

Enacting politics through art: Encounters between queer and trans of color organizers and the
Canadian City

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	ii
Abstract.....	iv
Introduction.....	1
Toronto, Canada.....	3
Theoretical Contributions.....	7
Positionality.....	34
Dissertation overview.....	39
Chapter One: Creating affective boundaries: “Safe space” and the gendered politics of feelings-based work	44
Chapter Two: Sacrificial entrepreneurship: Queering modes of neoliberal governance.....	76
Chapter Three: Reconfiguring love, money and time: Adjusting chronotopic realities.....	103
Chapter Four: On affect, violence and (un)making humanity: The limits of anti-oppression and the turn to transformative justice	132
Chapter Five: Making queer and trans of color counter-politics: Disability, accessibility and the politics of inclusion.....	158
Conclusion: Visioning what comes next.....	181
Appendix One: An extended note on method.....	194
References Cited.....	208

ABSTRACT

This ethnographic study investigates the role of the arts in the relationship between urban governmental institutions and queer and transgender people of color (QTPOC) community organizations. Toronto is a fitting site for this project given that the city is intensively mobilizing the arts to foster urban economic development and that it is uniquely emblematic of Canada's regulatory embrace of racialized, gendered and sexual minorities. The findings from this study are derived from two years of ethnographic fieldwork and 63 semi-structured interviews carried out between 2012 and 2014 among state arts institutions, funding bodies and community arts initiatives. Drawing from the fields of social work, anthropology, queer studies, and critical ethnic studies, I argue that the arts operate as a means of constructing the neoliberal welfare state through the incorporation of QTPOC. These inclusionary creative citizenship practices enable QTPOC to engage in a feelings-based mode of community development in ways that are nevertheless constrained by how state institutions administer the programs that fund these initiatives. Each chapter of this dissertation is organized around an ethnographic dilemma that brings into focus how the arts surface as the solution to the diverse challenges that government institutions and minority community organizations face. As a uniquely elastic mode of social action, the arts serve as the linchpin between QTPOC efforts to counter the intertwined mechanisms of racism, sexism, transphobia and homophobia, and municipal imperatives to promote economic growth and address the social exclusion of marginalized populations. By

using the arts to explore the interrelated workings of urban government and grassroots collectives, this study demonstrates how questions of space, time, feelings, humanity and political economy are deeply implicated in the politics of making racialized, gendered and sexual difference.

INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation, I argue that the arts serve as the means through which the neoliberal multicultural welfare state is produced through the incorporation of the figure of the queer and trans person of color. Given the establishment of neoliberalism as political economic orthodoxy in the majority of putatively “Western” nation states, the significance of this study lies in its ability to illuminate tensions that arise from the uneasy relationship between neoliberalism and forms of governance designed both to care for national populations and assimilate various modes of social alterity. As a political ideology, neoliberalism emphasizes the primacy of the autonomous individual in fostering economic growth and advocates for the distribution of public resources through the market place as opposed to state institutions. While neoliberal theory stands in contrast to principles of welfarism that are premised on state support for the wellbeing of its people, it has a more contradictory relationship to multiculturalism as its enactment does not necessarily preclude the benefit of subaltern groups that multicultural programs aim to empower. In this dissertation, I thus argue that neoliberal modes of state incorporation enable the formation of simultaneously racialized, gendered and sexed modes of sociality. As a domain of social action traditionally considered to be outside of economic calculations, art serves as an important medium through which to examine the workings of multicultural welfarism under neoliberalism.

Canada is the site par excellence to undertake this investigation given its international reputation as *the* quintessential progressive multicultural welfare state. In 1971, Canada was the first country in the world to adopt multiculturalism as an official policy in the attempt to affirm the value of all Canadians regardless of their racial or ethnic origins (among other dimensions of social difference). In 2005, it also became the first country in the Americas to legalize marriage between same sex individuals. In addition to actively marking its progressive approach to questions of sexual and ethno-racial difference, Canada also takes great pride in its public health care system under which transgender people are (theoretically) able to access gender confirming health care. While there are certainly valid criticisms of these national achievements and while some might argue that Canada is perhaps more appropriately recognized by, for instance its contribution to the environmental movement, it would appear that Canada's sterling international reputation is at least partly premised on its incorporation of raced, gendered and sexualized difference. In this case, the queer and trans person of color serves as an iconic figure through which the understand the way in which Canada is constituted as the exemplar progressive multicultural welfare state.

This Canadian study is centrally concerned with how the arts figure into the relationship between mechanisms of state governance and the construction of social relations among racialized, gendered and sexual minority populations. It is situated in the city of Toronto given that municipal government officials are increasingly turning to the arts in order to foster urban economic development by pushing its status as a “Creative City”. Its reputation as “the most multicultural city in the world” and its renown for accepting gender and sexual minorities, such that it was the first North American city to host World Pride, also mark Toronto as a prime site for this investigation. By examining how the arts surface as the solution to many of the

challenges that both government institutions and minority community organizations face, this project attempts to unpack a set of ethnographic dilemmas using the theoretical tools furnished by social work, anthropology, queer studies and critical ethnic studies. It is through marshalling the insights provided by these disparate fields that this study is able to use the arts as a productive site through which to analyze the workings of both minority community organizations and government institutions.

This introductory chapter is divided into four sections. In the first section, I situate this study in Toronto, Canada and provide readers with a brief background of the city in order to orient them to the chapters to come. The second section outlines the theoretical contributions of this project to three specific fields: the study of race, gender and sexuality; the politics of art; and the social analysis of “feelings”. I then describe my own relationship to this study and conclude with an overview of the dissertation as a whole, providing brief summaries of each of the chapters to follow.

Toronto, Canada

The city of Toronto was established in 1834. It is located in the eastern part of Canada in the southeastern region of the province of Ontario, on the shores of Lake Ontario. With a population of approximately 2.8 million, it is the largest city in Canada and the fourth largest city in North America (City of Toronto, 2015) . It is consistently ranked as one of the most desirable cities in the world to live based on a number factors including safety, economic development, environmental health, creativity, and multiculturalism and tolerance of diversity (Economist

Intelligence Unit, 2014; Intelligent Community Forum, 2014; PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2014). In this brief background, I focus specifically on the city's relationship to the arts and to racialized, gendered, and sexual minorities.

Toronto's reputation as one of the most multicultural cities in the world is not surprising given the municipality's demographic makeup. Based on 2011 census data, more than half of the city's population was born outside of Canada and respondents indicated more than 213 different countries of birth (City of Toronto, 2013). These demographic realities were made possible through the transformation of Canada's immigration system in 1967 whereby entry was no longer premised (at least explicitly) on considerations of race and ethnic origin but rather on assessment according to a "points system" measuring applicant's ability to contribute to the Canadian economy (Kelley, N., & Trebilcock, 2010). The 1967 Immigration Act brought about a significant change in the ethno-racial make-up of Canadian immigrants as immigrant source countries shifted away from Europe and toward Asia, Africa and the Caribbean (Hierbert, 1994). These racial transformations are quite evident in Toronto as the city has drawn and continues to draw the majority of Canadian immigrants. 2011 census data indicate that almost 50 percent of the city's population identify as a visible minority (City of Toronto, 2013). It is important to note however that simply noting the co-existence of variously constituted ethno-racial groups does little to explain the relationships among them. For instance Canadian scholars have noted a significant gap in labor market outcomes between white Canadians and Canadians from visible minority groups (Block & Galabuzi, 2011; Cranford & Vosko, 2006; Fuller & Vosko, 2008). Urban geographers have also pointed out the increasing spatialization of these racialized economic realities in Toronto such that visible minority status and low economic earnings are

taking on perceivable patterns among certain neighborhoods (Hulchanski, 2012; H. Smith & Ley, 2008; Walks & Bourne, 2006).

Among mainstream lesbian and gay organizations around the world, Toronto is also considered to be a beacon of tolerance for gender and sexual minorities. In 2003, the city was the location of the first legal same sex marriage in North America between Michael Stark and Michael Leshner (Senger, 2013). A decade later, Toronto was selected to be the first city in North America to host World Pride and the event was also organized to include an international human rights conference around lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights (DeMara, 2014). Yet, in spite of Toronto's embrace of sexual and gender diversity, it is important to take note of how certain facets of this diversity are not as tolerated as others. When the Palestinian rights group "Queers against Israeli apartheid" attempted to march in Toronto's Pride parade in 2010, they were met with the charge of discrimination and anti-Semitism (Paperny, 2010). This incident led politicians to argue that public funds should not be used to support "political" causes and resulted in the City of Toronto changing the conditions under which it provided financial support to Pride Toronto (Grant, 2012). This incident highlights the observation made by social movement scholars that protections for vulnerable groups have come about more as the result of the tireless efforts of activists pushing for social change as opposed the benevolence of those in power (Tom Warner, 2002; Tremblay, 2015).

Miriam Smith (2005) attempts to document such efforts in her survey of the field of LGBT organizing in Toronto and provides a general outline of the workings of sexual and gender minority groups in the city. While earlier organizing in the 1960s and 1970s was dominated by white gays and lesbians, the demographic changes in the city since then have meant that LGBT organizing in Toronto has become increasingly diverse in terms of race and

ethnicity. Though Smith identified 175 different groups, the majority had fewer than 20 active participants and budgets of less than \$10,000. She states, “the overall picture...is one in which there is a dispersed network of relatively small groups that mix social, recreation and cultural activities. Groups engage in both philanthropy and self-help; participating in a group is a way of helping oneself as well as a means of contributing to the community” (2005, p. 467). She goes on to argue that this “diffuse, informally organized set of interlocking community networks...form the backbone of LGBT life in the city” (2005, p. 471). As will be seen later in this chapter and in the chapters to come, Smith’s description of LGBT groups in Toronto very much resonates with the kind of organizations that I worked with over the course of this project.

Aside from its reputation for incorporating racialized, gendered and sexual difference, Toronto is also known around the world as a “Creative City”. This status is not altogether unearned. Urban planning guru, Richard Florida (named Toronto as a prime example of how urban centers can mobilize the arts to foster economic development. Indeed, the City justifies the expenditure of public funds on the arts by pointing to the economic benefits generated from art production and consumption (City of Toronto, 2011): arts and culture are said to contribute \$11.3 billion per year to Toronto’s GDP (City of Toronto, 2012a). This push for public investment in the arts comes not only from the halls of municipal government and academia but also from various grassroots actors. As early as 2001, a group of artists, community organizers and activists (that would later morph into the collaborative “BeautifulCity”) had been pushing for the City of Toronto to use its powers to tax billboards in order to increase public arts funding (Beautifulcity.ca, n.d.-b). They argued that this new source of revenue would enable the City to meet its target of spending \$25/capita on arts and culture as outlined in its 2003 Culture Plan (City of Toronto, 2003). While highlighting the economic gains to be made from this policy

initiative, those involved in advocating for greater arts funding also pointed out how the arts serve to counteract mechanisms of social exclusion that disproportionately affect the City's vulnerable groups such as youth, visible minorities and low income populations (Leslie & Hunt, 2013). In 2013, Toronto City Council voted to increase public funding to the arts by \$17 million over the next 4 years (Knelman, 2013) and although the timeline for this increase has been delayed (Spurr, 2013), additional public resources continue to be devoted to the arts in the city. It is these resources that have financially supported the QTPOC community¹ arts organizations that are the centerpiece of this study.

Theoretical contributions:

THINKING RACE GENDER AND SEXUALITY THROUGH CANADA

In this section I draw attention to the field of scholarship committed to thinking through the interrelated nature of racialized, gendered and sexual difference and show how a focus on Canada can contribute to and extend this body of knowledge. Often explicitly making connections with earlier women of color feminist work, this line of inquiry has been instrumental in offering a nuanced analysis of the workings of political power by showing for instance how

¹ Anthropologists such as Amit (2002) and Herzfeld (2005) have criticized the largely abstract concept of community popularized through Anderson's (1983) *Imagined Communities*. In this text, I follow the lead of anthropologists like Irvine and Gal (2000) who maintain that "community" cannot be understood outside of the specific practices and coordinative processes that constitute it. For a more thorough discussion of how I mobilize the term "QTPOC community", please see Appendix 1.

exclusionary immigration policies not only enact racist modes of violence but also more deeply entrench existing inequalities on the basis of gender and sexuality (Reddy, 2005). Yet while this kind of approach is able to provide important insights into the inter-connected nature of mechanisms of exclusion that operate in seemingly distinct ways, it has predominately focused on social differences situated in the United States. Canada is a particularly important site to extend this body of literature because its multicultural approach to race and ethnicity counters the tendency of this scholarship to focus on a singularly constituted ethno-racial group. In this study, I focus on Canadian multiculturalism to facilitate a broader understanding of how state power and processes of racialization relate to the workings of sexualized and gendered difference.

Scholars from as diverse fields as critical ethnic studies, women & gender studies, queer studies, history and English have recognized the increasing importance of analyzing the interrelated nature of race, gender and sexuality as dimensions of social difference. For instance, David Eng (2007) questions the extent to which the 2003 Supreme Court decision *Lawrence vs Texas*, which struck down the Texas statute banning same sex sodomy, should be lauded as a victory of queer politics. In this case, he argues that the inscription of queer subjects into the domain of American citizenship exacerbates continuing relations of racial domination. In a close reading of the circumstances that lead to this court case Eng states,

[I]t was not the report of “consensual sodomy” that provided the basis for the Harris County Sheriff Department’s intrusion into Lawrence’s Houston apartment. It was, in fact, the report of a weapons disturbance... Robert Eubanks... called the Harris County police dispatcher with the following words: “There’s a nigger going crazy with a gun”... It is this enduring and far from resolved history of whiteness, private property and black racial trespass that provides the material and ideological background through which the queer liberalism of *Lawrence* emerges (2007, p. 47).

For scholars such as Eng, it is by investigating dimensions of race, gender and sexuality within the same frame of reference that enables a more thoroughgoing analysis of supposedly liberating social forms.

In distilling this mode of analysis into a theoretical paradigm, Roderick Ferguson advances what he refers to as “queer of color critique”, which insists on the importance of interrogating “social formations as the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and class, with particular interest in how those formations correspond with and diverge from nationalist ideals and practices.” (2003, p. 149). While queer of color critique is constructive in thinking through processes of capitalist formation in novel ways, its formulation through African American gender and sexual non-normativity nevertheless is characteristic of the scholarship that examines those who are produced as racial, sexual and gendered deviants in two ways. Firstly, with few exceptions, many of the studies to date that have placed this intersectional non-normativity at the center of their analyses have been firmly situated in the American context.

But processes of racialization are not everywhere the same. Taking seriously Etienne Balibar’s ² (Balibar & Wallerstein, 1991) insights on the relationship between race and processes of national formation means that by moving away from a decidedly American model of race relations, scholars have the potential to broaden their understanding of the interrelated mechanisms of racialized, gendered and sexual deviance. I argue that by focusing on Canada as a decisive point of contrast, scholars working with queer and trans people of color not only counter

² In analyzing the relationship between race and the nation state, Etienne Balibar proposes the concept of “fictive ethnicity” to describe the way in which states attempt to fabricate a national community. He argues that as social formations become nationalized, their populations are ethnicized such that they are represented as though they formed a natural community. This process of ethnicization unfolds along the axis of race and language, both of which express the notion that the national character is immanent in individual people. However, Balibar grants race a privileged role in the creation of fictive ethnicities because while linguistic constructions of identity are structurally open, the production of racialized difference is a more fixed undertaking.

the American hegemony that characterizes much of the literature on the connections between race, gender and sexuality, but they also have the opportunity to move away from the tendency of this literature to focus on a singularly constituted ethno-racial group.

But why does Canada function as a particularly useful site to examine multi ethno-racial social relations as opposed to the United States? Scholars of race relations in North America have been keen to point out that Canada and the US differ significantly in terms of how they approach the issue of race (Mackey, 2002). The United States adheres to an assimilationist model whereby non-white groups are expected to adapt to the existing socio-cultural and political economic fabric of American society. The success of assimilation is premised on the extent to which racial minority groups become socio-economically indistinguishable from the racial majority (Peach, 2005). Sociologists and geographers have typically measured the level of assimilation by examining the degree of racial residential segregation within a given spatial unit such that higher levels of racial segregation are taken to mean lower levels of assimilation and vice versa (Johnston, Poulsen, & Forrest, 2007).

In contrast to America's assimilative approach, Canada addresses ethno-racial diversity through multiculturalism. Established in 1971, Canada's Multiculturalism Act maintains that Canada does not have an official culture and that no ethnic group takes precedence over any other. With the passage of Bill C-93 in 1988, the Canadian government recognized multiculturalism as a fundamental characteristic of Canadian heritage and identity. In contrast to America's injunction for racial minority groups to "fit in", Canada's multiculturalism allows and in fact encourages ethno-racial groups to maintain their ways of life. Thus, while assimilationist

approaches discourage the residential segregation of ethno-racial minorities, within multicultural societies, this kind of separation is not necessarily perceived negatively (Taylor, 1994).

Although this study makes the case that Canada provides a constructive point of contrast to the literature on simultaneously racialized, sexualized and gendered difference, which has tended to focus on singular ethno-racial groups in the United States because it serves as an opportunity to examine multi-racial modes of social organization, it is important to note that the basis of this claim is not empirical. I am therefore not asserting that Canadian multiculturalism policy has the effect of producing multiracial social relations and that American assimilationist programs construct segregated ethno-racial specific communities. While members of the organizations, groups and collectives present in this study do in fact span different ethno-racial affiliations, this is not necessarily the consequence of Canadian multiculturalism policy per se.

Indeed the literature comparing the US and Canada have shown not only that the levels of ethno-racial segregation are roughly similar, but that the small differences that do exist cannot be traced to the national differences in approaches to ethno-racial diversity (Reitz & Breton, 1994).

Rather than emphasizing the significance of the relationship between Canada, multiculturalism and multi-racial forms of social organization at the level of empiricism, this study instead argues that this significance is located at the level of ideology. Canadian multiculturalism and US assimilation differently position ethno-racial minority groups to questions of identity and difference. While US assimilation obliges different minority groups to align themselves with a racial majority, Canadian multiculturalism allows these groups to remain separate not only from a racial majority but from each other. In the US context, the focus on a singularly constituted ethno-racial group thus serves to counteract the homogenizing tendencies of the US

state. In contrast, the emphasis on multi-racial modes of social organization in the Canadian context operates in opposition to the state's tendency to separate different groups on the basis of ethno-racial affiliation. It thus makes sense to investigate forms of social organization characterized by multiple ethno-racial affiliations in Canada not because of Canada's exceptionalism in housing these modes of social relations but rather because they serve to oppose a uniquely Canadian form of state power.

This argument, that multiculturalism enacts the colonial logic of divide and conquer, has been mobilized by those with diverse political affiliations. In my contention that the examination of multi-racial forms of social organization has particular significance within Canada, I am certainly not siding with critics who call for the substitution of multiculturalism with a universalistic color blind approach to governance (Bissoondath, 1994). Instead, I build on the work of scholars like Himani Bannerji (2000) who reminds us that Canadian multicultural policy was enacted to consolidate state power in a period of national crisis as a way to mute francophone nationalist aspirations, sideline the claims of indigenous populations and address the growing grievances of Canada's non-European immigrants. As a result "official multiculturalism represents its polity in cultural terms, setting apart the so-called immigrants of color from francophones and the aboriginal peoples... an element of whiteness quietly enters into cultural definitions, marking the difference between a core cultural group and other groups who are represented as cultural fragments" (2000, p. 10). In the process of reproducing Canada as a white nation, Thobani (2007) argues that "multiculturalism co-opted and derailed the explicitly anti-racist activism of people of colour, splitting their cross racial alliances as it worked to contain the demand for racial equality that sought to transform the basis of social, economic and political power" (2007, p. 160). It is by examining these multi-racial modes of social organization that we

can most productively understand how a specifically Canadian form of state power is contingently produced in dialectic relation to its abject national subjects.

By focusing on social relations that cross minority ethno-racial lines, this study aligns with the work of Fatima El-Tayeb (2009) who examines the emergence of multicultural minority communities in continental European urban centers. The contribution of *European Others* lies in the way in which its analysis exceeds national framings to embrace a continental context and moves beyond the focus of a singular ethno-racial minority group. El-Tayeb seeks to address what she refers to as “political racelessness”, a European wide phenomenon in which continental identity is established in ways that construct non-whiteness as non-European-ness and thus operates to constantly externalize racialized populations. She argues, “The Europeanization of exclusion...[means that] patterns of identification among minorities do not necessarily follow national or ethnic borders. Interactions between different racialized communities in continental Europe are shaped by the common experience of migration and often also that of European colonization” (2009, p. xxi). She goes on suggest that these interactions “might best be explored through a shift away from a vertical look at one ethnic group...toward a horizontal perspective crossing various ethnic and national divides” (2009, p. xxii). In *European Others* El-Tayeb thus focuses on modes of multi-racial and multi ethnic social organization as a strategy best suited for addressing a particular constellation of exclusionary power.

But while multi-ethno-racial social forms serve as an appropriate starting point to analyze decidedly Canadian situations, what are the significance of these forms for the study of the interrelationship between race, gender and sexuality more broadly? I argue that by examining modes of social organization created by people who are produced as racialized minorities in

different ways allows for a more fulsome understanding of the dominant processes of racialization to which all racialized minorities (including those who are also gender and sexual minorities) are subject. In this regard this project builds on Foucault's (2003) work examining the relationship between racism and the state. Foucault argues that racism emerges in the process by which sovereign power reconciles the power to kill within the context of a technology of power which seeks to bring about life, "it is at this moment that racism is inscribed as the basic mechanism of power as it is exercised in modern states" (2003, p. 254). In Foucault's model, racism has two functions: to separate the groups that exist within a population and to bring about death through life via the logic that the death of some groups will allow others to live. While this work is constructive in thinking about the complicity between the state and racism, this project demonstrates that state power operates not only through the workings of race writ large but through the interconnectedness of racialized, sexual and gendered difference.

By amalgamating those who are subject to different processes of racialization, this project goes against the tendency for cultural anthropologists to emphasize human difference as opposed to identity and similarity. However, in making a case for the analysis of multi-ethno-racial forms of social organization, I do not condone analyzing forms of ethno-racial difference as equivalent. As Ebron and Tsing (1995) argue, while "there is some truth to the interconnection between varied forms of racism...[t]o imagine all forms of racism as features of an unerring and ahistorical structural logic denies the existence of separate histories of discrimination and struggle" (1995, p. 395). The dangers of equating different forms of racism were also clearly apparent to the individuals and collectives that I worked with in this study as over the course of my fieldwork period, I saw a shift in the use of terminology from queer and trans people of color (QTPOC) to Black and indigenous, queer and trans people of color (BIQTPOC) as a way to

signal the specificity of anti-Black racism and of the workings of settler colonialism. These insights are closely related to the findings of scholars of Canadian race relations who have not shied away from examining the particular ways in which Black Canadians are consistently excluded from as diverse arenas as the labor market and discourses of national identity (Das Gupta, 1996; Thomas, 2014; Walcott, 2003). In calling for the decolonization of anti-racist discourse, they have also drawn attention to the need to focus on issues of race in examining not only the relationships among settlers but also the relationships between settlers and indigenous peoples (Lawrence & Dua, 2005; Simpson, James, & Mack, 2011; St. Denis, 2011).

