazz in Toronto. How could this statement have been uttered in 1996 Toronto? How could this be possible? What were the conditions that gave rise to such a statement after all we claim to know about Jazz? What were the conditions of this music and the space it occupied that made this statement even possible in Toronto, the largest city in Canada, and supposedly the most “multicultural” in the world? To me, something was most certainly wrong.

How is it that after all that we think we know about the history of the music that Jazz could be considered a “white” thing by a “black” person? This young brother’s statement led me to wonder if it could be that the African-ness of the music could have been lost or had disappeared so to speak. I wanted to understand the role that race may have played in the evolution of Jazz music in the city of Toronto and how this role may have produced this young man’s perception.

This paper is a report on the project I have undertaken for graduate work for a Master’s Degree in Environment Studies, documenting a slice of the history of African Canadian Jazz musicians in Toronto and tracing the way in which racism has affected the development of the music in the city. At another level, it is also an attempt to understand my own personal motivation behind opening and running a Jazz club and restaurant in the city for nearly 10 years, and why I felt the urge to present Jazz music in the city for now nearly 20 years. I wanted to get a sense of the root of the music in the city and to better understand why it seemed so challenging to open and sustain an African Canadian owned and operated Jazz space in the city.

Jazz is recognized primarily as an African American art form. My enquiry aims to find out how African Canadian musicians in particular, find their connection to the music in the Toronto, and what their experiences with the music might be. I am interested in the role of white domination and *Eurocentrism* play in re-signifying or re-shaping of the reality and historical context of Jazz in Toronto. My intention with this project is to get at the history of the music, and its intentionality -- this being as it were an instrument of liberation on a spiritual, physical and psychic level. I needed to know how different Jazz in Toronto really was as it emerged in the city and as it related to African musicians and the community here. This project is therefore based on oral accounts of the history, social context and background of African or “black” Jazz in

Toronto, as well as my own experience with operating a Jazz club in the city.

The purpose of this research project was to start documenting the history of Jazz in Toronto. And the only way realistically for me to do this was to speak to the musicians themselves as it has been difficult to find any written history of African Canadian Jazz musicians and their presence in the music in Toronto. We know there are and have been players but what we don't know is the history and politics that came along with this African inspired art form we call Jazz. The musicians with whom I spoke are, legendary drummer Archie Alleyne, singer, songwriter and producer Eric Mercury, multi-instrumentalist and vocalist Terry Logan, organ and piano player Kingsley Ettienne, and Wesley “Jaribu” Cason were a solid source of knowledge, and our conversations were extremely enlightening and informative. So I thank them tremendously. Sadly, Wesley “Jaribu” Cason passed away earlier in spring of 2014. Cason was a passionate source of knowledge, he was a musician, a librarian, a supporter of the music, and a true humanitarian. He was an African American “draft dodger” from Chicago who migrated to Toronto, pretty much by accident in 1970. He fell in love, and then fell in love again with the city as he saw it as a progressive town during that time. He had witnessed the evolution of the music in the city for over 40 years. I thank him for his friendship over the years, support, passion, honesty and insight.

Through the lived experiences of African Canadian Jazz musicians living and working in Toronto, my intention was to explore the possible contentions of space and place when speaking of the racism (albeit colour blinded) and history of Jazz in Toronto. I also explored the concepts and works of both Canadian and American scholars around issues of race and racism. This essay presents a part of what I have gathered from the interviews, and again my personal and critical insights and experience. This is only a part of a larger story and does not pretend to answer all the questions about race in Toronto but it nevertheless sheds some light on the city’s Jazz heritage.

The starting point of my essay is my finding and coming into Jazz. I then present the history of Jazz in Toronto through introducing the experiences of 5 African Canadian musicians. Thirdly, I document a particular moment in Toronto's Jazz history when African Jazz and music general was most prominent as a result of the arrival of many African American players to the scene. In the following section, I discuss the

feeling of loss and the dominance of white academic influence on the music itself, and how such dominance contributed to the erasure of the “source”. The spirit of reclamation is discussed by the participant in a more driven and revolutionary way, which has ownership and equity as core pieces in terms of presentation. Finally, I return to the relevance and meaning of Jazz, what it stands for and comes out of...

1. A Personal Journey to Jazz

American racism has many moving parts, and has had enough centuries in which to evolve an impressive camouflage. It can hoard its malice in great stillness for a long time, all the while pretending to look the other way. Like misogyny, it is atmospheric. You don't see it at first. But understanding comes (Teju Cole 2014).

Finding Jazz

In *Beats of the Heart: Popular Music of the World*, Joe Higgs, considered the godfather of Reggae music and the musical teacher of the original Wailers (Bob Marley, Peter Tosh and Bunny Livingston), states:

A classical reggae should be accepted in any part of the world. Freedom, that's what it's asking for; acceptance, that's what it needs, and understanding, that's what reggae's saying. You have a certain love come from hard struggle, long suffering. Through pain you guard yourself with that hope of freedom, not to give up (quoted in Marre and Carlton 1985: 191).

Reggae has evolved dramatically since the 1950s and 1960s in Jamaica, much like any other musical form in the diaspora. Jazz is, like Reggae, another freedom seeking music born from struggle and suffering and it has evolved possibly more so than any other African influenced musical art form. Here is an idea as to how Jazz comes into being. Smallwood (2001: 172) in his essay "At the Vanguard: African American Life As Seen Through the Music of selected a Rap and Jazz Artists", writes:

Jazz music is born out of the African American experience emanating from vocal and musical expressions blacks, creoles and whites in the nineteenth century New Orleans Louisiana. During the late 1800s musicians combined folk music, work, chants and spirituals to develop musical compositions that were the beginnings of the jazz musical genre. Black marching bands in New Orleans drew on brass band music, popular songs, hymns, ragtime, and blues music.

Jazz goes a bit deeper when the story comes from African scholars and musicians. Jazz is regarded as the classical music of our modern day and the supposed "new" world. Much like reggae, Jazz comes from this very similar place in African diaspora. It evolves from a harsher political reality -- in many ways a more brutal one -- and through the oppressive past of its colonial history. And as much as Jamaican Reggae music may seem to be somewhat a distant musical genre, reggae still finds its roots in Jazz.

Growing up in Jamaica this was not clearly understood. In fact, unless you were somewhat privileged, learning about Jazz was never a consideration. You may have heard it in passing but it was not the norm to speak of it. We heard soul music and

African American rhythm and blues, and country music (believe it or not) but not so much Jazz. Jazz has close ancestral roots to reggae but it was not something that we would hear or even consider. However, Don Drummond, considered one of the three greatest trombone players in the world, was Jamaican. For many, he was the world's best trombone player (and still is). Before Drummond made the move to ska and rockers, which eventually morphed into what was to be called Reggae, he was a celebrated Jazz musician on the island for many years. I frequently heard of Drummond, Marley, Tosh, Livingston and Higgs but never related to them in terms of their legacy with respect to Jazz. Why was this the case? What made it difficult or seemingly alien for me to make the connection to the African musical tradition and see Jazz as a part of who I was as a young boy? It was alien in part and only relative to a particular form of privilege and, for whatever reason, not an African related privilege in spite of the fact that the African roots of Jazz.

Jazz is not new. And Jazz is not new to Toronto. Jazz music goes back to nearly a century and half in New Orleans. It is said to have been made popular by local cornetist Buddy Bolden by the 1890s in Louisiana. After the great Migration it found its way to the Northern States and eventually up through to Canada, and specifically to Toronto, which began importing big swing bands and orchestras at placings such as the Palais Royale in Toronto, in the 1920s and 1930s. Benny Goodman, Duke Ellington, Glen Miller and Count Basie's big bands were featured at the venue in the 1940s. The music was a key attraction and very much alive in Toronto, but as in the Jamaica of my growing up, it was a key feature of white affluence from very early. By the time the music arrived in Toronto it was no longer grassroots and “negro street music”. It was grown up and presented in a particular kind of way with White (WASP) influence and affluence. It was so because of the ways in which white capital controls the music industry – and the formal Eurocentric educational system.

This is why I had to learn about Jazz, not through the educational system but through what might be described as a series of accidents. As a child, I was never educated in Jazz by anyone so to speak. I stumbled upon the music in an interesting kinda/sorta way. It was never through lectures or personal references or friends or anything such as that. I would say it was really an artistic fluke or by accident. No one brought me in and said “hey, you need to listen to this”. In fact, I probably would have dismissed such recommendation. But here's how it happened.

I was in my grade 10 geography class and we were asked to research a country of interest. I chose Cuba. My Spanish tutor had lived in Cuba and spoke so fondly of her experience there that I wanted to learn more about the politics of the place. Through my search, I discovered a poet whom I was very much moved by. His name was Claude McKay. He happened to be Jamaican as well but I had never heard of him. By complete accident, I discovered his poem “If We Must Die”. I was hip to Shakespeare and his sonnets because I was very fond of English, creative writing (composition as they called in Jamaica) and the arts in general. I was a great fan of symbolism as an art form and the more symbolism in a piece of poetry the more I was pulled in. McKay spoke to me through his symbolism. So when I came across McKay, he became the relevant political African Shakespeare to me at that time. I wanted to know more.

I checked out McKay biographies, forgetting about Cuba (but I did complete my geography assignment) and discovered more of his writings. McKay had grown up in Clarendon in Jamaica and become a policeman – one of the only professional positions available to men from peasant communities in Jamaica. He wrote several novels about Jamaica in the 1920s and then moved to the US where he became part of a growing African American intellectual movement in Harlem. I discovered his novels, and became fond of one in particular, “Home To Harlem”. In “Home to Harlem,” McKay speaks to the culture of the Harlem Renaissance, and a key feature here of course was the music -- this thing called JAZZ. Sure I had heard of Jazz, but I wanted to learn more. This music was the heart, soul, and pulse of the everything surrounding the whole of Harlem. It was magnetic and it was pulling me in through the very pages of these texts and poetry. I learned more about Jazz before I learned about even its Blues roots. It was clear to me, at least by grade 10, that Jazz was an African American art form.

That summer I spent time in the library borrowing vinyls and cassettes. Here is where my education began for better or worse. That summer through Jazz I stumbled across bossa nova and one of favourite female vocalist of all time Gal Costa. Jazz was right up that alley as well. Latin music became even sweeter. There was no question over the following years for me that Jazz was in just about everything that I listened. And I listened to pop, my favorite artists in my mid- to late teen years were Sade and Sting. Jazz was there. In fact Sting's first solo Album “Dream of the Blue Turtles” was

a Jazz album.

In 1993 I had just completed an Honours degree from York University in English with a minor in Creative Writing. I was interested in cultural production, theatre, film, visual arts, music, and anything relatively close to black popular culture and post modernist cultural production. I was particularly interested in Jazz – in particular, Eric Dolphy (his “Out To Lunch” album captured me totally in high school) and John Coltrane (*A Love Supreme*). I must admit I wasn't interested so much in checking out concerts, but listening to the music, alone, and more significantly when I was writing or musing on life and “livity.” I was never the die hard “Jazzier” but I love the spirit and pride of the music. I loved Dolphy's and Coltrane's music, whether it was called Jazz or anything else. I loved their compositions and they were creative inspiration to me. The label didn't matter so much to me in high school and it still doesn't matter much to me now. My discovery of the music was accidental, perhaps it might even have been that I didn't really discover it but rather that it discovered me.

I had studied quite a bit about the Harlem Renaissance as an English major, with an interest in African American literature. It really was Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Claude McKay, Zora Neale Hurston and James Baldwin who first anointed my head in a cultural way when it came to Jazz. Most of this understanding came about through independent enquiry and learning such as self-anointing information, like improvisation and learning by ear, putting all the various bits of stories together to form your own personal understanding. To me back then the public library was hip. It was where I could borrow this music and other music as well. It was a key incubator and an accessible source of whatever knowledge I could find. I learned about Bolden, Armstrong, Morton, Holiday, Bird, Fitzgerald, Ellington, Lester, Dizzy, Miles, Max, Cannonball, Coltrane, Monk and all these many cats, and through each of these cats I discovered our own Canadian sensation, Oscar Peterson. And through these musicians I learned about other musicians as well. And so on... It wasn't that I was interested in the music to want to be a musician or musicologist or historian... it really was that I wanted to hear more for pleasure, for living, feeling, understanding, growing and for writing. Jazz for me represented a social and cultural umbrella on a rainy day, sheltering and providing a cultural calming of the soul despite the storm above and ahead. It was a necessary social and cultural remedy. This is what Jazz did for African peoples in North America and the world. This is what makes it rich and special, and

why we do need to share it and claim it. Jazz helps to keep us alive in troubling times, and it dignified our spirits. It helped us through. Now, why would this privilege and intellectual property be reserved to white folks alone in Toronto?

As a young African man growing up in Toronto in the 1990s, I initially felt somewhat alien to Jazz. I was probably no different from other immigrant African Caribbean immigrant men from a generation before. The more I searched, the more the music felt strange to me even as I understood the art form to be African in spirit and birth. When I went to restaurants and heard all this beautiful music being played while folks dined, I actually felt somewhat like an outsider, as though I really didn't belong in these places. Jazz seemed distant and away. It was fine to listen at home but was not for me to appreciate in public. I was self-conscious for some reason. (It was a similar yet different feeling then of walking in the restaurant only to hear reggae music coming through the speakers five or ten minutes after being seated. What's that about? Now, I find it all a treat.) I would observe the mainly European or "white" patrons seemingly at ease with Jazz music. I felt as though I had little or no rights or claims to it as if it was much too elegant and or sophisticated to be African. Jazz seems no longer accessible to African community; I felt a colonizing spirit about it, meaning it had the air about it that spoke to a white colonial attitude of ownership. And so I turned away from it, even then with this sense that something needed to be addressed. But how? I was caught up into something greater, a movement, a personal commitment to myself and my unborn children then. The desire had deepened and the need and will became more than just speaking to an issue. It was about doing something. It was not that I was wealthy, rather far from it. Still my urge was to respond in a way contribute to countering a particular norm.

I felt that something else was driving this sense of a deeper "unease". I heard African folks blaming white folks, but it was really more than that. It is not about whether or not white folks or anyone for that matter played, listened, or liked it, as certainly the European had a part in the creation and evolution of the music then and now. This is not the question. As Terry Logan says, "Jazz is about storytelling"; it is really about communication. And everyone has a story to tell and should, and Jazz was a medium to tell this story.

Instead of being pissed off, I wanted to do something about this whole business of alienation. I needed to provide a space which allowed for *openness*, which to me

represents the true spirit and feeling of the music. However, while this sense of alienation was real to me, I also felt as though there was a need for some degree of education and understanding. By the way, this alienation runs counter to everything that Jazz stands for. Jazz has no reason at all to discriminate, rather opposite, its curse or crime should be that it integrates too much, if there could be such a crime. I understood enough to appreciate that whatever it was, the music could never be about alienation, and certainly not alienating the children of its roots. I understand that Jazz, as African as it was, came into being through other influences of European music and the instruments as well, so white folks are in their also. The conduits through which these rhythms were delivered or expressed were largely European instruments. It was from the earliest days of the music, dating back to work songs, spirituals, gospel, folk songs and poly-rhythms of West African percussion that the music finds its earliest credit in Congo Square. Congo Square was the open space of “freedom” where north of the French Quarters in New Orleans where Africans could gather, trade goods, stories and participate in music and dance. It was in Congo Square that the community found a moment of liberation from the harsh realities of otherwise barbaric conditions of oppression. The music represented hymns of freedom in general, if not the physical freedom, then spiritual freedom from the oppressive conditions of enslavement and regimes of European apartheid in America. After understanding and knowing this, how could the music be presented any differently? How could we try to enslave or colonize its spirit again? What would make anyone want to own or control it in this way? Perhaps this speaks to what Eric Mercury's point to as “business.” Business in the end is about ownership of sort. It comes down to “white privilege”, opportunity and access. For me it was important to try to speak to this “business” of music in a more egalitarian way. This is where the whole business part of it came into being for me, but the business of counter-culture is more political than business. Countering is first and business is kinda second. The business side of this never fully thought out. The countering part is driven by desire and passion.

The Trane Studio began in much the same way, almost by accident in 2003, a little more than a generation after the closing of an African Jazz landmark, The Underground Railroad. The Trane emerged as a subtle and naive act of resistance, much like Jazz itself. Jazz, as an act of pleasing resistance had its eyes on a more egalitarian and joyful root to freedom or a “free spirit” in hybrid cultural and spatial

liberation. This bit of revolution I was certain about. Yet, I understood in a certain sense that I would be up against a lot. Countering without *bread* is no easy feat. It was a very challenging market and I certainly did not have deep pockets to make the magic I was conceiving. I was not at all privileged in anyway, outside of being somewhat young and naive, passionate and able. I felt something needed to be done.

Before the Trane Studio I got my feet wet with Caliban Arts Theatre. After my undergraduate studies at York University, I founded Caliban Arts Theatre. The whole intention behind Caliban was for the company to be a vibrant, dynamic and (mainly) African/diaspora focus multidisciplinary arts organization. I was informed and inspired well enough (I believe) and appreciative of the cultural politics which then came at me from many theoretical directions. I was exposed, informed and armed by many of the cultural and postcolonial literature and theories that emerged quite strongly in the 1990s. I read Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall, bell hooks, Walter Rodney, Cornell West, Angela Davis, Greg Tate and many of the Caribbean, African and South Asian authors, all the while still being a fan of Shakespeare, Joyce, Pinter, Chekhov, Sheppard, Atwood, Beckett, Brecht and many of the Western/European canons. For me, art was to be engaging, intriguing, informative, political (if necessary) and accessible. It was to be appreciated by as many people as possible, at least art that spoke about people and was about people. Art was Jazz. There is a purpose behind all art as I see it. There's always something that it intends to communicate. The focus and intention behind Caliban Arts Theatre was to communicate widely. While Caliban was primarily an African-centred project, it was about bringing people together -- much in the spirit of Jazz. It was important for me that the message and intentions be driven by this vision. As I see and engage it, African art and art in general is always about community or if not about community in the broader sense, then it wills communication, storytelling and conversation whether in its simplest or most complex forms. Jazz needs to be heard by those who can hear it, it is music; it has to call out and it needs to answered. It is the community that answers, critiques and responds. It is the community that popularizes the skills of the artists. It is the communication or conversation or dialogue between musicians through their instruments which offers up the improvisational energy, which makes it Jazz, and makes us want to learn more and hear more. It is about conversation so someone has to say "hey these cats can play" or "hey I love what this cat is saying of the drums or horns." It is about storytelling.

In *Thelonious Monk: Life and Times of an American Original*, Robin Kelley (2009) speaks to the social, political and cultural significance of this African American art form taking the social construct of race into play. Kelley understands the integral role of communal relevance and the social and political impositions on the music which is critical in my view. Of Thelonious Monk, one of the greatest icons of the music, Kelley (2009: 27) says:

Monk wasn't born with some kind of natural musical knowledge and ability, nor was he entirely self-taught... He received a formidable education and worked very hard to achieve his distinctive sound. Nor did he withdraw into an isolated musical meditation, away from the world it took a village to raise Monk: the village populated by formal music teachers, local musicians from the San Juan Hills neighborhood of New York in which he grew up; an itinerant preacher, a range of friends and collaborators who helped facilitate his own musical studies and expiration; and a very large, extended family willing to pitch in and sacrifice a great deal so that the loneliest could pursue a life of uncompromising creativity.

In other words, environment plays a huge part in the evolution of art, and jazz certainly is no different.

Jazz, in my view, is as much about community as it was about the music. The individual by virtue of this arrangement is secondly. The ensemble comes first, despite the credibility and reputation of the ensemble's leader; the collective is most vital. It has always been this way, even as Jazz was being birthed in Congo Square in New Orleans. Congo Square was a gathering space for Africans to sing, dance, trade and share ideas. Congo Square was African communal space. The African souls that summoned this music into being clearly intended it to be a collective and communal experience. The music was (and is still) a conduit for communication, a musical and spiritual communication which was intended to get into the bodies of the participants to allow them to freely express themselves in song, rhythm and dance. The music was improvisational in spirit, pulling from traditional dirges, spiritual and popular folk songs which insisted on community involvement. Like all great art, the aim is to create, to speak out -- to say something. It is always about giving something back.

Even as I wanted to see myself as a writer, playwright or poet, my own person to be independent and free to romanticize art as a privileged dream, and as I struggled in whatever way and like all the others, great and not so great, in isolation to

contemplate what I thought was my own personal thing, Caliban had other plans. What I was discovering through Caliban Arts Theatre was a need to address a possible colonial condition at work; Caliban was demanding public engagement -- to engage and present a kind of mirror to a blatant and bold psychic, social and political contradiction or drama that was being played out and insisting that I present what I had been synthesizing on post-colonial histories, theories, politics, thoughts, ruminations and culture. It was through Caliban Arts Theatre that the call to action came. It insisted that I disrupted a scene, even as I wanted to develop my own personal art. It demanded that I bring people together, and most important, it demanded that I be cognisant of the politics and histories of African peoples, particularly those of us from the diaspora, which admittedly is a deeply complex, convoluted, contradictory, painful, fascinating, and totally mixed up history. The African of the Caribbean is also Jazz; s/he has many layers, histories and people's blood running through those veins. Yet it is African, primarily because of the history and the related politics. The African of the Caribbean or West Indies is African because of the roots, but also because s/he could not be anything else because of the implications of the oppressive regimes of slavery. Caliban to me represented Jazz, this strange fascinating and beautiful thing, not as s/he or "it" tends to be portrayed in so many Shakespearean productions. Caliban represents a passion and thirst for freedom, as well as a mixture of many things. It is a fight for something greater, as the imposition of colonialism presses down upon you and entraps.