Within this broader analysis of racialized, gendered and sexual difference, a focus on the differences among various racial groups is woefully inadequate to account not only for the various possible permutations of raced, gendered and sexual differences, but also for the relationships among them. While it is not my intention to enumerate all of these permutations or the dynamics that exist between them as though performing some kind of mathematical exercise, I do maintain that these differences matter. In this regard, the very particular kind of racialized, gendered and sexualized difference under consideration (and its relationship to other forms of difference) is crucial in clarifying the specificity of the claims that scholars can make about their work. I have chosen to focus on race as the point of entry into this conversation. This is not to say that starting this dialogue from another vantage point is necessarily less productive as other scholars have made considerable contributions to this line of inquiry having founded their studies firmly in another domain of analysis. However, I chose race as the ground on which to base this study because, as a project situated in Canada, the domain of race provides what I believe to be substantial analytic leverage with which to contribute to the existing scholarship on the relationships between race, gender and sexuality.

While the previous section examined the politics of difference within a specific national form, in this section I examine how state institutions use the arts to work through questions of social difference among national populations. Scholars have tended to examine the relationship between the state³, the arts and social difference by looking at the role of the arts in the interaction between state institutions and a particular subaltern population. While this approach has proven to be helpful in illuminating both the repressive and productive dimensions of state power, it has also proven to be less useful in understanding how the state uses the arts to establish different kinds of relationships with a range of marginalized groups. Yet, examining how the arts operate in this way yields a deeper understanding of the multidimensional nature of the arts as a medium of political power. I am particularly interested in populations whose acute minority status render them oblique to dominant political discourses because, in navigating their relationship to the state, they are not able to rely on existing modes of state-minority engagement. By using the arts to examine the misalignment between politically oblique populations and conventional modes of state-minority engagement, I seek to uncover unique insights into the relationship between the state and the politics of difference.

In their attempt to investigate the politics of art production, circulation and consumption, anthropologists have had to confront long standing approaches to art in Euro-American contexts that emphasize its separation from quotidian social relations. By analyzing the contexts in which art is created and the consequences of these art forms on local social relations, they counter approaches taken by more traditional art historians that analyze creative practices in terms of

³ I use the term state to refer to what Abrams describes as the state-system or “the palpable nexus of practice and institutional structure centered in government and more or less extensive, unified and dominant in any given society” (2006, p. 125)

supposedly universal aesthetic judgments. Art scholars trace this mode of apprehending art to Immanuel Kant (1987), who proposes a thesis of aesthetic autonomy in which art ought to be valued “for its own sake”. He maintains that aesthetic judgment is concerned solely with the pleasure that a spectator (regardless of their particular social location) takes in apprehending a particular object of art. Universally valid aesthetic judgments are also characterized by a disinterestedness in their purported inability to be affected by empirical circumstances. Terry Eagleton (1990) argues that this notion of the aesthetic as a theoretical category is closely bound to the material processes in which cultural production becomes autonomous from the social functions that it had previously served. With the institutionalization of capitalist forms of exchange that began to occur during the Enlightenment period in Europe, Eagleton contends that art works became commodities in the market place, existing entirely for themselves as opposed to existing for particular people or social purposes.

Pierre Bourdieu’s (1984) landmark text *Distinction* has been instrumental in demonstrating how art practices are not only intimately related to the conditions in which they are embedded but also operate as mechanisms of social differentiation. In his critique of philosophers of the aesthetic like Kant and Jacques Derrida, Bourdieu argues that “art and cultural consumption are predisposed consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfill a social function of legitimating social differences” (1984, p. 7). Drawing from ethnographic observations, interviews and survey data, he unmaskes the social basis of aesthetic choices in contemporary France. He shows how different social classes (bourgeois, petite bourgeoisie and the working class) are marked by different aesthetic preferences that are inculcated through inherited social position and the educational system. For Bourdieu, all acts of making

classifications perform the work of class definition such that distinction as difference is always shaped by and in the service of distinction as superiority.

Extending Bourdieu's pragmatic analysis of art, scholars have been keen to examine how the arts function as a political economic tool of governance for state institutions. For instance, Stuart Hall (2006) analyzes the political implications of the epochal transitions in the relationship between the British state and popular culture between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries. He maintains that “the shifting boundary line between state and civil society is one whose very shifts tell us a great deal about the changing character of the state. It is a significant moment for example, when culture ceases to be the privilege and prerogative of the cultivation of private individuals and begins to be a matter for which the state takes public responsibility” (2006, p. 364). In the context of a decline of British industrial dominance in the global marketplace and the rise of British trade union organizing, Hall demonstrates how the British state began to take a greater role in public broadcasting through the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) as a way of educating the popular classes by shaping their tastes and desires. Ultimately, he argues that the state restructuring of the relationship between culture and class is a central process through which hegemony or “a condition of social ascendancy, of cultural, moral and political leadership by a particular social bloc” (2006, p. 379) is achieved.

Much like Britain, the arts have been central to questions of the nation state in Canada. In the mid-twentieth century, the construction of Canada's nationhood was intimately linked to the arts. In 1949, the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences (also known as the Massey Commission) was charged with the task of fostering a national

culture given that Canada had gained greater prominence on the international stage through its involvement in World War II but had yet to develop a distinctive national culture (Massey Commission, 1951). Canada's growing international reputation also empowered the federal government to become involved in the arts at the national level as prior to this period, arts policy was considered to fall under the jurisdiction of the provinces (Druick, 2006). The report published by the Massey Commission made it clear that Canada needed to foster the participation of Canadians in all forms of intellectual, artistic and cultural activities as a way for the country to distance itself from American cultural hegemony (Finlay, 2004). The work of the commission was central in paving the way for the establishment of the Canada Council for the Arts, Canada's federal arts funding body. Toward the end of the twentieth century, the state again became preoccupied with the role of the arts in creating and maintaining a distinct national culture. In negotiations for the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the United States, special status was accorded to artistic culture (Atkey, 1997). Within the overall discussion about the movement of goods, services and people across state borders, Canada considered it important to take measures to protect the nation's art from the free trade discipline otherwise imposed by the Agreement.

Studies in the politics of art have been keen to point out how the arts serve as the site through which state institutions seek to deal with populations that are otherwise considered to be outside of the national body politic. Sujatha Fernandes (2003) examines the role of the Cuban socialist state in harnessing the oppositional power of rap music to maintain its hegemony in the face of growing racial and economic disparities. She shows how, in the absence of organized political movements or forms of association among Afro-Cuban youth, rap provides an avenue of expression and cultural resistance in Cuban society where musicians can address racial injustice

in Cuba and make demands for the inclusion of marginalized sectors in the process of advocating for political and economic change. By assimilating internal critiques that denounce the country's racial and economic injustice, Fernandes outlines the ways in which the Cuban state comes to exert influence over the strategies, directions and politics of rap in Cuba.

Fernandes analysis of how arts figure into states attempt to contain racialized others resonates with other ethnographic studies. For instance, in his analysis of how Aboriginal art comes to be considered 'contemporary Australian art', Fred Myers (2001) tracks the way in which it has been commoditized not only through market processes of consumer capitalism and the demands for recognition by Aboriginal activists but also by practices of the Australian state. Tracing the history of Papunya Tula, Myers demonstrates that this artist cooperative in the Western Desert was derived from the Australian states assimilationist policy toward Aboriginal peoples. When Australian Aboriginal people gained the rights of citizenship in 1967 they became subjects of national concern and federal responsibility. In response to high rates of poverty and mortality, the Australian state attempted to find them a place in the economy and turned to art as a way of providing culturally meaningful work.

Within Canada, one way in which the state attempts to contain racialized others is through the operation of arts funding structures focused on "community arts"⁴. In tracing the history of the institutionalization of community arts, Honor Ford-Smith (2001) argues that it was only through the advocacy of artists of color in the 1980s and 1990s around the lack of access to the means of cultural production that authorizing institutions like Canada Council for the Arts

⁴ This current political arrangement is different from an earlier era that Peter Li describes as being characterized by two separate and unequal art worlds. Li differentiates a formal legitimized and high status art world populated by mostly white Canadians and supported by the Canada Council for the Arts (an autonomous professional body), from a marginal folkloric and low status multicultural art world reserved for largely immigrants and visible minorities supported by Canada's official policy of multiculturalism and subject to government oversight.

began to respond by implementing specific reforms. Consequently community art programs which had previously referred to arts in the more remote provincial regions were expanded to include different ethno-racial and linguistic groups. This struggle for inclusion has continued to inform mainstream conceptions of community art, “When the term ‘community’ is invoked in discussions about community art, it usually refers to groups that are different from the dominant (white middle class) norm” (2001, p. 22). Yet Ford-Smith is skeptical about the transformative potential of state institutionalization and questions the degree to which people of color and other marginalized groups are able to set the terms of the debate. She cautions that if these new arrangements prevent artists from working in politically subversive ways, “what we have is a situation in which so called community art becomes a way of massaging and managing social consent by offering welfare to the most marginalized, in a bright new decorative package” (p. 18).

Ford-Smith’s insights into the way in which community arts can serve as a means through which states exercise control over racially subordinate populations are borne out in more recent studies focused specifically on the city of Toronto. Grundy and Boudreau (2008) draw on literature around neoliberal governmentality to argue that community art programs in Toronto serve as technologies of governance where active citizenship is premised at least partly on participation in cultural events and creative practices. In a finer grained analysis of art funding in the city, Debroah Leslie and Mia Hunt (2013) argue that community art programs target at-risk youth (largely youth of color) living in impoverished neighborhoods as a means of reducing the risk of violence presumed to be associated with these populations.

But state institutions recognize the multiple uses to which the arts may be applied, mobilizing both its repressive and productive potential. Thus while the arts serve to contain racialized others, they also operate to empower other populations for particular ends. The role of gay people in Richard Florida's (2002) argument about the relationship between creativity and economic growth provides a particularly apt example of how this process occurs. Drawing from his extensive research on urban economic development, Florida maintains that creativity is the driving force of economic growth and that the role of urban planners and policy makers is to create environments that are conducive to this creativity. According to Florida, because of an overall decrease in job security, people are no longer moving to jobs, opting instead to live in geographic areas based on their lifestyle interests. Companies are thus increasingly interested in moving to regions that are populated by creative skilled people who, according to Florida value diversity in all its manifestations. Because of the fact that "homosexuality represents the last frontier of diversity in our society...[an openness to gays is a] good indicator of the low entry barriers to human capital that are so important to spurring creativity and generating ...[economic] growth" (2002, p. 256).

In Florida's argument, gays are important for urban governments because their presence serves as an indicator as to the areas in which state institutions should concentrate their resources to promote creativity, which serves as a driver for economic growth. Florida's thesis linking gays to the advancement of urban economic development is a prime example of what Lisa Duggan (2002) refers to as homonormativity or a depoliticizing politics in which gays are complicit not only with dominant heteronormative assumptions but the unfolding of neoliberalism such that "gay rights" are narrowed to the sphere of consumption and private domesticity.

Though his work has been subject to academic criticism, his arguments have been widely embraced in the halls of urban government in countries as diverse as the United States, Australia, Japan, Copenhagen, and Italy. Florida has a particularly intimate relationship to Canada and with Toronto in particular. Florida is the Director of the Martin Prosperity Institute and Professor of Business and Creativity at the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto. In his text he specifically mentions Toronto as one of the cities that recognizes the importance of fostering a “creativity” climate in support of urban economic development (Florida, 2002). Florida’s arguments can also be evinced in the City of Toronto’s latest cultural plan (City of Toronto, 2011) which mobilizes the concept of the “creative city” as an economic engine that ensures prosperity. This is not altogether surprising given that Florida is listed as the first special advisor on the report's advisory council.

As an instrument of governance, the arts operate not only to contain the threat posed by racialized groups but also to foster a kind of economic development supported by gay inclusion. The existing literature on arts governance does in fact attest that these two populations are analytically distinct. A closer reading of Florida's work reveals a categorical distinction that he makes between questions of race and those of sexuality. He states, "my own research shows a negative statistical correlation between concentrations of high tech firms in a region and non-whites as a percentage of the population, which is particularly disturbing in light of my other findings on the positive relationship between high tech and other kinds of diversity..[such as] gays" (2002, p. 80). For Florida, it would appear that non-whites are not gays and that race and sexuality are separate categories of existence. I am not the first to make note of this distinction. Hanhardt writes "Although for Florida, acceptance of gays represents the far reaches of tolerance and diversity, his curious definition is absent of people of color" (2013, p. 187). Similarly, while

studies on the use of arts as a political tool in the lives of people of color have noted how issues of racialization are connected to other aspects of social difference such as age and gender, none have adopted an analyses that take into account how race and sexuality may be mutually constitutive.

In this section, I ask how the figure of the queer and trans person of color complicates existing analysis of the arts as a political tool wielded by the state to both constrain the resistance of racialized others and enable the assimilation of (white) gays in the name of economic development. If the state works through the arts to contain people of color and to assimilate (white) gays, how do queer and trans people of color fit into this narrative? Roderick Ferguson's (2004) conceptualization of "surplus populations" provides an important starting point for this discussion and demonstrates the simultaneously productive and repressive dimensions of power to which queer and trans people of color are subject. Extending Marx's analysis in "On the Jewish question" (2012), Ferguson argues that the workings of capital continuously disrupt the state's insistence on the universality of citizenship by enabling social formations marked by intersecting particularities of race, gender, class and sexuality. Speaking specifically about the United States, Ferguson points out how US capital had to look outside local and national boundaries for labor thereby violating ideals of racial homogeneity. He argues that the enlisting of labor in this way produces surplus populations or those that are "relatively redundant working populations...that is superfluous to capital's average requirements for its own valorization" (Marx, 1977, p. 782 as cited in Ferguson 2004, p. 15). He states,

"surplus populations point to a fundamental feature of capital: it does not rely on normative prescriptions to assemble labor, even while it may use those prescriptions to establish the value of that labor. Capital is based on a logic of reproduction that fundamentally overrides and often violates heteropatriarchy's logic. Subsequently, capital

often goes against the state's universalization and normalization of heteropatriarchy” (2004, p. 16)

In Ferguson's analysis, while queer and trans folks of color are denigrated by a state that operates to construct a universal citizenship based on a particular gendered, raced, sexual and classed normativity, they are nevertheless sanctioned by the demands of capital which constructs them as “surplus”.

It is important to note however that Ferguson's analysis is derived from the history of a particular nation state and the social formations to be found in other locales do not neatly fit into his theoretical framework. This is not to say that Ferguson is not aware of the limits of his analytic reach as he argues that the heterogeneity of surplus populations in different contexts requires continual theoretical adjustments “based on the historical and social particularities of group or groups under analysis and the competing narratives that frame those particularities” (2009, p. 163). As indicated in the previous section, the case of Canada provides an important point of departure from Ferguson's theorizations because the relationship of the Canadian state to the particularities of race, gender and sexuality is quite different from that of the US. In Ferguson's analysis, the US state is invested in producing a universal citizenship premised on white heteropatriarchy. In contrast, the Canadian state enshrines multiculturalism as a central component of the nation's heritage and has welcomed gays and lesbians into the national fold through the legalization of same-sex marriage. This is not to say that the Canadian state is immune from enacting violence on the basis of race, gender and sexuality, but that the particular way in which the state engages with queer and trans people of color through the arts requires a mode of analysis that is attentive to this specific national context.

While the previous two sections focused on understanding the politics of difference within the context of the nation-state, this section focuses specifically on the affective dimensions of QTPOC social relations. Although political economic conditions have allowed the arts to become the means through which queer and trans of color organizers self-consciously construct modes of sociality, it is through the idiom of feelings that these modes ultimately cohere. As Masti Khor, a queer south Asian community performance artist shared, “all of these QTPOC community art things that are happening right now super value feelings. All the things that are being modeled for us in community... [tell us] that you are actually rewarded for being vulnerable”. In this section, I focus on how to study feelings as an object of analysis.

Feelings are an important domain of research not only because their examination allows for greater insight into the workings of broader socio-political processes, but also because they serve as the means through which to enact positive social change. Yet despite the transformative potential of feelings, emotions, affects and sentiments, scholars are still working through how to understand these phenomena empirically. Part of the trouble in figuring out how to study feelings in Anglo-American academic contexts stem from the inheritance of Enlightenment ideologies which posit dichotomies that separate phenomenon like matter from spirit (Keane, 2003). Within these set of frameworks, feelings in and of themselves are challenging to study because they are not understood to be physical entities that can take on material form. In this section I propose the utility of turning to Actor Network Theory (ANT) as a way to address the shortcomings of existing approaches in order to provide a more capacious analysis of feelings.

Within this study, “feelings” are not general and undifferentiated but rather refer to different kinds of phenomenon that operate at different scales of analysis. I use the term feelings in two different ways. The first is concerned with an individual orientation toward various human or non-human others. Chapter three provides a clear illustration of this approach as it examines QTPOC organizers relationships to each other and to their work. In this case, feelings describe both the love that these organizers profess for their community efforts and the hostility that they express toward others with whom they have conflict. In keeping with ANT’s characteristic ontological flatness, categorical divisions between what serve as the focus of these individual feelings (whether other humans or organizing work) are analytically inconsequential. In contrast, the second way that I use the term “feelings” is more concerned with the nature of the relationship between individual humans than the humans themselves. In this approach, “feelings” refer to the kinds of social environments that humans produce and to the settings in which they conduct their activities. Chapters one and four illustrate this approach in their elaboration of “safe space” as a feelings-based environment and of how public practices of censure produce settings of fear and shame respectively.

In many ways, this focus on feelings has been made possible by the “affective turn” in the social sciences and humanities in its reversal of the historical neglect of feelings as a legitimate domain of inquiry. With the publication of Arlie Hochschild’s (1983) *The managed heart*, scholars increasingly began to refute the notion that feelings are necessarily individual phenomenon associated with a natural interiorized subjectivity. Scholars like Catherine Lutz and Gregory White (1986) have traced the denigration of feelings in Anglo-American scholarship to several hierarchically ordered and gendered Enlightenment dualisms - objective vs. subjective, nature vs. culture, rational vs. irrational, body vs. mind, social vs. individual, universalism vs.

particularism - in which the first terms in each of these paired sets are associated with maleness and are generally more valued than the second, which are associated with femaleness. As a consequence, Lutz and Abu-Lughod (1990) argue that scholarly treatments of emotion are often, “tied to tropes of interiority and granted ultimate facticity by being located in the natural body...[such that emotions] stubbornly retain their place, even in all but the most recent anthropological discussions, as the aspect of human experience least subject to control, least constructed or learned (hence most universal), least public and therefore least amenable to sociocultural analysis” (1990, p. 1)

However, more recent studies of feelings have adopted a different scale of analysis by focusing on the explicitly political nature of how feelings are manifest in social relations. For instance, Joseph Masco (2008) focuses on the relationship between affect (as well as technology, and threat perception) and a national public sphere. In his analysis of the cultural work performed by the mass circulation of images of a nuclear bombed United States since 1945, he argues that the production of negative affects has become a central arena of nation building. These images were mobilized in the name of civil defense to emotionally manage US citizens through the transformation of nuclear terror (which was seen as paralyzing) into nuclear fear (which would enable citizens to function in a time of crisis). By normalizing and politically deploying images of the catastrophic risk of nuclear fall out, the US state produced nuclear fear as a crucial dimension of the militarization of everyday life. Nuclear fear thus operated as a way for the state to shift the responsibility for nuclear war from itself to citizens by making public panic (and not the nuclear war itself) the enemy. Focusing on emotional regulation as the single most important issues in the case of a nuclear attack, citizens were prompted to take responsibility for their own survival. By emotionally adapting citizens to nuclear crisis, the US

state engaged in a mode of psychological defense in order to produce feelings that would unify a national public in the face of wide spread nuclear threat. Nuclear fear becomes the means through which Americans are transformed into (Foucauldian) docile bodies in support of the goals of the US security state. In Masco's analysis, feelings are far from natural phenomenon located within individual human subjectivity; instead they operate as means of engineering social collectivity in the mobilization of particular political projects.

Scholars have also noted that a focus on feelings is particularly useful in moving away from deconstructive and toward more productive modes of scholarship and analysis. *In Parables for the virtual*, Massumi (2002) draws on Deleuze's critique of negativity and his emphasis on the cultivation of joy to make a case for shifting from critical modes of analysis to more affirmative ones. He argues "critical thinking...sees itself as uncovering something it claims was hidden or as debunking something it desires to subtract from the world, it clings to a basically descriptive and justificatory modus operandi...The balance has to shift to affirmative methods: techniques which embrace their own inventiveness and are not afraid to own up to the fact that they add (if so meagerly) to reality "(2002, p. 12).

A focus on affect serves as a particularly fitting way to go about the productivist approach that Massumi advocates. The genealogy of concept of "affect" may be traced to Baruch Spinoza's (1992) *Ethics* in which he offers a practical philosophy on how to go about living a happy life. In contrast to Rene Descartes who conceived of man in terms of two radically different substances (mental and physical), Spinoza maintains a metaphysical monism such that "man" is composed of only one substance characterized by an infinite number of attributes. Within this framework, affect refers to a body's capacity to affect and be affected whereby this

capacity is never defined solely by a body in and of itself but is always supported by the context of its force relations. (Body in this case is not confined to a human body but also simply entities in general). This emphasis on capacity means that affect is not an object or a thing but rather must be understood in terms of "becoming". For Spinoza, while affects are a crucial element of "man", the key to securing human happiness is through moderating and directing them. In this sense, affects operate as an obstacle to happiness insofar as humans are ignorant of how they function. Moving toward happiness requires cultivating a knowledge of how affects come to influence the way in which humans move through the world and of how affects connect humans to the natural world.

An example of how a focus on feelings facilitate a productive as opposed to a negative analytic can be located in Munoz's (2009) work *Cruising Utopia*. In this text, he pushes against the political pessimism of what Sedgwick (2003) refers to as "paranoid readings" in order to seriously consider the significance of utopia and the importance of "astonished contemplation" as a way in which one can surpass the limitations of an alienating present to conceive a different time and place. Drawing on the work of Ernst Bloch, he mobilizes hope as a critical affect and methodology in order to outline a modality of queer utopianism through an analysis of quotidian aesthetics. He argues, "queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world" (2009, p.1). Munoz makes a distinction between abstract and concrete utopias in which the former ultimately falter given their separation from historical consciousness and the latter which are associated with historically situated struggles and the actualization of collectivity. While he concedes that utopian feelings can be subject to disappointment, they are nonetheless essential for the imagining and bringing forth of social transformation.

Spinoza's understanding of feelings serves as a starting point for scholars seeking to study feelings empirically. Spinoza states, "by emotions, I understand the affectations of the body by which the body's power of activity is increased or diminished, assisted or checked together with the ideas of these affectations. Thus, if we can be the adequate cause of one of these affectations, then by emotion, I understand activity" (1992, p. 102). In making a case for the significance of studying feelings and how this may be accomplished he states, "The emotions of hatred, anger, envy etc. considered in themselves, follow from the same necessity and force of nature as all other particular things. So emotions are assignable to definite causes through which they can be understood and have definite properties, equally deserving of our investigation as the properties of any other thing" (1992, p. 102). In mining Spinoza's work to construct an approach to the study of feelings, I note two specific points that existing approaches fail to take into consideration. One is the conception of feeling in terms of activity that is not necessarily confined to (though consequential for) the human body. The second is that feelings are amenable to analyses that are applied to the workings of the natural order. In different ways, these two points have been noted by other scholars. For instance, Gregg and Seigworth (2010) maintain that Spinoza "locates affect in the midst of things and relations (in immanence) and, then in the complex assemblages that come to compose bodies and worlds simultaneously...[affect is conceived as] an entire vital and modulating field of myriad becomings across human and non-human" (2010, p. 6)

The tools provided by existing approaches to the study of feeling are not up to the task of analyzing feelings as conceptualized by Spinoza. For instance, while some scholars have focused on discourse in the analysis of how people communicate in various forms about feelings as a way of conceding to their apparent immateriality (Irvine, 1990), such an approach fails to capture

what Spinoza describes as feelings' naturalistic operations. And while other scholars have embraced practice theory as a way of rejecting the separation of feelings from questions of embodiment (Ramos-Zayas, 2012), they have failed to take into account feelings' non-human dimensions. In this section, I turn to Actor Network Theory (ANT) as a way of addressing the shortcomings of these approaches and providing a more capacious analysis of feelings. In a somewhat long winded description, John Law (2009) characterizes ANT as

“a disparate family of semiotic tools sensibilities and methods of analysis that treat everything in the social and natural worlds as a continuously generated effect of the webs of relations within which they are located. It assumes that nothing has reality or form outside the enactment of those relations. Its studies explore and characterize the webs and practices that carry them. Like other material-semiotic approaches, the actor network approach thus describes the enactment of materially and discursively heterogenous relations that produce and reshuffle all kinds of actors including object, subjects, human beings, machines, animals...” (2009, p. 141)

There are two specific traits of ANT that make this approach particularly fitting to the study of Spinozian feelings. The first is ANT's commitment to relationality. ANT provides a set of tools that levels divisions that are typically taken to be foundational within the social sciences. One of the ways that such leveling happens is by rendering the social world as flat as possible so that connections and disconnections between phenomena can be clearly rendered (in this regard chemical bonds are not necessarily fundamentally different from legal ties for example) (Latour, 2005). Yet while ANT approaches have collapsed binaries between meaning and materiality, macro and micro and (especially controversial) human and non-human, few studies have turned their focus to the realm of feelings. Yet Spinoza's metaphysical monism and his insistence that feelings be treated like any other object of scientific/naturalistic inquiry serve as particularly fitting within ANT's approach. Using ANT is especially constructive in the study of feelings

because by tracing the associations (to use Latour's language) scholars can analyze how feelings are not only individual subjective states of being, characteristics of particular kinds of settings or questions of political economy but also how they may be part of all of these phenomena at once.

Secondly, ANT's insistence on construction squarely aligns with Spinoza's emphasis on feelings' generativity. As mentioned earlier, Spinoza's treatise on feelings is oriented toward the achievement of happiness by augmenting "man's" capacity. In contrast to the deconstructive impulse of much of the social sciences, ANT expresses a commitment to productivity. Latour writes "dispersion, destruction and deconstruction are not the goals to be achieved but what needs to be overcome. It's much more important to check what are the new institutions, procedures and concepts able to collect and reconnect the social" (2005, p. 11). While few ANT theorists would specifically identify with Spinoza's goal of cultivating human joy, many nevertheless do articulate the importance of pushing for positive social change. For instance, in her explicitly political material semiotics, Donna Haraway (1991) uses tropes such as the cyborg to undermine politically and ethically problematic conditions. She maintains that scholars make realities through their work and are thus compelled to grapple with deciding on the differences that they seek to make.

Making the case for analyzing feelings through ANT is not to deny the shortcomings of this approach. For instance, while its practitioners insist that ANT is not a theory in the sense that it doesn't attempt to explain why events occur but rather to describe how relations are assembled (or not), critics have labeled such a stance as apolitical and have pointed out that ANT scholars often end up taking the side of dominant groups (Haraway, 1997). Such a charge is unlikely to be made in the context of this project however, given that the tools of ANT are explicitly being used

to analyze relations found among subordinated populations (though these relations are not confined exclusively to these collectivities). It is only by keeping these and other criticism of ANT firmly in view that it's potential for the study of feelings can be most effectively utilized.

Positionality

ENTERING "THE FIELD"

The decision to focus this study on queer and trans people of color was no accident. My first entrée into a social world of simultaneously raced, gendered and sexual difference took place at the doorway of a portable classroom housed just outside one of the buildings at the University of Toronto, Scarborough (UTSC). Based on posters that I had seen around campus, I knew that this was where I could find the “Lounge”, a club for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) students. It was my second year as an undergraduate student in International Development Studies and I had not yet decided to take on an additional major in Anthropology. In choosing to open that door however, I was making an altogether different kind of decision. Having grown up in Kingston, Jamaica and witnessed the casual ubiquity of intense homophobic violence, entering that portable felt like moving into another world. As the majority of the students at UTSC were students of color with immigrant backgrounds, the Lounge was my entry point to a world of queerness that was intimately tied to racialized otherness.

Over ten years later, I still have a strong connection to several people I met through the Lounge and they are prominent characters in the chapters that follow. It was through the people I met at the Lounge that I first came to be involved in predominantly queer and trans of color community art initiatives like Asian Arts Freedom School (AAFS) and Blockorama, both of which are featured in this dissertation. Groups like these were instrumental to developing a

deeper understanding of myself in social contexts that often failed to recognize the interconnectedness of my different lived experiences. Initially understanding “gayness” as a “white thing”, I was deeply moved by the fact that I could listen to reggae and dancehall in an environment that celebrated African-diasporic, Black and Caribbean queer and trans people. Feeling confused by Canadians bafflement when confronted with a Chinese person speaking with a Jamaican accent, I found refuge in AAFS creative writing exercises which actively made space for many different permutations of Asian (including considerations of gender and sexuality as the two founders describe themselves as queer women).

While I benefited from taking part in different community programs, I joined the LGBT YouthLine, a telephone support service for queer and trans youth throughout the province of Ontario, as a way to be a more active contributor to the communities that I was fast becoming a part of. My experiences with queer and trans of color community arts initiatives and with supportive counseling led me to ask questions about the role of the arts in improving the wellbeing of subordinated populations. In leaving Toronto to go to the University of Michigan for my doctoral studies, I focused my dissertation project on trying to understand the impact of art programming for people of color with mental health conditions. I was able to find an ethno-racial community mental health agency that had a plethora of art programming and that agreed to be part of the study. Yet after several months of participant observation as a social work intern with the agency, I received the unpleasant surprise that the staff member who had brought me into the organization was fired from her post. I was informed that while I was welcome to stay on as an intern, it was no longer acceptable for me to conduct research there.

In trying to figure out how to salvage my dissertation project, I turned to friends and colleagues to ask about other organizations that I could work with. I consistently received the

suggestion to contact the very organizations that inspired my initial project, "what about Asian Arts Freedom School?" my friends would ask. And the suggestions were not just confined to the programs that existed when I was in my early 20s. I was being told about all kinds of predominantly QTPOC arts initiatives that I hadn't heard of before: ILL NANA DiverseCity Dance Company, Unapologetic Burlesque, The People Project, Write On!, Rhythm Roots & Resistance (R3), Crafty Queers, 88 Days of Fortune, Femme Fatales, The Kiki Ballroom Alliance, Mangos with Chili and Raging Asian Women (RAW) among others. I decided to refocus my dissertation on trying to understand the sheer volume of largely queer and trans of color arts group in Toronto.

DOING "INSIDER" ANTHROPOLOGY?

The fact that I chose to work in a social scene that I had previously been part of for several years has several implications for how this project unfolded. Obtaining consent for participant observation and interviews was generally a straightforward and uncomplicated process. Even for people that I had never met before, simply locating myself in Toronto's QTPOC social scene was enough for them to agree to participate.

This is not to say that many, even those I had been friends with for over a decade, didn't have questions for me. As mentioned earlier, many of the people that I worked with have at least some level of tertiary education and a good number of these individuals already had experience with social research. I fielded sophisticated questions about my research objectives, how I planned to disseminate the research findings and the possibility of participants being able to see my fieldnotes. As I write this introduction, I am in the process of revising one of the dissertation chapters to be published in a book edited by one of my interlocutors, who reminded me that

some of the people that I worked with on this project will likely publish their artwork in this book and that even more of them will read it. I conducted this study with the full understanding that the entire research process would be open to the scrutiny of those involved.

This was a terrifying thought. As I describe in chapter four, politicized queer and trans people of color in Toronto do not hesitate to "call out" or publically criticize situations and incidents that they perceive to be problematic. Would I be "called out" for my work? Would I damage my relationships with my friends by improperly representing them and/or the initiatives they are involved with? All researchers, especially anthropologists share this concern, but it is especially worrisome for anthropologists who work "at home". For anthropologists working away from "home" the fact that the reception of their work may damage their relationships with their interlocutors does not necessarily impact their relationships at "home". This is not the case for "insider" anthropologists whose friends and family are the focus of their investigation. While critics of insider anthropology argue that these kinds of studies often operate as recuperative projects, highlighting the positive aspects of the social relations under investigation while eliding issues of conflict, one can nevertheless understand this approach in the context of the pressures of conducting "insider" research.(Bunzl, 2004; Jacobs - Huey, 2002; Narayan, 1993)

Yet it is important to note that "privileging the 'insider' does not, and never will, privilege everyone on the 'inside' equally" (Domínguez, 2000, p. 365). While I consider myself a queer person of color, and while I have experience with community arts organizing in Toronto, in many ways I am very different from the people that I worked with in this study. I am in the position of getting a doctorate by conducting research on community arts, a topic that, for many in this project, form the basis of their relationship to others and for others serve as the foundation of their livelihood. This degree will provide me with the class mobility that many of the people I

worked with do not have access to. Thus, while I can grumble with my friends about the increases in our monthly rents and the gentrification of our neighborhoods, in several years, it is highly likely that I will be in the position to be able to afford the housing from which they are currently being squeezed out.

I also consider myself to be (and am unequivocally read as) a cis-gender man. Both in the academy and in the QTPOC social scenes that I describe in this study, this has enormous implications for how this project unfolded. By trafficking in questions of sex, gender, feelings and the arts, my dissertation deals with several subjects traditionally not considered worthy of serious scholarly attention arguably given their association with femininity. While people with different relationships to gender might struggle to be taken seriously in academic circles for conducting this kind of study, my unmistakable maleness allows me to "get away with it". Additionally, as I describe in chapter one, I am one of the few cis-men involved in QTPOC community organizing in Toronto. Many of the people who both coordinate and attend anti-racist, queer and trans positive community initiatives were female assigned at birth. And while a good proportion consider themselves to be genderqueer, transmen and, to a lesser extent, transwomen, most of the people that I interacted with, spoke to and worked alongside, identify themselves as cis-women. As a cis-gender queer man, I avoided the affective volatility that I often saw characterize the social relationships among largely queer women of color that I describe in chapter three. By virtue of the limited possibility of forming intimate relationships with women, I was able to side step the intensely passionate connections (and equally passionate conflicts and tensions that arose when these connections went awry) that otherwise characterize the social relations among QTPOC organizers. I was thus able to maintain a degree of

separateness that allowed this project to unfold without personally encountering affectively difficult interactions which were quite common among the people that I worked with.

In speaking about the privileges that I experience even as an "insider" among Toronto-based QTPOC community arts organizations, I do not maintain the fantasy that by clearly articulating these privileges, they somehow lose their social force. Speaking specifically about whiteness and anti-racism Sara Ahmed clearly illustrates this point when she states "the declarative mode involves a fantasy of transcendence in which 'what' is transcended is the very 'thing' admitted to in the declaration (for example, if we say that are racists, then we are not racists...)" (2007, p. 104). By pointing out how I am positioned in this project, my intention is not to disavow my social power relative to the people I worked with, but rather to clearly show how this position has allowed this study to unfold in a particular way.

Dissertation overview

This study is concerned with how the arts function simultaneously as a state technology of governance and the means through which modes of sociality based on race, gender and sexuality are manifest. The capacity of the arts to operate in these ways is premised on their ability to serve as the grounds through which affective economic interactions occur. Chapter one examines debates about the production of 'safe space' among minority communities. While some scholars have insisted on the importance of "safe spaces" for marginalized people to connect with each other and to serve as a reprieve from the oppressive nature of mainstream environments, others have pointed to challenges with the practice of safe space such as the way that these settings incarcerate subaltern people while allowing privileged groups greater freedom

of movement. I contribute to this debate by ethnographically demonstrating the productive and constraining ways in which QTPOC organizers mobilize “safe space” in their community arts initiatives. Forwarding an understanding of safe space as “affective atmospheres” I show how these settings are supportive by virtue of their feelings-based engagement with participants. I argue that while these settings serve as a refuge against racism, sexism, transphobia and homophobia that operate in the lives of program participants, they also exclude those who are uncomfortable operating in an affective vernacular and prevent program participants from entering into mainstream art settings, which are characterized by different affective norms.

Chapter two analyzes the valuation of collective creative work under political economic conditions that foster individual capital accumulation. While the entrepreneur has been lauded as the exemplar figure of neoliberalism, this chapter demonstrates how the particular enactment of entrepreneurship among certain subjects may in fact complicate neoliberal imperatives. It looks at how the city of Toronto has increased entrepreneurship-based funding to community arts programs specifically targeting marginalized groups as part of a larger cultural-economic plan for the city. While QTPOC community arts organizers have embraced these developments in order to gain funding to resource their work, they nevertheless reject the incitement to personal economic gain fostered by municipal funding policies in the prioritization of creative and accessible community development. I argue that these conditions produce a kind of “sacrificial entrepreneurship” where QTPOC organizers engage in activities associated with entrepreneurship such as fundraising and self-promotion but face personal financial hardship by funneling the resources derived from these activities into community initiatives. Focusing on sacrificial entrepreneurship as a site through to analyze the intimate workings of neoliberalism allows for

an understanding of the contingency of existing political economic arrangements and for the potential to envision how other arrangements may be possible.

Chapter three extends the discussion initiated in chapter two around community arts funding by investigating how QTPOC organizers negotiate the relationships between temporality, affect and political economy in their community work. I analyze the challenges that these organizers face in attempting to transform short term initiatives largely associated with young people into sustainable intergenerational programs. This chapter contributes to the existing scholarship that investigates the sustainability of various organizational and institutional forms. By seeking to understand how these initiatives come to exit as particular temporal phenomena, it goes against the tendency of much of this literature to treat time as the inert backdrop to human activity. I demonstrate how the youthful and ephemeral nature of these initiatives are intimately related to the precarity of the arts funding systems on which the financial viability of these initiatives depend and on the volatile affective orientations of QTPOC toward both their community organizing work and each other. In their struggle for change, these organizers attempt to reconcile the competing demands of love, time and money. Ultimately, I argue that one way in which QTPOC can work to transform their initiatives along temporal lines is to reconfigure the affective and political economic contexts in which these initiatives occur.

Chapter four investigates the limitations of the kinds of political practices that queer studies scholars seek to foster in the context of their critique of how dominant gay organizations pursue mainstream assimilation. Yet their push for a politics founded on mainstream resistance can lead to other kinds of challenges when, as in the case of Toronto-based QTPOC, radicalness in the form of anti-oppression politics becomes the framework for moral evaluation. Though this

approach certainly differs from the normalizing emphasis found in more mainstream gay organizing, I show how the enactment of the valorization of radical politics among QTPOC does not necessarily serve as an antidote to exclusions created by an adherence to respectability politics. Indeed, when approximation to radicalness as opposed to normalcy becomes the favored means of assessment, those deemed to be insufficiently radical are subject to exclusion through a public practice of censure referred to as “calling out”. I not only investigate the negative consequences of calling out – how it produces environments of fear and shame and compromises the humanity of those who are “called out” – but also evaluate transformative justice as one of the ways that QTPOC are formulating alternative approaches to community practice.

Chapter five analyzes the challenges that QTPOC organizers face in their attempts to make their initiatives more accessible to those who typically do not participate. I point out the tension between the production and reception of accessibility work among QTPOC as a way to think about the significance of accessibility in relation to the practice of community organizing in general. Drawing from the work of disability justice activists, queer and trans of color organizers have adopted a number of practices to ensure that people with disabilities can take part in their events. Yet some of these organizers have criticized the way in which disability justice organizing is implemented, arguing that these practice are opaque to those who are unfamiliar with Toronto’s QTPOC community arts scene. Echoing the works of community building/organizing scholars who speak to the importance of expanding social collectives that tend to adopt an inward orientation, QTPOC organizers also stress the importance of encouraging the participation of newcomers. This tension between disability justice organizing and efforts to ensure the participation newcomers surfaces questions about how organizing practices anticipatorily imagine the people they seek to include. I argue that in this process of

anticipatory imagination, QTPOC accessibility efforts construct relationships among unknown others in the creation of subaltern counter public spheres.

In the concluding chapter, I attempt to think through what the future may hold for the queer and trans of color community organizations that serve as the focus of this study. In so doing I trace the trajectory of the People Project, a community-based arts initiative run by and for queer and trans youth of color. In many ways, this initiative reflects the core tensions that this study investigates. I show how the People Project labors to create environments that are welcoming and accessible to QTPOC (chapters one and five), how it struggles for financial sustainability (chapter two) and how questions of feeling are central to its operation (chapters three and four). While these concerns are not unique to the People Project, the fact that it has experienced several challenges to its continued existence warrants more careful consideration. Given the changeability of the political economic conditions that allowed for groups like the People Project to come into being, I speculate about what these groups might look like in the years to come. Ultimately, I draw attention to a dilemma that many QTPOC community organizations (and grassroots initiatives focused on social changes in general) face in their struggle for sustainability: how to continue to pursue their work in the face of dominant assimilative pressures.

**CHAPTER ONE: CREATING AFFECTIVE BOUNDARIES: “SAFE SPACE” AND THE
GENDERED POLITICS OF FEELINGS-BASED WORK**

This chapter is centrally concerned with “safe space” and focuses on the work of ILL NANA DiverseCity Dance Company (ILL NANA). Like many other queer and trans people of color (QTPOC) community groups in Toronto, ILL NANA draws on feminist community organizing practices in mobilizing the concept of safe space to create supportive environments for art production. QTPOC organizers contend that these initiatives are necessary because of the challenges that their participants (who are often other QTPOC with limited formal arts training) face both in mainstream art environments and in their everyday lives; challenges intimately related to mechanisms of racialized, gendered and sexualized marginalization. That expectations around creating art in these initiatives focus on personal story telling mean that feelings come to be a dominant mode of social interaction as participants work through the feelings that arise from creating and showing art based on their often difficult lived realities.

I argue for an understanding of safe space in terms of affect or the “atmospheres” (Stewart, 2011) in which feelings are produced. I contend that a certain affective orientation constitutes both the boundaries of QTPOC community arts and the way in which these creative

practices are differentiated from professional or “mainstream” arts, which are guided by different logics of art production. As a consequence, QTPOC community artists find it difficult to cross over into professional art circles because they are not able to receive the critical feedback necessary to improve their artistic proficiency in an overly supportive “safe space” mode of art production. In this chapter I show how the affective complexes that enable the production of a particular kind of art based on the personal experiences of minority subjects also serve as a barrier that these subjects must grappled with in their attempts to enter professional art circles.

ILL NANA DiverseCity Dance Company: Creating ‘safe space’

There were nine of us in the room that day. With sunshine streaming through the windows of the third floor makeshift dance studio at the 519 Church Street Community Center, it was surprisingly bright for a February Sunday afternoon. Yet, as much as Torontonians love to complain about the city's cold, dark winters, I am not sure if we were even paying attention to the weather outside to appreciate the sunshine. That day, as people with limited to no experience with dance, we were supposed to show our self-choreographed solo dance pieces to each other for the first time and the prickly energy of our collective nervousness was almost unbearably palpable throughout the room.

We were a part of a two month dance intensive hosted by ILL NANA, one of the many programs that it offers on a free to pay-what-you-can basis specifically to those who otherwise have difficulty accessing dance education. As a queer multi-racial dance company, ILL NANA aims to challenge mainstream ideas about who can dance and what dance is "supposed" to look like. As articulated in various grant proposals submitted to different funding bodies such as the Laidlaw foundation and ArtReach Toronto, the company explains that the intensive is a program

that provides dance training to participants and culminates in a showcase where participants perform their own dance works.

In this session, the collective members of ILL NANA (kumari, Jelani and Sze-yang) were not able to be present as they were scheduled to perform their piece, FIRE - an “exploration of their personal experiences of racism homophobia and other forms of oppression” - at the 34th Annual Rhubarb Festival. Instead, they had asked Shaunga and Meg, both of whom had been in the previous iteration of the intensive program, to facilitate the session which took the form of a works in progress showing. Much in the same way that ILL NANA's creative process was driven by their personal experiences, many of the dance pieces that we created for ourselves in the intensive explored our painful and difficult lived realities. In the weeks leading up to this session, ILL NANA had focused on cultivating dance as a means of personal expression, giving us dance techniques and advice on choreography, music and costuming so that we could learn to tell our stories through embodied movement.

Throughout the program, one of the participants, Dee confessed their unease with performing. Dee was originally assigned "female" at birth but their preferred gender pronoun at the time was "they" as they no longer felt comfortable being called she (or he for that matter). They were quite willing to take part in the group choreographic pieces and even to make their own dance piece as per the program requirements but did not feel comfortable performing the piece to those outside of the intensive. Even still, they seemed nervous when it was their turn to share that day. I was more than a bit nervous for them myself. As a fairly reticent person, they seemed to be very tense when talking about the story that inspired their dance piece, a story about their relationship with their estranged father who struggles with substance use issues. I had no idea what would happen once the music started. As I was the person operating the boom box

that day, Dee came up to me with their ipod and told me that their song was all ready to go. I just needed to press play. I nodded and said that I would wait for them to give me the signal.

However, they did not get started right away. They paced around for a few seconds. They went to get a few sips of water from their water bottle. They took off the black zip-up jacket that they were wearing and put it in the corner of the room. Visibly agitated, they leaned against the windowsill to comment in a shaky voice, "hey, it's snowing outside". After a few more seconds staring out the window, they turned to me decisively and said they were ready. They then took off their red tank top, the only piece of clothing covering their brown chest. I was so startled that I had to force myself to remember to start their song, a beautifully lyrical ballad.

I was shocked that they performed bare chested because during the intensive they had spoken of intentionally trying to find clothing to hide their chest in their everyday life. Choosing to perform in this way seemed to me to be a vulnerable act. The tender nature of the song that they chose, combined with the emotive quality of their movement in addition to the fact that they decided to bare their chest caused my breath to catch in my throat and my eyes to well up with tears. The room was silent once the performance was over. Another intensive participant who goes by her stage name Masti Khor (which translates to "mischievous" in Gujarati) eventually broke the silence by saying "we all have feelings" to which there was a chorus of affirmative "umhmm's". As those who had just witnessed a works in progress showing, we would typically give "notes" to the performer, providing feedback and sharing our thoughts about their performance. But in Dee's case this did not happen. The emotional intensity of the performance seemed to render us speechless. Shaunga asked Dee how they felt about performing and they shared that it was such a difficult thing for them to do that they now had trouble meeting our gaze.