Caliban Arts presented its first theatre production in 1996 at then The Ford Centre For The Performing Arts' Studio Theatre where I met many musicians. Music was also included as part of our programming objective and mandate. I had been speaking with my friend Meiron Kelly, a young, and very talented local Jazz Trombonist about a project I had in mind called the Black Underground Project. The Black Underground Project was an idea which came about as I reflected on the music scene, and Jazz in particular, and specifically on how Jazz was being presented as an art form outside of the "people". I shared my thoughts with Meiron Kelly and asked him to be the musical director on the project. Kelly got exactly what I was sensing instantly. It was through Meiron Kelly that I first met Archie Alleyne. Prior to this introduction I had heard of Alleyne but had never met him. I knew so many scholars and African Canadian musicians in the city who still has no idea who Alleyne is. But

this has little to do with them as much as it speaks to the climate and cultural history and industries in Toronto. Could you imagine this being the case in New York, an African American musician or scholar in New York not knowing who Charlie Parker is? Again, this is not to speak ill of scholars or musicians. Toronto is no New York and New York is no Toronto. Things happen differently everywhere for different reasons. For instance, I had discussed with several African musicians in the city and couldn't understand why so many had not been playing Jazz. The older musicians were playing Jazz, but not the younger ones. As I observed more closely, I noticed that there were so many great players, "white and black", but it was the "white" players that were well represented across generations in the city with respect to the music. It was the case in every sense, in radio, on stage, in clubs and in festival programming. The Black Underground Project's intention was to place young "black" musicians in the driver's seat as musical directors. Meiron Kelly, Neil Brathwaite and Marc Auguste were all Musical Directors for these projects. The Black Underground Project guaranteed these players more than they were accustomed to getting at the regular gigs in local clubs. I was completely ignorant of the scale of pay for the players and found out later that it was 50% less than what I was offering. It certainly got the players engaged and committed, and moreover, I really believed in the project. Players appreciated this. I took a risk and the risk paid off. People, African people wanted to see African players play Jazz; they wanted to get a sense of the music from this spirit. The Black Underground was supported by JAZZFM. I naively called and set up a meeting, walked into the office and pitched the project. JAZZFM came on board openly, offering spots for promotion and the partnership worked. JAZZFM and HMV were the first two sponsors which came on board. HMV provided us with CDs of the featured artists that we were honouring for gifts. In fact JAZZFM and HMV along with local community papers such as Share, Caribbean Camera, EYE (then) and NOW were major supporters before Caliban was supported by any of the Arts Funding agencies and governments for the Underground Project.

In the very early days of Caliban in 1995-1996, while still developing the concept, I was on a board of an artist run space called Symptom Hall, located in an old church on Claremont Street, just south of Dundas Street West. I had discovered Symptom Hall by accident. I had no idea a space such as this existed. I was driving by on Claremont and saw folks, white bohemian artist types and recognized someone I

knew. We spoke about the place and he invited me to check it out as he was having a play reading there. Something drew me in and I fell in love with the location and immediately got involved. The space was a bit of a laboratory for alternative art presentation, including music, poetry, theatre and visual arts. It was being operated by a number of artists, cool and transient folks. Some of the artists were passing through from Eastern Europe, some finding temporary shelter in living there. The place, by some people's standard would be considered filthy. The artists who ran the hall were "edgers" to me. They were essentially 1990s wannabe hippies, they were Eastern European hobo types. These artists I would say were essentially "white" counter culture folks with an understanding of communal space sharing. They had not the slightest interest in conforming to what was the norm... Symptom Hall must have been the last of this type of venue in the city. I am almost willing to bet.

Symptom Hall needed an occasional cleaning and some smoking out with incense due to the old musty smell and humidity and other aromas and fragrances forbidden by the laws of our bright nations. But the potential was there. It was the perfect place for rehearsals. Symptom Hall was a cool organically worn and broken space. I loved it for all the graffiti and cracks in the walls and the worn and torn hardwood floors. The basement was another scene altogether but we turned it into an incredible installation art space of found art when we used it and lit it with various lights and instruments (including Christmas lights and bare bulbs). A friend visual artist and interior designer gave this 90-year old space a sweet little facelift, and brought out an abstract and minimal beauty –and we made sure it was relatively safe or as safe as it could be.

The Black Underground concerts held in Symptom Hall turned out to be something special. They were a total surprise for me. I had no idea as to what to expect really. I had contacted all 3 local community radio stations and they all supportive along with JAZZFM and HVM. The radio stations gave us air-time to develop and offered interviews with the musicians and me. HVM again donated Jazz CDs to give away as prizes. Many people who had not heard of Coltrane or Bird or Ella or Sarah quickly found out who they were. The Black Underground Project was hosted by Clifton Joseph and my fiancée at the time. It really felt like a huge communal effort. A feature was for us to have an educational session as well, where the MC/Host would speak on who these people were and occasionally present a documentary film on the

featured artist prior to the concert.

The Black Underground Project provided an opportunity and opened doors for many local African Canadian musicians and poets. It wasn't that the Project had anything really to do with the skill level of these musicians, it was that the Project brought these players back into the roots of what the music was and who some of the pioneering spirits were. It brought the history back into the music to a generation that had been alienated somewhat from it. It was a "black" venue, bridging history, present and future, and the doors were wide open to a diverse community and audience. Everyone spoke of the sense of inclusion, respect and joy that they felt. Musicians felt a great sense of pride, collaboration and appreciation. This was an accident as well. Many of these players were a generation or two after Archie Alleyne, their parents were immigrants, some immigrants themselves. Funk, reggae, calypso, pop, Latin and European classical was brought to the stage. Local Jazz icons such as Archie Alleyne turned local R&B singers such as Divine Brown and Alana Bridgewater into Billie Holiday and Ella Fitzgerald on those evenings. This is where the music was coming from and this is where it was dying to go. The Black Underground would host audience of up 400 people on both floors at the Symptom Hall.

The music died at Symptom Hall in 1997 when the landlord found the right buyer and the building was sold. Yes, artists were always late on the rent, and would then have to rush a party or so to get the rent sometimes coming up short. While the landlord could not rent the space in the condition that it was in to anyone except to these artists, he always had plan to wait for the next interested buyer to get the most money. Eventually the landlord's ship came in and the venue was demolished and became a string of townhouses.

The Black Underground Project became nomadic for 3 seasons, hosting concerts at all "white" owned establishments such as The Rivoli, The Pilot and the newly opened Revival Club. This situation, to me, even then highlighted the vulnerabilities of our community and its cultural industries, it was deeply problematic from an ownership and cultural production standpoint. It had nothing really to do with whether or not these new relationships with white owners had anything to do with race, but clearly there was still the issue of the power dynamics. It was really that evident. These operations, as liberal as the spaces might have been, generally had more to do with money coming in at the bar and less with the art. It wasn't that I actually had met

all these owners but rather their agents who represented the interests of the bosses. This is generally how it works. But through these agents I felt as though I somewhat “begging” for access, trying to convince these operators and their agents that we were worthy. We were begging for the opportunity to prove something to them in order to gain access to be productive. The feeling of powerlessness is a strange position to be in. It wasn't necessarily that any of these agents came across as intolerant, but they had their own goals and objectives as business people. It is a “business” after all. Essentially these club owners were the guardians of the scene by virtue of access and privilege. The power really was in their hands.

Stepping Away

Life happens, in all kinds of ways for all kinds of people. I suppose this is what makes life what it is, different for all kinds of people. In July 1998 my wife at the time and I brought into the world our first born. In the very early stages of her pregnancy my wife was diagnosed with pre-eclampsia and had an extraordinarily difficult pregnancy. It was also extremely expensive for us as well, with medication costing upwards of a \$1000 per month (more than our rent for 3 bedroom apartment at the time), for a drug known as *Diclectin*. My wife was unable to work for sometime, before eventually ordered to bed rest. We were a young couple, cash was tight but between family, credit cards, line of credit, loans, workshop pay and a little grant money for my writings we were able to make something of a dire situation. We both had to pull back from just about everything in order to make sure our daughter was safe and that my wife was supported. I had this strange notion that somehow pregnancy for us would be an easy and romantic episode in our lives. It wasn't. Far from it in fact. It really was beyond anything I could have imagined. We were told of the very serious risks. If not careful we could lose both mother and baby. And to make things more intense, our lovely little daughter was extremely active, and constant monitoring revealed that (at the 6th month of pregnancy) that our little one was not gaining the weight she needed at her term in development. My wife was told she needed to be admitted at 32 weeks for further monitoring and hospital bed rest. While resting and being monitored we had the scary news that my wife needed to be induced immediately because our playful little one had the umbilical cord wrapped around her neck, restricting food and oxygen. The doctors

were extremely concerned and clearly we were as well. The decision was brisk. And after a safe and successful C-section procedure, Soleia Julane Francis was brought into this world by a very strong and determined mother with the guidance and care of the doctors and nurses at Woman's College Hospital. Soleia's name was inspired by Miles Davis' seminal album (my favourite Miles' album) *Sketches of Spain*. Soleia was our "Sun Song". Julane, Soleia's middle name, is the first name of my sister, the middle child, we lost when she was only 18 years old, I was 11. The passing of my sister was the very first time I had ever seen my mother cry. As is to be expected, my sister's loss took a huge piece of her spirit away. This was a very difficult time and I became much more connected to my mother at this time. I had always been close to her but after my sister passed, I became even more fiercely connected and protective of her. It was after this painful chapter that I think my mother decided to leave Jamaica permanently.

Soleia was born remarkably strong and with a great will. It was up to us to do our part. I felt I needed to give all I could to make sure she remained as empowered as she had entered the world. She was born barely 3 pounds yet dynamic, peaceful, delicate and empowered. She was the tiniest in the hospital, born at the earliest gestation date of all the babies in the emergency prenatal unit. I watched other parents come and go. My heart went out to some of these parents. One family was told their baby would experience permanent life challenges; others were given more severe news. The hospital is a humbling site and this was a humbling time. We were relieved and happy with Soleia's progress but we could not help thinking about the other babies and wished them the very best. As parents we empathized with what the other parents may have been going through. For us African, Asian or European didn't matter. At that particular moment human empathy played a critical role. I was happy and cautious, and had to make sure I was as calm as possible. My life changed immediately. Everything became heightened before my eyes then, and it remained so for many years after and I believe to this day. My wife was incredible. I watched this woman who thought she never wanted children become an incredible miracle maker and mother, fortunate to have had so much love available to nourish and fortify Soleia. At one point, our entire freezer was filled with pumped breast milk. My wife supplied the hospital with milk from the freezer, formula was not a first option. It really was a miracle but I was scared, nervous and protective all at once. We lived at the hospital for nearly 3 months until Soleia was ours to take home. Soleia came home in time for my

30th birthday. It was the greatest gift.

Such experiences have the incredible way of putting many things into perspective. During this time the Black Underground Project was obviously placed on the back burner. Caliban was in part as well. I did produce a couple literary projects which were well received but the focus had to be placed on family and our newest treasure. What became even clearer at that moment was why I felt I needed to do more. The story of African peoples stories are extremely important to be documented. The stories of African peoples' everyday lives and struggles are complicated, complex, challenging and difficult by virtue of many things including history. Sacrifices are made daily. Discrimination is rampant and not only by “white” but by everyone largely due to this thing related to history. African families and children contend with racism at every level and from very early on, even as we attempt the transformation of social narratives. It was important to me that children, such as my young daughter Soleia (and subsequently her sisters) whose parents contend with so much, feel at home and less in constant stress, alienation and conflict. It was important to me that my children had a knowledge and awareness of who they were and be empowered positively early on, so that they and others who looked like them could proudly relate to and call their own. If nothing else Soleia and her sisters would have a proud culture/heritage to look back on and build upon. As parents, I felt we owed it to our child to help point the way. It would not be as simple for all the reasons one might imagine in an environment still being manoeuvred systematically through racism. But I knew I had to give it my best and that I needed to learn more in order to pass something constructive on, even with the complex and convoluted roots of “racism” all around us.

By the time I was able to get back to the music and the art presentation scene it seemed that there were several other projects similar to the Black Underground Project up and running. This was good. It meant that something had begun to engage the younger African community members when it came to the music of Jazz. It was clear that something had transpired. Clubs were hiring some of the younger players and producing tribute concerts to the greats. For a moment, there was an interest in this scene and clubs, and an opportunity to make a buzz and a bit of cash as well. After all, it is a “business”.

However, there were still no African owned clubs presenting the music or profiting in any way from it. So the community, the music and African Jazz players

were still at the disposal or mercy, depending on how you see it, of the white club owners and presenters. Caliban through its programming had picked up support of the arts councils as well as all three levels of government. We also had a strong membership and support base of over 5,000 people of every community and ethnicity but the majority of our membership base had been African Canadians. What I realized as I was producing events at these “white” spaces, as sweet and polite as the owners were, was that they were running businesses and the bottom line was just that, the bottom line. As Eric Mercury rightly points out -- it was business and all about the money. It really had nothing or very little to do with the music or culture so to speak, it really came down to money. There were Jazz clubs, such as the Top of the Senator, The Rex and the Montreal Bistro where I may have been able to bring these projects but how would these be any different? Again, it would be the case of begging for access. Moreover, such venues already had their scene and bookers. And for whatever reasons they were not as accessible to me, they never felt accessible in the least. Then again, I have been called proud, difficult, impossible, and snobbish because I do not think “white people are any better than black people” and therefore I will never play down to anyone “white” in this way. If “privileged” means “better”, I want nothing to do with it. These venues to me seem like conservative Toronto Jazz gatekeepers. There was an air of “arrogance” about Toronto Clubs keeping the African audience away. Granted I was never a fan of when African folks emulated this arrogance either. To me something was twisted.

Kingsley Ettienne says it best when he simply states: “The music is for the people.” But for all people. In our discussion, Ettienne shared a story of a white woman singer who came out to hear him play at the Orbit Room (a weathered and well known live music venue at College and Clinton) took her husband with her. Upon arriving upstairs at the revenue, Ettienne over heard the husband declares “We aren't staying here.” The singer replies, “Why not?”, to which the husband says “This is a dump.” Ettienne says that this disturbed him very much. The couple left. These clubs, many of the clubs of prominence in the city, in my estimation, seemed to be sanitizing the form (whether they were culturally aware of this or not) in order to make it accessible for a “white” privileged audience with the result of decent music but missing essence and soul. But such sanitizing makes the audience feel safe, protected and comfortable. It is not to say the complete opposite is what I am advocating, it is

that the space needs to develop inclusion while still remaining safe and comfortable. Anyhow, this was my impression then and it still seems to be playing itself out in some venues. This was far off from the Symptom Hall vibe which I came to appreciate.

I was interested in a space where we could work together with an audience to create what I deemed to be a “truer” and more open environment for the art form, as well as one where the experimenting and blending of the music could be explored in a way creating places that were less restricting in many regards. I was still looking for a place as sexy and edgy as Symptom Hall. The Senator and the Bistro were great and well recognized venues for Jazz. They, along with The Rex, had been the cornerstone venues of the music when we were producing *The Black Underground* and the coming of age of Caliban Arts Theatre. Such venues were presenting good musicians, both local and from the United States, but many of the younger African musicians still felt like outsiders in these venues. Venues such as the Senator, Montreal Bistro and The Rex were white owned, managed and operated, with a majority of white audience members and an occasional sprinkle of “coloured” faces. By and large these spaces were intimidating as one might imagine for a young African audience. It may not have been so much that the African audience member would have experience blatant and overt racism, it was the strong sense of the unspoken “this is not your space” even if the intention was otherwise. There is something with the psychic space of “racism” which still acts as cultural and integrating barriers due to the stigmas of white oppression and its methodology of superior thinking and history. The words need not be spoken. It is that light which seems to be burning hot. Whether we see it or not, we always sense it. It is burning in the psyche. Younger “black” musicians and audience members felt this burning and simply turned away from the genre to find other allegedly liberal spaces for performance: always homeless and always searching. There was a different pride which came with the evolution of funk and hip hop, these artists and audience members had no interest in playing a role in a space where they felt they needed to be less than who they were. But even then these alternative spaces, although seemingly liberal were still largely white owned again. Venues that catered to any majority gathering of African folks and music, i.e., the club district of the late 1980s and 1990s were pretty much invaded by the police and eventually African party going folks were pretty much forced out of the centre. But this is another story, yet related.

In the so-called Jazz spaces in Toronto, many potential African audience

members felt that they were not welcome. I had heard this sentiment shared by both musicians and audience members. So Caliban stayed away from these venues. At least, the deal with other emerging venues was straight: “we don't really care so much about what you do but show us the money and we are good to go with the project for at least another month.” This was the idea. Month to month. Nothing permanent. But after a while you realize that you are still marching to the beat of the white man's drum. He calls the shot.

The audience coming out to the Caliban events was an interesting group. They were clubbers, politicized group, middle aged, working and middle classed groups. The dance clubs represented another or different type of exploitation, but these smaller venues came with more freedom. I am speaking of venues such as the Rivoli and before that the Cameron House, which found its rebirth at the hands of young African Canadian folks who programmed and managed the venue for a while. Those who did not feel like going to the dance clubs or the white owned jazz clubs stayed home, or were partying with friends, or frequented the after hours party scene on occasion, some hosting local musicians much like the “coffee houses” I would imagine of the 1940s and 1950s (illegal booze cans and all). These spaces were really the most liberating spaces. But an African Jazz audience was never able to be cultivated or permitted to develop for many social and political/environmental reasons. “I felt a bit weird being there, like I didn't belong”, an audience member later shared with me when speaking of the Top of The Senator. This “weird” feeling I could identify with as well. I had felt it. How does one, an African person or anyone feel weird listening to Jazz, unless something is a bit weird or off? Something didn't feel right. It is akin to going to a party you are not invited to or feeling like a stranger in your own house -- but it's not your house. This was not the root of the music, and thereby the culture and community aspect of it was compromised. Jazz does not or should not exclude. But I suppose this depends on how it is programmed or presented.

While The Black Underground Project was successful for many of these venues, it was not the same as the drinking crowd of the primarily white Indie or DJ culture scene. The African Canadian community just does not have the privilege or resource to risk spending loads of money on booze. Plus, it is not a safe thing being intoxicated and driving while being African, we are always aware of this. Our parents have alerted us to the police. The police do see colour. Many of us “black folks” are

critically aware of these limitations. Drunken and intoxicated white folks are treated differently than drunken and intoxicated black folks. This is a reality. The track record here is not so good as we know, and it was worse in the 1990s and I am believe I might be correct to say things would not be much better before then either.

It is not easy nor is it cheap to run a venue and therefore so at times the social consciousness component and creative process are forced to take a back seat or it is undermined or criticized. The Black Underground was not about people getting intoxicated, it was about the social component, the music, its history, the art, culture and community. Its a different animal but not different in a judgemental way. It was a very delicate, searching for a new social, creative scene and political reality. There were times when as packed as the venues were, club owners wanted to see more and went as far as double booking the nights in some cases. A case of greed... I made a commitment to myself that I would never be this kind of a club owner, as much as I understood the economic needs and the need to make it all work. I believe the artist in me always spoke up even when I wish I could lead with the very important and steady entrepreneurial head.

In order to build onto what was happening with Caliban Arts Theatre, I increasingly felt that company needed its own space. The more I observed and "begged", the more this became evident. I must say that while the company was thriving, I myself was less interested in seemingly begging for access to these other spaces. This became personal for me. So I admit being proud and impulsive --not a bad thing perhaps for a privileged white young person but potentially detrimental for a hustling young African Canadian man. You get the sense that you are somewhat too confident for what you have, which is little and for some nothing.

In the fall of 2001 I signed a lease for an open loft at College and Euclid. It was a third floor loft, 1800 square feet (really 1300 square feet but the landlord included the common area). Later that year on the eve of winter another miracle occurred -- my first wife and I gave birth to twin girls. Although another tough pregnancy, our lovely girls Kiura and Cien were born early again through inducing and on the opening night of Caliban Arts Theatre theatre production no less. Miracles and accidents are also key punctuations in my life. It was another pretty good yet tough year. Lots and lots of juggling. Things had to be done and we did our best to get things done. Perhaps I could have made it easier on myself but also at the time I really didn't

know how. Once you are moving, the momentum of life pulls you along. And once we become conscious, if even slightly so, to the bits of reality *racing* around us, it is equally difficult to shut one's self off to the “goings on”. In a way it comes down to the act of doing something, something that speaks to the issues as they are presented. Now I owed it not just to me to make somewhat of a statement on behalf of what I thought I knew but also to my children. The idea here is to build upon a legacy with whatever you may have, so that the next generation has something else to build on. This sounds like a worthy and noble consideration. But this still depended on a number of factors and many of these factors working favourably in your interest.

Looking For Space: A Place to Call Our Own

LeRoi Jones in Amiri Baraka's (1963: 137) *Blues People* contends that “Negro music and Negro life in America were always the result of a reaction to, and an adaptation of, whatever American Negroes were given or could secure for themselves.” This quote rings true not only for African American but Africans just about everywhere in the diaspora. We create and build through and from what we are given. The notion of change, reaction and adaptation are ideas always springing forward from this life. The urgency of having African children forces the conscience and heightens consciousness in the African parent. It does when you are hyper aware of what your children must go through. You don't have to be a parent to appreciate this *force*. You get it if you are African and is aware that there are African children. I am aware also that dissent takes form in many ways, even in ways that some may deem criminal, like smoking 'weed' or jaywalking. Dissent is necessary.

In the spring of 2002, I opened the Caliban Arts Theatre Studio at 533 College Street in another 3rd floor south facing the previous studio loft. I took a risk on this with a little grant that I was receiving for the company for my own creative writing. The sunny space was a little more than 1300 square with 15-ft ceiling. It was an incredibly successful space. The studio needed to speak to the reality of access. It was no Massey Hall or Can Stage but it was our place. It wasn't that we had opened the studio with a real sense of what we needed by way of expenses and budgeting (staffing and overall operating costs, etc). We just opened the doors. And many organizations and artists came in for readings and releases, concerts and screenings. The Caliban Studio became

a multipurpose venue. The main complaint that we were getting was that we did not serve food and drinks. Many guests would leave the Studio unto College Street to get a bite or to have a drink, missing an act, a set or a good section of the performance. It was through trying to address this issue of accommodating the audience, and to make the venue one workable space, that The Trane Studio came into being. At the Caliban Studio we were not able to put in a kitchen or a licensed bar. I had to source another space which could work as a venue with a bar and kitchen. The Trane Studio was born, and one year later it opened its doors.