As a way of indexing these kinds of settings, I defer to the phrase often used by QTPOC community organizers and those who take part in their initiatives by referring to them as "safe spaces". This emphasis on safe space is not limited to ILL NANA but is a common theme among many Toronto-based QTPOC community organizing groups whose initiatives typically take the form of this kind of programming. Naty, who describes themselves as Metis and whose off-beat, snazzy wardrobe is a telltale sign of their identification as genderqueer is a co-founder of the People Project, a community arts initiative focusing on queer and trans youth of color and indigenous youth. They offer, "It is so refreshing to be able to come into a space and know and trust and encounter the majority of people there are invested in your self-determination and having different tools and infrastructure in place for you to do that. People will do everything they can to support that and that's a rarity I think. Something that is prevalent in the queer community in Toronto, the POC, trans, 2-spirit and Black queer communities of Toronto"

I could not help but witness this principle in action when, at the last minute, I found myself sitting in on some of the interviews for the Drag Musical program of Asian Arts Freedom School, an art-based radical history and activism program for Asian youth in Toronto (it has since changed its focus from pan-Asian youth to youth of color and indigenous youth more generally). One of the facilitators suddenly was not able to make it to the interviews and my friend Patrick who was the other facilitator, asked me to fill in. Sitting at a small table in a Tim Horton's coffee shop, Patrick was wearing a fashionable Beyonce T-shirt and red headband, occasionally taking notes as Carson responded to some of the questions that we asked of him. Toward the end of the interview, Carson somewhat guiltily asked if participants had to have lots of previous experience with drag and Patrick rushed to assure him that the program actually welcomed people with little or no experience. He spoke about the different measures that the

program had put in place to make sure that participants felt supported in being able to create the drag performances that they envisioned, including facilitating workshops on character development and script writing as well as providing mentors that would be available to give advice on make-up and costuming as well as voice and movement.

Safe space as feminist community organizing against violence

Many QTPOC community organizers maintain that it is important to create safe spaces because of the difficulty of creating art as racialized, gendered and sexual minorities in mainstream art settings. In his interview with me, sitting on the corner of the blue couch in my apartment with his hair swept to the side and his arms wrapped comfortably around his stomach, Jelani explains that ILL NANA was established as a consequence of the frustration that the founding members experienced with the mainstream dance world. The initial ILL NANA collective members, Jelani, his partner Sze-Yang and their best friend Ray, felt constrained by a traditional ballet/contemporary/modern dance education that was heavily invested in maintaining dominant modes of gender expression. The first ILL NANA performance thus involved dressing up in drag to perform an urban dance routine to Janet Jackson's song "Feedback"⁵. With Jelani finishing up his last year at dance school, Sze-Yang and Ray were auditioning for dancing jobs and felt frustrated by the racism that they witnessed where less proficient white dancers were consistently chosen over dancers of color. ILL NANA thus came about as a way for its members to continue to dance on their own terms in response to the racism and rigid gender norms that characterized their encounters with mainstream ballet/contemporary/modern dance.

⁵ It is important to note that all current collective members of ILL NANA do not identify as either "male" or "female". While assigned female at birth, kumari now identifies as "they". Similarly, Jelani and Sze-yang were both assigned male at birth but Jelani identifies as two-spirit and Sze-yang has no preferred gender pronoun or gender expression

Melisse, who also participated in ILL NANA's intensive, shared similar sentiments about their encounters with mainstream dance (though originally assigned female at birth, Melisse's preferred gender pronoun is "they"). I had not met Melisse before joining the intensive and had the chance to get to know them better by doing an interview with them a month after the program had finished. One of my first questions was about what it was like for them to first join the program. Sitting on the same blue couch, munching pretzels in one hand while absent mindedly twisting their dreadlocks with their brown fingers in the other, they took a moment to think before responding.

“My last relationship with dance ended badly. We had a bad break up. Mostly because I was a pre-teen in a class with older women and the class was about sexualized female hip hop and I was in the middle of figuring out my gender stuff and sexuality stuff and feeling comfortable in my body and it was hard to have options to move my body. I felt as though I didn't have control and so I had to stop and I forgot that I really liked dance. It was just that part of my experience that tainted all of dancing.”

ILL NANA was fortunate enough to book rehearsal space for the intensive at the National Ballet School (NBS) but warned us that it might be uncomfortable for us to be there. Both the physical architecture and the people who attended classes at NBS were radically different from the ILL NANA intensive. As a community group, ILL NANA was allowed to use the dance studios at the end of the night once all of the classes had finished, but there was often an overlap between when the intensive participants would arrive and when groups of largely white girls wearing their hair in tight buns and tutus would emerge from classes into the arms of their upper class parents. Melisse states:

“The difference between the School [NBS] and the intensive was also whiteness...It's the architecture, how clean everything was, the uniforms, the connection between white parent and white daughter and this dance. It was uncomfortable on different levels...I had all

these conversations that I hadn't had in a while, like "I wonder if they think I'm a boy or a girl?" Or they probably think that there are only boys and girls. The fact that there were Black people there probably freaked them out. Or that we didn't have our hair up and shoulder backs. That was a wow moment for me."

But for those organizing and participating in QTPOC community arts initiatives, this emphasis on safe space is not only a consequence of the exclusionary impacts of racism and heteronormativity within specific mainstream art settings but is also connected to the need to respond to the inter-related mechanisms of racism, sexism and gender oppression more generally. I asked Naty what they thought of the term "QTPOC" and why it was important and they responded:

"So now you can come into Toronto and at first glance say, there's a LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans] community. There's a street with flags and so it's not a homophobic place. Someone was sharing a story about a youth that was coming from the Caribbean and he had this idea that there was no homophobia here and literally as he was coming into the country, he was dealing with an immigration officer and he was like "no one told me that racism was there!" And that's a huge issue. My belief is that those spaces are necessary. My understanding is that those spaces exist both out of necessity and also with the intention of being able to create something that is separate, maybe not separate but as unique in providing alternative ways of organizing, alternative communities."

In their response to my question, Naty points out the limitations of what Jasbir Puar calls "homonationalism" (2007) or the way in which tolerance for sexual minority subjects become the barometer for evaluating the capacity for national sovereignty. Naty's response echoes the statements made by many of those who are involved in QTPOC community arts initiatives and how these initiatives emerge in response to the racism that often pervades mainstream white, "gay" settings and the homo/transphobia that exists in communities of color. Masti Khor, a member of the intensive introduced earlier speaks extensively about her experience with this tension. I interviewed Masti in her dining room late one night over a pot of tea and in response to

my question about how she came to understand art as a means of storytelling, she spoke about her experience with Asian Arts Freedom School:

Masti: I think for me it's about the fact that our stories are not told as marginalized people. We are fed these mainstream stories and we feel like we don't belong or fit in. It's basically like consciousness-raising. That was what [Asian Arts] Freedom School was for me. I had all of this theory, I knew all this stuff, I went to school and read women's studies and had a few friends that talked about this. But you get there and everyone is talking about their hard immigrant experiences as queer people of color. I grew up in Scarborough. Everybody was brown or some kind of brown and so I actually don't have the typically Canadian POC [person of color] story of like "no one understood what it was like", because everyone in my life knew what it was like. But I ended up being a fucking gaymo so when I came out, I lost all my friends and I started hanging out with white people and I started feeling isolated, like, "these people don't get me". So Freedom School was the first place where all my identities were coming together. Almost everyone is working class, almost everyone is - everyone was queer, I think - and trans and hot and gay and I was just so into it. So it was the first place where I could bring all parts of myself to...

Matthew:... the same spot.

Masti: Exactly and share the hard immigrant stories and learning it wasn't my fault. The hard things in my life were common stories that happened to everybody, so de-centering myself from the hardness was really important for me at the time and also so many of us didn't have access to arts. We were working class kids. [As] immigrant kids...[we would hear] "be a doctor, be a lawyer, don't focus on art that doesn't help you"

In talking to QTPOC community arts organizers and those who participate in their initiatives, many connected this emphasis on creating safe space in otherwise hostile environments to a particular kind of feminine labor. For instance, Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha writer, performance artist and cultural worker who describes herself as "queer disabled Sri Lankan cis⁶ femme writer, performer, organizer and badass visionary healer" and who is a co-founder of AAFS spoke extensively on this topic when I asked her a question about

⁶ The term "cis" refers to individuals whose current understanding of their gender identity is congruent with the gender identity with which they were raised.

what I saw as the prevalence of women in QTPOC community organizing in Toronto⁷. As I continued to learn about different groups doing community arts organizing among queer and trans people in Toronto, I began to notice that there were not very many non-trans/cis-men around. Most of the people in leadership positions in these initiatives and those participating and attending programs, events and activities consider themselves to be queer cis-women with some, but noticeably fewer gender queer and transmasculine folks⁸. Given Leah's extensive involvement with activism in the city, I wanted to know if she had noticed a similar trend. Drawing from her experience doing arts-based political work across the United State and in different countries around the world, she says that she sees Toronto as "femme city" and argues, "as femme-of-center organizers, we have a kind of politics of nurturance that we don't see as separate from the work we are doing... and I don't mean in some kind of self-sacrificial mommy role that's unsustainable". She is cautious in not trying to create a rigid gender binary because she concedes that masculine-of-center people can nurture as well. However, she wants to

⁷ The predominance of female labor that I witnessed in QTPOC community arts can also be seen in Toronto's community arts sector in general. Ella Cooper, manager at the Toronto Neighborhood Arts Network, which describes itself as "the place where arts community engagement meet in Toronto...[with] over 1,025 members, including artists, arts organizations, cultural workers and community agencies" (Toronto Neighbourhood Arts Network, n.d.) states, "What I appreciate in community arts is that there's a real blend. There are individuals who see themselves as "they". There are a lot of "they's" and "she's" and less "he's" you know?" In commenting on her study of community arts initiatives in three different Toronto neighborhoods, (Charlton et al., 2013) Margo Charlton, researcher at the Toronto Arts Foundation (a non-profit charitable organization that attempts to garner support of the arts from individuals, private and public foundations, government agencies and corporate donors) shares that her study found that more women than men are involved in community arts in Toronto. Drawing from the conclusions of this study, as well as her own experiences as a community artist (Many of the employees in arts funding/administration organizations focusing on community arts have had extensive first-hand experience in the field prior to assuming their current positions.), Margo shares that the predominance of women in community arts is quite common because more often than not community arts programming in Toronto is geared toward children and youth, largely seen to be a female domain. She identifies the connection between community arts and the work of social service agencies as another potential explanatory factor, given that the roles in these organizations (which are not very well remunerated) tend to be staffed by women. Again, I want to re-iterate that the groups that I chose to work with are not institutionalized initiatives and are only tangentially connected to more formal organizations such as community health centers and not for profit agencies. Among the community arts initiatives that are more closely connected to institutions - where the pay tends to be steadier and more plentiful - there tend to be more cis men employed than among those initiatives that are less connected in the same way.

⁸ There is a clear absence of transwomen that almost all research participants commented on and attributed to transmisogyny both within mainstream society and in their social circles

acknowledge the attempts to counter the sexism that often exists within traditional community organizing approaches where activities such as relationship building, childcare and getting the food are not perceived as "real" organizing skills such as coordinating rallies and giving inspiring speeches to large crowds.

Many of the characteristics of QTPOC community arts initiatives, including the attempt to create “safe space”, are similar to practices of consciousness-raising (as Masti noted earlier) developed by second wave feminists in North America in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Kathie Sarachild (1970) is credited with the development of consciousness raising which involves women meeting in small groups to share their experiences through personal testimony. These kinds of meetings were understood to be necessary because women held negative self-images of themselves in part because of their subjugation to men. By recognizing that their individual experiences were not isolated events, women began to realize that they were not to blame for their negative experiences (Chesebro, Cragan, & McCullough, 1973; Sowards & Renegar, 2004). The practice of consciousness-raising was often also quite cathartic as women would share thoughts that often caused them anguish and agony. In its original formulation, Sarachild wrote “in our groups, let’s share our feelings and pool them. Let’s let ourselves go and see where our feelings lead us. Our feelings will lead us to ideas and then to actions” (1970, p. 78)

The development of consciousness-raising is closely tied to the credence “the personal is political” (Hanisch, 1970) in which women increasingly sought to bring issues that were previously associated with the “private” realm into the domain of the “public”. While second wave feminists were later roundly criticized for their inattention to the differences among women (Crenshaw, 1989; Minh-ha, 1989; Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 1991; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981), and though the practice of consciousness-raising has been criticized, for instance in its under-

theorization of “experience” (Scott, 1991; Spivak, 1972), the emphasis on the political import of “the personal” and concerns related to the private sphere continue to resonate within feminist community organizing. Stall and Stoecker thus argue that a “women-centered model” of community organizing is characterized by “building expanded private sphere relationships and empowering individuals through those relationships” (2005, p. 198). This model resonates with Gutierrez and Lewis’s (2012) description of the organizing work of women of color and aptly describes some of the ways in which queer women of color in particular have struggled against intertwined mechanisms of racism, sexism and homophobia. For instance, in writing against the homophobia in Black and Black feminist organizing efforts, Audre Lorde (1988) insists on the significance of Black lesbian labor in these initiatives not only in terms of protesting and advocating for institutional reform but also in terms of arguably more private sphere activities such as preparing food, supplying sexual health products and mentoring young Black women. She states,

“When Yoli [Yolanda Rios] and I cooked curried chicken and beans and rice and took our extra blankets and pillows up the hill to the striking students occupying buildings at City College in 1969, demanding open admissions and the right to an education, I was a Black Lesbian. When I walked through the midnight hallways of Lehman College that same year, carrying Midol and Kotex pads for the young Black radical women taking part in the action, and we tried to persuade them that their place in the revolution was not ten paces behind Black men, that spreading their legs to the guys on the tables in the cafeteria was not a revolutionary act no matter what the brothers said, I was a Black Lesbian.” (1988, p. 28)

Yet it is important to look at how these particular practices come to be associated with queer women of color through the establishment and contingent maintenance of social conventions. Drawing on Austin’s speech act theory, Althusser’s notion of interpellation and Derrida’s insights on iterability, Butler (1993) proposes a performative theory of gender whereby

gender is continuously being enacted in ways that may reproduce and/or subvert existing gendered regimes. The work of anthropologists have been helpful in ethnographically elaborating how such regimes play a role in the way that activities such as personal story telling and the emphasis on feelings in consciousness raising groups come to be associated with women. For instance, Ramos-Zaya's (2012) work on affect in Newark, New Jersey emphasizes the importance of the role of emotions in the way that women are constituted as racialized and sexualized subjects. She argues that while Latinas and Latin American immigrant women acknowledge the suffering that African Americans as a group experience, they nevertheless focus on particular emotional qualities that they attribute to Black women including jealousy, hyper masculinity, carelessness about personal appearance and a propensity to violence. Ramos-Zayas work provides a counterpoint to the association between feelings-based care and women's work by demonstrating how processes of racialization and sexuality play into the way in which certain kind of emotional characteristics are applied to particular kinds of women. Thus, while Toronto-based QTPOC community arts organizers understand the work that goes into the production of safe spaces (and the feelings-based interactions that often follow from this production) to be associated with a femme of color approach to organizing, it is important to note that this association is not necessarily possible under different constellations of race, gender, sexuality and emotion.

Theorizing safe space: Making affect

I propose that the insights afforded by affect theory provide useful tools in thinking about how to conceptualize "safe space" as created by QTPOC community arts organizers. The genealogy of concept of "affect" may be traced to Baruch Spinoza (1992) who, contrary to René

Descartes conception of "man" as the composite of two radically different substances (mental and physical), maintained a metaphysical monism such that "man" is composed of only one substance characterized by an infinite number of attributes. According to Spinoza, affect refers to a body's capacity to affect and be affected whereby this capacity is never defined solely by a body in and of itself but is always supported by the context of its force relations. (Body in this case is not confined to a human body but also simply entities in general). This emphasis on capacity means that affect is not an object or a thing but rather must be understood in terms of "becoming". For instance, in their attempt to forward a Foucauldian concept of "economies of affect" Analiese Richard and Daromir Rudnycky (2009) examine the process of making neo-liberal subjects. They consider affect to be a form of conduct, or the means through which people conduct themselves and others. In this formulation, affect is less an object of circulation than a medium through which subjects act on others and are acted on.

The work of Kathleen Stewart is helpful in thinking about safe space in terms of affect or the medium through which feeling subjects are produced. In her text *Ordinary Affects* Stewart describes ordinary affects as "the varied surging capacities to affect and be affected that give everyday life the quality of a continual motion of relations, scenes, contingencies and emergencies" (2007, p. 2) and maintains that "their significance lies in the intensities they build and in what thoughts and *feelings* they make possible" (2007, p. 3 emphasis added). In her article "Atmospheric attunements" Stewart draws on Heidegger's concept of "worlding" to describe the "intimate, compositional process of dwelling in spaces that bears, gestures, gestates, worlds" (2011, p. 445) and argues for an understanding of atmospheres not as the effect of other forces but as lived affects, the force fields in which people find themselves. To attend to these atmospheric attunements is to take note of how "incommensurate elements hang together in a

scene that bodies labor to be in or to get through" (2011, p. 452). Stewart's work allows for an understanding of "safe space" in affective terms such that participants' emotional experiences in Toronto-based QTPOC community art programming are facilitated by the kind of "atmospheres" that organizers labor to create.

Yet while Stewart's work is constructive for providing the conceptual tools for thinking about safe space as the atmospheres from which feelings emerge, I want to move away from how she conceives of the way that these atmospheres or affects come into existence. She states,

“how are such elements constituted *as* an atmosphere for living? How do they sometimes and for some people hang together to produce a felt or half felt, or barely felt sense of something happening?...This is not exactly intended or unintended, not the kind of pure agency we imagine marching forward, like a zombie doggedly after what it wants...and not ‘couch potato’ passive either, but a balling up and unraveling of states of attending to what might be happening” (2011, p. 449)

In this schema, atmospheres are not the result of intentional action but rather the end product of attuning to what is currently transpiring. I pull away from Stewart's understanding of how safe space come to be assembled because, the settings that facilitate the kind of art that Dee created in ILL NANA's dance intensive do not simply occur “naturally” but are the product of intentional labor. Indeed, Shaunga and Meg put in a lot of work into trying to create an environment where we felt comfortable enough to share our pieces with each other, especially in the absence of ILL NANA who had been working with us closely for the past several weeks. Shaunga originally sent out an email letting us know that we would be showing our work to each other and assured us that: "it can be scary to contemplate presenting something that feels unfinished, but our experience as intensive participants last year was that group feedback was incredibly helpful in shaping our final works. As well, to do this at this stage of the process will ensure that the last week before the performance will be less stressful and rushed in trying to fit everything in".

Later, in response to emails that she and Meg received from some of the participants expressing their fears about showing their pieces in front of others, Shaunga sent out another email trying to allay our worries about the process, attaching a document explaining how the process of showing our pieces would unfold and how it would be helpful to us, even though it was a scary prospect. This theme of trying to make us feel comfortable enough to share our pieces with each other continued into the session itself when Shaunga and Meg, drawing from the document they sent out, assured us that our pieces didn't have to be finished and that we could share our work in whatever stage it was at. Reading from the document, they also gave us different options in which we could share with each other:

- dance/mark through your whole piece
- show an excerpt of what you have / a section / a piece of choreography
- show us a character or mood for the piece you've been working on (through walks, body language, facial expressions, even low-key improvisation)
- mark/talk through your piece and your intentions/feelings/character for the piece
- show different significant moments you want to come across through poses, facial expression, body language etc.
- share your ideas about your creative process, what has worked so far, what hasn't
- if you don't feel safe to share anything, listen to others and offer your feedback where you can

Having attended the meeting when ILL NANA was trying to decide who would cover the intensive sessions during their absence, I was not altogether surprised at Shaunga and Meg's approach. ILL NANA spent quite some time trying to figure out who they would ask to facilitate as they wanted to make sure that the classes were carried out in a way that did not contradict how they had conducted the intensive in the previous weeks. In the three years that it has been running its programming, ILL NANA has spent countless hours coming up with facilitation strategies and techniques so that people who are typically excluded from mainstream dance can

feel comfortable. For this particular session they did not want their hard work undone by a facilitator who was unfamiliar with how they typically conduct their classes.

An examination of their facilitation guide perhaps provides a clearer understanding of ILL NANA's approach to dance education. A few months after the intensive, ILL NANA hosted a dance conference and invited other facilitators to teach a range of dance styles. They developed a short facilitation guide that they distributed to the facilitators and insisted on meeting with each of them to have a conversation about dance education and to discuss the guide. The guide states,

"One of our goals for classes during this conference is to teach with an anti-oppressive framework that affirms and validates the experiences of LGBTTIQQ2S [lesbian, gay bisexual transgender, transsexual, intersex queer questioning 2-spirited] spectrum people. We also want to create a space that is relaxed, friendly and participant-centred where participants can explore movement on their own terms and gain body awareness. Facilitators should be prepared to tailor their class based on participant needs/wants while also sharing movement knowledge and experience."

Some of the (many) suggestions provided in the guide include

- Ask participants what safety looks like for them
 - Give good examples by offering what safety looks like for me [facilitator]
- Create space to ask questions and check-in with participants: e.x. how are you feeling? Do you want to repeat something?
- Offer several different options for varying bodies, abilities and needs (ex: providing quad stretches that are sitting/lying down/ standing/ more or less knee intensive)
- Allow for participants to interpret movement in a way that fits how they want to move, for example “ this is how I like to do this movement, or these are some options for how this movement can be done, do it the way that feels right for you, e.x. faster or slower”

Intensive participants like Eshan were quick to point out the effectiveness of these practices in creating the settings necessary for them to be able to create movement pieces about their lived experiences. Taking part in the intensive provided me with an opportunity to reconnect with Eshan after several years of being in Michigan for graduate school. I first met Eshan in the

summer of 2008 and was impressed that even in their early 20s they had enough experience to facilitate art-based programming for different client populations at various social service agencies in Toronto and that they had the gumption to pull together a visual arts project from their experience of returning "home" to Pakistan. In reflecting on their experience in the program, Eshan said that they were initially resistant to opening up and sharing with the group, "I was having feelings through the process but I wasn't sharing. I still had a container around myself. I didn't start letting go until I started working on my own [dance] piece...I was there and I was feeling stuff and trying to support people but I still wasn't trusting the space and sharing where I was at. I didn't think I could be vulnerable...But as it went on, I saw people bawling and then I was like, 'okay, people are here and I'm gonna be here too'". In part, they attribute the fact that they were able to let down their guard to the kind of setting that ILL NANA created: "I'm still so amazed that space created could hold us and it's because of ILL NANA and how they facilitate and who they are and how they create spaces. I think it's possible for all of us to be together under different circumstances and have shit happen. But here it felt really caring; everybody was really sweet to each other and really supportive".

This is not to place excessive weight on intentionality or to assume that the stated aim of the practices that groups like ILL NANA undertake automatically succeed in accomplishing the goals set out beforehand, without failure or any other kinds of unforeseen consequences. Indeed, despite their inclusive aims, one intensive member decided to discontinue their participation in the program because they were uncomfortable with the pressure that they felt to talk about their feelings (a more extended discussion on the mechanisms of exclusion in nominally inclusive spaces will be fleshed out in chapter five). The central point is to acknowledge that, in this particular case, much of the work that goes into the creation of settings where QTPOC feel

supported in making art about their lived experience is at least partially the result of conscious human action. In attempting to outline an agenda for Black queer studies through an analysis of a politics of deviance, Cathy Cohen (2004) looks specifically at the role of intention in her distinction between deviance, defiance and resistance. She states, “I hypothesize that most acts labeled deviant or even defiant of power are more often attempts to create greater autonomy over one’s life, to pursue desire, or to make the best of very limited life options...such acts cannot be read as resistance independent of some understanding of the intent and agency of the individual” (2004, p. 40). She contends that the significance of such an approach allows us to see “how deviant choices that are repeated by groups or sub groups of people can create a space where normative myths of how the society is naturally structured are challenged in practice...and in speech” (2004, p. 36)

In order to better understand the constitution of safe space through human action, Nancy Munn’s (1986) monograph, *The Fame of Gawa* is particularly constructive. In this text, she looks at the transformative action through which a community seeks to create value that it perceives as essential to its viability. She argues that specific practices such as food giving and the trading of kula shells contribute to the creation of a time-space-person system among different Papua New Guinea islands. These practices do not simply go on through time and space but actively construct the space time through which they persist: actors concretely produce their own space times (and themselves) in the process. Munn contends that the value of any activity or practice can be understood in terms of its key possible outcomes. Any act thus embodies a particular potency which can be expressed in terms of a parameter. Ultimately Munn argues for an understanding of space-time as the relevant value parameter such that the value of any act may be characterized in terms of its potency to effect spatio-temporal transformation. Munn’s work is

helpful in conceptualizing how QTPOC community arts organizers go about creating safe space. Through specific actions such as asking participants how they feel and adjusting their classes accordingly, giving them different options for dance choreography or letting them interpret the prepared dance routine in a way that feels most comfortable for them, ILL NANA creates safe spaces or affective atmospheres in which feelings subjects emerge.

The limits of safe space: Affective boundaries between community and professional arts

But the safe spaces created in QTPOC community arts initiatives are not for everyone. There are those who want to focus more intensively on their artistic craft and find that they are not able to grow in the overly supportive environment of QTPOC initiatives. It would seem that while such unstinting support is helpful for those who are just beginning to engage with art production in order to tell stories about their often difficult lived experiences, different kinds of settings are needed for those who take a different approach in their artistic practice. For instance, while we were packing up to leave after the intensive session that Shaunga and Meg hosted, Eshan spoke about their frustration in trying to gain greater technical dance competency. They said that they had been taking drop-in classes with ILL NANA for two years but when they go to mainstream dance classes, even the beginner level ones, they often find it too difficult because the instructors do not take time to explain the exercises. Masti and Shaunga joked, "What do you mean? They don't stop and explain something to you for 25 minutes?" In making this joke, Masti and Shaunga refer to the way that ILL NANA spend a lot of time going over specific dance movements that they are trying to teach so that all of the participants can understand. While this approach is extremely helpful in making sure that no one is left fumbling through a dance class and in encouraging participants to ask questions when they are confused about something, it is not necessarily the most conducive to improving technical dance skills over an extended period

of time. This is especially the case if class participants have different levels of dance training, which typically occurs in ILL NANA's drop in sessions.

Nadijah Robinson, whose website describes her as a "multidisciplinary artist producing both visual art, sound and video work", also finds herself frustrated with the dynamics of art production in QTPOC community arts circles. I had first met Nadijah at Asian Arts Freedom School when she facilitated a workshop where she showed pieces from her visual art series "Black Infinity". Several months later, I contacted her to do an interview and we met up in one of Toronto's public libraries. She shared,

"When I had my opening for Black Infinity, I had so much praise but I couldn't even tell if it was genuine or not. There was this praise around being earnest and being honest and being vulnerable but no one is going to tell me if my work is quality or not and be honest about that. They are going to say, "That's so great!" But no one would tell me, "You know what? It could have more of this." Or "It could have had more of that." Or "You know what would have made it even stronger? This" No one is here for that at all. People praise everything. As long as you get up on stage or you do something, it's just praise... It's hard to tell if I'm making quality art in the community because no matter what I make people will say it's golden."

More recently Nadijah was featured in the 2013 *That's So Gay* event, the annual gay pride art exhibition hosted by the Gladstone (a trendy boutique hotel in the west end of downtown Toronto). The event was curated by Elisha Lim who shares some of the concerns that Nadijah expresses about QTPOC community arts. In working with the Gladstone, Elisha sought to push back against what they saw as the predominantly white cis-gendered nature of previous iterations of the exhibit. The event description reads "The annual *That's So Gay* art exhibit was originally a witty protest reclaiming an insult in the face of homophobia. This year's exhibit pushes harder across lines of racial and cisgendered segregation in both the traditional and queer art canons". I met Elisha in 2008 when they had first moved to Toronto and was living with their sister down

the street from the house that I had been sharing with other QTPOC roommates. At the time, they had had been working on a project called "100 Butches" and both this project and Elisha themselves have since become wildly successful. In re-connecting with them, they readily agreed to an interview with me and we met to talk in a café in the Annex neighborhood of Toronto. In response to my question about where they see the future of their artistic practice, they responded.

Elisha: I want to continue to try to go for skill and merit. That's been an interest in community organizing. To try to set a high bar and I think that's the next place to go. I'm not sure if that's how everyone feels but that's how I feel. I don't want to do things that are cathartic and for therapy's sake. I want respect.

Matthew: Who do you want respect from?

Elisha: Well after this show [*That's So Gay*], I really want galleryists pay attention to these artists and invite them to be in their shows, not because they are people of color but because they are amazing...I want to take the friends and networks I've made and the politics that I've learned and move it up in a way so that people have more power. I guess it feels like when I get to a certain level it's still all white and it's frustrating. At a, not a board room, but at a planning meeting... it's me and a bunch of white people and I hate that and it's not fair. How come they still have the power in this way? I want to push upward and that's why I'm interested in curating. Curating is a labor of love. I don't like it because you don't get to show [your own work] yourself because it's a professional conflict, at least in my opinion. I would rather be making art. That's where my activism is moving. Whereas before I wanted to have parties for us for fun and relaxation, now I want to push us into power. And so I want to try to continue to organize things that people come out to because they are high profile not because they are therapy of any kind...Some people are disappointed that I do it that way and disagree with me. [They say] "It's more important that we are boding and why are you catering", not exactly to white people, but "Why are you going into places that are not so community?"

In some ways, this tension between building safe spaces so that QTPOC with limited formal arts training can feel comfortable in engaging in the often emotional process of creating art about their lived experiences and the desire to pay greater attention to the quality of the art produced maps onto the broader Canadian arts sector distinction between “community arts” and “mainstream arts”. In speaking about this distinction Ella Cooper, manager of the Toronto Neighborhood Art Network states:

“Sometimes what you have to look at is the process. Sometimes it's not the product that's important in community arts, it's what's happening in the process. So, what that means or looks like is that... So an arts world person might go [and] I have heard someone quite prominent say, "Why does community arts have to be so ugly? Why can't people do a good job as well?" And the thing is, let's say from a creative facilitation model, I may take someone through a visualization of their creative spirit and they draw what they learn from that visualization. What they draw, it's not about, "Please convey this as Rembrandt would" It's just like, "Tap into your creativity, see where this marker or pen, crayon, paint brush takes you". This is not a place of judgment. It may be the catalyst for you to create the next Brothco. This is where you are finding your voice again. You're not inviting someone to sing and "you better be perfect or get out of the room"

Ella thus explains the differences between “community arts” and “mainstream arts” in terms of distinct logics of production such that the *process* of creating community arts is a central concern whereas mainstream art circles place greater emphasis on the aesthetic qualities of the final artistic *product*. Ella’s understandings of the differences between these modes of art production bears a faint resemblance to Peter Li’s (1994) analysis of the distinction between what he refers to as “Occidental arts” and “minority arts” in Canada. (As will be elaborated in chapter two, the category of “community arts” came into existence because minority artists advocated for their arts practices to be given proper consideration by public arts funding institutions). Li argues that Canada’s policy toward Occidental arts and its multiculturalism policy toward minority arts and cultures have produced different art worlds for enhancing the artistic development of white Canadians and visible minorities. Though many of the institutional practices and political economic arrangements that Li describes in his text are no longer in operation, his main contention that minority art is generally held to be of lower status than Occidental art continues to be true of the distinction between community arts and mainstream arts respectively.

By making the claim that QTPOC’s safe space mode of art production makes it difficult for queer and trans of color artists to transition into mainstream art settings, I do not mean to

imply that these settings are without affective character of their own. Rather, I argue that the affective environments that enable the production of community arts among QTPOC are not necessarily commensurate with the logics of art production to be found in more mainstream environments. While QTPOC community organizations espouse a kind of creative egalitarianism in which everyone has the potential to be an artist and affective measures must be taken to nourish this potential, hegemonic arts institutions in Toronto such as the Royal Ontario Museum are less focused on the redistribution of the means of cultural production. Instead they operate according to a more elitist approach in which hierarchical distinctions are made between the different kinds of people who evaluate, produce and consume works of art. While a thoroughgoing analysis of the affective tone of mainstream art settings is beyond the scope of this chapter, it is worth noting that many of QTPOC community artists expressed feelings of discomfort in coming into contact with more dominant art institutions. For instance, as mentioned earlier, ILL NANA intensive participants articulated a powerful sense of unease as a consequence of being at the prestigious National Ballet School and having to interact with largely middle to upper class white adults and their children.

How can we make sense of this situation in which “safe spaces” not only create the settings necessary for the production of a kind of purposefully self-expressive art among those who have been subject to racism, sexism and gender oppression, but also condition these emerging artists to produce works in ways that are incompatible with logics of a more prestigious art world? While existing literature on minority identity formation may serve as an important starting point, it is the insights from scholars on affect that prove to be the most productive starting point for this line of inquiry. Political theorists caution against the reification of the processes that produce minority subjects because of the potential to reproduce the

conditions that construct minority subjecthood to begin with. Yet what is at stake is not a question of identity politics per se but rather a question of the limitations that arise with the formation of affective settings that enable minority subjects to come together.

In her critique of identity politics in the United States, Wendy Brown states,

“In its emergence as a protest against marginalization or subordination, politicized identity thus becomes attached to its own exclusion both because it is premised on this exclusion for its very existence as identity and because the formation of identity at the site of exclusion, as exclusion, augments or ‘alters the direction of the suffering’ entailed in subordination or marginalization by finding a site of blame for it. But in so doing, it installs its pain over its unredeemed history in the very foundation of its political claim, in its demand for recognition as identity. In locating a site of blame for its powerlessness over its past...it converts this reasoning into an ethicizing politics, a politics of recrimination that seeks to avenge the hurt even while it reaffirms it, discursively codifies it. Politicized identity thus enunciates itself, makes claims for itself, only by entrenching, dramatizing, and inscribing its pain in politics and can hold out no future-for itself or others-that triumphs over this pain” (1993, p. 406)

In this passage from “Wounded attachments”, Brown seeks to clarify how the codification of processes of marginalization (through, for instance legislation against discriminatory acts) forecloses the possibility of politicized identities engaging in their own self fashioning and instead re-inscribes their historical and present pain. The limits of identity politics that Brown describes can be seen in the quotation that Anne Cvetkovich (2003) published from her interview with Zoe Leonard as part of her study of lesbian activists in the group AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) in New York. While it was not uncommon for lesbians and gay men to have sex with each other within the group, it was also fairly taboo at the time, and in describing her sexual relationship with fellow ACT Up activist Greg Bordowitz, Leonard states,

“People were either "supportive" (quote/unquote) or angry and unsupportive of our relationship. In retrospect, I can understand that. We had created a safe queer space and now there were people having heterosexual sex within that space, occupying that space. I can understand now why that was threatening. At the time it felt small-minded and painful. But I stayed in ACT UP and I still felt good there most of the time, and I still felt

I could be a contributing member...I think identity politics can be a double edged sword that way in that this definition and container you seek for your feelings or for your culture is so helpful, but it can also be restrictive” (2003, p, 193)

Although lesbians and gay men having sex within queer activist circles are not currently necessarily met with the same kind of negative regard as in the 1980s and 90s, Leonard’s point is significant in showing the limits of social interactions premised on identity politics.

Anne Cheng (2000) also explores the restrictive character of minority identity formation in the United States but her specific focus on race and her engagement with affective considerations are constructive in thinking through the limiting nature of QTPOC community arts programming. Drawing on Freud’s analysis of grief, Cheng forwards the conception of racial melancholy which functions as crucial framework for analyzing the constitutive role that grief plays in racial/ethnic subject formation. Cheng uses racial melancholy as a mode of analysis critically examine the traditional methods of restitution in the United States which has typically taken the form of converting the disenfranchised person from being subjected to grief to being a subject speaking grievance. She argues that this speaking about racial grief runs the risk of repeating a tool of containment traditionally exercised by authority. Racial melancholy is thus an analytic framework to examine this repetitive process among racialized others who engage in an ongoing psychological negotiation that has been instigated and institutionalized by racism.⁹

⁹ While Brown and Cheng look at some of the restrictive aspects of identity politics, other scholars have examined how supposedly limiting forms of the affective aspects of identity also serve as sites of productive potential. For instance, David Eng and David Kazanjian (2003) employ Walter Benjamin’s analysis of history to critically examine Freud’s approach to grief. Benjamin makes a distinction between historical materialism, or the creative process of animating history for future significations, and historicism which entails a fixing of the remains of the past. They argue that Freud’s conception of mourning, or the eventual release of loss may be understood in terms of historicism where the past is declared resolved, finished and dead. On the other hand, melancholy as the refusal to disengage with loss can be understood in terms of historical materialism because melancholy is essentially an ongoing and engagement with loss and its remains which can enable the re-writing of the past as well as a re-imagining of the future. This transformative approach to supposedly limiting forms of affective aspects of identity can be seen in the work of Eve Sedgwick (1993) who proposes that shame is central to the consolidation of queer identity formation. While Sedgwick draws attention to the way in which rejection and humiliation are centrally

In some ways, these analyses around affect and identity politics are relevant in thinking through the limits of safe spaces as created by QTPOC community arts initiatives because the term “queer and trans people of color” undoubtedly falls in the realm of a set of politicized identities. It would thus be tempting to understand the challenges that QTPOC community artists face in moving into professional art circles in terms of the limitations imposed by identity politics. At the same time, these approaches do not necessarily map on to the limits of QTPOC art programs as articulated by cultural producers like Nadijah and Elisha. At stake is not the degree to which QTPOC as an identity category constrains other modes of being but rather the limiting nature of “safe space” or the affective spheres associated with this identity category. Cristina Hanhardt’s (2013) work on the history of “safe space” in gay and lesbian neighborhood organizing in the United States is helpful in understanding restrictive processes that the production of “safe spaces” enact. It is important to note however, that while I approach safe space in terms of affective considerations, Hanhardt is much more concerned with the connection between violence and geography. She argues that violence and safety have been the defining motors of mainstream LGBT politics since the 1970s but that these concerns have also been intimately connected to urban politics and the administration of cities. Though Hanhardt is concerned with how organizing practices around safe space rearrange existing power relations to the benefit of largely white, middle class gays and lesbians and this chapter is more concerned with alternative strategies of safe space that seek to provide support to those who can be seen as

connected to the production of queer subjects, she disavows theoretical approaches that would repudiate this affect simply because it is created through homophobia. Instead, she points out that because the stigma of sexual and gender “deviance” is so profound, it is potentially an endless source of energy available for transformation. For queer subjects, this process occurs through the incorporation of shame into political movements and its transformation into pride as part of activist practices.

excluded by the work of Hanhardt's organizers, her approach to safety is nonetheless useful in understanding the limiting nature of QTPOC community arts organizing. She states

“I am not convinced that safety or safe space in their most popular usages can or even should exist. Safety is commonly imagined as a condition of no challenge or stakes, a state of being that might be best described as protectionist (or, perhaps, isolationist). This is not to say that the ideal of finding or developing environments in which one might be free of violence should not be a goal....among the most transformative visions are those driven less by a fixed goal of safety than by the admittedly abstract concept of freedom” (2013, p. 30)

Hanhardt's work resonates with the critical writing on safe space that has emerged from the field of education that attempts to counter the emphasis on fostering “pedagogical conditions under which students can be free from self-doubt, hostility, fear or non-affirmation” (Stengel & Weems, 2010, p. 505). These scholars have tended to theorize safe space in terms of negotiating formal institutional settings where students (and their instructors) are differently positioned along various axes of alterity (Henry, 1994; Hooks, 2014; Ludlow, 2004). They have pointed out that pedagogical practices that support the creation of safe space may have the effect of inhibiting critical learning such that for instance students may choose not to ask questions around issues they deem to be controversial because they fear being chastised for lack of “political correctness” (Boast Rom, 1998; Holley & Steiner, 2005). What is instructive in these kinds of discussions is their attention to issues of affect and how the affective character of safe spaces are central to understanding their limiting nature. For instance, Stengel (2010) examines the practice of creating particular settings for marginalized group and argues, “it is the call for safe space itself that both instantiates and signals the emotion of fear in educational settings... The function of the emotion of fear is the control of embodied persons, enabling some free access and other constrained movement. Thus fear—as any emotion—is a relational phenomenon with a political

purpose and impact.” (Stengel 2010, p. 538). For Stengel, fear is a critical component in understanding how the segregation of minority groups can have the effect of controlling bodies in social space such that a “home” is created for marginalized groups and harassers are thus allowed to circulate freely.

Much like the literature in the field of education describes, it is the affective nature of the settings that QTPOC community arts organizers create that account for the fact that some of their participants struggle to gain access to a more mainstream art world. Boost Rom states, “‘space’ is ‘safe’ when individuals and groups know that they will not face criticism that would challenge their expression of identity. In a ‘safe space’, people are encouraged to speak their minds freely and to share their experiences openly, and they are guaranteed that their expressions of self will be as well regarded as anyone else” (1998, p. 407). While Boost Rom is specifically referring to formal classroom settings, he may as well also be talking about a Toronto-based QTPOC community arts program such as ILL NANA’s intensive¹⁰. Unfortunately, this kind of affective setting is not conducive to entering more professional art domains. For instance, while the community arts program of the Toronto Arts Council emphasizes the ability of this kind of art to create “a powerful sense of inclusion understanding and the possibility of self expression” (Toronto Arts Council, n.d.-a), eligibility for funding from the dance program requires professional status, defined as “someone who has developed their skills through training and/or practice; is recognized as such by artists working in the same artistic tradition; actively practises his or her art, and has a history of public presentation” (Toronto Arts Council, n.d.). As noted

¹⁰ This is certainly not to imply that queer and trans of color initiatives are settings in which “anything goes”. In one of ILL NANA’s drop in classes where kumari and Sze-Yang were facilitating, Sze-Yang intervened when one participant answered the question posed by another participant that was directed at the two facilitators. The first participant stated that the difficulty that the second participant was experiencing with the movement exercise was because of her large size. Sze-Yang interrupted this response to explain that this was not the case and asked the first participant to refrain from giving this advice.

earlier, while ILL NANA purposefully crafts safe spaces (or affective atmospheres) so that their participants can feel comfortable to engage in self expression through personal storytelling, this kind of affective environment does not contribute to the development of skills needed to be considered a professional.

By drawing attention to the limits of community arts in affective terms, I do not mean to take away from their importance nor to detract from the significance safe spaces in general. On the one hand, safe space can serve as a much needed refuge for marginalized peoples. In offering her definition of a womanist, which she describes as a Black feminist or feminist of color, Alice Walker writes that she is “committed to the survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. Not separatist, except periodically, for health. Traditionally universalist as in ‘Mama, why are we brown, pink and yellow and our cousins are white, beige and black?’ Ans: ‘Well, you know the colored race is just like a flower garden, with every color flower represented’” (Walker, 2003. p.xi). Walker thus points out that while a womanist is dedicated to the wellbeing of all peoples, she may occasionally need to be only with other Black feminists or feminists of color as a temporary means of reprieve from processes of racism and sexism. On the other hand, while Elisha, Nadijah and Eshan may feel the need to move beyond the safe space mode of art production created by QTPOC organizers, there are others who do not necessarily see the need to make a similar move. Shahina Sayini, Executive Director of the arts funding initiative ArtReach that seeks to “engage youth who have experienced exclusion in under-served areas of Toronto” (ArtReach Toronto, n.d.) explains that while she recognizes the struggle that youth face in making the transition from working in community arts to a professional arts environment, not everyone necessarily wants to make this change. She notes that some community arts initiatives

that receive funding from ArtReach simply do not continue once the project is complete because “it was a pilot project and it was great for the community at the time and the youth move on”.

Conclusion

This chapter has been centrally concerned with the community organizing practices employed by queer and trans of color community art initiatives like ILL NANA DiverseCity Dance Company. These initiatives strive to create “safe spaces” or environments that support participants in the process of creating art. Drawing from feminist community organizing practices such as consciousness-raising, safe spaces are understood to be important because those who take part in these programs are mostly QTPOC with limited to no formal arts education and they are often expected to make art based on their personal experiences. Having been subject to mechanisms of racism, sexism and gender oppression with few other avenues for self-expression, community arts participants engage in feelings-based work in the process of making art about their often difficult lived realities. Unfortunately, while community arts programs offer unfailing support in its focus on the art making process, for those who want to succeed in more professionalized circles, which places greater emphasis on the quality of the art produced, this safe space mode of art production does not allow them to improve their artistic skills in ways that enable them to cross over into mainstream arts.

While existing scholarship on identity politics has sought to show how organizing social relations around politicized identities can reproduce the very processes of subjugation on which these identities are based, the challenges that QTPOC face in entering professional arts circles

cannot be explained solely by turning to the limitations of identity politics. Instead, I argue that these challenges can best be understood by acknowledging the differences in affective orientation towards art production in community and professional arts settings. Understanding the safe spaces that QTPOC community arts organizers struggle to create in terms of affect, or the “atmospheres” in which particular feeling subjects are produced allows for an appreciation of how affective considerations demarcate differently valued modes of art production and draws attention to the political nature of affect in mediating different domains of social relations. Unfortunately, in this discussion of how affective considerations are useful in understanding the ways in which the field of QTPOC community arts is differentiated from more mainstream/professional art circles, a nuanced understanding of the variations within this field has been lost. This emphasis on variation, hierarchical distinction and conflict will be the focus of chapter four.

CHAPTER TWO: SACRIFICIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP: QUEERING MODES OF NEOLIBERAL GOVERNANCE

This chapter proposes what I refer to as “sacrificial entrepreneurship” as a way to understand how the formation of social relations based on racialized, gendered and sexualized difference works to queer mechanisms of neoliberal governance. The profit maximizing, self-sufficient entrepreneur is often taken as the foundational figure in neoliberal calculations that emphasize the reduction of state involvement in the domain of the economy. By focusing on Unapologetic Burlesque, a queer anti-racist, consensual performance program in Toronto, I show how the practice of entrepreneurship on the basis of collective as opposed to individual gain works to complicate the relationship between entrepreneurship and the unfolding of neoliberalism. In the context of social environments fundamentally premised on racism, transphobia, sexism and homophobia, queer and trans people of color (QTPOC) community organizations like Unapologetic struggle to create spaces for themselves with limited financial resources due to their systemic exclusion from the labor market. Given the lack of alternative sources for money, they turn to public institutions whose policies emphasize the importance of addressing the social exclusion of vulnerable populations through the provision of entrepreneurship-based arts funding programs. Yet by taking public resources intended to promote individual profit making and using them for community building efforts, QTPOC queer the neoliberal incitement to personal gain by sacrificing their economic wellbeing.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section ethnographically elaborates how Unapologetic Burlesque's financial challenges come to be addressed through the evolution of public arts funding initiatives in Toronto. I then situate these initiatives in a broader political economic context of neoliberal governance whereby public arts funding is disbursed in ways that foster individual entrepreneurship as part of the City of Toronto's attempt to contain the violence associated with youth of color living in poor neighborhoods. Returning to Unapologetic Burlesque, I show how this program and other QTPOC community groups engage in sacrificial entrepreneurship as a means of pursuing community development in the context of limited financial resources, labor market exclusion and the provision of entrepreneurship-based public arts funding. While proponents of neoliberalism assume that individuals are the best arbiters of their own wellbeing, sacrificial entrepreneurship lays bare the kind of "self" that neoliberalism presupposes by calling into question the extent to which individuals operate solely in their own interests. Ultimately, this chapter asks us to consider the value of collective, creative work under political economic conditions that foster individual capital accumulation.