There was a contractor whom I had met while trying get some work done on my house (we purchased it one year after Soleia was born in 1999). Super fellow, I thought, he was a good enough “liberal” seeming white fellow, who had been to many of the Caliban concerts and had helped with the construction of the Caliban Studio. In fact, he had even met his fiancée (whom he later married) at the Caliban Arts Theatre Studio. While I was thinking about expanding the Caliban Studio into the Trane Studio, the suggestion of partnership was brought up. It was a good enough of an idea. Sharing duties always seem a great idea when you are nearly wiped out and exhausted. It would take a bit of pressure off of me, I would have a little more support, I could be home a bit more with my family, write more and work on furthering the development of Caliban in this new independent venue. After we signed the lease, the partnership lasted less than four months before I had to pay it out. This created a great bit of tension and strife around the young business. It would take 4 years and a great deal of animosity for this whole episode to settle. All the while this added loads of stress not only the business but also on Caliban Arts and my personal life.

Prior to signing the lease for the College Street location, I had signed up with Artscape for an office. A space came up at the Artscape’s Distillery District location at the same time as I was looking into The Trane venue. I gave noticed for the Caliban lease on College Street and took possession of the office in the Distillery District in April 2003, one month after taking possession of the Trane Studio location on Bathurst Street. The Caliban Arts Theatre office was significantly less in size than the old Studio but large enough for an office space.

However, on the eve of signing this lease for The Trane, in February 2003, I was told that my father was on his deathbed. He had been in Toronto just 4 months prior for treatment at the Princess Margaret Hospital for prostate cancer. He told us that

he was OK. Looking back, I am sure now that he knew that he wasn't. He had returned home to die. The cancer had moved to his lungs and to his brain. As soon as I learned what was happening, I booked a flight went to Jamaica. I arrived in Montego Bay and was taken to the hospital immediately. My father was in palliative care. The cancer which we were led to think was in remission had moved rapidly throughout his body. I went to see my father at the hospital as soon as I arrived in Jamaica. He couldn't speak but acknowledged me, or at least this is what I thought. After staying with him for a couple hours, I told him I would drop my luggage off and be back to be with him. I left the hospital and went to our home in Rose Hall. My mother (who had arrived days prior) and I went back to visit my father that same evening. By the time I returned to the hospital, my father was in coma. I told him that we loved him, and that it was "OK" if he had to "go," things would be fine. I gave him a loving message on behalf of his three granddaughters and wished him a safe journey. I watched a tear roll down my father's left cheek and heard him take his final breaths. My father passed away on the evening of February 12, two days before my mother's birthday. I had arrived on the island in the afternoon and by night, my father was gone.

My father and I celebrate the same birth day, same month, date and day of the week. We were like twins ourselves, he was the supposed businessman and I was the supposed artist who thought he understood business. I did take after his independent spirit I must admit, although in many ways we were opposites. I learned so much more in later years, understood him more, related to him more when he passed. I looked at my three little girls and my heart broke more for them as I was beginning to see through them a man I never knew all too well. My father was so proud by my little girls brought him way down to his knees, made him silly, and he took great pride in this. It was amazing to see and complete treat in fact. I never knew this fellow, and was looking forward to seeing so much more of this gentle docile person which he became when he was with his granddaughters. And then he was with us no longer. My daughters were at the funeral; we made it possible between whatever little cash we had left and what our families could put together.

I came back to Toronto and was thrown back immediately into the rapid pace of lives, Caliban Studio and invention of the Trane Studio. There had not been a moment to mourn or remember. It was a strange moment with so many things happening all at the time. This always seemed to be the case with me, always lots of

“happenings” with many tales of trials and perseverance. I was generally calm but perhaps just in shock, processing and fixing several things while in flight. I had to be calm in order to navigate what was happening around me and the impending and uncertain storms ahead.

At home we had twins and a 4-year old. We had a mortgage now, debt and no childcare. So mom and I had to split duties while we both worked, plus shopping, writing grants, booking the space, hosting the events, working the concession bar and everything else. At that moment, I saw life for what it was, rolling with punches and accepting them for what they were. I might even go as far as to admit the denial. I saw a need and kept pushing on, with a will against failure and a will to succeed for my children and a community which also felt needed me to push on. I seriously wouldn't say that I honestly felt any selfish inclination at all outside of succeeding and building a venue only so I could get out sooner rather than later.

Here began a journey of nearly 10 years. It was on. I really had not the slightest idea as to what I was to expect. There was the buyout of an ex-business partner, restructuring, back taxes, 6 month street construction, SARS, break-ins and burglary, staff internal robbery and fights, separation, divorce, debt, 100 to 120-hr work weeks, liquor license war with the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, city officials, lawsuits, threats, racist neighbours, black-outs, power cuts, flooding, fraud, staff in fighting, busted equipment, other trials and conflicts, you name it. What we were able to maintain for the most part was the integrity of the programming and the commitment to something that was in the interest of the community. The sacrifices were grand, only trouble was that all of the burdens, debts and stress were in my name. So that the bulk of all the madness and responsibilities were sitting squarely on my shoulders.

If Jazz is the birth child of the blues, then what I did in fact have was a Jazz Club. A child of the child of the blues. And the blues is called to blues for no other reason. It is emotional and painful music. To a large extent, it was this reality and the need to be committed that brought The Trane to where it got. This kind of business is certainly not for everyone, ignorance, naivete, love and commitment all play their parts. It was this commitment, along with uninformed emotional advice and impractical prompting which contributed to the trauma as well. For example, within the 6th or 7th year of the business I had had a couple of very good offers for sale and thus an

opportunity to step out still with a bit of skin left. I had spoken with elders in our community who felt I should either push on more or asked for more money from the prospective buyer who happened to be white... The feeling was that if The Trane was to be sold to someone outside of the community, the community and its cultural landscape would once again be vulnerable. It was a difficult choice and I therefore prolonged the sacrifice for nearly 10 years. Unlike the Underground Railroad, I was alone without partners. Had there been partners who could have worked with a common interest, things might have been different, perhaps... Perhaps we could have pushed through for another several years. Perhaps. But the decision to stay on was set in pride, the community and its needs. It was not a wise business decision, it was a political and somewhat emotional and again an uninformed one. I had tried to move on on several occasions but what my gut and others were saying was stridently contradicting. I did not stick it out because it was joyful, not even half of the time, or even for the love of it, in fact love had nothing to do with it. In the end, it was really for the community more than anything else, and not at all for me. And I really did understand and appreciate this need. The personal side was an all together another issue.

Even now there is still an urgent need for Africans of this post-colonial diaspora to push back, to resist, and to reclaim what they feel belongs to them. And so some will sacrifice part of their lives even in the most impractical of ways. The soul cries out. That said, what brought The Trane into being was a need to speak to a real barrier and concern. There was a need to bring all I was experiencing and what I felt the community needed to the foreground and to make this need central in a space with a capacity of 107 people. Perhaps the statement became clearer over time, but I felt it was natural. I couldn't understand why things were as they were, and why it felt as though nothing in the interest of Jazz was happening for a community that had such a direct line to the music. Perhaps, what I was then failing to understand deeply was that we were in Toronto. But what did this mean? I felt we needed to speak practically to the theories of what things were and to speak to this particular concern in a constructive way. There was clearly a need to find space, claiming and reclaiming property for cultural dignity. Even in an environment where all seems to be well, there is a deeper truth under the surface, a deeper psychic scarring where the African mind and body still seek to understand and negotiate its own presence both publicly and

privately, a space where this African self is not alien from the very foundation of its very own cultural signifier. This is equivalent to any other community losing its cultural form and having to watch while it is appropriated or prevented or restricted by virtue of a privileged imposition to have a say in how it is transformed or developed. This act is an act of direct and indirect cultural colonialism in a very strong sense. This is not to say we should ignore the cards, we the children of the diaspora, deal at the table. This is however the sub-set, the symptom of something already at work.

2. A Look at the History of African Jazz in Toronto

I argue that white Americans are encouraged to invest in whiteness, to remain true to an identity that provides them with resources, power, and opportunity. This whiteness is, of course a delusion, scientific and cultural fiction that like all racial identities has no valid foundation in biology or anthropology. Whiteness is, however, social fact, an identity created and continued with all-too-real consequences for the distribution of wealth, prestige, and opportunity (Lipstiz 2006: vii).

Pleasing Resistance and the Spirit of Freedom and Integration

Jazz vocalists and instrumentalists have sung and played to the concerns and issues of social justice, race and anti-racism ever since the music began. They still continue today. It is out of the African American blues, that Jazz is born, this is no secret. I can remember one of our more extraordinary local horn players, Doug Richardson (whom I acknowledged earlier), sharing with me his story of moving to Chicago in the late 1970s because “nothing was happening in Toronto for black players.” Things were happening a little, but Richardson wanted to feel and play more. He was one of the city's top saxophonists when he decided to leave Toronto. He moved to the Chicago with the intention of hanging in there with the some of the baddest cats in the city, African American players. He soon discovered that there was a difference with his playing. He could play the music, and yes, he had fire and rage but he was still hurried off the local Chicago stage. He couldn't understand why he was not getting the kind of attention and respect he thought he deserved. He described how completely broken his spirit was, he felt like just putting the horn down forever. He was encouraged again by local players and Eric Mercury, who was living in Chicago in the 1970s, to pick up the horn and never quit. He would go into the clubs again and play, still he was not given the respect as a serious player. No one said a thing to him. His spirit was so damaged, he told me, that he had to put his pride on ice and finally asked another local African American musician what he was doing wrong. According to Richardson, the musician answered “you can play but it ain't Jazz that you're playing until you can play the blues”. That was the difference. Richardson felt then that he had missed a key step in his evolution as Jazz musician in Toronto. The feeling of the blues was missing from his music. The pain in the chords and “the dark and heavy” feeling of tension had to be there for Jazz to be born. The pain was real but it was also through the musical articulation of this pain that the African community found its liberation. This is the idea of “pleasing resistance” of which I speak.

Jazz as many have identified is not just “feel good” music, it is socially aware and liberating by virtue of its history alone. It had to entertain the community, make it smile, laugh, think and dance. It was that sweet elixir that the community needed to keep it going. It was a vital spiritual source and cultural lifeline of a community. It is popular gospel in its raw nakedness. And it was pleasure music, “nigger music” and Devil's music, which provided avenues to escape, both physical and spiritual. It was

the music of the dives, shacks, brothels and the streets; it became the popular American music that showed the African American community a way out of the long standing anti-human policies of the southern states in particular, and the US as a whole; it was this music that created hope for Americans during the War Years and the Great Depression when white folks stumbled upon it. But before the world, particularly Europeans, jumped all over it, it was feared by the “white population” as an art form which would corrupt the pristine white establishment and culture, whatever that could have looked like (although we have been presented and fed a myth of what this may have been) all the while “white folks” were secretly taking stock and dancing in the privacy of their own spaces before opting to take it public and control it. Those who make the laws, control education and have the privilege of capital usually and the opportunity to create and control the operations of cultural industries. Perhaps it is this reality that led the young man whose comment still haunts me to de-historicize this music and the struggles from which it emerged and to see this African art form called Jazz as “white folks' music”. What does a statement like “Jazz is white folks' music” say about the place of African Canadian history in Canada? How is it that African Canadians themselves could be oblivious to their own truths and sense of value or worth?

Race, Oral Histories and the Emergence of Jazz in Toronto

Perhaps in the larger scheme of things, the young brother's comment may seem meaningless but in the context of cultural politics his comment speaks loud of a particular type of race politics and power that are at work whether we consciously engage them or not. When blackness becomes invisible, whiteness becomes the norm into which everything else is assimilated. I have always heard African folks, friends too, speak of white folks' pervasive passive aggressive attitude when dealing with race in Toronto. There is a liberal individualism that claims race blindness and this blindness masks the fact that certain groups cannot access individual rights because of their membership of a particular racial group, speaking specifically of African folks. Hence, African Canadian folks will say things such as “at least in the (United) States, people call you a nigger to your face. Here they pretend not to be racist... and call you nigger behind your back”. This to me, never made any sense but I could understand

what was meant. They would rather see it named and hear it spoken out rather than deal with the pretence of equity while being “hit from behind” or blindsided so to speak. To see the perpetrator is much easier, at least you have some time to consider your action before it strikes. Here you never quite see it coming, which I suppose makes it more devious. What is the connection between this and the appropriation of Jazz into whiteness and dominant culture in Toronto?

I wanted to understand just how Jazz actually became “white” in Toronto. When I went looking for books on the subject I found nothing really written history of African Jazz musicians in Toronto. There are books about Jazz musicians from Montreal such as John Gilmore's *Who's Who of Jazz in Montreal* (1989) and many more on African Canadian Jazz stars like Oscar Peterson. Rinaldo Walcott (1997) has written about black popular culture in Canada but not about Jazz. Both Walcott and Katherine McKittrick have pointed to the difficulty of speaking and writing about Blackness in the context of the Canadian Nation. Naomi Pabst points out that if black Canadians are “cast out of authentic Canadianness, they are simultaneously cast out of discourses of blackness” (in Clarke and Thomas 2006: 113). Pabst argues that this becomes possible for two reasons. Firstly, American monopoly on both blackness and racism positions Canada as a place of flight from US racism. Secondly, the institutionalization of multiculturalism in Canada positions blackness as part of an elsewhere which is non-Canadian. Therefore, the African Canadian claim to the music is significant and cannot and should not be easily forfeited.

It is not surprising then that to the best of my knowledge there is nothing about the history of Jazz in Toronto. Jazz is by its very nature positioned as an African American form which whitens in its flight north. To write the story of Jazz in Toronto into being is to re-narrate the Canadian nation, that is to create a counter narrative to what is or appears to be the dominant stories of Canada as a free and liberal society, which is both (first) white and (second) multicultural. It is to document a story, the history of African Jazz musicians in Toronto as well as to speak to the “feeling”, spirit and presence of the music. I wanted to narrate the history from the perspectives of the musicians who created it. I wanted to have a sense of the history of Jazz as African music and to learn how African musicians in Toronto experienced it in order to get a concrete sense of how the music scene appeared to them as they confronted the challenges of practising their musical art.

In order to get a better understanding of Jazz I needed to go back to the source of the music and this source had to be the players themselves. In others words, I needed to know their stories as they told them for what these stories might reveal. I rely on the oral and visual media of storytelling for documentation. A counter narrative places an opposing narrative into conversation with the dominant and official stories that normalize existing power relations. If, as Fanon and Cesaire long ago proposed, liberalism depends on colonization and elite racism, then creating the story of Jazz in Toronto is a re-telling of the city (and perhaps the nation as a whole), then this narrative would reveal much about how “normalized whiteness” depends on systems of exclusions and “cliques” in order to support a particular position.

I chose to undertake interviews with African musicians to get a sense as to where the music was coming from in Toronto as well as what it meant first and foremost for them. I began by interviewing several veteran jazz musicians, younger musicians and audience members who have called Toronto home for several decades now, including the senior statesman of the music, elder **Archie Alleyne**, a jazz drummer, who was born in Toronto over 80 years ago (in 1933) and who is still active and in charge of his music today. Archie has been playing as professional jazz drummer (for a living) for over 65 years. He was born and grew up in Toronto. I spoke with **Eric Mercury** who was born in Toronto in 1944 and who is an accomplished singer, writer, pianist and producer. **Terry Logan**, another participant, who is also from the same generation, was born in 1943 in Africville, Nova Scotia. Logan is a singer, organist, pianist, and guitarist. **Wesley “Jaribu” Cason**, a flutist and librarian was also born 1943 in Chicago, came to Canada in 1970 and transitioned in 2014. Unlike the others who were born on the continent, **Kingsley Ettienne** was born in 1955 in Grenada, West Indies. He is an organist and pianist who has been working in Toronto for decades. These were the five key contributors to my research.

I asked these musicians for a first hand account as to what was going on with the music and where it may be headed. I wanted to learn more about the “scene” and why it appears to be so “white,” or as the young man referred “white folks music,” when there were so many more African people living in the city. I needed to get a sense as to why younger African musicians were not interested in the music and why did the community seem so reluctant to support it. The lifespan of Jazz venues in Toronto over the past 20 years is dismal, approximately 3-4 years on average and even less if you

were to speak to some people or perhaps a little less if it is an African-owned and operated space, but African owned spaces including Jazz clubs generally do not come around very often.

I needed to also know more about who the players of the past were and why did not I know who they were (are) now and why things might be different in the US. Why were there so few clubs that could showcase and present their skills? What was the real deal with the Toronto Jazz scene when it came to African players? So I relied on Alleyne and the other elders to shed a bit of insight and history from their lived experience and perspectives of the scene. What was it that I was missing and why was it that venues like The Trane Studio could not make it or did not really stand a real chance. Where is the community and where does it stand in all of this?

The oral history of Jazz clubs can tell us a great deal about the lived history of the music in Toronto and this is where I needed to begin. Again, there is little information or data available about the history of the music in the city and even less about the positions and histories of African musicians in the city. Again, I wanted to learn more about why it was that the music seemed to be as troubled (for a lack of a better word) and contested when it comes to the African Canadian history in Toronto as it were and even more so for African musicians. What was it that prompted me, in part, to be so willing to risk just about everything, and somewhat without real awareness or even “real” knowledge of the scene, to wanting to open an African owned Jazz room? It became necessary for me identify this need both from a personal and a community point of reference. I was neither a musician, and certainly not a restaurateur. My interests, as mentioned earlier, were literature and theatre, all be it, African-centric narratives collections of the colonial, post-colonial and neo-diasporic experience, free narratives and postmodernist literature as well. In order to understand why I was looking at Jazz and why I needed to appreciate and understand my own efforts and risks, in part, I had to go back and ask myself these questions.

I argue in what follows, and based on the conversations and research material gathered, that racism and colonialism in Toronto have had a significant impact on the evolution of Jazz in the city of Toronto; which have directly influenced and even distorted the culture and history of the music -- hence giving rise to the statements such as the one made by this young African-Canadian man. I argue that the pathways to the “whitening” of Jazz in Toronto take place as a result of several reasons linked to the

population size of the African Canadian community, to the system of white privilege and exclusion, to the labour marginalization of black musicians, and the relentless pressure of conservative assimilation of the “old” white club masking itself in the pseudo-liberal practice of multiculturalism.

On Discussing Jazz and Toronto

Finally, we arrive now at the second and key part of this project. Interviews with musicians were conducted individually in the months of July and August 2013 with the consent of all the participants. The participants again are Archie Alleyne, Eric Mercury, Terry Logan, Wesley Cason and Kingsley Ettienne. There was a follow up with Terry Logan as we prepared for his performance with his band for the Jazz seminar/concert in the fall of 2014. The seminar and concert presentation took place *the blakbird* venue on Bloor Street West on October 24, 2014. It was a very successful event as many supporters, faculty and students were on hand to participate with questions and support the project. Archie Alleyne, Eric Mercury and Terry Logan were present to share some of what we discussed and to take questions.

Learning to Play: Informal Community Labour in Producing Jazz Musicians

Much like Monk and many of the great African American Jazz icons, and even the not so great, the community played the most significant role in the development of African Canadian Jazz musicians. It was in the community that they learned and developed first as artists. This was it. There was nowhere else for these youngsters to develop as musicians. Jazz emerged out of the informal and unpaid labour of community members in Canada and it was not even considered by the white mainstream to be teachable music. In other words, Jazz was not taught in schools. It was seen as backwards, negro music, otherwise known as devil music because it gave a kick to the soul, and it caused you to act out musically, freely and expressively. It was too wild for the conservatory. Classical music was much more orderly, pious and civilized. According to Archie Alleyne, African Canadian families in Toronto were extremely musical; music was a great organic and intellectual cultural asset. Most children like Alleyne and the children of the Mercury family all played musical instruments. It was a regular thing and what

children did. Alleyne's father before migrating to Toronto had spent his young adult days in New York City. It was through his father that Alleyne was first introduced to the music of the great African American musicians of the early Jazz era. He appreciated and connected with the music immediately.

Archie Alleyne also fondly recalls Mr. Ricketts, the local/community music teacher to many children for a fee of ten cents for lessons back in the 1940s and 1950s. "He was a multi-instrumentalist..." who played trumpet in the Salvation Army Band in the city, says Alleyne. Music was an everyday thing for these families. It was music and home concerts that were also called up for fundraising for local families when rent was short or if a family needed to make a little extra money for bills or living. This was one way that the community pitched in and supported one another. The families knew and supported each other.

Eric Mercury recalls that "everyone (in his family) played and sung". His mother played classical harp. His father played the piano and sung. His father was Reverend GL Mercury at the local B.M.E (African Methodist) Church located at 460 Shaw Street in Toronto. There were seven children and they all played an instrument or two. In fact his older brother Albert played the bass with Oscar Peterson and Ted Rogers (from Rogers Cable) who was the Jazz pianist in the group, according to Mercury. Albert Mercury and Ted Rogers had met at the University of Toronto where they were students. But most of the Mercury children and African children at that time played by ear. They were not formally trained, where as the white players at the time were classically trained at the Conservatory.

These African children learned how to play the music at home mainly or at the church, or with family members or teachers such as Mr. Ricketts. If you wanted formal music training an option was the Royal Conservatory, which had a classical music curriculum, was intimidatingly privileged, and in the interests of "white students." The African students who were accepted at schools like the Conservatory never stayed on for very long. Mercury left because as he says the schools "weren't teaching the music (they) wanted to play". Some like Alleyne even withdrew from regular public school because there were so few African students and because they were targeted (in name calling and fights) by other white students.