Tracing the money: Unapologetic Burlesque, ArtReach and the City of Toronto

In her hot pink winter jacket, Shaunga trudges through the winter snow beside me. We make our way along Queen Street West to wait for the bus that will take us far enough along Dufferin Street so that we can walk to our neighboring apartments. It is close to midnight on a Saturday in December and we have just come from a dress rehearsal for the Unapologetic Burlesque show that will take place on Monday. Thankfully, one of the show's performers lives in an apartment building with a large common area which meant that Unapologetic did not have to go to the expense of renting rehearsal space. The room's harsh florescent lights and white

linoleum floors are a far cry from the darkened theatre environment where the show will be mounted in 3 days. After kumari has distributed the set list indicating the order of the performances and Shaunga has plugged her phone (with the performance audio tracks) into a small portable speaker, the dress rehearsal begins. The performers move through their pieces with kumari and the stage manager asking clarifying questions around stage management: Are you starting your performance on or off stage? Are you using props? If so, where do you want them to be placed? We clap and cheer enthusiastically for each performer at the end of their piece. Unfortunately, the snow storm that day has kept some of the performers from attending, but the size of the room is more than sufficient to fit the dozen or so people who have shown up. After doing a run of the show, the main organizers, kumari and Shaunga who co-founded Unapologetic, the stage manager and I, the accessibility coordinator remain behind to tie up loose ends.

Describing itself as an anti-racist, consensual, queer burlesque showcase series, Unapologetic came into existence at a burlesque workshop as part of a larger arts initiative focusing on South Asian queer youth that kumari helped to coordinate. In the midst of other participants sharing their negative experiences in mainstream burlesque, Shaunga asked what it would be like to create their own show and kumari quickly agreed that they would be interested in organizing to make that happen. In meeting to talk about the kind of initiative they wanted to build, they envisioned a show where performers could tell their own stories versus those dictated by what audiences or larger society want to hear. They broadly defined burlesque as a means of storytelling, where performers could play with gender and incorporate multiple means of expression. They also strongly emphasized principles of consent such that, for instance,

performers decide whether or not they want to be photographed/videotaped and how these images or videos are circulated.

I had first heard of Unapologetic through facebook where I was invited by one of my friends to attend the first show themed around anti-racism and Halloween that was held at the Gladstone Hotel in the west end of downtown Toronto. I did not end up going to the event, but all of my friends in attendance conveyed how impressed they were by the show and the quality of the performances. After seeing the call out for volunteers on facebook for the next show around Valentine's Day called "queer from the heart", I responded that I would be interested in supporting the show by selling raffle tickets. By the time Unapologetic hosted its third show, "Lost and found" at Pride, Shaunga and kumari had asked me to be part of the organizing team as the accessibility coordinator and I had my own performance spot on the set list that night. The scene above that I describe was in preparation for the fourth show, themed a "Superqueero Holiday Potluck"

The weather that night was bitterly cold at -15C and Shaunga and I gratefully made our way onto the warm bus when it finally arrived. As it was quite late, the bus was mostly empty. After several hours of hectic dress rehearsal, it was nice to be able to sit by ourselves in quiet for a few minutes. As we began to approach Dundas Street however, Shaunga started to share with me her worries about Unapologetic's finances. The first show seemed to come together so effortlessly because once they shared their hopes for the event on facebook, people were generous with their advice, volunteer labor and monetary donations. The second event, "Queer from the heart" did not prove to be as expensive because arrangements to secure American Sign Language interpretation (ASL), one of Unapologetic's biggest costs, fell through. The financial pressure for the third show, "Lost and found" was also relieved because, as a consequence of

being part of the Gladstone Hotel's Pride festivities, Unapologetic did not have to pay for the costs associated with the venue and they were able to use the left over money that they had fundraised for ASL from "Queer from the heart" and apply it to ASL costs for "Lost and found". For Shaunga, it was this fourth show that was the most worrisome. Unlike the first three shows, they would have to fundraise the costs of ASL interpretation as well as the costs for the venue all at the same time.

A few weeks later, Shaunga and I were leaving a drop in dance class hosted by ILL NANA DiverseCity Dance Company (the queer multiracial dance company discussed in chapter one) at the 519 Church Street Community Centre. Walking through Toronto's "gay" village as we made our way to the subway, Shaunga and I were talking about the class we had just taken when she suddenly asked if I knew that Unapologetic had applied for a grant from ArtReach Toronto, a youth arts funding organization. She said that Unapologetic hoped to obtain one of its \$10,000 grants so that they would be able not only to cover the cost of the show but also to offer programming around burlesque. She and kumari wanted to host workshops on performance, costuming and makeup as well as to initiate conversations around accessibility in order to critically examine who gets to perform as well as to brainstorm the kind of work needed to expand opportunities for those who are typically not on stages. I was so excited to hear that they had applied and assured Shaunga that I thought they were sure to get it. Shaunga shared my enthusiasm and said that she felt like they had a pretty good chance, especially because a similar initiative, Colour Me Dragg¹¹, had been successful in its application two years before.

¹¹ *Colour Me Dragg describes itself as a group that "brings together a collective of QT2SBIPOC [Queer Trans 2Spirit Black Indigenous People of Colour] performance artists for social change, performing in Toronto as a talent showcase since 2006 for audiences of hundreds"*

ArtReach describes itself as "a program designed to support arts initiatives that engage youth who have experienced exclusion in under-served areas of Toronto" (ArtReach Toronto, n.d.). Over email, I scheduled an interview with Shahina Sayini, Executive Director of the organization and biked over to her office near Queen Street and Spadina Avenue. After getting me a glass of water from the nearby kitchen area, she led me back to her office and offered me a radiant smile before we began the interview. She explained that ArtReach is quite different from similar initiatives because it operates on two separate levels: it is not only a funding body, but it also serves as a kind of non-profit in attempting to build the skills of youth through workshops around grant writing, budgeting, creating programming, managing social media etc. Having been with the program since its inception, Shahina was well positioned to tell me how ArtReach came into existence. After an extensive assessment study, the organization was created on the premise that the existing architecture of arts funding in the city was not making it into the hands of youth. Though it currently has charitable organization status, the agency was initially formed as a coalition of organizations from different levels of federal, provincial and municipal government. Shahina confessed that while the capacity building aspect of the organization is relatively easy to maintain ("it is easy to write grants to sustain that work"), finding ways to continue the funding of youth initiatives was proving to be particularly difficult. The members of the funders collaborative that initially formed ArtReach have steadily withdrawn the funds that were used to support the granting system and Shahina explained that it is challenging to obtain grants from funders so that ArtReach can then use this money for its own grants because most funders want to grant their own money (as opposed to giving it to other funders). Having exhausted multiple avenues in trying to fund its granting system, Shahina conceded that if ArtReach is not able to

benefit from the proposal to increase arts funding currently in front of Toronto City Council it is most likely that the granting aspect of ArtReach will come to an end.

By the time that I had spoken with Shahina in May, I was familiar with the proposal that she had mentioned. Having joined a queer and trans youth list-serve several years earlier, I received an email announcement of an Art Jam to be held at City Hall earlier that year in January. I didn't look at the announcement very closely and thought that it was simply an opportunity for people in the city to get together and make art. When I arrived at the large lobby at City Hall, I was surprised to see that the event was well attended by a wide variety of people: youth, city council members in suit jackets, social service workers with their organizational affiliations blazoned on their name tags, and artists carrying their musical instruments, cameras and paintbrushes. Once the event got underway, I realized that it was much more than an art jam, it was also a town hall that served as a means through which to advocate for greater funding for the arts at the City of Toronto.

In 2003 the City produced the policy document, *Culture Plan for a Creative City* and established the goal spending \$25/capita on arts and culture (City of Toronto, 2003). By the time this town hall and art jam had taken place a decade later, this goal had yet to be realized. The Beautiful City coalition that hosted the art jam and town hall that night was an alliance of over 60 social service and arts organizations throughout Toronto. It was advocating that the City's funding target be realized through the taxation of Toronto's billboards and was pushing for these funds to be directed toward enhancing public space through the arts, focusing specifically on underserved communities and grants to artists (Beautifulcity.ca, n.d.-a). The work of this alliance had finally resulted in this proposal being put forward to Toronto City Council. At the end of the town hall and art jam, the hosts of the event encouraged audience members to contact their

councilors and ask them to vote in support of the proposal. The next day I made a call to Ana Bailao, the councilor of my ward, to ask her about her position on the arts funding proposal under consideration. She assured me that, as one of the many people involved in pulling together the document to present to City Council, she would most definitely be voting in favor of the proposal. Scouring the news online and waiting to hear the outcome of the Council meeting, I was ecstatic to learn that the City of Toronto agreed to a four year plan to increase funding to the arts by \$17.5 million over the next four years in order to meet the original \$25/capita commitment and had allocated \$6 million to arts funding in the 2103 municipal budget (Knelman, 2013).¹²

Two weeks after I had my interview with Shahina, I read an online news release from the Toronto Arts Council (TAC) indicating that, of the funds to be collected from the billboard tax and directed to the TAC, \$300,000 would be invested in a partnership with ArtReach in support of youth art projects, especially those focusing on youth in under-served communities with experiences of exclusion on the basis of race, neighborhood, language, newcomer status, disability, gender, sexual orientation and other factors (Toronto Arts Council, 2013b). I was thus not surprised when kumari told me that Unapologetic's initial application to ArtReach was not successful but that the agency informed them that it really liked the programming that Unapologetic had proposed and urged them to re-submit their proposal (unchanged) for the next round of grants because they had an influx of funding for new initiatives. On the day before the Superqueero Holiday Potluck showcase in December, kumari and Shaunga received the good news that their grant application was successful and were able to share this information as an

¹² Unfortunately since then the city has extended the four year timeline for the implementation of these increases by two years (Spurr, 2013)

announcement at the show (met by a rousing round of applause). Later, Shaunga posted a note to the Unapologetic facebook page. The first paragraph reads:

"THIS JUST IN - Unapologetic Burlesque received its first arts/community grant from ArtReach Toronto!! THIS MEANS WE HAVE MONEY TO DO AMAZING THINGS LEADING UP TO OUR NEXT SHOWCASE!! Not only do we have more funds to put toward accessibility and production costs, more fairly compensate the work & art that performers, crew and organizers do, we're ALSO going to be able to create space for more skill share workshops revolving around all things unapologetic burlesque (storytelling! active listening! character building! gender play! props and costume making! tech, stage and production skills! whatever the fuck you want!) because this knowledge is meant to be shared, and we are meant to grow into stronger artists, storytellers and organizers."

Neoliberal governance: Making the artist entrepreneur amidst labor market precarity

In tracing this series of events, it is important to situate the work of Unapologetic Burlesque, ArtReach and the City of Toronto within a broader discussion of neoliberal governance. Scholars of government in advanced liberal democracies like Canada have pointed out a shift from welfarist to neoliberal modes of governance beginning in the 1970s (Harvey, 2005; Rose & Miller, 1992). Adopting Keynesian fiscal policies, welfarist states focused on securing full employment and economic growth by actively intervening in market processes to dampen business cycles. Animating T.S. Marshall's concept of social rights, which call for the protection of women, the poor, minorities and others who are vulnerable to social forces that undercut their standing as equal citizens, these states also established systems to attend to basic human needs like health, housing and social insurance. The shift to neoliberalism signaled a significant change in approaches to governance. In the bid for economic growth in the aftermath of fiscal crises engendered by Keynesian policies, government bodies re-oriented their relationship to economic forces, no longer intervening in activities of capital accumulation, regardless of the effect on employment levels. They also transformed their relationship to the

populations they governed, abandoning the programs that were said to foster dependency and instead encouraged a more active citizenship whereby enterprising individuals are understood to best be able to secure their own needs.

Typically scholars have understood neoliberalism to be associated with curbing the influence of government authorities, especially in areas of the economy. This can certainly be seen in the case of the City of Toronto where, in the lead up to the release of the 2013 municipal budget, media outlets identified concerns around reduced government spending. This is not altogether surprising given that, in 2010, Rob Ford was elected mayor of Toronto on a platform based on stopping "the gravy train" of municipal expenditures and taxes (Blatchford, 2010) and that the 2012 budget process involved a highly publicized struggle between Mayor Ford who sought to cut \$19 million from city services and Toronto residents and city councilors who were vehemently opposed to these measures (Alcoba, 2012). Some of the more conventional tensions around city spending were reported in the media such as cuts to the affordable housing, shelter and housing support programs due to decreased contributions from the provincial and federal levels of government (Social Planning Toronto, 2013) as well as struggles with the firefighters union over the fire service budget (Gee, 2013).

At the same time, scholars of neoliberalism have pointed out that in addition to eliminating social programming, government institutions may also engage in the formation of such programming in order to achieve specific aims. In their analysis of neoliberalism in North American and Western European contexts, Peck and Tickell (2003) point out "a shift from the pattern of deregulation and dismantlement so dominant during the 1980s which might be characterized as a "roll back neoliberalism" to an emergent phase of active state building and regulatory reform- an ascendant moment of "roll out neoliberalism" (2003, p. 384). In this newer

version of neoliberalism, “new technologies of government are being designed and rolled out, new technologies of ‘reform’ are being constructed...new institutions and modes of delivery are being fashioned and new social subjectivities are being fostered” (2003, p. 399). Peck and Tickell’s notion of “roll out neoliberalism” help to explain why, in an environment where essential services like public housing are struggling to maintain existing levels of municipal support, arguably less important budget line items like the arts are able to secure increases in government spending. The 2013 municipal budget thus positioned increases in public funding of the arts alongside issues of poverty alleviation and public transit. (Krgovic, 2012).

It is important to note the significance of the public nature of community arts funding. Cindy, a community grants officer at a government arts funding agency, shared that given the difficulty of accessing money from other sources, community arts necessarily have to be funded through public budgets. She states:

"It's very hard for them [community arts initiatives] to raise funds in any other way. So there's no expectation of diverse revenue. Corporate funding? No. Ticket sales? No. There aren't opportunities to generate revenue when you are trying to provide access...because of the kinds of communities being engaged, it's much more difficult. You can't really sell tickets when trying to provide access to programming. And in terms of fundraising in terms of corporations? No. Why would they be interested? Not to say not at all but you know, pretty much nil."

Mariana Valverde argues that the government support of “community” initiatives has a particular history in Canada. Through a close reading of the government of Ontario’s 1874 Charities Aid Act, she examines Canada’s history of social service provision and argues against facile binaries between public and private, state and civil society as conceptualized by Gramsci (1971) and other social theorists. She argues that these dichotomies often fail to account for the similarities in the practice of government between government and non-government agencies. In the case of Canada's history of publically beneficial programs, this division obscures the

particular characteristics of different aspects of social service processes: funding, service delivery, regulation and policy development (such that for instance, while the government may fund a particular social service program, its delivery may be left in the hands of non-governmental actors). Ultimately, Valverde contends that Canada's particular brand of social service provision is related to kind of mixed social economy, which necessarily involves a theory about the relationship between the state and civil society. Her articulation of this theory is as follows,

“The appearance of a clear public/private divide must be maintained by both government and business rhetoric, but this liberal ideological requirement is not to stand in the way of public subsidies to supposedly private organizations, subsidies which make at least some spheres of the so-called private subject to different types of government regulation and inspection. Subsidies, however, have to be justified as somehow encouraging private initiative and eventual independence of state support.” (1995, p. 50)

It would appear that characteristics of what Valverde describes as Canada's mixed social economy continue to persist in current modes of neoliberal governance. But if we can understand the extension of social programming to be as much a tool of neoliberal governance as its destruction, to what end is this tool being applied in the case of community arts in Toronto? Peck and Tickell maintain roll out neoliberalism is especially concerned with “the aggressive reregulation, disciplining and containment of those marginalized or disposed” (2003, p. 389). A similar concern with reaching out to disenfranchised groups is articulated in several municipal public policy documents that attempt to justify the need for financial support for the arts. In *Creative capital gains: An action plan for Toronto* a document produced by the City of Toronto's Economic Development Committee as a follow up to the city's initial cultural plan in 2003, one of the specific challenges outlined was the need “to ensure access and opportunity for cultural participation to all citizens, regardless of age, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, geography or socioeconomic status” (2011, p.7) . Similarly, in its 2012 annual report, the

Toronto Arts Council (TAC) emphasized the importance of taking into consideration the “changing demographic of the city...[and the need to support] culturally diverse artists and art forms” as well as “the growing financial disparity between the inner suburbs and downtown, leading to underserved artists, neighborhoods and audiences” (Toronto Arts Council, 2013a)

Arts funding agencies, municipal authorities and arts organizations have especially centered community arts as a means through which to engage marginalized communities. In the preamble to the guidelines for community arts funding, the TAC states “Art practiced at a community level creates a powerful sense of inclusion, understanding and the possibility of self-expression among participants... the collaborative involvement of professional artists with community members is a necessary component” (Toronto Arts Council, n.d.-a). This understanding of community arts as the involvement of professional artist(s) in community settings is a common criteria in funding for community arts across different levels of government. Honor Ford-Smith (2001) traces the history of the institutionalization of community arts in Canada and argues that it was only through the advocacy of artists of color in the 1980s and 1990s around the lack of access to the means of cultural production that authorizing institutions like the Ontario Arts Council and the Canada Council for the Arts began to respond by implementing specific reforms. Consequently, community art programs which had previously referred to arts in the more remote provincial regions were expanded to include different ethno-racial and linguistic groups. Ford-Smith argues that this struggle for inclusion has continued to inform mainstream conceptions of community art, “When the term ‘community’ is invoked in discussions about community art, it usually refers to groups that are different from the dominant (white middle class) norm” (2001, p. 22).

It is important to note however that not all non-dominant groups are equally prioritized in the funding of community arts. While *Creative Capital Gains* makes mention of the importance of reaching out to all citizens, the images accompanying the section on “Access and Diversity” are all of young people of color. The document also points to the significance of focusing on youth as “the most entrepreneurial and technologically literate members of our society” (2001, p. 18). In their analysis of the political economy of arts funding in the city, Deborah Leslie and Mia Hunt (2013) argue that community arts programs that target at-risk youth (largely youth of color) living in impoverished neighborhoods are intended to foster creative and entrepreneurial subjectivities and to reduce the risk of violence presumed to be associated with these populations. Yet, a smaller point in Leslie and Hunt's article deserves more extensive consideration: they state that community art programs "divert attention from more systemic reasons for marginalization related to racism and the structure of local labor markets" (2013, p. 1188).

It is impossible to note the increasingly availability of funding for community arts for youth, especially youth of color, without also noting the disenfranchisement of these groups from the formal labor market. In 2013, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCAP) and the Toronto Foundation identified youth unemployment as a significant area of concern. In their analysis of youth unemployment in the province of Ontario, CCAP noted that the Great Recession of the mid-2000s hit Ontario youth particularly hard. Standing at 16.9%, the CCAP has linked the Ontario youth unemployment rate to the national economic shift away from manufacturing toward resource extraction (Geobey, 2013). Both the CCAP and the Toronto Foundation, in its annual Vital Signs report, have highlighted Toronto's youth unemployment as particularly troubling. Despite the fact that the economic indicators for the city show signs of

positive growth, and that youth have greater levels of educational attainment than ever before, more than one in five youth are unemployed (the figures for immigrant youth, most of whom are of color, are even higher) (Toronto Community Foundation, 2013).

Research into the employment outcomes of people of color has been similarly bleak. In his case study of the regulation of employment standards in Ontario, Mark Thomas (2010) looks at neoliberal reforms to Ontario's Employment Standards Act and argues that these reforms intensified racialized segmentation in the labor market. He maintains that such neoliberal market restructuring has taken place across Canada and has resulted in a situation where workers of color experience significant barriers to secure employment and labor market mobility. These findings are echoed by more quantitative studies. For instance, in their investigation of the impact of race on employment opportunities and outcomes in Canada, Teelucksingh and Galabuzi (2007) analyze data from the 1996 and 2001 Canadian Census, the Survey of Labor and Income Dynamics (SLID) and the Human Resources and Skills Development (HRSD) sectoral employment data. Among their other findings, they conclude that a persistent double digit income disparity exists between racialized and non-racialized individual income earners and that racialized groups are over-represented in many low paying occupations with high levels of precariousness and are under-represented in the better paying more secure jobs. As will be discussed later, QTPOC community arts organizers are not immune to these broader labor market patterns.

The provision public money to the very groups that experience labor market exclusion forces us to look more closely at precisely how this funding is disbursed. My interview with Margo Charlton at the Toronto Arts Foundation (TAF) provides a clear picture in this respect. The TAF "exists to provide the opportunity for individuals, private and public foundation

government agencies and corporate donors to join us [TAF] in supporting all the various disciplines of art"(Toronto Arts Foundation, n.d.). It raises funds through "donations, sponsorships and grants" and their programs "directly increase the resource available to artists and arts organizations through TAC" (Toronto Arts Foundation, n.d.). Having learned that she had been involved in community arts for several years, I asked her:

Matthew: What are the big debates in the field community arts right now and what do you think is missing?

Margo: One of the big debates is training and [the need for] a more, a more empowering engagement and even an entrepreneurial model that gives people an opportunity to make a living, to make some money. ... Okay it's great if there's a dance class in my community and it's free. Okay but now I'm hearing, "how do I then find out places where I can be paid to perform?" And that's not a bad thing. You've got people who are being paid to be facilitators to facilitate an experience for people from a community that are facing huge socio-economic problems and they [the community members] are receiving something for free but where are their opportunities to make money? So this training thing will shift that [by] giving people a set of skills that will allow them to see this as a way to move forward. If I'm interested in design, can I maybe start to make like, \$100 a month? Is there a way that I can start something? Otherwise, I'm simply receiving something from someone else who is being paid, who is an outsider...that is shifting and that is definitely shifting.

In this interview, Margo highlights how individual community artists are looking for avenues of income generation, which is not altogether surprising given the dismal employment prospects for youth of color, those who are most often the target of community arts interventions. At the same time, it is important to note that this drive toward artistic entrepreneurialism is also coming from municipal policy such as Toronto's first Community Art Action Plan (CAAP) implemented in 2008 (it is also worth mentioning that Margo was one of the eleven members of the CAAP advisory board) (City of Toronto, 2008a). This five year plan originated in the Cultural Services department of the city, which was established in 1998 to deliver the city's arts

and cultural grants program. The department's articulated mandate for community arts is "to develop and promote opportunities for artistic expression, arts education and audience development and to encourage access to the arts for all"(City of Toronto, 2008b, p. 4). The CAAP has four main objectives including: enhancing funding for community arts; creating more accessible space for community arts across the city; raising the profile of the community arts sector; and sharing resources. It is under this last objective that a push toward entrepreneurialism in community arts may be detected as the plan states "Cultural services will work with youth-led and emerging community arts organizations and artists to ensure they are aware of resources available for developing entrepreneurial skills and other business related training" (City of Toronto, 2008a).

In its 2012 report on the implementation of the CAAP, Cultural Services highlighted a number of community arts initiatives focusing on employment in general and entrepreneurship in particular. For instance, between 2008-2012, ArtReach (in collaboration with others agencies) facilitated the Youth Arts Pitch Contest which has provided over \$70,000 in start-up funds as well as business training and support for youth led organizations and creative entrepreneurs(City of Toronto, 2012b). This contest is designed so that young artists can learn the basics of how to make a live pitch to a professional panel whose members include highly successful artists and arts entrepreneurs. Since the launch of the contest, two QTPOC community arts organizing initiatives have won this award (ILL NANA and Colour Me Dragg, both of which were mentioned earlier). In addition to the pitch contest, some of the other activities that have come out of CAAP include a micro-loan program that have supported 15 young arts entrepreneurs to start their own businesses and *Live Arts Inc.*, a virtual cultural incubator for young creative entrepreneurs and enterprises (City of Toronto, 2012b).

As a mechanism of neoliberal governance, it is not altogether surprising that the City of Toronto is channeling public funds to entrepreneurship based arts programs targeting those that experience the most dire labor market outcomes, youth of color. Scholars have posited that the entrepreneur functions as the subject par excellence of neoliberalism because of its drive toward individual profit making¹³. For instance, in his analysis of neoliberal theory's conception of human capital, Foucault notes that a worker's wage is best understood as an income, or the product of the return on capital. In this case, capital cannot be separated from the person who possesses it such that "the worker appears as a sort of enterprise for himself" (2008, p. 225). Foucault's insights are in line with Gershon's examination of neoliberal agency where he states, "a neoliberal perspective assumes that actors who create and are created by the most ideal social order are those who reflexively and flexibly manage themselves as one owns or manages a business, tending to one's own qualities and traits as owned, even improvable assets" (2011, p. 539). For Foucault, that the basic element in neoliberal analysis is not individuals but rather enterprises means that neoliberalism involves a focus on what he refers to as *homo oeconomicus*,

¹³ Such an approach does not account for the ways in which other kinds of labor may be fostered in support of neoliberal projects. For instance, the work of Andrea Muehlbach (2011) demonstrates how, through the promotion of a culture of voluntarism, the post-fordist Italian state sought to foster a kind of laborer that is far from recognizable as entrepreneurial. In the context of abandonment of welfare modes of government, Muehlbach shows how unemployed populations such as seniors and youth are called upon to engage in unwaged labor in the creation of a public based on compassion and care. Supplanting modes of citizenship based on Fordist model of waged work, such voluntarism creates (non-commercial) social bonds through affective means.

This approach also does not take into consideration of how practices of entrepreneurship may be corralled into projects in support of alternative political economic arrangements. For instance, in his analysis of Cuba's Salud y Turismo S.A., Sean Brotherton (2008) advances the concept of a "socialist entrepreneur" to show how practices of entrepreneurship are mobilized to support of a socialist economic infrastructure. In the context of a failing social-welfare system, the Cuban state has created a private health care industry intended to cater to tourists, effectively producing a two-tiered health care system in which those who are able to pay full prices for products that are readily available, exists in stark contrast to a public health system for Cuban nationals that, though subsidized by the state, is characterized by long wait times and acute shortages. In response to the accusation that it is more concerned with the wellbeing of foreigners than that of its own people, the Cuban state has argued that the funds generated from Salud y Turismo, S.A. are diverted into the public health system in order to subsidize its costs for the benefit of the Cuban population.

or in this particular case, “an entrepreneur of himself...being for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself the source of earnings.” (2008, p, 226).

Sacrificial entrepreneurship: Queering the individualizing neoliberal imperative

By returning to Unapologetic Burlesque and closely attending to their work (alongside the work of other queer and trans of color community organizations) I argue that we are able to develop a more nuanced understanding of neoliberal governance. While municipal arts funding programs seek to foster entrepreneurship as a way of attending to labor market exclusion, the unexpected way in which Unapologetic Burlesque engages with these programs forces us to reconsider the relationship between entrepreneurship and neoliberalism. Rather than facilitating projects of neoliberal capital accumulation, the particular way in which entrepreneurship is practiced may actually complicate the unfolding of such projects. This kind of analysis builds on Ong’s (2006) work on the relationship between neoliberalism and exceptionalism. Ong looks at the relationship between neoliberalism as exception (how neoliberalism is manifests in contexts where it is not the general characteristic of technologies of governance) as well as exceptions to neoliberalism (the ways in which political decisions single out populations and places to be included or excluded from neoliberal calculations and choices). She argues that both of these permutations of the connection between neoliberalism and exceptionalism are connected in that those who are governed by neoliberalism are dependent on those are excluded from its purview. Extending Ong’s work, I look at the ways in which QTPOC community arts organizers, subjects who are considered to be exceptions to neoliberalism, engage with the terms of their inclusion by municipal funding policies by behaving in unexpected ways. Such an approach allows for an understanding of the contingent nature of the mechanisms of neoliberal governance and how the

programs assumed to constitute their very essence may also serve as the site of their transformation. This is not to say that groups like Unapologetic do not engage in entrepreneurial activities in order to carry out their work but rather that the emphasis on individual profit making is not their primary consideration both because of the prioritization of community development over personal gain and because of artist's fraught relationship to financial remuneration.

The concern with financial self-sufficiency was a significant topic of discussion at the Unapologetic Burlesque meeting held after the third show, "Lost and Found". However, contrary to municipal policy expectations which foster a kind of entrepreneurialism in the face of considerable rates of unemployment and underemployment, the conversation did not center on amassing as much money as possible for individual organizers but rather on ensuring that the show was accessible to those who might otherwise not be able to attend due to disability concerns and/or the capacity to pay high ticket prices. kumari, Shaunga, the crew coordinator and I met up at a coffee shop where kumari shared the news that "Lost and Found" did not collect as much money from door sales as in past shows. We began to brainstorm strategies around how to make sure we would be able to bring in enough money to cover the costs of the venue and ASL interpretation as well as to compensate the labor that goes into making the show possible (providing honorariums to performers, hosts, backstage runners, make up people etc.). Initially, the price of admission to an Unapologetic show was set at \$5-\$15 or "pay-what-you-can (PWYC), no one turned away for lack of funds". We all agreed that we did not want to increase the price of admission because that would serve as a barrier to those who would benefit from seeing the show but who would not be able to afford to attend. kumari explained that the issue was not about raising the price of admission but rather encouraging those who can pay more to do so in order to subsidize those who cannot pay as much. This was the first time that I

had heard them¹⁴ vocalize this sentiment. It then made sense to me why the price had changed from \$5-\$15/PWYC at the "Queer from the heart" show to \$5-\$25/PWYC at the "Lost and found" show. Increasing the upper limit of the admission price was meant to signal to attendees that they were welcome to contribute more to the show if they were able to do so. We also talked about various other strategies that we could use, including communicating very clearly how all of the money coming into Unapologetic was being used. (Facebook posts and handmade signs at the door of the show proclaimed to (potential) attendees that their money was going toward paying for the costs associated with the venue, accessibility as well as paying performers and volunteers.) In many ways, QTPOC community arts initiatives like Unapologetic go through the motions associated with entrepreneurship such as writing grants (to ArtReach) and figuring out creative ways to financially support their events. At the end of the day however, they thwart the expectation that entrepreneurs are motivated purely by the desire to maximize personal profit because they seek to increase access to their programs among those who might otherwise not be able to attend (in this particular case because of disability concerns and/or financial hardship).

The relationship between art production and financial remuneration in North America also serves as a dis-incentive for personal financial gain. This tension was a major theme that emerged in my interview with Dainty Smith. I first met Dainty when she hosted the second Unapologetic show, "Queer from the heart". Since then I have seen her perform and host at many other QTPOC community events throughout the city. The issue of being paid as an artist came up in my question about an observation that I made when I attended *Femme Fatale*, a burlesque showcase that she produces. The venue became quite crowded and despite promoting the show quite heavily beforehand to make sure that it was well attended, Dainty made an announcement

¹⁴ Like many of the participants in this study, kumari does not solely identify with either "he" or "she" and prefers to be referred to by the pronoun "they"

to the audience that they would no longer be admitting people into the space for fear of safety concerns and asked that audience members tell any friends who were thinking of coming that the show was now full and that they would not be able to get in. Later, in my interview with her, I asked her about that announcement and if she was worried that it would affect her bottom line. She responded emphatically:

“that [making money] can't be the main focus because again, of course you're concerned about your basic necessities but if you're doing it for that... if you do anything in terms of art, if you're doing it for the money, you're going to lose every dime. You'll never be able to... I know that sounds ridiculous or ironic or clichéd but that's what selling out actually really means. The fact of the matter is... you have to do this kind of work for nothing. You have to know that you will do it if you get paid zero dollars. You have to do it because you believe in it so much that you can't do anything else”

While Dainty speaks about the importance of making art regardless of the monetary compensation, it is important to note that the definition of an "artist" for many arts funding bodies is related to the extent to which someone has been paid for their work. In speaking about the situation of newcomer artists, Margo Charlton at TAF shared her insights about how the processes of receiving money for one's artwork can also validate someone's understanding of themselves as an artist.

“[There are a] number of professionally trained newcomer artists. So people who were trained in their own country in their art form and they arrived. What happens with that story? How can we help make the transition happen for newcomer artists in the way that people are making transitions happen for newcomer doctors or engineers?...The challenging part in this is that the skills that they came with were not properly used so the survival job became their life long job. The same thing is happening for newcomer artists. It's hard for any artist to make a living but I think that [there's] something that happens when an artist loses their identity, when they don't call themselves an artist anymore. If you're not making a living at it, or if you can't make any money on it, can you still call yourself that [an artist]? I don't have any answers to this, but what's the difference between

[when] you're not an engineer anymore and [when] you're not an artist anymore. Is it different? Is it the same?

Artists fraught relationship with money was also a topic that arose in my skype interview with Ella Cooper, manager of Toronto's Neighborhood Arts Network, an initiative created by the TAF and which describes itself as "the place where arts and community engagement meet in Toronto. We are a Toronto-wide network of over 1,025 members including artists, arts organizations, cultural workers and community agencies working throughout the City of Toronto" (Toronto Neighbourhood Arts Network, n.d.). When I asked her what she thinks is missing from existing conversations around community arts in the city, she responded:

"I would like to see more conversations that center around our relationship with money because I think that sometimes artists and social change makers have a very loaded relationship with money and sometimes that means that they actually do things to self-sabotage. And I'm not trying to say that everyone must have oodles of money but more simply that everyone, or many people, could use a conversation around money that isn't just about how to make money for your project but how you manage money and your relationship with it. I think that a certain aspect of healthy work life balance is wrapped up in that. Yeah, because I feel like there are individuals who are in a starving artist category and are constantly really strapped for cash and this is part and parcel of the nature of this work...you're not going to necessarily make a lot of money doing it. But there's also a relationship around how you manage it and how it comes into your life and how you give and how you might even run from it or how you undervalue yourself"

Ultimately, QTPOC community arts organizers are placed in the difficult position of navigating municipal funding policies which encourage personal economic gain on the one hand and expectations around financial remuneration for artistic production and the creation of initiatives that are accessible to those who might otherwise not be able to participate on the other. For many of the organizers I worked with, negotiating these tensions often meant having to deal with figuring out how to pay rent and to make ends meet. I came to understand that among these organizers (and those who participated in their initiatives), working several low wage, part time

and/or contract jobs (for instance in retail, childcare or social services) at the same time is not unusual. Coordinating events, programs and shows that do not result in personal financial gain is challenging given that the labor and time intensive nature of these initiatives means that organizers are constrained in looking for and maintaining more conventional paid work. And yet even if organizers chose to pursue this route, the procurement of such work is quite difficult given that Canada's "economic apartheid" (Galabuzi, 2006) has resulted in a growing gap between white workers and workers of color. The challenge of being able to be make enough money to survive was certainly an issue that arose in Dainty's interview. When I asked if she felt as though she is adequately paid for her art and for the organizing work that goes into producing her shows she responded:

“For my own shows, sometimes I'd barely break even and other times I make enough money to feel like I can pay my rent this month. Financially it's tricky and hard and it can be back-breaking to do this work without knowing if you're going to be okay. One of the things that I have learned in terms of doing this for the past few years is that art is a continual exercise in trust. You're constantly learning how to trust because so many of the shows that are put on by myself and other producers and promoters in the city are self-financed and most of us don't have a lot of money. We don't come from money so you put everything into it. You put every spare cent, dollar, you borrow and you put it in and you just hope that enough money comes in and you can pay people and you at least have something left over for yourself to buy dinner that night...you have to make something happen and sometimes you are making something out of nothing. It's an exercise in trust because you're hoping that money can come in so you can keep on doing this work...Because it's a hard city to live [in], its expensive. You want to be able to produce and produce and produce but you also have to be able to eat and pay your rent and afford your life.¹⁵

¹⁵ By drawing attention to the financial struggle that QTPOC community arts organizers experience, I do not mean to imply that they do not benefit from their work in other ways. Dainty's earlier comment about doing art because "you believe in it so much that you can't do anything else" is similar to the sentiments voiced by other organizers who, in the same breath that they express concerns about working so hard without being adequately paid, also speak of a profound personal fulfillment in doing community arts organizing. Further, the organizers of QTPOC community arts initiatives may also gain a certain status/celebrity/popularity among those who attend their programming.

The difficult situations faced by community arts organizers like Shaunga, Kumari and Dainty force us to think about the value of collective creative work under political economic conditions in which individual capital accumulation is encouraged in a context of otherwise limited alternative possibilities for making a living. As a way to make sense of these circumstances, I use the term “sacrificial entrepreneurship” to describe the seemingly contradictory process of engaging with entrepreneurial activity while resisting the policy imperative to maximize personal profit. By engaging in sacrificial entrepreneurship, groups like Unapologetic work to subvert the neoliberal incitement to individual financial gain. This disconnect between municipal funding mandates and the way in which QTPOC community arts organizers go about their work serve as fertile ground for examining the contingent nature of the mechanisms of neoliberal governance. The fact that these organizers only partly acquiesce to the demands that they behave as proper entrepreneurial subjects indicates that projects of governance are never complete and are subject to transformation.

Yet, in line with Valverde’s (1995) insight into Canada’s mixed social economy, this subversion of the neoliberal incitement to personal profit making must not be understood as some sort of battle between two sets of disconnected actors: a neoliberal municipal government and a collection of grassroots QTPOC community arts organizers. Firstly, these organizers are troubling neoliberalism from within by manipulating what is considered to be at very heart of this mode of governance: the drive for individual wealth. While adopting the practices associated with entrepreneurship, they are choosing to funnel the wages derived from these activities into initiatives attending to collective well-being. Secondly, as mentioned earlier, the very fact that this public community arts funding infrastructure came into existence is, in large part due to the advocacy work of artists and community organizers of color petitioning public institutions to be

included into their programming. Later, the increased availability of municipal money for community arts occurred largely through the organizing efforts of grassroots initiatives like Beautiful City. Finally, at a more theoretical level, Foucault forwards the notion of discourse as a way to disrupt the notion that power and resistance are necessarily separate and oppositional phenomenon. He states, “it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together...we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse...we must make allowances for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance” (1978, p. 101).

It is important to note that the work of subverting neoliberal expectations from the inside is not necessarily unique to QTPOC community arts organizers. For instance, in their appraisal of the strategic maneuvers of Te Oranga, the Family Health and Education Division of Te Runanga o Te Rarawa (TRoTR), the tribal authority of Te Rawara in New Zealand, Lewis et al. argue, “in particular conditions or conjunctures of political projects, neoliberal state apparatus has facilitated the emergence of progressive space” (2009, p. 167). Taking advantage of how the state contracted out social services, Te Oranga engaged in a form of community centered entrepreneurialism in order to gain these contracts so that, over time, it came to take control over Te Rarawa’s welfare according to local values. This state of affairs came to pass in a context where the process of taking on (and transforming) the social services downloaded by the state also took place in relation to broader Maori political projects around land reclamation and local economic development. In making clear the most significant aspect of this work, Lewis et al. state, “genuine community identities are able to subvert neoliberalism’s underlying governmentality of individual self-interest. The contracts were won by a collective organisation,

the rationale of which was neither profit nor acquisitive individualism... This reflection on the subversion of self-interest is perhaps our most universally hopeful reflection on the progressive spaces of neoliberalism” (2009, p. 182).

The cases of Te Oranga and Toronto-based QTPOC community arts organizers are similar in that both used the opportunities provided by neoliberal mechanisms of governance in order to subvert the expectation of individual gain in the support of collective well-being. However, while Te Organa was able to accomplish this task as an institution, the more grassroots nature of QTPOC community arts meant that the (financial) costs of this subversion was borne more heavily by individual organizers. Sacrificial entrepreneurship thus allows collective work to unfold only through the forbearance of personal economic hardship. This continual challenge of being able to make ends meet will be taken up again in chapter three in a discussion of “burn out” and the ephemeral temporality of QTPOC community arts organizing initiatives.

**CHAPTER THREE: RECONFIGURING LOVE, MONEY AND TIME: ADJUSTING CHRONOTOPIC
REALITIES**

Sitting in a large office area in downtown Toronto, I was leafing through an outdated fashion magazine while waiting for Twysted. Earlier that week we had scheduled to meet up for an interview over facebook. While I had not met him in person before, I had seen him perform at community events in Toronto over the years as part of the House of Monroe, the first ballroom house formed in Toronto in 2006. I had learned that the ballroom scene had transformed from hosting balls much like those featured in Livingston's film *Paris is Burning* to also providing programming for newcomers to the ball scene. As part of the leadership of the Toronto Kiki Ballroom Alliance, Twysted was trying to create a venue where youth could learn to take part in the scene without being intimidated by the sometimes harsh and competitive environment of the balls themselves. His response to my question, "if this was your research project, what would you be interested in learning?" provides the starting point for this chapter, which attempts to think through the temporal nature of queer and trans people of color (QTPOC) community arts in Toronto. He asks, "What creates longevity? What actually lasts in Toronto? And what makes it last as far as the queer scene goes?... That's a problem I'm having, finding a way to extend [the Alliance] to create a legacy". Twysted is not alone in his desire for sustainability as many other QTPOC arts organizers are also grappling with the question of how to keep their initiatives going over time.

In trying to think through the challenges facing these social actors, this chapter focuses on time. More specifically, it explores how QTPOC community arts initiatives come to exist as a particular temporal phenomenon and argues that the affective and political economic conditions in which they take place are crucial for understanding their temporal manifestation. As organizers struggle to create social forms of a particular temporal nature, they negotiate the precarity of the arts funding systems on which the financial viability of their initiatives depend as well as volatile affective orientations to both their community organizing work and to each other. Ultimately, I argue that one method by which QTPOC organizers may transform their initiatives along temporal lines involves the reconfiguration of the affective and political economic contexts in which these initiatives occur.

Navigating love, money and time: Chronotopic realities

Queer and trans of color organizers like Twysted are concerned about the longevity of their initiatives because they frequently come to an end after several months (though some are able to hold out for a few years). Hearing Twysted articulate his desire to secure the sustainability of the Toronto Kiki Ballroom Alliance, I could not help but think of Aqza zine, Lez blues, Colour Me Dragg and other Toronto-based queer and trans of color arts groups that were active in my early twenties but that are no longer in existence. I also noticed that in speaking with QTPOC artists and community organizers who were older than thirty years old, they would invariably reminisce about the creative collective initiatives that were personally meaningful to them but that had also ceased to exist. Speaking to people who were in their later 30s, 40s and 50s, I had often never even heard of some the groups that they so cherished in their younger days, despite my involvement in the queer and trans of color community arts scene for

several years. From my conversation with Margo Charlton, Research Manager at the Toronto Arts Foundation, I learned that the ephemeral nature of community arts programs was not confined to queer and trans people of color specifically, but rather was a characteristic of informal grassroots arts groups in general. Speaking about the results of a study on community arts in Toronto in which she was the principal investigator (Charlton, Barndt, Dennis, & Donegan, 2013) she shared with me that the research team was able to map out an impressive 180 resources for community arts in three Toronto neighborhoods. However, she confessed that within six months, this list of resources was likely to be out of date because of the rapidly changing nature of the community arts scene.

In this section, I attempt to clarify how we might understand the temporal nature of queer and trans of color community arts initiatives in Toronto. This investigation of the temporal characteristics of these initiatives takes into account not only their limited duration but also how the nature of this duration is linked to the life cycle consideration of their participants such that community arts is produced as a generational phenomenon associated with young people. The way in which time is manifest in QTPOC community arts is intimately connected to both the mechanisms of public funding on which these initiatives depend as well as the love (or lack thereof) that queer and trans of color organizers have for their work and for each other.

The workings of Asian Arts Freedom School clearly demonstrate these complex relationships between love, time and money. Inspired by the freedom schools established by African American communities in the United States, this group was formed in 2005 as an arts-based radical history and activism program where Asian youth in Toronto could find support, contribute to their communities and develop their artistry (the organization has since broadened its mandate to include youth of color and indigenous youth more generally). While issues of

gender and sexuality are not specifically addressed in its mandate, it has always been a program whose staff and participants have been primarily, if not exclusively, queer and trans. It was in the spring 2013 cycle of Asian Freedom School that I first became aware of the challenges that the group faced in terms of securing its long term viability and how these challenges were linked questions of financial support and matters of love.

On a blustery Sunday afternoon in May, Jeff hosted the third session of this cycle in his apartment in the west end of downtown Toronto. Jeff and Shaunga, who co-coordinate Freedom School programming, had planned the day's session to encourage participants to talk about their visions for community. They asked Rose to facilitate the discussion given her long time involvement with the initiative since its inception in 2005 and her extensive experience as an artist, community organizer and activist. After a visual art exercise in which the 8 participants were asked to creatively convey their ideal notion of community, Rose led a discussion that touched on the issue of money and the longevity of Freedom School. She said: "It's great to do art and talk about what we're going through but at the end of the day you need to make a living, you're going to have to survive...that doesn't mean we have to make a lot of money but we have to be aware, because everyone just stops doing this work and gets other jobs. [They say], 'I'm gonna get a corporate job, I'm done'. [But] It doesn't have to look like that."

Later, she asked about the future direction of Freedom School's Drag Musical program and when Patrick, the coordinator, said that he still was not sure what was going to happen, she asked, "So, you haven't plotted out how far in advance... you don't know if that's happening yet?" Patrick replied, "Funding, we're waiting on funding." She responded, "Okay, is there a five year plan for Freedom School? Is there a one year plan, a two year plan? Is that part of what needs to happen or no? What's the contingency plan for Freedom School if the money runs out

and you don't get funding?...I think grants are a good thing but I think we also have to take a step back and ask, 'how do we create sustainable models that aren't grant funded?'"

In facilitating this discussion, Rose draws attention to the political economic dimensions of temporality within community arts programs. As discussed in chapter two, the issues of funding that she mentions are particularly significant within Toronto which is home to a set of political economic arrangements that have facilitated an increase in government funding to community arts (Ford-Smith, 2001). Largely targeting 'marginalized groups' community art programs are said to address a host of social issues including urban economic development, crime, unemployment and social alienation (City of Toronto, 2011). Informal queer and trans of color community groups like Freedom School constitute a considerable proportion of the initiatives that receive this funding and many have built programming in response to the racism that they face in mainstream gay settings and the homophobia and transphobia that they experience in communities of color.