Alleyne made the decision at the very young age of 13 to pursue a musical career. Jazz was where he turned to anchor his identity as an African person. This is

where he found his idols, cultural identity and roots. Although his parents were of both African descent (Caribbean) and European (British), he found his roots more so on the African side, as his father's family was much more accepting. He knew clearly that he was not “white”. When he was born, he was delivered by his Barbadian grandmother and his father in an apartment on Cameron Street near Queen Street. His parents made the decision to have a home birth because, as he says, his parents refused to be a spectacle of being a “mixed race” couple in a Toronto hospital. He recalls his mother being called a “nigger lover” and his father getting in fist fights on Toronto streets with white men. His parents were ostracized by the “white” British side of the family. His African Barbadian grandmother was a strong influence on him, and his father was a proud African man, as he recalls. His father was also criticized by the African community for having married a British woman. He is proud that his parents stayed together for some 40 years. According to Alleyne, his father was a strong supporter of Marcus Garvey and he was very proud and aware of his “colour” and everything African at the time. Alleyne grew up understanding that he was different and the power was on the “white” side, as he said. Jazz was one of the connections to blackness for Alleyne through his father. And so for Alleyne, a solid presentation of African/blackness for him was the music. Little did he know that the Jazz scene though young and seemingly more progressive had its own embedded prejudices.

As Alleyne was learning more about the scene he understood that he had to be very good and better in order for him to make it as a top player. His parents were supportive of him playing Jazz, but not all African families were agreeable to their children playing Jazz. Many believed in the assimilationist ideals that what was best was what the “WASPs” were doing. But what the WASPs were doing was largely for the WASPs alone. African folks did not really figure much into this world outside of being labourers. Classical music was the music of affluence and prestige for many African families. Still what many of these young African Canadian students wanted to learn, and rightfully and rebelliously so, was their music -- Jazz and Soul music -- and this “black” music was not formally offered in schools. They were not interested in classical music as such. So they learned more by listening to records and to each other playing at home or going to parties on the third floor of the United Negro Improvement Association Hall or at churches. This evolution or development of the community in music was no different than the development of the music south of the border. Many of

players never went to music schools.

Terry Logan learned to play the piano when he was very young by watching older boys playing the guitar and singing. He thought this was what he wanted to do. Logan grew up in Africville, Nova Scotia. His father was a reverend in the church as well, and like Mercury's father, also played a little piano. Jaribu Cason speaks of this communal coming together in the music on the South Side of Chicago in the very same way. The older musicians taught the younger ones and this is how it went. This is also true with Ettienne, who speaks of going to the clubs to listen to musicians like Logan play and picking up the music from his idols such as James Brown, Brook Benton, Jimmy Smith and Jack McDuff. Logan admits to being a "Beatles maniac" too in the early 1960s like most young people at the time, and performing their music in Montreal. Ettienne acknowledges Logan to be an inspiration and a former teacher in his early development.

Playing the music was the most important part for these young musicians. They weren't into it for the money, as they say, they just wanted to play. They wanted to express themselves freely and openly, and show what they had to the community. It wasn't about making the music as a commodity; it was quite the opposite, they wanted to play for fun and for the community. The business side of the music was more or less the "white side" and could only have emerged from that side, primarily due to privilege and access. Classical music had already had its clear class distinction, it was an established business for a particular social class and it was already a business for white folk. As it turns out, these white musicians who were classically trained were the ones eventually getting paid for professional "gigs" on the main Jazz stage.

Mercury admitted that it was not Jazz that he wanted to learn while he was enrolled as a student at the Conservatory. His mother wanted him to learn classical piano. While the majority of the African families knew and understood Jazz to be African, they preferred that their children study the "white man's" art form in order to get jobs like the white students. Still it was soul/African music that was calling them. Mercury was growing up in the 1950s and 1960s and soul music and R&B were becoming "a thing" for him. He didn't want to learn classical music. He was interested in "black music." He wanted to sing and play the soul music because, as he pointed out, "this was where the girls were." And he wanted to be where the girls were. Logan learned the guitar and singing because that was what the "girls" liked. They weren't

thinking money and career and all of that. They, perhaps, understood the limitations of the scene, and soon found out that they were good. The better you sang and even better if your voice came along with a musical instrument, the happier you made the ladies. So music for these young black men was not just about making money in the early days, it was about having fun, making the community, and especially the ladies, proud and happy. As they played and got into the music, the desire to be professional came about. Now it was about making a living.

In those days these players were good at what they did and in most cases better than most of white players, certainly when it came to playing Jazz and soul music. African Canadian Jazz musicians, like African American anywhere else, emerged outside the formal educational systems of white society. The music emerged from within community. It was nurtured in the separate spaces of the black underground and “coffee houses”, played by self taught and home tutored musicians whose brilliance and hard work came in spite of the exclusion of their art form from formal structures of musical and cultural education.

At the Jazz Clubs: Race, Space and the Business of Racial Exclusion

Most of the Jazz clubs were white owned and African musicians had a difficult time entering them. According to Archie Alleyne, the first African operated Jazz clubs in the city were underground operations or what was referred to as after hours “coffee houses.” Alleyne recalls that city officials did not grant licenses to African club “owners in those days.” There was discrimination towards everyone who wasn't WASP. Irish and Jewish people were certainly discriminated against, but African Canadians felt the brunt of this discrimination the most and from everyone. Alleyne points out clearly that there was “lot of disrespect for black people.” Toronto was run primarily by “WASPs”. Those who were not WASP were working class and poor. Alleyne remembers that “they [WASPs] didn't consider us a threat because we didn't own anything.” Although this was the case, young middle class whites at the time craved the music and there was a desire for the music to be heard.

Although the African community was small, it still wanted to publicly hear its own music in black spaces despite the lack of resources. The United Negro Improvement Association Hall (UNIA Hall) on College Street at the corner of Augusta

(today's Kensington Market) and shelters presented the music but the “coffee houses” or what would be speakeasies sprung up in Toronto between 1940s and 1960s with the later generations of the Africans born and grown in the city. Before the “coffee houses” many of the community concerts took place in the homes of members of the community. Mercury recalls that when he was a child, his sister would organize parties at their home and charge for admission and meals. He now realizes these parties were to help the family out with “rent” or other expenses. Apart from opening private homes to the public, there were “coffee houses” such as the First Floor Club on Asquith Avenue. The Mink Club on Parliament Street was operated by an African American musician Donald Townes and a few local African Canadian musicians. The TNT Club at 317 College Street was next door to United Negro Improvement Association Hall, the centre for the African Canadian community in Toronto for several decades, and many of these musicians had their start at the Hall. There were other African owned clubs which came and went, clearly coming into being out a very specific need of self representation, and out of exclusion.

The majority of the licensed clubs in the early days of the music were “white” owned and operated. Alleyne describes the process of his gaining entry to these clubs as a process of “infiltration”. He “infiltrated” these clubs in order to get a sense as to what was going on and how to learn and understand more about the business side of the music. As Alleyne states, “I infiltrated the music industry through some very dear friends of mine who assisted me to get into some of these doors that were closed on me but they let me in and they heard me play and I just got better and better.” According to Alleyne, African Canadian musicians were not hired by white clubs to play. Actually, African Musicians were not welcome in these venues and there were times when trouble could easily start just for “being black” in these venues.

Alleyne recalls, however, that he still had a desire as a young musician to hear and catch the music live. His access or rather easier access again came as a result of his connections to other white musicians whom he had befriended through infiltration as he describes it. Infiltration was the only way to gain access. He had his motives and intention of being a professional musician. Alleyne credits white players at the time who helped him by allowing him access to the wider “whiter” Toronto scene. It was also these players who would open the doors for him to get the later recording gigs at the CBC for example. Being the product of a white British mother and African

Barbadian father, Alleyne pointed out that his lighter coloured skin also helped him to *pass* easier or gain access to the white owned clubs such as the Colonial Tavern. The point he makes is clearly illustrated in rhetorical invocations of the language of underground resistance movements and spies. Entry could only be gained through subterfuge. Doors were closed to African musicians in the city and could only be penetrated freely with help from insiders. This speaks to Toronto's racist and segregated history where even ice skating rinks were not integrated until the late 1940s as Harry Gairey Jr. experienced, when he and his Jewish friend Donny Jubas discussed in John Goddard's (February 16, 2009) report in *The Toronto Star*:

We don't sell tickets to Negroes... Certain beaches were understood to be off-limits. Certain restaurants were known to keep some diners waiting indefinitely. The Icelandia (the ice-rink, located at the time north of St. Clair Ave. and Yonge St.) they later discovered, often turned away Jews as well.

In other words, Toronto from the earliest days of the music until the 1960s was largely a WASP space. Alleyne says in those days African people and Jews had a clear sense as to where they belonged in Toronto.

There had been several attempts made by entrepreneurs and musicians to get venues started but the city simply did not allow it and the community was not large enough to support them as "white folk" with "means" didn't support African owned businesses. Jazz was a kind of "exotic privilege" that conferred a form of cosmopolitanism and cultural *savoir-faire* reserved for the white population of means in Toronto. To consume Jazz and to make excursions into this form of otherness enabled them to show themselves as superior. In their world then like early "hipsters," one might imagine a revolution in the "birth of the cool" at the liberal expense of *others*.

The original Underground Railroad was opened in 1969 at Bloor and Sherbourne Streets by Archie Alleyne, Howard Mathews, John Henry Jackson and Dave Mann. Two of the original partners, Alleyne and Mathews (originally from St. Kitts) were Canadians while Jackson and Mann were from the US. The business was successful and a clear destination spot for great entertainment and food. Archie Alleyne was a young handsome, driven, confident drummer and a student of the scene in the city. By then, he had been playing for 20 years and had played with many of the heavy

weights in Jazz. He had a great reputation and name, he was determined to play, and had a passion to learn as much as he could about the music. He gives credit to the African musicians who came before him, such as the great African Canadian pianists Cy McLean and Oscar Peterson. It was McLean who broke the colour bar in Toronto in 1947 at the Colonial Tavern (which was a main stay for Jazz on Yonge Street) by being the first African Canadian band to play in a white establishment. This was historic for the city. McLean was also the first African Canadian musician to gain membership in Toronto Musicians Union in 1944, after its then-President vowed that no “nigger” would be admitted. It was strictly a white boys club then, and some may argue still is today.

“Jazz was it” for Alleyne. There was nothing else outside of Jazz for him. The music made him proud. It was the only thing culturally and artistically tangible as a young African man that he could relate to in those days, at least by virtue of something African to be proud of. Jazz offered these young men a sense of power and confidence, and a real connection to their roots. “There really wasn't anything else” says Alleyne. It was also very clear to Alleyne from his very early years, that “Jazz was Black music.” His Jazz heroes and inspirations were all African greats such as Art Tatum, Art Blakey, Charlie Parker, Duke Ellington, Chick Webb, Ben Webster and so many others, including the young Miles Davis and Canadian icon Oscar Peterson.

Alleyne speaks with fond memories of the days of his early teens to mid twenties when he would check out all of the these “coffee houses” and white clubs in Toronto in the late 1940s to 1960s, while insisting that he really had to be cautious given the colour of his skin. The “coffee houses” were actually fine, it was the white clubs that he needed to be careful. He grew up hearing of the race riot which took place at Christie Pitts in the year he was born. He remembers clearly his father getting into fights with white men when they would regard him with racial slurs. He himself remembers when he could be beaten up for being on the wrong side of the tracks. However, he was determined to be one of the best and kept pushing forward. Alleyne made the connections, got across town to the white side, made his way to the stage, got recorded, played the club scene, survived and helped with opening doors for other African Canadian musicians.

Alleyne had played the circuit and knew pretty much all the African and white players in the scene, so much so that by the time the idea came for him to partner with

the team for The Underground Railroad, he was ready to go with it. He even remembers fondly the last visit that Billie Holiday made in Canada. He was the drummer on the ticket when Holiday performed in Stratford, two years prior her passing in 1959 (at the ripe young age of 44). Holiday had enquired about “black musicians” in Toronto. She wanted to know where they were. Alleyne's name was one brought forward and he was called to the gig. This was in 1957 and he was 24 years old. To have played with one of the greatest Jazz vocalist of all time was an opportunity of lifetime for any musician and particularly for this young African Canadian man. He had to be pretty good also. He had to know how to make the music swing and this he had learned and picked up even more from the African American players, from whom he also received support and encouragement. It was obvious that African American musicians were very much aware of the “business” of white supremacy. While there was the necessity to perform, and perform before white audiences, the African American musicians were compulsively aware of what it meant to be African. It was as imminent as heat or ice on the skin. It was raw and tangible and they understood injustice. They had been exposed to the fierceness and brutality of racism. In the 1950s the Civil Rights movement was getting its legs and the African American musicians were right there taking notes, studying, reporting and composing. Musicians were commenting on the events of the day, many were appalled by the conditions of the Africans in the southern United States, segregation and inequity in general. The Civil Rights movement was real and violently present, opening America's (and the world's) eyes to the true ugliness of injustice, inhumanity and the deep contradictions of the American political and social psyche. The musicians in Toronto were not unaffected by the African American Civil Rights movement. The community in Toronto was tiny but was connected to the African American struggle, although not as intensely. Holiday's request for a “black” musician here in Toronto emphasized a powerful African statement of solidarity. The many white audience members who would have been stoked to hear the greatness of Holiday's voice and the spectacle or tragedy of her persona would not understand the need for this solidarity.

In order for Jazz to be “authentic” there needed to be remnants or traces of “blackness.” Although, there had been many “white” bands playing the music at the time it was undeniable that the music was African in roots and spirit. The music could clearly trace its roots back. To speak to why Africans would be kept out of their own

invention is an all together real story of white supremacy and colonial positioning at work. Still, in order for Toronto to even consider itself seriously in terms of the music, it had to have “black bands”, African American bands, yes, but African Canadian musicians were still regarded as second rate or not at all. This is much the case today, where African Canadian musicians are still considered third rate to African American musicians and local white players. As times passes, the layers of insecurities are heavy. This follows generations and such insecurities evolve over time. The local African Canadian musician either has to keep beating his own drum for recognition, emigrate to the United States or elsewhere, or simply stop playing entirely. The African American musicians' genetic lines to the music cannot be debated, and the African American community has been quite eloquent and clear about these roots. It has been very clear from the start, this documented all across the United States, and have been even clear to the most ignorant of American racists. The African Canadian musician with respect to Jazz almost does not have the same rights to the music because of how Jazz operates in the city. Because of this reality, and the lack of confidence here, there is still reluctance on the part of the African Canadian player. S/he is always considered a third class citizen. In spite of this, Alleyne played not only with Billie Holiday but with the likes of Zoot Sims, Lester Young, Stan Getz, Ben Webster and countless others, and held his own with these giants. It is an experience Alleyne treasures and shares with great pride for obvious reasons. These players represented an authentic and practical connection to the real history, tradition and pulse of the music. This was a bold and bright feather in the cap for Alleyne. He was well on his way as a “someone on the local Jazz scene.” His reputation grew tremendously as the go-to-drummer on the local scene and he started being invited to more and more recording gigs where other African musicians were not. One or two African players was enough, and it represented a giant step forward in the bold “white” world of Jazz in Toronto. Alleyne was not seen as a threat; he was friendly, talented and lighter complexioned with “good wavy hair.” Another key card which granted him access was the fact that he was a drummer “and many drummers are not expected to read [sheet] music.”

Allyene admits a key instrument for discrimination at the time was education. Because many of the local African musicians played “by ear,” Allyene understood that while this was how Jazz was learned, it was also used against them. If you didn't chart read, you were not afforded many of the better paying gigs, despite how well you

played. Alleyne says, “[White] musicians were trained as professional musicians... most of the white musicians were classically trained. They were getting all the gigs at the time. There were no black musicians getting gigs because they were not trained.” This was a key reason for keeping the African musician in his place while white musicians earned a living from the music. And white musicians took care of their “own”.

Clearly, white nepotism was alive and well as early as then too as a subtle and direct act of cultural colonialism. Those who have power and influence make their mark on the world in a more profound way with power and privilege. Today Ettienne still sees much of the same in the Jazz educational system. What he sees is white men hiring white men (the “cliques” as he refers to them) and African men who have been playing professional for decades do not get the calls for teaching positions. According to Ettienne, “the city has gone totally intellectual right now... the heart of the music is lost, it's gone. Archie Alleyne should be teaching drums.” According to Alleyne, he was awarded these gigs also because he was an excellent drummer, and again, drummers generally speaking are not so stringently expected to read the charts. Plus by playing with many of the great African American musicians (ironically many of whom who never studied formally, including Billie Holiday, Charlie Parker, Lester Young, and countless others), Alleyne was on the ‘A’ list of musicians called for gigs and he became a key player on the local club scene. He had seen the clubs and knew them all very well. Ettienne is correct in his thought that Alleyne should be teaching. I say this because there is not another player in this country, whether “African” or “white” that can boast Alleyne’s credentials. How many musicians can say they have played with Billie Holiday, Lester Young and Ben Webster? It does not get any bigger or better than this. These were legends of the music. Had Alleyne been white, I am willing to bet he would be vetted as head of every Jazz university program across the country. Who makes these decisions?

The “white” Toronto Jazz scene, socially and politically segregated, did not allow for African musicians to make a living in their establishments. The first calls were for white players. It wasn't that the community kept quiet. In the 1960s the community began to call out the prejudice and rallies took place against institutions such as the CBC for not hiring black Jazz musicians for paid recording gigs. As the story goes, CBC producers agreed to give some of these African players a shot in order

to silent the outcry of racism from the community but it was more or less a set up. Players were called into the CBC studios for the recording but aware that they were not educated on chart reading, the producers presented them with charts. This was a way of silencing the revolution by saying “we want to give you a chance but you just can't read chart sheets.” This was a way to silence African musicians through a system of shame and undermining. And the strategy seemed to have worked as it did take the steam out of the ambitious young players. So the players who were not young enough to go back to learning charts moved on to playing locally in smaller underground settings and community parties barely making a living, and feeling as though they simply were not good enough. In other words, the musicians were relying on their working class community to make a living. To be better paid, they needed to access to the Toronto white and privileged scene, and access was particularly restricted for these players.

Alienation and Discontent: “They don't want black players in their clubs”

[White Supremacy] survives and thrives because whiteness delivers unfair gains and unjust enrichments to people who participate in it and profit from the existence of a cartel that skews opportunities and life chances for their own benefit (Lipstiz 2011: 36).

Challenging issues face the average Jazz musician regardless of colour. Most of the time it is difficult to make ends meet. Generally speaking life as a Jazz musician is pretty much a gamble to begin with, despite the passion and appeal. For the African musician, however, there's still the issue of his “skin colour” with respect to the “white spatial imaginary” or the ideas and social manifestations of “white supremacy”.

When discussing what Toronto looked like in the 1940s and 1950s, Alleyne describes it as “white bread”. Not only was there “disrespect”, Alleyne recalls being called “nigger” on countless occasions. Perhaps Toronto was not as bluntly violent as it had been with the terrible and consistent occurrences of violence in the US, but certainly there had been riots and racially motivated disturbances in the city. It was not a haven of equality of African people whose dignity was constantly under attack.

Both Alleyne and Logan describe Toronto as a conservative space. And it was

not at all as diverse as it has become. There was a very small community of African people living and working in the city. Both Eric Mercury and Archie Alleyne speak to the size of the community pointing out that every African Canadian family knew one another coming up to the 1960s. The small African community at that time (as it is now) was mainly working class. There were businesses but no real ownership of property. Things are a little different today but not by much where property is concerned. This indicates the nature and sense of who was in control of people's lives and the culture of the city. In conversation, Logan recalls the days when restaurants in Toronto did not sell booze in the 1960s and 1970s because it was conservative and over regulated. It was “not like Montreal”, added Logan, “Montreal was swinging for musicians, it was really the first stop for the Jazz musicians in the day. No one cared about Toronto.” Logan “lived in Montreal and worked regularly. Montreal was just not as conservative.” In Toronto the social movements, culture and the spirit of art were controlled and when it came to Jazz it was pretty much the same: white domination. If you were not in the clique, you were out of the scene. It was the business. You had to be a part of the “white boys” club.

Logan who lived in Montreal in the early 1960s and had a different experience he says. For Logan, Montreal was far less conservative than Toronto and found that “[in Montreal], the French people seemed to have a closer connection to Jazz. They appreciate it more; they get it”, he says. This was what he says, clearly though, other African residents of Montreal have spoken to the ugly racist past and present of the city as well. However, if Montreal was more open to the music, this may be so perhaps because of the French and European influence in the music, coming out of the French Quarter in New Orleans, a former French colony. Instrumentally speaking the music was there without doubt. There is also a sense that the Europeans accepted the music more because of the direct influence in music, and perhaps because they were a bit more distant from it. This is in no way a denial of European racism, far from it. Nonetheless, for many African American Jazz musicians from very early on, Europe and mainly France was a destination of preference to play and live. Montreal, for many of the African American Musicians who were touring north was as close to Europe or Paris as they could get. It was really a good enough reason to get out and see and experience another place. Many African American players settled in Montreal in early days of the music as well. The city it seemed had more of a European flair to it than

Toronto, because it much older, with very strong French accents in style and architecture. It is no surprise that the biggest African Canadian Jazz artist and export of all time, Oscar Peterson, was a born and grew up in Montreal. This, by no means, is to say as indicated earlier that Montreal was a totally accepting city. It seems however, that Montreal audiences showed more genuine appreciation of the music. In many local opinions, Montreal today still boasts a much more progressive and active Jazz scene than Toronto; as well as a more solidly programmed international Jazz Festival. The musicians themselves seem to share similar sentiments as well.

In my interviews with musicians, themes of alienation and echoes of indirect or direct appropriation and disregard kept surfacing. For example, Ettienne was rather blunt when he says that in Toronto “they don’t want us (black musicians) in their clubs”. “They” are, of course, white club owners. Ettienne isn’t alone in this sentiment. Cason supports this argument when he says “White club owners don’t want black players playing in their clubs because they feel that if they have black players in their club, they will run away their white players.” There is a real sense of resentment of a “system” where the African players feel they are being excluded once more by the “white” Jazz establishment in the city. Players believe that there is a conscious and deliberate act to suppress black musicians and black art in Toronto. The reason, as they put it, is due to ignorance, greed and power, hence creating a seemingly subtle and quite effective form of racism on the local club scene and as well at institutional level. I do not think it is possible to look at culture in any serious way in Toronto without understanding the inner workings of systematic racism and its history when looking at African Art in the city.

In *Black Music, White Business*, Frank Kosky (1998: 19) writes “A jazz artist... does own the tools of his trade, so to speak, but is nonetheless alienated from what he himself has created by the fact that he must depend on those who control the means of distribution... in order to bring his music before the public to earn a livelihood from it.” He further states, speaking of this kind of alienation for the African musician: “The same white executives who occupy the command posts in the political economy of jazz are also in a position to shape and direct the manufacture and dissemination of ideas in jazz: ideas about who creates the music, ideas about who benefits from its creation” (Kosky 1998: 23).

Although Jazz in Toronto may have emerged from a less “racially” volatile

space in Toronto than the space of the US South, it clear that the notion of power and dominance of white supremacy still played its part. The act of alienation was always there. White dominance was always present both socially and politically and certainly no music at the time could escape it. With respect to white supremacy and control, Cason remembers a rising star Jazz radio host Ted O' Reilly being somewhat reluctant to play "black jazz" on the radio in the 1970s. Cason says "O' Reilly would mainly play white middle of the road stuff." Cason sees the act of playing more "white" players as "deliberate" with the intent to further the "white hype" while undermining the black side of the music, which in part constructed yet another commercial and racial division. O' Reilly was instrumental in developing CJRT-FM, which is now Toronto's JAZZ FM and has been key presenter and representative of the music for nearly 5 decades. Was O' Reilly a racist? I would think he would say not. But if Cason is right his ignorance would have certainly furthered a white racist agenda in the Jazz world of Toronto. O' Reilly has been a committed advocate of the music and a National Jazz Award winner for Lifetime achievement. In Cason's view, even with all this history, passion and commitment, he still sees O' Reilly as a radio host who aided in pushing a white Jazz agenda, both directly and indirectly, and being very much a part of the old boys club. I did not not speak to Mr. O' Reilly to get his opinion here, but would have loved to. Lipsitz (2007: 54) relates a Louis Armstrong story:

Late in his life, the great Louis Armstrong developed a standard response to younger musicians who asked him how he was doing, "well," the great virtuoso would reply slowly, "white folks still on top." Armstrong's answer seem to imply that small changes in the lives of individuals could hardly alter the big picture, that the pervasive white supremacy that plagued the music industry -and all of US society- remained constant, even when his personal fortunes waxed and waned.

The alienation that we are speaking about is one which has been *pervasive* and has used education, privilege, cliques as well as the power numbers in terms of population to keep a group in a minoritized position, a position of being on the outside, even on the outside of itself. It has even positioned itself in such a way that even in the opposite reality where the white is a minority, it still has its hands in a dominant socioeconomic way and becomes almost difficult to point at. This is what these veteran musicians are speaking about. The Underground Railroad did make an impact but like throwing a

pebble into the ocean at night, its history and impact did not take very long to vanish. We know only of its existence because many of these pioneering spirits are still with us to share the stories of this particular history. These players are not concerned with who plays, they are more concerned about fair play and about the feeling of the music -- and how it seems to be missing. As they see it, there is a kind of cultural slapping in the face, with brave appropriation of the form. These musicians will be the first to tell us that the music is really not so much about colour. For Cason: "it's not a segregated thing." For Alleyne, Logan, Mercury and Ettienne, who says, "Jazz is to be played by everyone." Alleyne commented that "There are Italian musicians that play great Jazz; there are Jewish musicians that play great Jazz; there are Chinese musicians that play great Jazz." Terry Logan says of working with musicians as a leader: "[It] depends on their qualifications... I don't care what colour you are. If you don't have what I'm looking for and all I'm looking for is the truth then forget it. The truth is out there, everyone knows what it is. They just ignore it at their own peril."

What is important to these players is the feeling and the honesty of the communication coming through. The "heart" and the "feeling" is critical to them. This "truth" in playing the music is also the truth about the legacy of the art form. They all agree that Jazz originated from the African community, or as Logan says: "Black Jazz is by itself, it stands alone... First it was black. The black man gave that dominant sound to the music. Basically Jazz is black." When asked if he thought the word Jazz should be used to represent the art form, Logan answers: "We are just playing with words... Jazz is one thing, it's black! You can buy, you can steal it, you can block it off, or lock it in, but it belongs to the black man." Logan is far from being alone here. Ettienne passionately supports the idea that Jazz is African/Black and that it is an original African art form. For Etienne, "Jazz is black classical music... it belongs to the world." Again it is not a question of these musicians wanting to re-capture the music and secure it in some sort of a black box, it is merely about access, opportunity, respect and "truth". For them through the arrogance and ignorance of the Toronto white scene, the music through appropriation has become "watered down" and lacks sincerity. When asked if he feels there is "racism" when it comes to the music and how it is presented, Logan says: "oh, absolutely. Race is definitely a part of it... Watering it down makes it white, watering it down makes it easy. They are definitely suppressing it; the watering down comes from greedy people." Essentially the idea is that the

deliberate act of alienation throughout the history of the music has only added to the misconceptions of Jazz being a “white thing” in Toronto and the destruction of what possibly could have an African Jazz scene.

When asked about the last time he found Jazz exciting, Logan for quite a few seconds before saying: “Gee, you got me on that... it had to be in the 70s.” Again this was nearly 50 years ago with the influx of African American musicians coming into the city. This is also the period that Ettienne and Cason spoke of as the kind of golden age, the golden age of the Underground Railroad. This was also the period when African people found the will, desire and pride through African American Black Power era. There was the obvious solidarity and empowerment which fostered a great deal of independence in the African Canadian community. The 1970s marked the golden age of the music because it was the first time that the community felt music to be in its hands. The music and the time of the 1970s were more liberating and expressive, and everyone felt as though they were making creative music together. Logan recalls that “the audience was pretty enthusiastic then... I was working six days a week, sometimes seven. The musicians were supportive of one another.”

To summarize, there are clearly several issues at play here. The main issue seems to be that these African Canadian Jazz musicians do feel a genuine sense of alienation from the marketing and consumption of their own music. The alienation stems from the workings of white privilege and control of the music. It is not so much about who plays the music as much as it is about who directs and controls the spaces in which it can be heard. Who has the power and the music in their grasp has the power to do what they will with it. This will change with understanding and acknowledgement. The most important thing, however, is that these players are all totally aware of the truth and speak to it. They have spoken. And to be able to vocalize and to speak “truth” is also what Jazz advocates in its quest for freedom, even if it is complex or convoluted, beautiful or ugly, it is all a part of it.

3. The Shift in the Scene

[C]an racism exist outside reason or without its support? No, because racism is nothing but biologism, that is, the face-extreme exaggerated as much as you like, but a face all the same-of modern scientific reason. Certainly, racism is only a caricature of rationalism; but just like any caricature, it cannot be understood without reference to its model (Delacampagne 1992: 87).

A Shift on The Scene: When The Change Came and Where it Went

By the 1960s, Toronto was beginning to see some critical changes. The Civil Rights Movement in the United States was ripe and explosive. The Black Power movement was also empowering the local African Canadian community in Toronto, and everywhere else. The Vietnam War was causing political and civil disobedience in the States and many African American musicians were coming across the border to Toronto, “draft dodging”. They were not supporters of the war. This period from the mid 1960s to the early 1980s seems to have been the high times for Jazz and African musicians in the city. The community was not as big but it had found solidarity and camaraderie with many of the African American players who were coming into the city during the Vietnam War era. These African American players brought with them not only the passion for the music but also the history and context of struggle. Kingsley Ettiienne remembers “that Vietnam War brought a lot of people here that were struggling there [in the US].” Born on the island of Grenada and migrating to Toronto in 1969, Etienne acknowledges that the scene was different, much more vibrant and thus musicians were giving more. He recalls that at the Zanzibar Club on Yonge Street was a happening spot for Jazz and that live Jazz could be heard throughout the days from noon to midnight sometimes 5 or 6 nights a week. Musicians had places to play and they could share the music. It was in these clubs that he first got a feel for the organ and really learned to play it. Wesley “Jaribu” Cason who originally came in from Chicago in 1970 speaks of that period as a highlight as well. He says: “Queen Street was like that... 100,000 or more draft dodgers in the city... The Beverly Tavern was an artsy kind of place.” The scene was open with possibilities because it seemed a spell had been lifted, and a particular force of African American energy and the politics at the time had lifted this white and conservative spell for that moment. It was also the “hippie era” and there was a sense of openness of cultural and creative expression. Toronto was totally swept up in this euphoria. Cason says he liked Toronto then because there was a strong counter culture scene.

Cason recalls:

In that particular time... a lot of people were playing a lot of impressionist music... The Zanzibar was open on Yonge Street.... there were a host of people that would come and go... because they had sessions 5 days a week from 12-3... When musicians, say Freddie Hubbard or somebody, would come here

they would put them up at the hotel for 5 days, so these guys during the day they didn't have much to do so it was a who's who would come and go at the Zanzibar... There was a cat by the name Shan that sounded like Charlie Parker, a rough brother out of Milwaukee who was in the penitentiary for the last 5 years... sure [enough] beboper, Jim Heineman [who is a local brilliant and pioneering “white” saxophonist] studied with him... the Jazz scene at that time was happening.

The Underground Railroad: Taking Control, A Model for Independence

The late 1960s and 1970s were a positive and liberating time for African music and music in general in Toronto. Musicians were encouraged and rewarded creatively and somewhat financially, as many like Logan were working steadily. It seems during this period African players were in demand. It was during this period of “progress”, tension, and challenge that the musicians and the African community seemed to have found the spirit in musical creativity and action in the city. It was also this period that gave birth to the Underground Railroad. Howard Mathews, a partner of the Underground Railroad, another brilliantly aware and streetwise local African Canadian promoter and entrepreneur, was the operator of several of “coffee houses” and had founded several other Jazz spots including the Mink Club and The First Floor Club, among others. Mathews knew the music and he understood the business. He had been at it like Alleyne for quite some time. It was primarily African music, gospel, folk and soul which the African community in Toronto knew to be theirs. But it was Jazz that provided the social outlet for the young people of the community outside of the churches. Jazz essentially was American and Canadian popular music at the time, speaking primarily of the period of the 1940s to the mid 1960s. This was where the young men like Archie Alleyne, Howard Mathews, and the Mercury children found their relative roots. Today there are super athletes, pop stars and rappers which provide a kind of masculine and cultural modelling for young African men. For the young African Canadian men prior, it was the African American musicians, and locals such as Cy McLean and Oscar Peterson who would have been the models for these young men. The music was a key social outlet then as it is now. Musicians, as Logan says, “just wanted to play.” Like their African American counterparts playing meant everything, it was liberating on every level and in playing there is ownership of skills if nothing else. There is great pride in ownership. Mathews, like Alleyne, was also pulled

in much the same direction of success and independence.

Mathews however, was not so much interested in playing, as much as he was interested in creating spaces. He was interested in a different kind of playing. The act was clear and it was about attempting to empower through self-determination and ownership. He was an open and welcoming host who understood the racism of the time. I met Mathews on several occasions. He was a proud, energetic and gregarious man. He seemed always willing to lend a hand and open with his encouragement. He understood the game very well. I remember Mathews wearing a baseball cap when I first met him, he must have been in his late 60s at the time but had a very youthful face and curious eyes. Mathews, was and still is, married to the great local jazz vocalist giant, Grammy nominee and Dora Award Winner, Salomey Bey. Bey is African American born from a musical family. Her brother, the famous Jazz crooner Andy Bey, and her sister, Geraldine Bey de Haas (a founding member of the Chicago Jazz Festival and the South Shore Festival), made up a Jazz outfit called *Andy and The Bey Sisters* who created a sensation in the 1960s. Bey, who also moved to Toronto in the mid-1960s, came from a middle class New Jersey family and married Mathews around this same time. She was a pioneering spirit of Jazz and Blues in the city. Mathews had this vision of more ownership and control of the music and with the community coming into itself, he was able to galvanized its support. Bey, being an independent African American powerhouse, made with him an excellent partner in more ways than one. She too was clear about the issues, the industry, the “black power movements” and whiteness and its hands on the music. Mathews, like many young African Canadian men, at the time had frequented the United Negro Improvement Association Hall on College Street and would have been a Marcus Garvey supporter. The Garvey movement, despite its fair share of critics, had mobilized and instilled a great deal of hope and pride for an African community burdened by oppression. It was an honour to have hosted them both Bey and Mathews for their joint birthday party at The Trane.

Mathews was born on St. Kitts. Much like Alleyne, he was a young mover and shaker in the mid- to late 1950s, working on learning as much about the club scene as possible. He also infiltrated the scene. He had many supportive and somewhat influential white friends. He had a wise and street smart cosmopolitan and entrepreneurial spirit about him. Self-determination was a key principle in Garvey's philosophies and teachings, and Mathews in this respect was a true student. Alleyne

and Mathews were really the early key players of the Toronto African Jazz scene, from the 1950s on, taking Jazz to the African community on the main and “professional” stage. Alleyne and Mathews were really of the generation that began making the mark on the African Jazz scene in Toronto, although this period would have come about decades after the rise of the illustrious New York and US Jazz scene. This primarily had to do again with the size of the African Canadian population in Toronto, which was much smaller in comparison to the African American populations in the major Jazz cities in the United States whether it be New Orleans, New York, St. Louis, Chicago or Kansas City. The community in Toronto, as Alleyne indicates, was not just small but it was overshadowed by a WASP majority. Although this was the reality, the music was still very much being heard and listened to by the community yet not to the same public extent as it was in the United States. I may even argue that a factor which ironically could have hindered the early development of the music in the city could very well be the passive aggressive nature of the city itself, when addressing racist attitude -- the latent *sneaky* business of liberalism. Unlike the US South where Jazz found its roots nearly 150 years ago under terrible conditions of slavery and Jim Crow laws, murders, burnings and constant assaults, the African American community united and galvanized itself politically. It had no other choice. Due to the conditions in the South, the oppressed and segregated community held onto what was “negro” culture. The majority of whites at that time wanted nothing to do with what was the “negro” and certainly not their culture. Things were different in Toronto, with respect to Jim Crow, violence and population size when speaking of the African population. Things are done and expressed differently in Toronto. “Differently” here being an active word.

Canada, as McKittrick and Turner have pointed out, hides its slave past. While Canada did not have plantation slavery, African enslavement was still part of the history of early Canadian history. Black Canadian presence is usually presented as part of a flight from US brutality and not as part of a history of enslavement. Yet as Turner shows, many of the founding fathers of Toronto like Peter Russell had slaves. The African community in Toronto was a small community and lacked the strength in numbers, unlike the United States. In fact, I would argue due this fact of space and place that the community in Toronto, adopted the passive aggressive attitude of the city. In Toronto, you could be called a “nigger” and the “white man” could be called a “cracker”, perhaps a fight could ensue, more cursing in the exchange, a gang fight

might occurred, and it would largely be the extent of it. There were no written segregated laws, but it was as it were. Canadian supposed “blind” liberalism took no account of this history of collective disadvantage of African peoples through colonization, not to mention the history of first nations peoples. It cloaked this subordination of blackness in the language of individual privilege and the normalization of whiteness through assimilation and racialized guises. Surely, it was different from what had gone south of the border -- again, not as brutal but this was the covert way in which Canadian racism worked by making black presence invisible in the context of white normativity. We could all get along, but there were hidden restrictions due to this white power and privilege. White cliques have history and roots.

Back To The Underground

The Underground Railroad emerged in this context of understanding that in order to address and counter the normative space there had to be ownership and reclaiming of self. The Underground Railroad was the very first publicly successful African-owned club in the city that really gave the music a solid “professional” attempt and representation. It very quickly became an institution and a main stage for African and white musicians in the city for well over 13 years (more depending on who you speak to). The Underground Railroad represented not just pride and ownership, it was a venue for education and the reminder of a very particular historical period. The name in and of itself speaks to the intentionality and purpose of the club if we are even just a little aware of African American/Canadian history. The Underground Railroad opened in 1969 and was a great success at the original Bloor Street East and Sherbourne Street location before expanding to the larger space on King Street East. The club was a destination spot for many locals and international audiences. Many African Americans, including celebrities such as Carmen McRae, Sarah Vaughan, Bill Cosby, and the entire cast of *The Wiz*, including Michael Jackson, Diana Ross, Richard Pryor and Lena Horne performed at the Underground Railroad. The Underground Railroad was the very first venue of its kind and of stature in Toronto. According to Alleyne, it was the key gathering spot for “most entertainers appearing in Toronto” and many sold out appearances.

For Alleyne, the doors of the Underground Railroad closed in 1982 (the same

year I landed as a permanent resident of Canada) when he left the team. I should point out here as well that there are different dates regarding closure. However, the Underground Railroad continued on with other partners and investors for a number of years, and more or less expanded to another large restaurant on the Yonge Street strip at Wellesley Street, but the decision seemed to be either ill-timed or ill-planned and eventually the business closed permanently. As far as Alleyne is concerned the Underground Railroad and its spirit closed in 1982 when he left and many aspects of it may have been compromised. Alleyne never got much into the split of partners or ideas, and I did not press the issue. I can say however that I vaguely remember visiting the Underground Railroad when in my late teens for the experience, as I had heard so much about it, but it was more the food that we were visiting for and less for Jazz. By the time I got to the Underground Railroad I understand now that Alleyne was no longer a partner, and programming and concept had changed somewhat. In the end the Underground Railroad closed for all the reasons that strangle Jazz clubs in the city: internal frictions, poor decisions, landlord wanted way much more money with a new lease, owner burn out, the day to day grinding down, expenses and many other business complications. As Mercury says, it's all about "business".

Jazz is a tricky business. It is tricky balancing the business and the art side, as it is money that drives the business, and money is generated primarily through hospitality and service of food and beverages. The Underground Railroad had a golden opportunity with a solid team to push with for over 13 years but it just didn't make it. In the end it was about the presentation of Jazz, but the owners were not the landlords and it came down again to the money, planning and ownership. It was simple economics and privilege. The money certainly was not going back into the community. To make money you have to have money and you have to be incredibly tactical with the management of it when it comes. Capitalism is strictly about money and, capitalism relies on capital, privilege and access. Capital is still largely white as a result of centuries of colonial exploitation. That is the law of economic privilege in the 20th and 21st century. The Underground Railroad was the first great "African" hope when it came to a successful African own Jazz club and it had all the right players for success. There seems to have been a number of factors contributing to the underlying tensions and eventual closure of the venue.

The closure of such spaces always create constant ruptures in the social and

cultural process of not just continuing and fostering pride but in terms of education as well. The situation of “here today, gone tomorrow” speaks to this reality of vulnerability. When the doors are closed, access is denied and other doors often take time to open while white Jazz swings on. The African community is always playing catch up in a near losing game. It is not able to put deep, tangible and practical roots down when speaking specifically of music. Psychically and spiritually there is still remnants of a time but memories fade away, adding to the list of undocumented African Canadian business ventures that were successful for a time but disappeared without being seen through the lens of “real” Canadian social and historical context. Ventures like the Underground Railroad had clear liberating attributes, much like Minton's in Harlem or The Velvet Lounge in Chicago. However, once gone they simply become distant memories of joy for some people. Lost with the times perhaps is the other “real” purpose of cultural, social and political relevance. And as a result of the lack of privilege and even a deeper critical understanding of this relevance today in the community, there are only a few of these venues that can come into existence at any given time, and, it seems, they are not meant to last but to be temporary and passionate excursions. These venues would eventually be swallowed up in a sea of white Toronto privilege. Once the decision to close becomes a living breathing reality in the mind, there is usually no turning back, no sign of rescue, consider it done. In other word, by the time the decision to close consciously enters the culture of an African club, it essentially means that the thought had been conceived and had been reached many times before the final decision is made. There are no bailouts. These venues are political and passionate spaces. They come into being as necessary spaces of counter-narrative and counter-culture as simple as they seems. The intention and thinking power which goes into creating many black spaces are different, they are not only about business but also driven by a great deal of emotional, intellectual, social and political capital, plus whatever funds the owner has. It is all heart, body and soul. These spaces are intended to be cultural incubators and not only spaces for entertainment, even as they may seem so. They are active spots of resistance. These spaces even as mundane as they may seem are revolutionary acts. They are going up against something larger. The Underground Railroad was critical because it offered another alternative to the inundation of white spaces, white privilege and white control --while remaining an inclusive and integrated space for both audiences and musicians.

It represented a political and social slicing through of white supremacy and presented an important and significant voice and presence of a tangible and practical space. Even if the whole community did not support it, they claimed it, even as they criticized. It was still a “black space.”

When the Underground Railroad doors closed, whiteness flooded over again like *Katrina*. It was as if it never existed and soon whiteness back in business as if nothing had changed. All traces of the Underground Railroad were erased except for the legacy in the minds of those to whom it mattered. Yet, for the younger African Canadians growing up then or for new immigrants like myself coming from the Caribbean, no clear sense of Black Canadian cultural or historical tradition was to be understood, and certainly nothing of a musical history or legacy existed as far as we knew. Anything of Jazz that we had heard had the legacies of Afro-America and nothing to do with Afro-Canada. And we, the children from the West Indies, coming to Canada in the early 1980s had our own music which we brought with us on cassettes and 45s. We, like the generation before brought in Reggae, Calypso, Zouk and then more new American and British pop music. We were clear about our music, as clear as the Africans who crossed the middle passage. Michael Jackson had also taken over the world as “the King of Pop”, his “Off the Wall” album released in 1979 was an international sensation, and then came the mega album “Thriller”; and MTV was spreading across our impressionable minds like wildfire. Underground Railroad, what? Disco was cooling off and Bob Marley was the “King of Reggae” and Lord Sparrow was the ruling patriarch of Calypso. It seems the children of the 1980s who were migrating had their own cultural icons and packages; we were post civil rights babies. Jazz and the Underground Railroad did not speak to us in the same way. We were alien to that passing, undocumented and unobserved moment. There was a kind of cultural cutting away or stepping over of that history and education that we could not see. It is the fate of every generation, to want to refer to the one before as old, backwards, or of little value. It is even worse so when it is not seen or known. How do you respect what you don't really know? In Toronto, we seemed to have handed off Jazz music to the whites once more, whether intentionally or not. It appears that we had not the time nor interest.

The Trane Studio, according to Alleyne was the next “major” African-owned Jazz club to come along years later in yet another dry and desperate time for African

folks in the city. This is Alleyne's view, not mine, yet in looking back, I might agree, and only so primarily because of the length of time for which the Trane Studio existed. There have been a few other African-owned venues, none lasting more than 2 or 3 years. There were restaurant venues that had a particular flare and great appeal about them, such as the Bermuda Onion or the Opal Jazz Lounge and Restaurant. But nothing really stuck around for any significant amount of time. In fact, for me I had only planned to be involved in the business no more than 2 years. I had not the slightest interest in being a club owner. I never personally liked club owners or the title for that matter. The title did absolutely nothing for except brought me more anxiety than I could ever want, and far away from the playwright and director that I wanted to be. I was always most comfortable behind the scene. So my intention with The Trane was to get it started and find friends or like-minded people who could be involved. But this was not how it all turned out. I tried to bring friends on board but to make a long story short, we are a diverse and complex people, with our own individual ways and interests. Some could work together, others did not want to work together at all. In my own mind and without fully realizing it, I was hoping to emulate a history of the Underground Railroad and its partnership what I felt could be a community of like-minded African folks. I was looking, waiting, vetting searching. For whatever reasons, what I was expecting to find was never there. It would come in with hope and then hope would vanish. The visions could not gel properly. Partnership in and of itself can be tough business. I had seen it and dealt with it, but it wasn't that I was giving up. But such challenges, it seems as though this was the constant recurring theme for African-owned venues in Toronto. For whatever the reason, anything that was "Jazz and black" owned never seemed to make it. There is the real issue of "African" diversity which exists. We may share similar history, but there are deeper realities and histories abound, and preventing this real and necessary understanding of working together. There seems to be always something creating ruptures in the process of African cultural production sites and ownership in the city. There is enough for which to confirm and to speculate. For Eric Mercury, one of the key issues here is that passion is not enough. There needs to be an understanding of what is meant by "business" and business as we know is generally a white man sport and past time. The African community is getting a better picture but only after many decades of colonial exploitation and prejudices at the hands of the businesses of white folks. And after many painful failures. White folks without a

doubt have had a very early head start and an unfair advantage from the get go.

After all, those who have the means of production and control are white folks and they have their “cliques.” As Etienne argues, “everyone has their cliques” and they are going to keep putting representatives of themselves in control, not the “other”. It is the rule and order of the fraternity: to maintain a status quo and to maintain the order of things. Scary, but it is true and has been active for a very long time. Access is not easily granted. The few clubs that have been African owned have never been able to withstand the influence of the cliquish white Jazz establishments. The lived experiences of musicians themselves speak clearly of this point. The Toronto African Canadian Jazz scene while it shares connected roots to its southern relative is nevertheless very different. It is still becoming as this evolution and development largely depend on the access of the dominant white culture.

Here and There: The Understanding and The Coming Together

Jazz in the United States and Canada is similar but different -- much like Jazz in New Orleans is different from Jazz in New York, or Jazz in Montreal is different from Jazz in Toronto. This is largely an impact of the sociopolitical, economical, cultural, historical and demographical framing among other things. We are similar by virtue of our history, but different because of history just the same. With respect to Jazz south of the border we are similar because the music comes from a community that was pushed to the fringes and exploited. Yet we are different largely because of population size and history of violence. Compare the African Canadian population in Toronto to any major Jazz town in the United States and we see marked difference. In the United States the major cities had a large enough African American population that was able to provide spaces for African musicians, from the deep Southern States to the Northern ones; historically from the chittlin' circuit (during Jim Crow) to the northern states after the Great Migrations to cities such as Chicago and New York/ Harlem, which somewhat thrived despite the history of violence and racism of the United States. The population of African Americans in the United States amounts for more than the total population of Canada, and may even double the total population with continental Africans, West Indians, other mixed raced and undocumented residents today. In Toronto the history may not have been quite as rife with racial tensions, however the population seemed to

have been smothered easier under a placidity of whiteness which was *everything*, including Jazz. You were kept back if you were black, it just wasn't said. If you were a black musician and didn't read sheet music, access was denied. The only shift that seemed to have come about was during the time of the Vietnam War and the civil unrest in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s, during the migration of African American musicians and other young people who were draft dodgers came into city. Toronto was the fortunate recipient of some of the spark and spirit of the anti-Vietnam, civil rights, women rights, and Black Power movements. This opened the gates for more colour to be seen on more public stages in Toronto. The Blues, Jazz, Folk, Pop, Rock, Funk and everything else came across the border, along with feminists, leftist radicals, hippies and professionals of all kinds who opposed the violent and imperialistic political Americanisms at the time. These American folks who came in blindsided the local conservative white Jazz scene, which essentially blossomed and benefited as a result of its own position prior. Many of the African Canadians who were here speaks to this. This moment too was a social and political accident which is most unlikely to ever happen again. Governments have changed as well, and the two countries now might as well be one. It was during this hostile period again that gave birth to the Ettiennes of the time, and the generation of musicians to follow Alleyne. Black/African music was the music of the world and no one could cool the flame of this reality changing Toronto. This period was Toronto's great art and music moment, where the richness of artists was abundant and working and sharing art seemed real and not pretentious. This era opened the doors to possibilities and gave rise to new venues such as Bourbon Street, The Rex, The Montreal Bistro, The Top of The Senator and many others.

By the early 1980s with the Vietnam War over, there was the cooling off period of the Civil Rights movement, the black movement had been quelled, and many of the African American musicians returned home. New African populations from the Caribbean were coming into the city, with their music and pop was on the rise. All these factors and others contributed to taking the fire again out of the African Jazz scene and the larger Jazz scene in Toronto. No African venues survived for any substantial period but many of the white establishments were still standing, new ones with their new white owners from that period, now holding their new white positions. Many of the older venues had suffered due to new generations, new music (birth of

other popular genres and clubs), and new communities but many were still standing and stood for some time after. Of course there were still the Saturday night speakeasies or after hours joints that were operated by a few African entrepreneurs. By the late 1980s and early 1990s, virtually nothing was left that could be readily identified as a professional African owned Jazz establishment. As strange as it may seem that an African young man could make the statement of Jazz being “white folks music”, as surprising and possibly shocking as it sounds, it is understandable enough. It is a statement with deep sociological and historical concern. Here was a young man, who was “about” Hip Hop, Reggae, Hardcore Black music -- or at least might have seemed so given his mannerisms and attire. It was not that this young man was not political or not socially aware of the black music, from my assessment of him, it was really what he was seeing, the optics of things. In fact from the perceptions, images and from the dynamics of power and control, Jazz was in fact “white folks music” in Toronto. African folks may have given birth to the art form but in terms of power and production Jazz was in fact white in Toronto, perceptively speaking. It was not a question. And the white folks who were in control made this perception clearer every chance they got, whether it was for ego or for money or both. It should also be understood that arrogance and ignorance are both alive and well in whiteness. Those who know better generally try to do so, others simply deny or refuse or refute in clever ways. On the point of arrogance and ignorance, it is not that white presenters don't care, it is also true that they are aware of the business and have had a pretty good and privileged head start. They still have to work it and it still comes down to money and their interest in the bottom line. And money will make good people do really bad or not so good things at the expense of others. As Mercury says, business. Who is the audience of Jazz? Who is spending the money? Who owns the clubs? White folks own the market and have to sell it where the money is, which is majority white folks. They have to play what the Jazz audience that is willing to pay for and keep it there. They, in other words, have to cater to themselves, “white folks”, or until they find another market and then they may switch. Development in a fickle market is a fickle plan. They are not in the business of losing money in an already fickle market. Audience development and education around the music is desperately lacking but the presenters' position is simple: business first, social stick handling later, if ever. And if there are white musicians around to help push the agenda of capital ahead, then as Ettienne says,

“They [will] delete you”. The erasure of blackness is put in place clever without overt discussion. Those with the power of resource have the power to decide the trajectory of things and they are directly aware of this power and influence.

Jazz Cultural, Capital and Influence

Jazz still sits on major cultural capital. It has been a cultural cash cow for white America for over 100 years. That's a lot of time for a lot of capital. White Canada has benefited greatly as well, much more so than African Canada. In fact, I will say that white folks have benefited quite a bit more from Jazz monetarily speaking than African folks. In fact, I am willing to bet. Don't take my word for it. Study all the great labels, clubs, agents, composers, radio stations, TV stations and programs, art works, merchandises, record shops, etc. The answer should not surprise you. It is right before your eyes. Jazz is “high art” as Cason says. It is the wonder music, which transcends boundaries. It not only represented an enlightened and exciting liberating art form but a break away from conservatism. It was revolutionary and hip and everyone who wanted to be hip wanted a piece of it. It had to cross over to a market who was willing to pay for it, and it was sold and bought by the privileged white side. They could relate to it, but they had to clean it up first and make it acceptable in the white side. It came to represent status and made the white music establishment a ton of money. Once Jazz began to move North after the Great Migrations in the US (between 1910 and 1970), the music that was presented on a “serious and sophisticated” popular scale was Jazz. Jazz offered a free sophistication, with great evolutionary and creative promise. This was also the case in Canada as the music found its way further North. Jazz made quite a sensation in Europe, during the first World War. It caught fire in the high societies of France, Germany, England, and Holland. Major Canadian cities such as Montreal and later Toronto also picked it up. Jazz brought fresh energy to the New York social and cultural scene. It was a roaring sensation. The world wanted a piece of this as did Toronto; it was inescapable as white middle and upper class began the consumption. For better digestion, it had to “watered down”, cleaned up and played by primarily young white Anglo males in Toronto. The “black” had to be taken out and separated in order for it to be palatable for early white consumption. And this is what happened in Toronto as well with its tiny African population. The African population in Toronto did

not have the numbers to push back against this whitewashing of the music. In New York, however, an African population was present and the community was large and strong enough to foster and develop the music and kept it African. In New York you had the large sprawl of the white Manhattan scene with Birdland and The Cotton Club, but uptown there was Harlem with Minton's and The Savoy Ballroom. Although the wealth was never ever equal and the racial divide and tension was what it was, there was still an impressive African American cultural scene in New York City and the Harlem Renaissance was very much a reminder to the world that Jazz was a source of African American heritage, culture, pride and creativity. Intellectuals, artists, authors, critics, sociologists and historians were clear to make this origin known. This wasn't just the case in New York, while it was the Jazz Capital, this was happening in many major cities across the United States. While the community in Toronto had no doubt that Jazz belonged to them, it was never in much the same position. The community in Toronto never had a Harlem Renaissance, a Congo Square, a South Side, or an East St. Louis. Toronto was missing its own "Renaissance", and it seems the population was not there to support one. The US communities blossomed through the migrations from the South and stayed intact for the most part because in the early days it really did not have a choice. The closest Toronto may have gotten to such a creative buzz was in the 1960s and 1970s. I want to be clear here again and state that it is not that this has nothing to do with who plays Jazz as much as it has to do with the communication around the history of the music in the city. Logan says, "Jazz is about spiritual communication with the body, mind and soul... it has a story to tell... Jazz is storytelling." And the goal here is to tell a story. It is not that no one else feels the Blues, it is precisely the opposite. It is rather that we all do. But according to Cason, "because Jazz is a high art of improvisation they [white folks] want to control the music." It is this notion of control that I am speaking to. In order to control something there must first be a need and a desire, and just as important, there must influence and power to do so. The act of controlling is a clever act.

4. “The Feeling is Gone”: the Business of Jazz

The production of space/place involves, then, both material and imaginary texts. Materialities and the subjective of elsewhere intertwine to illustrate the different ways black Canadian spaces are simultaneously negated and affirmed. The loss and reinvention of space reflects disavowal, racialized geographies, and reoccupation, all of which take up space within existing and future black histories and geographies. Products, ideas, affirmations and negations exit and enter space on various levels which mutate linear time: histories are brought into the present, forgotten and revisited, depending on identity, location and accessibility. This fracturing of space/place involves looking back, ahead, and elsewhere; it is about continuously remaking blackness and revisiting, tolerating, and contesting unwelcome geo-political spaces (McKittrick 2002: 35).

Dixieland Jazz

While Jazz travelled to the Northern states in America and was brought further north by a majority of African Americans, it was popularized into Toronto by whites. In other word, it could be that the white Toronto Jazz aesthetic was most likely a “white” Dixieland prototype as opposed to the “African Jazz” aesthetic. Dixieland Jazz is the white side of Jazz. It was a segregated white Jazz, played by young white men who were excited and enthusiastic about exploring this new popular music. Dixieland Jazz, as Eric Mercury puts it, “comes from the other side” of the African Jazz music tradition. However it came of age on the white side in the segregated South, with white musicians such as Nick LaRocca (who allegedly claimed to have been the creator of the music), and took hold in Northern cities when these bands were brought North to tour in cities such as Chicago and New York. Thus, it seems to me that the initial Toronto Jazz experience is coming out of the “white” side for several factors. First, power and privilege was in the hands of whiteness from the very beginning by virtue of market and what was being imported into the city, beginning with white Jazz bands in the 1920s and 1930s. Second, the size of the African Canadian Community in Toronto was so small it really was an *ultra-minority* not solid enough to sustain and forge ahead with a stronger more mainstream scene. Third, “white” exclusion and prejudices prevented the African cultural scene to grow and further develop for many generations prior to the 1960s and 1970s, and after.

When big swing began making a comeback in the 1940s and 1950s, they became a hit at venues such as the Palais Royale in Toronto. The big bands were a major sensation, drawing thousands of majority white audiences to the venue. Jazz, again, was the pop music of the era. Big band music was major pop music during this period. Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey, Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman and Count Basie were major stars and icons. This was the music that young audiences wanted to listen to and spend their money on. Those who could afford to be there and to support it were white folks. The first time that this white dominated culture of Jazz in Toronto was ruptured, slightly, was during the time of the African American “invasion” of musicians in the 1960s and 1970s. These were the glory years of the Jazz for African players. For a *brief and shining moment* Toronto found a hint of an African musical renaissance.

“Watering it Down”: On Jazz Re-Education

It seems though that what is at conflict with the music in Toronto began with white supremacy but also with the arrogance of education. Musicians feel that the way Jazz was and is being taught is contrary to the feel of the music. Logan explains:

Years ago back when I was doing the Jazz Festival... I could spot a Humber College player student from 20 miles because they had this little glitch that they all played, like they were all related... Shit, I mean like, what is that? That is not teaching... now they [Humber College] have people like Kurt McDonald, they have guys like Bob McClaren and Bernie Senenski.

Granted these musicians that he mentions are all beautiful and talented local players, but incidentally all white. Again, what is being pumped into these young students are the white impressions behind the music. Etienne says, “the music is not gonna get that far with these musicians that are being graduated every year.” The African side is non-existent. These African musicians relied on the tutelage of one another, the elder taught the younger and they had to want to listen, learn and play. They had to have a story to tell with their instruments. According to Logan, “finding your way [means] you have to have big ears... you have to copy... you have to figure out why someone did what they did. Once you understand that... the mistakes you make along the way become your own.”

When we spoke about education and the curriculum it was clear that the musicians were not saying that Jazz should be taken out of the schools and taught on the streets or even that all musicians needed to be self-taught. What they are saying is that the “feeling is gone” or slowly disappearing. They are saying that Jazz is no longer exciting because it has been taken away from the creators of the music and the spirit is missing, it has become a status form as well as an educated form. The excitement is missing for all these reasons. Mercury, who has also worked and toured with TS Monk (Thelonious Monk's son) says, “When Thelonious Monk came on the scene Jazz was the dance music of the time... It was dance music... There's too much of this from the neck up stuff... does it sound good, does it feel good... if so I'm taking it home with me... this is an entertainment form... but I don't want to hear the same stuff... just make it feel good.” Etienne agrees, “they are putting it at an upper class level. The music was not meant to be that... Get a place to play. It's not about how pretty it is, it's [about] the music.”

The commonality here is that we are missing the key element of the music that it is folk music played with great skill, verve, passion, style and emotion, with the key ingredients of improvisation and communication. When asked if there is a difference between black Jazz and white Jazz Mercury explains that Dixieland Jazz is the white side of the Southern Baptist tracks and JASS-JAZZ comes from the other black side of the Southern Baptist tracks. Mercury asks: “Does it sit down? If it sits down it's Jazz. It's about the feel.” It has to sit down and sitting down is the expression given to when the music feels just right and when it tells a story that reaches deep into the universe of the human spirit. As Kelley (2012: 6) contends:

They [African and African American musicians] all shared with JAZZ as a pathway to the future, a vehicle for both Africans and African-Americans to articulate and realize their own distinctive identity while critiquing this western variant. And, from their vantage point, standing at what appeared to be the precipice of freedom for Africa and black America, the continent represented a beacon of maternity blazing a new path For the rest of the world, but one time provide deeply spiritual, antimaterialistic values.

However, this possibility of connection between the African Canadian musician and Jazz seems to be rooted without roots. It exists but is always and seemingly being washed away easily. The roots are always threatened. They do not have the space to evolve in these “sharing pathways” and if so, they have had to do it differently in a sort of impermanent nomadic condition. Academia as players see it is not helping the next generation of young African or white players. According to Cason, the white academic tradition is a killer of the local young African players: “the black kids that are going to these schools don't have an identity... Academia is taking over the band stand... and with academia you don't get a genuine understanding of the culture of the music.” Similarly Etienne feels that in Toronto the music is presented now as if it is European classical music, which he does not criticize but is adamant that Jazz is “Black classical music.” Toronto has a long WASP relationship with the music while Montreal’s attitude is a bit different from a francophone position. New York still has Harlem where the music can be heard in Black owned venues, where African and white students can go to hear African musicians play. There are African players hired all across the US colleges who are instructors and teachers. Etienne feels as though the music in Toronto is missing the “spirit” and the white audiences are somewhat

conservative and polite because this is what they have been presented with. To speak honestly I have heard many white audience members who understand this, speak out against this as well. They themselves are insulted by the white washing of the form. They also feel that heart and soul of the music is missing or gone by virtue of how Jazz is managed, marketed and presented. They see it as a death sentence for the music in the city.

For Etienne, there is “nothing wrong with [being polite]... but the real art form has to do with the spirit of the music... they are very polite musically... the audience don't know... just being polite”. In other words, there is also the sense that the audience members who are somewhat unaware of the hidden subtext and history are also being fed something that is not authentic or true and this is what they give back in return, placid applause with uncertainty. And this placidity cannot bring forth passion in the culture which is needed to take the music to another level should there be one. There is no real or true critical appreciation. Perhaps, this is due to the spoke of conservative nature of the Toronto Jazz audience, or perhaps lack of knowledge; or even something else.

Logan sees musicians being taken for a ride in the inauthentic Toronto Jazz con game; the audience, the students, the musicians and even the key white presenters themselves. Again, Logan is clear: “the heart and soul is missing... There's no true commitment to Jazz... This is backwards.” For Logan, there has been years of “watering down” the music. Taking out the essentials and feeling in it for white consumption.

The privilege is therefore not in hands ready to make a substantial difference. Like Etienne, Logan believes that the music is only now being presenting for money or greed or “they are doing it for the prestige.” Echoing his fellow musicians, Alleyne believes that “the live energy and the spirit is all gone down the tubes... we are losing it... The government doesn't give a shit about the music unless they are gonna benefit from it...The whole world is turning to plastic... It's not real anymore.” When asked what he thought about the local Jazz Festival, Alleyne's response was: “They don't excite me anymore... Everything is gone, man!” There is sadness in this statement, not so much sadness of an elder putting away his instrument but rather a sense of defeat after dedicating a life to something that has everything to do with tradition. According to Alleyne,

“we do not have anything that we can call our own... we are actually losing our music... basically... I have been in the business 65 years... I am losing that feeling... I'm in a time warp... There's no more creativity. It's gone... the music of the day does not excite me... We have lost our music... we can't go back... the new generation of youth don't want to listen to their seniors... I try to tell a lot of the young people that Jazz is an expression of your people and expression of their lives.”

As discouraging as the scene may seem to him, Alleyne has not thrown in the towel. He admits the sense of despair but acknowledges his experience and understands that there is a great deal of value in this. He still shares his expertise with a younger generation with his **Evolution of Jazz** project. He has established a Jazz Scholarship for younger musicians, primarily African Canadian youth in Toronto. He has been acknowledged with an **Order of Canada** for his lifetime achievement in Jazz performance. To Alleyne, this is still not enough as he sees that more has to be done and is frustrated that the local African community is not in the privileged position of doing more to have a solid voice when it comes to the music. He does not think that the Toronto white Jazz establishment, the festivals, or the scene cares about the African story in the music. There has been no evidence of this as he sees it in all the years that he has been performing. This is not just a question of race and exclusion for Alleyne, it is not about “colour” as these players say. It comes down to who has the power to influence the scene and the influence sits on the “white” side of the tracks. Alleyne believes the local African Canadian community should be doing much better to support the music. He says: “We have to come together to have some strength to support our community...” Cason agreed with Alleyne when he says, “Coming from Chicago, I come from a collective environment where people sort of fight for what ever little they want... when I came here the only people that were like that were Nova Scotians or five or six generations of black Canadians... Black Canadians were very proud.” For many musicians, there is the feeling that there is no fighting for what is necessary and worth fighting for. It is as though the community has acquiesced, given up or has become comfortable with the conservative white attitudes and/or white liberalism of Toronto dressed up neatly under liberal multiculturalism. But who benefits from multiculturalism, when everything and everyone is bundled and treated as if they were a jar of multicoloured candies, where everyone is equal, when this is far from the case. It is a beautiful concept, provided the “truth” is spoken, and that we follow the dotted

lines of the history of Jazz in our city. Where is multiculturalism there? For these musicians, they cannot understand why the community and the musicians themselves have not stepped up.

Cason believes that the black musicians have to do whatever they must to step up and be “militant” about the music. Logan says much the same about any African musician, “He has to play harder. He can't be a sleeper... He has to tell the *truth*... you find a way to tell the story...Black has this thing...” The truth again for Logan is also the feeling and the stories of the African side... the truth must be spoken or the music is gone. The musicians, Cason feels, have to make a strong statement or they are complicit. He feels that in some ways the musicians may even be “hiding behind their instruments,” afraid to take a position for fear of being sidelined. Too vocal, they could lose their earning potential or even be blacklisted. This is real and this has happened according to both Logan and Etienne who feels that they have gotten the blacklisting from a prominent local club for speaking up. Etienne said he had asked about race and questioned the booking practice at The Rex and he was never invited to play again. Blacklisted. Logan remembers a time when his group was offered a small fee to play and the club would keep the door. Logan decided that he would take a chance with the door instead, and according to him he “packed the place” and made good money. The next night the manager came to him and told him that he would have to split the door with the club for the next show. Logan didn't go for that agreement and that pretty much sealed his fate at club as well.

Cason understands that although he comes out a space of segregation and racism in Chicago, there were associations such as the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) which created a safe and respectful haven for African American musicians. This Association was founded in the mid-1960s at the most revolutionary times of the Civil Rights Movement. The mandate of the Association was experimental, ultra-creative, progressive and Pan-African in every scope; it was pro-black and pro-creativity. Cason was affiliated with key players and appreciated the courage and charisma of the artists involved. He took lessons with some, played with others and was friends with many of the founders including Fred Anderson, key figure of the Chicago music scene with the Velvet Lounge until his passing in 2010. Cason witnessed the passion and bonding of these African musicians, and appreciated the fact that they did not discriminate but proudly embraced their

heritage and all saw their roles as leaders and teachers for the next generations. The Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians is just about 50 years old now but also draws its support from the raw legacy of African music. It was the members of the Association who coined the phrase “Great Black Music” in order to incorporate Jazz and all forms of African Music and instrumentation. The idea here was not to compartmentalize the music, but to embrace all the many facets of it while still searching and broadening the horizons of the music. There were other Associations and organizations across the United States. Nothing like the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians exists in Toronto.

Kelley (2012: 55) speaks of the kind of involvement and organizing that went on with African Musicians in speaking of Randy Weston:

With support from Melba Liston, Gigi Gryce, Ray Bryant, Nadi Qamar, Sadik Hakim, John Handy, and others, Weston found that the Afro-American Musicians Society to address problems reaching from low pay, the poor conditions of just club, royalties, Publishing and recording contracts, the absence of black music at the new venue such as Lincoln Center, and the overall concern that "the music [was] disappearing from the black neighborhoods.

Perhaps it is important here to know that Weston's father was Jamaican, and who a committed Marcus Garvey supporter as well. He had introduced his son to the teachings and philosophy of Garvey at a very early age.

It is this command or taking control that Cason and Alleyne are calling for; a reshaping and reconstituting of everything that was taught and doing something. No more sitting on the sidelines. What is necessary is militant engagement opposed to a passive position. The musicians want to see a supportive union which act proudly in a collective interest. It is not about suppressing whiteness, but rather bringing about pride, ownership and education for the African players. Something needed to be done to settle and establish this sense of pride, that could only come from the community itself. Pride being something that be helped along but first must be ignited from within. Cason says, “I don't see a lot for black folks unless black folks become militant about their conditions... they've been fooled. If you're under 40 you've been fooled through gimmicks... I am not against technology; it's [just] how we use technology.” Cason feels that there are many avenues now to be creative about ownership of the music.

There are opportunities and media to impact real changes but the community has to be willing to see it. Mercury would agree with this as well. Musicians can take their art on and manage themselves outside of the industry. For many of the older “cats” though this is a bit hard to grasp at their age.

Alleyne would defend that quite a bit has changed in Toronto with respect to “race” relations since 1933 when he was born. However, with respect to Jazz and African people there have been more than a few snags along the way. The “business” of Jazz is still very much a white dominated thing, and as it seems there really is not much of a desire in sharing at the top with people of African descent. Examine on your own. Then like now, the issues of education and qualification still present concerns and barriers for African folks. White nepotism in Jazz is still quite alive and well.

The spirit of the music is one of Freedom and integration. It is about bringing people together. Again the root and power of the music is about freedom and improvisation. But freedom and improvisation doesn't mean that players are just “messing” about, nothing could be further from the truth. It means that there are conversations – or storytelling -- taking place on stage between the players. However, rhythm is in the timing. It is a pure art form so to speak in that it seeks to constantly evolve and grow while remaining connected. Through all my discussions with the musicians in Toronto, I believe that while they are interested in the evolution and growth of the music, the Toronto Jazz establishment seems generally to be behind with the spirit and intentionality of the music. Keeping it stuck and predictably white. Cason, again here says it best when he says,

Toronto is strictly white, they don't want black music and they don't want black musicians here. It's as simple as that. They will play black music. Those two white guys that brought the festival here, they are not in touch, they don't know how to communicate, they are coming out of the colonial past, mentally. White club owners don't want black players playing in their clubs because they feel that if they have black players in their club they will run away their white players. That's the same mentality with the guys who promote the Toronto Jazz Festival. As far as Toronto is concerned blacks collectively have to come together. If you want Jazz music you have to get you some strong black players that aren't afraid of politics and culture and not hide behind their instruments.

Even as Toronto is one of the most diverse city's in the world, it still struggles terribly with issues of cultural access. There's yet another issue on the rise with respect to cultural integration which still needs addressing. There is now the issue of ethnic

prejudices and nepotism among people of colour. Who are culturally at one another's throats, so to speak. When people of colour have been put in positions of influence, they take on the pathologies of the former by empowering their own causes and initiatives, while restricting access to others. These are now other barriers to look at seriously. However, for the most part it is still very much a “white folks” world when speaking of culture in Toronto. There are diverse communities who mimic the operating conditions of cultural exclusion, which is equally as problematic.

The Mis-Reading of Black Jazz

The young African American bass player Dwayne Burno (2013) blogged:

It is not our job to allow d—heads at BEATDOWN and JazzTimes or any other pompous publication to dictate the direction of the music with the ignorance of their agenda or their underlying hatred and lack of respect of the music as the creative and expressive form and forum of art that it is. Our job as musicians is to soothe and heal the soul of those that listen to us. We may also stir up emotions and feelings and provoke contemplative thought as well but the backlash I know that is coming my way once I hit reply won't be from those in the know or from those that can play this music...

I found this blog poignant for this project, as it comes as a personal comment of a young African American musician. Burno is not alone. The musicians are saying the same thing. This is a sharp critical response in terms of what some of these young professional musicians of international stature are bold enough to say and to challenge the establishment. Burno is taking on the critics themselves, on his terms, and in his way as an artist. He is able to push back, using a public forum to do so. I think more of this is to come.

Incidentally, Burno passed on December 28, 2013 (5 days after jazz great Yusef Lateef), at the ripe young age of 43. I knew of Burno as Betty Carter's bassist but more through a friend, Marc Cary, who was also Carter's pianist. These young fellows were serious about what they did, and Carter made sure of it. But what was clear to them and affirmed through working with someone like Carter was that the music belonged to them. They owned it and there was no compromising of that. Be human but know your worth and your ancestral contribution, or it will be snatched up. There's

enough evidence of this as we have discussed above. No white person could even try to play the game of total appropriation even though they were generous with the music. They understood the double consciousness of their position. They knew that they were being paid by “the man” but it was their art, and it was for their art that they were being remunerated. Coltrane, for instance after coming off touring in Europe or wherever it is said, would go back to Harlem and give free concerts to the community. They realized that a part of their duty was to give something back, to return to the community. It is not the practice of every African musician but some were conscious of this and did do it. In Toronto, this did not happen in much the same way, and it couldn't. There has not been a major African Canadian Jazz musician from Toronto that has had the success of someone like Coltrane. But in Toronto, there's also another issue of insecurity. Publicly African musicians do not feel that they have the same rights to the music as much as they might feel they do. Again, the community was not as impacting on the scene as was the African American community. Jazz in Toronto was a part of the white man's world. This comes off clearly when speaking with Alleyne in particular. If Alleyne did not “infiltrate” as he says and stick to playing, he possibly would never had a gig with such African American legends such as Billie Holiday. The African Canadian Jazz musician in part is missing, and so is his or her presence in his or her own legacy or history in Toronto. The type of racism here is hidden (covert) and evolved more liberally over the years. It is a polite operation of systemic racism, which gets under the skin and lives there in a much different and insecure way; it is self-effacing racism. It makes you feel safe while exacting another type of violent pushing aside. It is that hidden dagger that works at you over time, just not as aggressively. It is a clever type of discrimination practice. So it wasn't that “white folks” here in Toronto are necessarily less racist, it is that we all seemed to be getting along, swept along by the face of apparent tolerance.

The artist is very much aware of what is happening in his/her world, although s/he may not articulate this always in the scope of a scholarly analysis. Like Monk, the artists who are aware choose to communicate in other ways, some being more vocal politically while others chose conversations (nonetheless, politically engaged). There is this idea that because we ignore it or are quiet about an issue it really isn't there. This is not so. Jazz is an art form of communication, and emerges from the sacred space of abstraction and dialogue through spiritual and communal improvisation. In looking at

Jazz, one cannot speak of the African without observing in a very real and political way the presence of “whiteness”, whether in Toronto, the United States of America or anywhere else where the political influence of white supremacy exists. Whiteness has a very long and affecting influence and history of African people and Jazz is not separate from the African. So much so that whiteness has had the power to invert history in places such as Toronto, while brandishing a proud multicultural banner of togetherness. What was brought to the surface, is that it wasn't necessarily that the act of alienation is so much deliberate today but rather that this alienation was in fact rooted in a deeper systematic form of alienation, embedded in racism and colonial power playing. In other words, this alienation was and is still related to systematic racism from the earliest days and goes back as far as the music has been played in the city. It is not possible that the music or anything else which was African and public would not be affected. It is today, so how could it not be even in a more dire space as yesterday. We are all operating within this normative framework: The “white” who took this for granted, and the many “blacks” who accepted this form as a normal practice, feeling somewhat betrayed but not naming it out of fear for not getting access. The older “black” musicians felt as though they had no choice, it was the music of their generation, and the music they related to most of all. They played the music, critiqued and observed what was going on, but still had to play this part: like Alleyne says, swallowing your pride for the sake of being a professional. This is nothing new. It happened also in the US where African players entertained white audiences, were called names and told they couldn't use washrooms, and still went on playing while critiquing the conditions. There are deep personal and cultural sacrifices that are made daily in order to make a living and survive. The younger black musicians knew the music and played it but they had other things to call on outside of Jazz. They had Jazz but also Soul, Funk, Reggae, Calypso, Afro-beat, House, Rock, Latin and so much more. The graver sacrifices had been made by the previous generations. The younger generation of players have a kind of privilege of youth and genre, if you will, to turn away from Jazz as they figured Jazz had been taken away from them anyway, stripped away from their blood line, right from under their noses and before their eyes. As Kofsky (1998) writes: “Even though black musicians themselves do not ordinarily employ the term “alienation”, one should not make the mistake of thinking that they are unaware of the phenomenon.”

What does seem clear, however, is that the few African folk and the majority of whites who were either musicians or audience members were connected and have been connected for a very long time some going back well over 60 years, as Alleyne points out. Jazz in the Toronto context still brought people together and was the first music to successfully have this impact culturally speaking in the city. It opened the doors to communities and broke down barriers. In my view throughout this project, I would argue that it is the first music to have done this opening of doors in an attempt to break down racial and cultural barriers. It was freedom music, and it became even more so in Toronto in the late 1960s and 1970s. By then the musicianship and community had grown up enough to begin to nurture many of the young Caribbean men who were now migrating and interested in music.

Every generation likes to take credit for any progression towards reform of any sort. For me, while standing on the shoulders of giants, it was really the generation of the 1990s, the post disco-, post-1980s pop generation-- the early hip hop generation that began to question again the location of Jazz in a more radical and spirited way. As Fanon says every generation in this post-colonial space has had its duty to push back in its own way. This 1990s generation of young adults were radicalized by the music of X-Clan, Public Enemy, Tupac Shakur, NWA, Nas, Tribe Called Quest and so many more popular artists in the 1990s. Hip Hop fuelled the questions, and a new era of pride washed over us. This was my generation. We were lathered by all kinds of musical influences, predominantly all black. We listened to other music played by white artists and pop, but black/African music was in everything, this was undeniable. Hip hop giants such as Guru, Digable Planets and others were bringing out Jazz in Hip Hop. Spike Lee's films were reclaiming the music and we supported his work. This was the generation whose parents had migrated in the 1960s and 1970s. It was this generation that wanted more, wanted to learn more about its heritage and wanted to reclaim a good part of this legacy. And so we looked further at ourselves. We began reading more on the history and on Harlem, African Art and literature, music, and yes, Jazz. And those of us who were looking at the face of Jazz in the city began to feel as though we were alien to ourselves. It wasn't that many of us felt there was an issue with anyone being involved with the music, it was the sense of exclusion that made young African people suspicious. It wasn't totally the white musicians or the white club owners' fault. It was that something deeper and historical was at play. And this

“something” began long before progressive or political Hip Hop arrived on the scene. And with everything that seemed to be happening with respect to music, we raised questions.

Critics have said that Jazz is dead. Jazz cannot die and never will. Jazz is everything and is in everything. It was the passion music which rocked the world and gave birth to Soul, Motown, Rock and Roll, Reggae, Pop, Disco, Hip Hop and House Music. It gave birth to Ray Charles, Little Richard, Don Drummond, Jimmy Hendrix, Elvis Presley, Michael Jackson, The Beatles, Led Zeppelin, The Police and even now the young Justin Bieber. It is altogether true that properties and things are more expensive in more ways than one, but Jazz today needs re-nurturing and safe spaces, with nurturing musician and a nurturing audience in order to take root. The other thing we must argue is that Jazz is about living and surviving. It is much a lifestyle and concept as much as it is music. The music and the concept is migratory in spirit. It represents movement and the idea of spiritual freedom. It was born in the new world out of necessity. And born from a people whose spirits needed to be lifted up and they used the music and the idea of the music as a vehicle for spiritual emancipation, making a rhythmic connection to a West African legacy through European form instruments. It was travelling and moving through time, space and histories long before we knew it or captured it with the caption of “Jazz”. While freedom, emancipation, liberty, humanity, dignity, equality, joy, storytelling and spiritual uplifting were at the core of the music for African peoples in America, it clearly struck a cord with others in America and the world as well, for some of these very core reasons. The music is universal because it has universality also in its chords; it has made the world stop to listen, and to want to participate. The more it moved, the more that it picked up along the way because of the spirit of an improvising energy, allowing other stories to be weaved into it. While it had depth, it was open if skills and discipline was in sync. It is not easy at all, quite intense in getting it down, players would say, but once the swing is in then the cooking begins and the communication becomes pure and organic sweetness. It opens its doors to many creative and spontaneous possibilities, lending itself to other forms as well. That is how the music travelled from the South expanding its horizons in the North, East and West coasts, before finding its way across Canadian border and the Atlantic Ocean, making its mark and picking up new movements in cultures along the way. The music is African by birth but it is now international in

scope. Of all the African Canadian musicians I interviewed overtime and specifically for this project, not one felt that Jazz was a musical art form to be played by African folk alone. How could they. All agreed that Jazz was to be played and enjoyed by all. It was not about owning and claiming it exclusively, but about sharing and communicating.

White musicians who are Jazz players, or “*those that can play this music.*” as Burno (2013) stated, understand where the music comes from and gives credit to this source. Charly Gerrard (1998: 17-18) writes in *Jazz in Black and White*:

Despite their ambivalence towards white musicians, black music ideologists have rarely, if ever, discouraged white musicians from playing black music... Most of the top white musicians grew up hearing the ODJB (Original Dixieland Jazz Band)) and were impressed by the group's recordings. But after they were exposed to performances by African-American musicians like King Oliver, they changed their views.

Harvey Cowan, a friend and supporter of Jazz in Toronto, founding member of The Artist Jazz Band, had never once experienced a sense of alienation around these musicians. Cowan, who is Jewish, in fact, has always found a place and camaraderie with local African musicians. Cowan is a professional architect who plays the violin and jams with professional musicians, and with Doug Richardson who founded a Jazz avant-garde ensemble called Trouble. According to Alleyne, African Canadians and Jewish Canadians had a bond of sort back then as “they knew” what their place was in the city. In fact, Alleyne mentions that the first job he ever had was working in the garment factory off Spadina Avenue, was owned by Jewish Canadians. At least for African musicians and Jewish Canadians the stage was an inviting space to experiment. Incidentally, Cowan was a former housemate of Alleyne and Matthews, and a regular at the Underground Railroad. There seemed to have been a true sense of camaraderie with all the players regardless of colour, or so it was for many of the African players. The musicians have a history of playing together despite of this “race” thing. Everyone brings something special to the stage. This is not to say that there were no tension between the African Canadian and Jewish Canadian communities. According to Alleyne, there may have been less tensions then than now as both communities had to “look out for the other” because both were discriminated against and were the outsiders then. Diversity and variety is welcome as long as the passion and skill is present. The problem is that while the musicians are open and have been

willing to share, some white presenters seemed to be more interested in claiming, controlling and owning, i.e., colonizing the spirit of the music.

Systematic racism is not a “black and white” issue. Jazz has nothing to do with issues of oppression. As I argue earlier, it runs counter to this by virtue of its very history. It is both art and spirit. It is as Alleyne says, “soul music”. Apart from the obvious act of going up against the established reality of what Jazz was in Toronto, speaking from a place of freedom and expression was what we were aiming to bring about at the Trane Studio. The idea was to create a space based on the idea of Jazz as “soul music” and to reclaim some aspect of it and give it back to people. My intention was to take it down from that high pretentious shelf where it seemed to be sitting and to provide a space and place of respect and communal appreciation. It is not easy to accomplish this with everything which goes up against you, and I am not sure I ever accomplished this goal. In fact I am inclined to say that I had not as it was an idea in the making. It is possible that some small part of the dream was realized, but people move on, and again like Katrina that history will be erased over time.

The Trane was an experiment, a dream... It was a quest for something higher perhaps, but something else is required to reach that other space. This idea has to be charted clearly from the get go, even as though it really opened my eyes more to the potential and the history. Going on 3 years later, I keep walking into people expressing regrets of its closure. I appreciate the idea of the Trane having had this impact on so many people. I am sure Alleyne hears much of the same from those who knew of the Underground Railroad. Again, I was young and somewhat impulsive and driven by an urgent desire to address what I felt was a need. It is not that simple, experience speaks now much more clearly and wisely.

Regardless of the seemingly dire place of the music, Jazz is not dying. It is however suffering because it is and has been experiencing a clinical and spiritual crisis. Musicians are working, and not paid enough, but this is not new. They are producing excellent and creative material yet many local and international greats will tell us, it is a global phenomenon but more so it seems to be a North American crisis. It is a money thing. It has been exploited and rung out, and as Mercury says, now (mostly white) producers just have not figured out how to get their money back as yet, because there are so many other genres of music out there that are pop related, and can be produced for less money through technology. The money is there to produce it, but the financial

returns are much greater with contemporary pop music.

As a long player and observer of Jazz in the city, Alleyne concludes: “White people know more about Jazz than most black people.” But what exactly do “white people” know about Jazz? Here I understand what Alleyne is alleging, but I partly disagree. Alleyne knows more about Jazz than most white people I know, but as Ettiene says he is not teaching. Privilege grants more access to knowledge. The white community in Toronto has a much longer history of producing and presenting the music on a professional stage—if this is what it means to be professional. The general and local African community does not have the privilege of breaking down the dynamics of the political and cultural economy of the music; and even if it does, it simply does not have the resources to go up against the “white” establishment and its head start. So knowledge and power is driven by those who have the resources to drive. It would be great to see a white person with means take this on in Toronto. Someone who understands more of the chemistry and spirit of the music, and is willing to stand for something greater.

There are good and well intentioned entrepreneurs, however, they still consult with members of the establishments and not the artists of the community themselves. The city never had a Max Gordon of the Village Vanguard in New York City, even as Max Gordon gave to Jazz by accident as well. There are privileged white people in Toronto, but where the consciousness rests is another story. You have to be willing and want for again some greater “truth”, but to use that privilege in a real and less nepotistic way. Although the Village Vanguard did not come into existence as Jazz club, it provided a space for African American musicians to practice, play and jam on Sunday afternoons before the music became a primary Jazz spot in the 1950s, until now. The Vanguard is not a large place with high-end decor. It is a weathered and accessible space, and a respected venue and host of the music. It actually valued the spirit of African players, and helped to launch many careers including that of Monk's. The Vanguard today is still being managed by Lorraine Gordon, Max's widow, some twenty five years after his passing. It was Lorraine Gordon who introduced her husband to Monk and stuck by him throughout his time at the Vanguard. Some entrepreneurs in Toronto have attempted to bring something special to the music through venues and more will come. It will take resources, not only financial ones, but just as importantly deep understanding, love, knowledge, will and less arrogance.

Conclusion and the Possessive Investment in Jazz

If white racism manifested itself exclusively through hostility and exclusion it would be easier to understand and to combat. Yet the long history of interracial relations has also created a possessive investment in whiteness that entails embracing people of color and their condescending and controlling ways (Lipstiz 2006: 118).

Thus far I have argued that Jazz in Canada was brought into being by the same black cultural forces which created Jazz and African diasporic music in all of the Americas. That there was a different but non the less related Jazz that was happening. I have documented the challenges of African musicians in Toronto. These problems have their roots in Canadian racism which operated in highly specific ways. Whereas the years of Jim Crow in the United States led to the creation of African spaces and separate spheres, African Canadian cultural presence has been rendered largely invisible by the ideology of liberalism which both assimilates while simultaneously masking racism by its emphasis on individual entitlements and opportunities. This ideology materializes through what Lipsitz (1995) calls the “possessive investment in whiteness.” This investment manifests itself through ownership of the means of production of Jazz, white ownership of Jazz itself, and venues. This ownership of space works to privilege both audiences and white musicians who become the preferred players while original creators of the music become marginalized. Hegemonic education works to perpetuate this as it consolidates this investment by marginalizing the innovation of African music while appropriating and profiting from established forms.

I have argued that Toronto, like anywhere else in the Americas, has benefited from colonial exploitation and became a WASP site of privilege with respect to Jazz production. Cason points to the impact of this on black musicians when he says:

Toronto is strictly white... they don't want black music and they don't want black musicians here... White club owners don't want black players playing in their clubs because they feel that if they have black players in their club they will run away their white players [and their white patrons].

Most places with the controlling capital “is strictly white”, according to Cason. Toronto is not unique here but its history has had quite an impact on the local African community. Cason and other musicians have been living and making Toronto’s history. To keep the club white, white entrepreneurs consistently hire and invest in the development of white players by granting them opportunities and the access to play. Keeping African players out kept the African audience away. This form of discrimination is based on a fear of the “black”. Most of Toronto's clubs operate on the notion that an African (black) audience is not a good spending or tipping audience. This is the money/business factor. But then again, why should an African audience be

big spenders in a white establishment that does not regard them or their culture? So class now also comes into play. Moreover, why should the African audience contribute to a system where they may also feel exploited? Black audiences will support black musicians, as a Jewish audience in Toronto will support a Jewish project. There is nothing really for the African audience to support. Hence why not use the white establishments for their entertainment purposes only, as these establishments are using African culture? We are dealing here with white assumptions/realities, ignorance and guilt. The ignorance factor, in my view, is also based on fear of a black audience as unpredictable, underprivileged and potentially problematic—violent in other words. The guilt factor comes out of ignorance, but also comes from a place of deeper resentment of the white Jazz establishment. In order to avoid this feeling of guilt you avoid those who you have exploited. Perhaps there is always some shame and guilt linked to exploitation, and might be difficult for some perpetrators to look his victim in the eyes. In the case of Jazz festivals anywhere on this planet, they are not in need of African players because it is not necessary to have African players. There are virtually enough white players (as there are African players) to put on all the Jazz stages around the world. However, even the presenters themselves are aware of the optics of this. It would look terrible and become extremely obvious at best to have a sea of white players and not one African player in larger cities like Toronto, so much so that the public may even be called to question, whether the public does anything is another matter entirely. So a few African musicians are called or brought in to legitimize the scene.

Another reality, largely unaddressed, is the economy of Jazz. Jazz quite honestly is no longer pop music, and I am not as certain it will ever be pop again. It is not impossible. It has had its glory days, but it is still incredible music. It does not draw the audience in Toronto much as the local white independent scene, which are populated with a particular majority of young white and hip audience type. The business of Jazz is not an easy one, and it doesn't pay the players enough to generally live on. This fact has not changed much. The mature players could also be working but the clubs that are struggling simply cannot to offer a decent guarantee. I know this because of The Trane. So that musicians who are older, more experienced and professional, are skipped over in favour of students who are just willing to work for the door and next to nothing in order to play and get their names out there. For the older

players, being asked to play for the door is a slap in the face. They feel they are voluntarily participating in their own exploitation. And they are partly correct. For them there's the justifiable sense that they deserve better. Yet, for the club owner, who needs to make a living and needs to survive as well, in a city heavily weighed down by by-laws and non-appreciative neighbours, high rent and many other costs, surprises and obstacles, it is not easy. The club owner is also looking for the best deal possible and this comes also with the cheapest possible options, which often times compromises the quality of the music. Logan is offended by the quality of the music, which he feels has been totally compromised: "It's offensive... I'm against that crap... I'm offended..." He, again, is speaking about the feeling. It is what Ettienne says of the Blues being missing, and the Blues is a key and original ingredient of Jazz. Ettienne observes that "most of the guys can't play the Blues properly." It all goes back to Doug Richardson and his settling in Chicago and the "if you're not playing the Blues and don't understand it, then you're not playing Jazz" lesson. What version of this Blues might we be hearing from students who are recent graduates in search of themselves musically? It is not to say that being young is the issue because clearly skill and ability are key, however, what is compromised and what this skill and ability need in order to resonate is experience and social conscience. Context is critical. What many of the African American Jazz greats, regardless of the degree of privilege, had in common was a racial context which informed the Blues, Jazz and the music in general.

Here again is the "feeling" or part of the "truth" that these musicians are calling for. According to what Richardson and Ettienne are saying is that many of these young white players, and even African ones, would not do well in a black Jazz joint in Chicago or Harlem because an African audience there gets it. Now it might be different. If they are correct, the audience *there* feels it and support is given to the feeling. They get when "you are faking the funk", as Cason says. It is not enough to show your skills alone, you have to show feeling. While the music is under white domination, there are smaller lesser known venues, much like the early days of the music, in African American communities which still play the music and where the feeling is still integral. The feeling cannot be separated from the talent, otherwise, it becomes a case of cart pulling horse scenario. You play to tell the story. If the story ain't there, it will not be accepted. Otherwise, there's no reward. Tough love, they call it, but it comes with love just the same. This, however, is not to say that the music is

not changing and to deny this would be disingenuous. Nonetheless, feeling is critical in the body of the music.

The decision for the club owners in Toronto to work with younger white players is often a financial one. The club owner may not see it as a personal matter. In the end, it is a business after all, and businesses prosper only by virtue of revenue. Nothing else. No revenue no business. There is still the other factor of the more established white musicians and their privilege. If the young white players are willing to work for the door, it is the elder white players who are first called for the paid gigs. So we have a situation of several tiers of exclusion and alienation. Nonetheless the concerns and situations are quite real. So we have a situation where there are the issues of historical racism, white privilege, supremacy and lack of access, ignorance, arrogance, fear, guilt, education, cliques, business, economic discrimination, lack of ownership, lack of community resource, lack of community participation, and likely more, all stacked up against the African Canadian Jazz musician. It is piled pretty high. Yet on a lighter *note*, who better to play the blues...

In a critical sense, barriers are stacked staggeringly high, and one way for the music to be played on a more even scale for African musicians in the city is to have African-centric venues or “open and free spirited” venues which are more inclusive. But even with this the community still needs to understand the business of Jazz as well. It is also important for club owners to be more educated and sensitive to the issues that concern the spirit and music, while providing fair access and opportunities. Educators, club owners and presenters owe it themselves, the musicians and the Jazz audience to educate and cultivate an appreciation of the spirit of the music. Musicians must be ready and willing to pass the music on to generations of players to come. As Kofsky (1998: 112) states:

Because of the systematic pattern of distortion that white critic imposed on the history of jazz, it is now necessary to try with equal thoroughness to uncover its past. Only in this way will we ever be able to rediscover for ourselves something of the meaning that the music had for its creators and for those who were present to witness its birth. For this reason we must insist at every step of the way that jazz (and black music generally) cannot be wrenched from the social moorings if there is ever to be an intelligent discussion of the "jazz tradition".

In Toronto Jazz Has Been White

If we were to operate on the basis of what we see in Toronto, we could understand or see Jazz as “white” and not African. If seeing is believing, Jazz in Toronto would in fact be totally a white thing, regardless of truth or history of the music. Begin with the clubs and go all the way to training institutions. See who the club owners are, see the students, see the instructors and see the audience and the privilege. In order for any real or significant understanding of difference to be, there would need to be specific attention placed on the systematic positioning of things, as well, the deconstructing and restructuring of certain conceptions would have to take place. It is not about shifting positions. If we are at all interested in the healing, social and spiritually transcending attributes of the music, we have to speak the truth behind the music and give the music back its power. It is about “awareness and education” as Alleyne rightfully suggests. It is also about granting opportunity to the community from which it comes to be creative by providing rightful access. Presenters and those in the privileged driving seats should want to make sure that this in fact happens. It should not be that every generation of African youth has to be starting over from that very place of reclamation and rediscovery. This is both disappointing and disheartening.

Jazz is tough business. I have been down that very difficult road, it began on that road. But it is even tougher business when we speak of it from the position of Black African club ownership. The mere fact that there is such tiny ownership should speak to a larger issue, but then again we spoke of population size and the idea of privilege. After all a community and its people have gone through and continue to go through on a daily basis, I think it is a crime to strip it naked completely and unethically of its culture and intellectual assets. It is a kind of a “colour blind” liberal stripping down which governs the art in Toronto.

In *Racism Without Racists*, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2006: 96) writes:

If the ideological wall of color-blind racism [is] not pliable, a few hard blows would suffice to bring it down. That is why the flexibility of the frames is so useful. Color-blind racism frames are pliable because they do not rely on absolutes... Instead, color-blind racism gives us the room for exceptions... and allows for a variety of ways of holding onto the frames---from crude and straightforward to gentle and indirect... The pliability of the color-blind walls is further enhanced by the style of color blindness. For instance, if whites find themselves in a rhetorical mind, such as having to disclose the personal taste

for whiteness or a dislike for blackness, they can always alter a disclaimer such as, "I am not prejudiced"... They can tip to around the most dangerous racial mine fields because the stylistic elements of color blindness provide them with the necessary tools to get in and out of almost any discussion.

So while the "*Jazz is white folks' music*" statement that this young *brother* made seems to have been absurd and crazy talk at the time, I can certainly understand that if an *alien* landed in Toronto in 1996 and went to a Jazz Club, the alien would find mainly what it might be called white players playing to a white audience in a white owned establishment. The African would be slight if not invisible. The alien might even say the same thing, and even that the world is a white one. The alien might say this music is called Jazz, it is cool and it is a representation of this particular group of "white people" if seeing is what we believe. The alien would have to ask more and be willing to explore or have had an accident like I did in grade 10 to see things differently. I was that alien who discovered Claude McKay in grade 10, which led me to Harlem and to Jazz, and caused me to question the space of Jazz in the city. Decolonization is a process. It is a very long process, no matter how hard we try to hurry it there are always remnants to get back to and re-examine.

And Then Again There's Taking Control... Again

From a producer's point of view today, Mercury cuts to the chase now when he says, "this is about business." He says Jazz in Toronto and North America in general "is conservative because it's about money... It is show business not show art." Toronto remains liberal yet extremely conservative. There's a gentle and polite respect on the WASP side for quiet palatable art and culture. If Jazz is going to be accepted, it has to be so on their terms and make it close to classical music as possible, or it has to speak to that particular sensibility at the very least. It cannot be revolutionary or free in spirit. It needs to be harnessed and controlled. It is not only the musicians' fault here, it is the cultural vibrations of the city and how it has evolved over the last hundred years. Cason says, "It [the music] is slowly being transformed into a European form." It is no different with Elvis Presley or The Beatles. It is again the jitterbug becoming the foxtrot. It is break dancing becoming modern dance. It is Jazz and it is Dixieland. It is business, and not only business but "show business". It is a clever form of

colonization, but colonizing just the same, ultimately colonizing is business. It is about capital. Once the product is comfortably captured, the profits are extracted from it for as long as possible, and in the case of the music, even as watered down as it may seem, there is still the ability to reap profit from really talented white players.

The Jazz industry does not need the African musician anymore, nor does it need the African story, reminding it of what it has done or calling it out. What crook wanted to be discovered as a crook. None, if you can get away with it. Not even the colonizer wants to be called a colonizer. It is a dirty word. It can do just fine with what it has going, until the African comes up with something else for it to take over or colonize. What else can the African come up with from the dirges of pain and poverty that can be spun into gold. For Mercury, “There’s a great market for Jazz all over the world” –and he is absolutely right. Jazz is in demand. There are sold out Jazz venues and festivals. However, it is still packaged and marketed by white privilege, with inconsiderate regards. As it stands in the industry, art is secondary and business is first. Jazz is not as profitable to the same extent as pop music, nonetheless, it is still a money maker which was and still is managed, marketed and managed by a majority of “white folks”. Mercury also understands this art from the business side, he was a music producer as well with STAX Records. He understands that there is still white privilege dominating the music, and states that in the end it is more than just a black and white thing, he sees it as a “money thing”. As Mercury explains, “Diana Krall is getting paid... don’t anybody dare tell me it’s because she’s white... This has nothing to do with being black or being white, it has nothing to do with being black... it has to do with being smart or not smart... It’s what we do in the west... It’s capitalism... it’s how we do it if you want success.” For Mercury, the musician and the producer has to be entrepreneurial. It is about taking control and understanding the *game* of capital. You have to understand what the *game* is all about if you want control and success. It is about the art, it is about the music, but it is about being a show person, it is about the packaging and it is about selling. That simple. As Mercury says, “A good manager is very important... but you won’t have a manager if there’s nothing to manage... It’s about show business... it’s what it is.”

Mercury feels that Jazz needs to be about business and young musicians need to understand the business of the music. He remembers when Hip Hop was on the rise when he lived in Chicago. He saw these young rappers becoming entrepreneurs.

“That's what we want them [younger generation] to do [to take ownership]” says Mercury. They created an industry and created a market when the white music establishments turned their backs on them. They became independent producers and agents of their own work. “They made them [the white execs] come to them... these record companies weren't gonna have that” says Mercury. Mercury, although in disagreement with some of the explicit content in hip hop music, believes the younger generations of the Dr. Dre's and Jayze's understand this game better. Perhaps they have learned from the experiences of the past. They created the music but have also been successful in some regards when it comes to control. He believes this is what the next generation of African Jazz musicians and presenters must do. They must take ownership. It is having the understanding of this game of capital equalling power and shifting the pages on this so to speak. It is not simply a black and white thing, but a power thing, and those with power, at least in the Jazz world now, happens to be “white” and have the historical legacy of “white privilege” on their side.

Taking control over the art with an entrepreneurial spirit is certainly a good method to be able to counter white control and productivity on one hand for sure. On the other hand, I should hope that lessons are learned from the other side as well. Countering white privilege is not a new thing. It is as old as colonialism itself. Alleyne did it. Mathews did it. Mercury did it. I tried to do it with Caliban Arts Theatre and The Trane. Every generation has had its burden with it. It is as real as breathing, and it will not go away silently with the night. It is true that things are in some senses becoming easier with education and with programs like the Archie Alleyne Scholarship Fund, and Alleyne's commitment to working with African youth interested in music. Jaribu Cason believed in the importance of letting “other little black kids see other black kids play their instruments.” This is one way to counter. The countering is necessary because white supremacy and its presence is both real and slippery. It is not that all white folk are privileged or even racist, but all whites have the privilege to benefit from this position of whiteness. Even when in an economically disadvantaged position, one can still harm the African child by calling him nigger or schvartza or anything else related to the history of peoples of African heritage. But Mercury is right, the younger generation is getting a handle of the game for better or worse, so let's see wher they take. Might this be another case of the end justifying the means, speaking capital principally here. Every generation has its own work carved out for itself in terms of

purging and cleansing themselves from the dirt of racial inequality and oppression. We still do have some ways to go to clear up stupidity and ignorance. There is enough work for generations to come, and I believe that every generation has faced the challenges with bravery, in their own way, and will continue to successfully chip away. This is not an African issue alone. It is critical that whiteness unburden its fears. It is critical that white presenters disarm and realize they are not threatened with sharing. But greed has this way of distorting the human spirit and making it very ugly. It is greed that had something to do with bringing Africans here in North America (many of whom who never made it) and it is through greed partly that Jazz was born.

Final thoughts

Jazz is the music of innovation, experimentation, and new discoveries... This constant discovery and illumination of the "marvelous" can help us move beyond academic imperative to impose order – on movements, events and even cultural and artistic developments... Jazz reveals that, even in the search for the tradition, its chains do not always bind us, and the most powerful map of the new world is in the imagination (Kelley 2012: 10).

The history of Jazz in Toronto, like the history of Jazz anywhere, when dealing with African peoples, has no straight line. It is different and takes on the characteristics of its environment. It does not always bind us. And even as there are lines and facts that are true to us, even if we agree that Jazz is first African, we still have our differences and our own personal impressions of what it is to each of us. I agree with Walcott (1997: 27) when he says,

In a Canadian context, writing blackness is a scary scenario: we are an absented presence always under erasure... Canadian blackness is difficult not because of the small number of us trying to take the tentative steps towards writing it, but rather because of the ways in which so many of us are nearly always preoccupied with elsewhere and seldom here.

We look somewhere else also because we are trying to have a better understanding of what *home* is. What is this place called home, and how do we really belong *here*? We are in search of the African Canadian self, which like African American self has many

selves. I understand Walcott refrains from using the term “African Canadian.” For now this is the term I would rather use, and less so “black” as you may have noticed. It is a matter of politics and style. We are different and that is fine. We appreciate and respect one another just the same by virtue of our differences. This self is always searching and it always seem that it is a dominant African American self that it has to reference itself to. But again, as Walcott indicates, there's work to be done at *home*. While the self here at home is present and has the many subtleties and personalities of being, it still negotiates this presence from a shrouded space of self-doubt. This is true of the African Canadian self and African Canadian musicians selves as well. The African Canadian musician is always compared to his African American kin, who have seen more success there across the border with the music.

It is true also, and Walcott understands, that we do at times need to zero in more, and strategically focus on the issues of “race and racism” *here* at home and understand more how it works and differ from “elsewhere”. Toronto is an interesting place and different from New York City, or perhaps even different than Montreal as Logan indicates. And Toronto is becoming more interesting by the minute, with this vast and widening blanket of diversity. Despite the spread of diversity, there is still the slow erasure and manipulating of the presence of African-ness by a particular brand whiteness (and not just whiteness alone) much like the old days but now operating suspiciously under multiculturalism. As Pabst writes,

Canada has officially institutionalized the policy of "multiculturalism", yet despite that, racism sets the terms of Canadian existence. The journalist Margaret Cannon has applied the term "invisible empire" to the vagaries of Canadian racism, hailing at once its strength and formidability but also its subtlety, its "invisibility" as it were... Racism in Canada is pervasive... and this "invisible empire" has, in the past and present, displaced, othered, and discriminated against black Canadians... Moreover, while Canada may have come to oppose slavery, it did not do so in an antiracist context. Escaped slaves were welcomed into Canada not just for benevolence's sake but as cheap labor. After slaves were emancipated in the United States, Canadians encouraged blacks to relocate there. And after emancipation many blacks voluntarily left Canada for the United States, not only to return to kin but also to flee Canadian racism.

I revisited Cecil Foster's (1996) *A Place Called Heaven* in an effort to grasp what his

personal lived experience and take on the scene was, not as a musician, but as a professional journalist and author. Foster (1996: 187) writes:

Since my arrival in Canada in 1979, I have maintained links with community publications and established media outlets. I have now worked in every media-newspapers (both general and business), magazines (general and business), radio and television. I have worked in front of cameras and radio microphones and behind-the-scenes writing scripts for announcers. In addition, I teach journalism at the University and community college and write books, both fiction and nonfiction. I think I understand how the Canadian media work... After almost two decades in this field, I do not believe I have ever been fully accepted into mainstream journalism. The primary reason is that I am a poor, black immigrant, while most Canadian journalist are white and middle class at the least.

This is the reality, another reality, not so distanced from the reality of the African Jazz musicians. As the great trumpeter Louis Armstrong alluded, “white folks are still running the show.” The cliques of white supremacy are binding. It is privileged-based, with the occasional face of inclusion, or tokenism. With white supremacy, the aim is control and you must be accessible to it at all times. You must be within reach. It wants to keep an eye, and even better on arm, on you at times. It is another sense of its psychic paranoia. It needs to know where you, whether it is for fear or guilt. It pretends not to need you, but the need is specific and explicit. It is control and dominance. It fears that the African and the world will come back and reclaim all that it has taken, hence the psychic cameras always rolling, keeping an eye on the potential wrong doers. While, it does not want to be figured out and exposed; most certainly it does not want to lose its position. White control over Jazz in Toronto is much the same. It must work to serve white interests and whatever it is must be under its control, otherwise this particular long standing brand of whiteness is lost. Lost without the sense of power and ownership, it lashes back in an effort to flex its muscles and to remind otherness that it is still in charge. It needs to learn to let go, but this is extremely difficult. It has a powerful and unrelenting fear. When you stand up against it, showing sign of independence or self-determination, the act becomes to “delete you”, as Ettienne says. Everything must be done on its terms otherwise it is lost.

Cason, our departed friend, reminded us that African Canadians, musicians and community, and all those who dare to bring forward the constructive ideologies of

pushing back against the restrictive, controlling paranoid impulses of white supremacist attitudes, have to bring that collective understanding into being. There still needs to be a willingness to work together with the specific determination, not to control, but to liberate the art form and let it be free, expressive and beautiful -- as was intended. Cason spoke of the will of the African American musicians in Chicago with active organizations such as the AACM and its specific mandate to keep the spirit of the music in the hearts, body and soul of these players and the community, while developing younger musicians and pushing the music forward.

In *Africa Speaks, America Listens* Kelley (2012) writes of the active attempts of African American musicians across the United States bringing associations of similar intent and purpose as the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians into being. There is the deliberate and empowered movement toward self-determination and ownership. The conditions have been identified and there is a need to re-imagine and re-configure a new counter-narrative. Logan argues that “we” have to take a lead. “We” are African folks, musicians and others, including white folks. This is what Archie Alleyne is doing with his scholarship program. He is leading. It is what Eric Mercury is saying of when he also speaks of “taking care of business”. And Ettienne speaks strongly of this need for a collective coming together. This talk of coming together has been spoken of from time past but this project brought forward this sense of urgency once again. It highlighted the sense of constant frustration and that ever recurring issue of uprootedness: the sense that your root is never quite as firm as you may like. It is the constant feeling of always starting over and being somewhat homeless. Even as there is this dreary sense of the feeling being “gone” there is still hope and optimism. And this hope and optimism stem once more from idea that one day a generation will come along and pick up the torch and make the community proud.

I hope that from this report someone picks it the meaning of this urgency and is able to speak from it in practical terms. I could tell through this process, that these participants were just stoked about the opportunity to speak about the music and their involvement in it, and of that particular time and scene. They all spoke from a particular place and a particular sense of history. They were appreciating of the opportunity to tell or relate their stories of Jazz and what it means and meant to them in Toronto. Listening to them was extremely informative and inspiring. And appreciate

them for taking the time and sharing such rich and important history with me. Their stories helped in clarifying more of what my goals and intentions were with The Trane Studio, and helped with clarifying my work ahead. Again I am grateful.

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