It is important to note that community art groups are funded almost exclusively through public sources as avenues of private funding for community arts in the city are practically non-existent. Yet, as Rose mentions, the way in which public arts funding is administered is intimately related to the temporality of community arts initiatives. The short-term project-based nature of these public grants means that community organizers are not able to engage in long term planning. For instance, in the conversation between Rose and Patrick that I presented earlier, the Drag Musical had applied for one-time project funding from the Toronto Arts Council even though it is, in fact, a yearly program. Additionally, the limited funding amounts provided by public grants are not able to adequately remunerate organizers for the often full time commitment that they invest in their initiatives. The arduous and time intensive nature of this

work is partly explained by organizer's inability to fall back on infrastructural resources present in more institutionalized environments. For instance, Freedom School does not have a designated space and coordinators often scramble to find spaces where they can hold their sessions at minimal to no cost. Ultimately, the longevity of informal queer and trans of color community arts programs like Freedom School is constantly threatened by the nature of the public arts funding system on which they depend.

The situation that Asian Arts Freedom School faces is unique neither to queer and trans of color organizers nor to Toronto in particular but rather to a specific set of political economic arrangements that can be evinced among community groups across Canada. While the broad strokes of these arrangements were laid out in chapter two, this chapter examines their relationship to the temporal nature of community initiatives. Through their study of three community organizations in three provinces across Canada, Gibson, O'Donnell and Rideout (2007) outline what they refer to as "the project funding regime" and describe the struggles that community organizations face in continuing their work as a consequence of how this 'regime' operates. They describe project funding as a particular kind of government financial support that differs from "core funding". Core funding is a sustained form of financing that allows organizations to cover basic administrative and organizational costs and permits flexibility and autonomy in how organizations operate. In contrast, project-based funding is short-term, only covers the cost of a specific project and grants greater control over project operations to the funder. Gibson et al. (2007) argue that because project funding is unsustainable, "community organizations and their administrative staff (when they can afford to have any) find themselves perpetually applying for more funds in order to finance programs...having to apply for funds and not knowing whether proposals will be approved is quite stressful and destabilizing.

Organizations and their workers are required to maintain services knowing that, in this project funding regime, there is no guarantee of what will happen once funds run out" (2007, p. 421). In their study Gibson and colleagues demonstrate the challenges that community organizations in Canada like Asian Arts Freedom School face in their attempt to continue their work over time. The dynamics of how state funding comes to influence the degree to which community organizations are able to sustain their existence is not limited to Canada as scholars have shown similar circumstances taking place in Australia and New Zealand (Panelli & Lerner, 2010) and the Czech Republic (Lorenz-Meyer, 2013)

However, queer and trans of color organizers are concerned not only with the sustainability of their initiatives in terms of economic exigencies but also in terms of their affective orientation toward their organizing work. Thus, even though they acknowledge they are not adequately paid, they speak of their love for this work as what keeps them going. In his interview with me, Patrick shared, "A lot of people work really hard to make these programs work. [In] these community programs we don't get paid the most money, but there's so much love. And if you're not loving it, you're not going to be in it, because it's not going to pay your rent all the time. That might be called the life of an artists but it could [also] be called the life of a community organizer too. You have to love what you do."

In this sense, Patrick's notion of love resonates with Lauren Berlant's attempt to come up with what she refers to as a properly political concept of love. She states, "Love is one of the few situations where we desire to have patience for what isn't working, an affective binding that allows us to iron things out, or to be elastic, or to try a new incoherence." (2011, p. 658) However, while organizers argue that love and not money is often the primary motivation for community work, the combination of too little money and too much love over time can lead to

“burn out” or what Jack Halberstam calls “subcultural fatigue” (2005, p. 156). For instance, Heidi was the co-coordinator of the Drag Musical with Patrick but decided to leave the program. When I asked her about this decision she shared “the positive and negative aspect of working in a grassroots program is that it’s your passion and it gives you life. But it’s hard to create boundaries of when to draw the line and how much to give. In the first cycle [of the Drag Musical], I gave my all, I put my heart into it, but this cycle, it was hard to balance everything. We are not able to do this work full time and so it’s something we have to balance with other work”

Patrick and Heidi’s description of the intense affective attachments that queer and trans of color organizers have to their work coincides with existing research on the significance of feelings within the community arts sector in general. Gill and Pratt (2008) state,

“One of the most consistent findings of research on work within the creative industries is that it is experienced by most who are involved with it as profoundly satisfying and intensely pleasurable... A vocabulary of love is repeatedly evinced in such studies, with work imbued with the features of the Romantic tradition of the artist, suffused with positive emotional qualities. Research speaks of deep attachment, affective bindings, and to the idea of self-expression and self-actualization through work” (2008, p. 14)

Yet, as indicated by Ella Cooper, the general manager of the Toronto Neighborhood Arts Network, the intensity of this passionate work can sometimes be overwhelming. In our interview, when I asked her about the big debates and issues that were being discussed in the community arts sector, she responded, "I think self-care is in there. I think people work incredibly hard and Toronto is one of those places where everyone seems like they are on the go and they support that in each other. But there's a moment when it's just a little too much. And that definitely comes up, you know? Around, 'how do you do the work that you do, but support and care for yourself at the same time?'"

Feminist scholars in particular have been quick to examine the challenges associated with the relationship between feelings and work. Focusing on the toll of what she refers to as ‘emotional labor’, Arlie Hochschild’s (1983) groundbreaking study, *The managed heart* argues that people who engage in emotional labor become estranged or alienated from an aspect of the self that is used to do this work. She defines emotional labor as the process of inducing or suppressing “feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others” (1983, p. 7) and problematizes the fact that this work is sold as a wage because it violates the sanctity of individual personhood. Weeks (2007) identifies Hochschild’s approach as one of the two major feminist analyses of affective labor. She outlines the other approach as a socialist feminist effort to add a critical account of reproductive labor to a Marxist account of productive labor. In this account, unwaged reproductive labor (especially household caring labor) is theorized both as a locus of exploitation and as a site from which resistant subjects and alternative realities may emerge. These kinds of analyses speak clearly to the topic of “safe spaces” and feelings-based work that I explored in chapter one, but are not as applicable to a critical investigation concerned not with affect as a kind of work but with having a particular affective orientation toward work. In contrast, Gregg’s (2009) conceptualization of affective labor as “meaningful and productive human activity that does not result in a direct financial profit or exchange value, but rather produces a sense of community, esteem and/or belonging for those who share a common interest” (2009, p. 209) is much more in alignment with the kind of efforts undertaken by Toronto-based queer and trans of color organizers.

Thus far, I have tried to show how Toronto-based queer and trans of color community organizer’s concerns about the longevity of their programming are intimately tied both to their affective orientation to their work and the political economic contexts in which this work occurs.

I would also like to demonstrate how the temporal nature of queer and trans of color community arts concerns not only the ephemeral nature of their existence but also the way in which the timing of these initiatives are connected to the life cycle of community organizers as a generational phenomenon. However, before exploring considerations of life cycles and generations, it is important to explicitly outline how I am dealing with the category of time.

My treatment of temporality turns away from time as conceived through Newtonian physics which Adam (1990) argues constitutes the dominant conceptualization of time in the social sciences. In this framework time is not considered in its own right but used purely operationally, as the measure of things and events. It is conceived in terms of the movement of bodies and quantitative measurement. Time is also abstracted from social relations so that it is theoretically reversible and may proceed forward or backward. Adam (1990) states that the clock constitutes a coherent expression of a mechanical and causally-oriented Newtonian science as it functions according to the principles of duration, rate, tempo, sequence and periodicity. Adam refers to this kind of temporality as “events in time”. According to the principles of Newtonian science, time is the universal, inert and mechanically unfolding background in which human actions take place.

In contrast to the concept of “events in time”, Adam (1990) draws on the work of George Herbert Mead (1981) to elaborate a notion of “time in events”. Time is no longer the abstract framework within which experience is conceptualized but rather located in things, events, perspectives or roles. Time is in the interaction of the individual and environment such that reality exists in the present and involves a process of becoming. For instance, a person’s present may be defined by the act of writing. Yet for writing to be recognizable as a past present, something new will have to have happened. In this case, going for a cup of coffee may be the

event which delineates the old from the new present. Adam thus posits time as actively produced through social practices as opposed to a notion of time that simply forms its inert backdrop. In the case of Asian Arts Freedom School and other queer and trans of color community arts initiatives in Toronto, the temporally limited nature of their existence is a consequence of the architecture of public arts funding policies as well as the affective complexes associated with community organizing work.

Yet though time may be created through social action, it is important to explore not only the production of time, but also the *kind* of time produced. Thus, while it is certainly significant to show how the short lived nature of QTPOC arts program is constructed, the qualitative characteristics of the temporal aspects of these programs also serve as an important site of inquiry. Mikhail Bakhtin's (1981) concept of the chronotope provides a starting point for this investigation. He defines a chronotope as the “intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationship...[such that]... spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out concrete whole” (1981, p. 84). According to Lemon, a chronotope “is not simply a point or a plane in space-time, not merely a scenic backdrop or surround of period and place. It shapes the logic by which events unfurl, their syntax, the rhythmic quality of plausible actions and counter-actions.” (2009, p, 839). There are different types of chronotopes such that, for instance the chronotope of the road, associated with chance encounters in which the spatial and temporal paths of people intersect, is different from the chronotope of the saloon where encounters are no longer random but are characterized by dialogue revealing the ideas of the characters of the novel. Though primarily concerned with space time in the novel, Bakhtin’s notion of choronotope allows for an understanding of how a particular (space)time (as opposed to any other) occurs in non-literary settings. Thus, in the context of this chapter Bakhtin’s work makes

it possible to investigate not only the fact that queer and trans of color arts initiatives tend to be short term endeavors but also to see how this short-term-ness is characterized by an affective intensity in which community organizers' love for their work keeps these initiatives alive as well as by a frenetic energy driven by economic precarity as organizers struggle to financially support their programming through state funding.

Yet the chronotope of queer and trans of color community arts in Toronto is characterized not only by an economically precarious and affectively charged ephemerality, but also as a generational phenomenon with a particular relationship to the life cycles of community organizers. In much the same way that the short term nature of QTPOC arts programming is intimately related to an affective political economy, the generational aspect of queer and trans of color community organizing is likewise inseparable from considerations of love and money. After several months of attending different queer and trans of color arts events throughout Toronto, I began to notice that at thirty years old, I was often one of the older people in the room. In my interview with Gein Wong, one of founders of Asian Arts Freedom School, she also drew attention to the youthfulness of queer and trans of color community organizing in the context of thinking through what she saw as the lack of intergenerational connection within Toronto-based QTPOC circles. Towards the end of our interview, I asked her if there was anything that she would like to talk about that had not yet come up in our conversation. She replied:

Gein: I don't know how you can do this in your research but I think... recognizing the whole thing about generations. People wanting more connections between generations... I am starting to become conscious of this because as I get older, even when I started Freedom School, people started seeing me as a mentor and as an elder in some ways.

Matthew: But you weren't that much older than us [participants of Freedom School]!

Gein: Yeah! Exactly right?! So it was even weird for me to think about that because it was strange. I was young too right? But now that I'm getting a bit older and the distance

is coming I realize that in 15 years or 20 years I will be an elder. But since we haven't had that, we don't know how that interaction works, right? I don't know how to be an elder and people don't know how to receive an elder in the community...How does that work properly? Because in other communities, it's there. It's there for generations, and people are used to it and they grew up with it. Whereas in our communities, it wasn't there. Is that a good thing or a bad thing? I don't know. But we actually have to talk that out and [figure out] what that means and how it can help everybody. I think it's something we have to talk about. I want to talk more about that....We're always looking for elders but we have to realize that people here never had elders. They don't know how to be elders. We can't expect them to be elders you know?"

The relationship between youth and community organizing (or social change efforts in general for that matter) are not only confined to queer and trans of color populations. For instance, earlier works coming out of the Birmingham University Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies made an explicit connection between the creation of subcultures that challenged dominant social arrangements and processes of youth formation. In her analysis of women organizing in Czech NGOs in the 1990s and into the 2010s, Lorenz-Meyer (2013) looks at women's involvement in activist work over the life course. She states that women's involvement in organizing "coincided with young adulthood, a period in the life course where many combined it with, or had just finished, university studies...[and that]...NGO activism is rarely a lifetime pursuit; various NGO representatives have moved out of the voluntary sector, taken up positions in other organizations, higher education or, more rarely, the for-profit sector" (2013, p. 418). She also points out that not all women participate in NGOs and that activist work has the tendency to reproduce class and ethnic distinctions. She states, "while activist work can be timed into the lives of younger, higher-educated Czech women, migrant (and working class) women are timed out of political advocacy work and NGO's" (2013, p.419)

While the association between youth and social change efforts is not confined to queer and trans of color arts organizing, the relationship between processes of youth formation and

racialized, gendered and sexualized difference carries particular significance. The field of queer studies has been keen to outline the ways in which queer and trans subjects are understood according to particular logics of temporality. Pointing to the enduring significance of Freud, scholars such as Love (2007), Freeman (2010) and Stockton (2009) have shown how sexual and gendered non-normativity are constituted in opposition to conceptions of linear progressive time. For instance, Stockton argues that while Freud's non-pathological reading of homosexuality undercut the more devastating moralistic judgements against same-sex practices in the early twentieth century, his conceptualization of homosexuality in terms of "arrested development" continues to be mobilized by contemporary Anglo-American fundamentalists. Thus Freud's contention that "in every aberration from the normal sexual life [there is] a fragment of inhibited development and infantilism" (2009, p. 24) shows up in more recent works of moralizing psychoanalysts who assert "most homosexuals do not feel like adults. Rather they see themselves as children or adolescents" (2009, p. 24).

Rohy (2009) points out that processes of racialization are central to these associations of temporal backwardness with queer and trans subjects. She states,

"the notion of homosexuality as 'archaic' emerges from the invention of modern sexual identity by sexological theories that borrowed not only their rhetoric but also their fundamental logic from scientific racism...[thus]...[m]uch as the African American was judged as backward or uncivilized, the homosexual was deemed a victim of arrested development. Informed by racist theories of 'primitive' backwardness, nineteenth century sexologists construed homosexuality as a regression both in individual development (to immature stages) and in human history (to savage societies or vanished cultures)." (2009, p. x)

Instead of attempting to counter these pejorative arguments, Halberstam argues that the constitution of queer and trans subjects in terms of temporal retrogression provides an opportunity to critically examine the production of normative temporal trajectories. Halberstam

forwards the notion of queer time as "a term for those specific models of temporality that emerge within postmodernism¹⁶ once one leaves the temporal frames of bourgeois reproduction and family, longevity, risk/safety and inheritance" (2005, p. 6). Within this framework he argues that "queer subcultures afford us a perfect opportunity to depart from a normative model of youth cultures as stages on the way to adulthood; this allows us to map out different forms of adulthood, or the refusal of adulthood and new modes of deliberate deviance... For queers, the separation between youth and adulthood quite simply does not hold, and queer adolescence can extend far beyond one's twenties" (2005, p. 175).

Yet while the field of queer studies has explored how the production of racialized, sexual and gendered difference is tied to temporal conceptions of delay, it has yet to examine the role of local affective political economies in the construction of social forms as particular temporal phenomenon. In contrast, the role of political economy in the construction of local temporalities has long been the subject of anthropological study (Cole, 2004; Mains, 2007; Ortner, 1998). For instance, in his analysis of unemployed young men in the city of Meerut in the Indian province of Uttar Pradesh, Craig Jeffrey (2010) examines how a lack of economic opportunities work to exclude men from social expectations of adulthood and to inculcate feelings of inadequacy in relation to desired discourses of "development" and "modernity". Joining anthropological approaches to the insights of queer theory, allows for an analysis of the generational nature of queer and trans of color community arts initiatives by tracking the lived social relations to which they are connected. Within Toronto, the generational character of QTPOC community groups is

¹⁶ Within the context of his text *In a queer time and place*, Halberstam writes, "[postmodernism] takes on meaning in relation to new forms of cultural production that emerge both in sync with and running counter to what Jameson has called the logic of late capitalism in his book *Postmodernism* (1997). I see postmodernism as simultaneously a crisis and an opportunity—a crisis in the stability of form and meaning, and an opportunity to rethink the practice of cultural production, its hierarchies and power dynamics, its tendency to resist or capitulate." (2003, p. 6)

intimately related to both public arts funding practices as well as to the affective volatility of the bonds among queer and trans of color community arts participants.

The political economy of community arts is consequential not only for the longevity of queer and trans of color community initiatives but also for the way in which these initiatives are related to the lifecycles of its participants. The available funding for community arts in Toronto is geared specifically toward youth. While the city of Toronto emphasizes the importance of ensuring "access and opportunity for cultural participation to all citizens regardless of age, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, geography or socioeconomic status" (2011, p. 7), they nevertheless place special emphasis on youth. In its most recent iteration of a cultural agenda, *Creative capital gains*, the City contends that, "young people are the most entrepreneurial and technologically literate members of our society...[they] devise innovative ways to create; nevertheless, enthusiasm and 'sweat equity' rarely suffice to sustain fledgling youth led cultural enterprises. Sustained funding is essential to their growth and development. Young people want to participate in youth-led cultural activities as creators, consumers, audiences and leaders." (2011, p. 18). This emphasis on the connection between youth and community arts is also to be found in arts funding bodies such as ArtReach, as discussed earlier, and in organizations such as the Toronto Arts Council which prioritizes youth arts. For instance, the council asserts, "culturally diverse youth arts organizations will be given enhanced opportunities to enter the funding stream" (ArtReach Toronto, n.d.) within its programming.

I am not the only one to draw a connection between the predominance of young people involved in queer and trans of color community arts and municipal level funding priorities. In my interview with Farrah, a community organizer who has taken part in different QTPOC arts

groups throughout Toronto, I shared what I saw as the youthful nature of the queer and trans of color arts scene in the city and asked if she had similar observations. She responded:

Farrah: Arts and queer communities are made for younger people, for people of color, right? There's very much a celebration of young bodies, young voices which I think is important but it's also about how do we do inter-generational conversations.

Matthew; So when you said that arts programs are made for queer young people, so what is that? How is that?

Farrah: Funding. I think ArtReach, it's one of the easiest, well not easiest, I don't want to say easiest, but it's the most accessible funding to get. You don't need to have charitable status. So it's the most accessible funding to get. And it's great money. You get \$10,000. ...[We] used that funding... it was stretched over 3 years, that's how much we used in terms of funding. We just stretched and stretched and stretched our dollars because we know how to do that. So I think, a couple of things. I think that's one piece. I think there is the celebration of young bodies, but there is more funding for young people... [that's] all about youth empowerment... But then I think [of] established artists [and that] there's a whole community of established artists that are older. There is a point where, 'I gotta have a kid and feed my family and settle down and I don't have time for all these things.'...It's hard, it's exhausting. But we need to build that [art] in because I think in you're 30s you still need to make art, you still need to have that release, you still are working through stuff, you are still celebrating pieces of you and how do you do that collectively?

Yet the fact that queer and trans of color community arts in Toronto is largely a phenomenon associated with young people cannot be explained solely by turning to state funding mechanisms. At the same time that QTPOC organizers acknowledge the power of affect to drive their efforts, the workings of affect also have the potential to rip these efforts apart. This affective un-doing of queer and trans of color community initiatives has specific implications for the relationship between these initiatives and the life course of QTPOC organizers. As one queer of color organizer put it, "when friends break up and partners break up, communities fall apart. And the reason why there is so much youth organizing is because people are coming out, they organize and then they date, find a partner, break up. And after a significant break up of a

community organizer, communities fall apart". The conflicts that divide young queer and trans of color social circles as well as the community arts initiatives that they create are often so enduring that it is frequently up to younger generations of QTPOC organizers to establish programming to "make up for" the gap left by their predecessors. While it might seem somewhat absurd to link the generational nature of queer and trans of color organizing to something as supposedly mundane as the break-up of intimate relationships, the destructive power of the negative affects produced through conflict and the enduring nature of the consequences of these affects among close friends/partners is nonetheless well recognized.

I first became aware of this issue when I attended the art event *That's So Gay* which showcased the work of Trinidadian born artist Michèle Pearson Clarke. A thin, brown-skinned woman in her early forties with a shaved head, Clarke was taking part in an interview with the event curator, Elisha Lim in which she talked about her work, *It's Good To Be Needed*. She described her work as a series in which she photographed queer women who are exes but who are not friends, holding hands with each other. She said that the inspiration for this project came partly from her desire to disrupt the pervasive notion that all queer women are friends with their exes. Given that the circle of queer women in Toronto is so small, Clarke shared that she felt as though queer women experienced pressure to be friends with former partners; to refuse to talk to one's ex can feel like "letting 'the community' down". In talking about the difficulty of trying to find women who were willing to be photographed, Clarke shared that she learned tremendously about the affective power of break ups in her exchanges with (potential) subjects. In sharing a fictional anecdote of walking into a bar full of community members and feeling as though one is not able to talk to half of the room, Clarke viscerally illustrated how the separations that exist among queer women catalyzed by break ups can be deep and enduring. In speaking about the

nature of the social relations that inspired her work, *It's Good To Be Needed*, Clarke draws attention to the affective dynamics in queer communities where conflict among friends and former lovers dissolves the bonds not only between the specific individuals involved but also among those more distantly connected to these individuals. It is the dissolution of these more distant bonds that are consequential for the continued existence of queer and trans of color art initiatives.¹⁷ While the inability to sustain the affect of love in the context of limited financial resources can help to explain the ephemeral nature of queer and trans of color community initiatives, the affective power of interpersonal conflicts can help to explain the generational nature of these initiatives as primarily associated with youth.

Crafting alternative chronotopes

In this chapter, I have attempted to outline the temporal nature of queer and trans of color community arts programming in Toronto. I have argued that the often ephemeral nature of these initiatives and their existence as a particular kind of generational phenomenon associated with young people must be understood within the affective political economic contexts in which they

¹⁷ Clarke's insights complement Gayle Rubin's (1975) analysis of sex and gender in Claude Lévi-Strauss's approach to the study of kinship. Rubin argues that Lévi-Strauss's understanding of marriage rests on the exchange of women as structured by the principles of "the gift" and the incest taboo. While gifts create social links between partners of an exchange, the incest taboos (restrictions on whom one can marry) operate to ensure that these exchanges take place between different families. The incest taboo promotes the formation of social alliances whereby women are the gifts exchanged between two groups, essentially operating as the conduit of relationships among men. In this system, Lévi-Strauss's notion of "family" is premised on heterosexual marriage given that his explanation for the division of labor by sex is that it operates to ensure that the smallest viable economic unit is comprised of the union between one man and one woman. Rubin's analysis of Lévi-Strauss's system of kinship enables her to note, "kinship systems do not merely exchange women. They exchange sexual access, genealogical statuses, lineage name and ancestors, rights and people...in concrete systems of social relationships" (p. 177). While Rubin writes both to specify and transform the mechanisms by which women are oppressed, Clarke's art work demonstrates that her insights into the workings of kinship more generally apply to intimate relationships in which men are absent. By documenting how changes in the relationship between queer women also transform the broader social relations in which these women operate, Clarke reinforces the point that the formation, transformation and severing of kinship bonds carries consequences not only for the specific individuals involved but also for the network of social relations in which they are embedded. It is therefore not altogether surprising that the formation of queer women of color couples can birth community arts initiatives just as easily as their dissolution can bring them to an end.

occur. Thus, the chronotopic specificity of these initiatives must be understood in relation to the largely short-term and overwhelming youth-focused public arts funding available to QTPOC community organizers alongside their intense affective orientation toward their work and each other. Yet, queer and trans of color organizers express dissatisfaction with the chronotopic form in which their initiatives have come to exist: as both Twysted and Gein have expressed, QTPOC organizers want both longevity and intergenerational connection to be part of their work.

In the final section of this chapter, I want to think about this tension between the idealization of sustainability and inter-generational connection on the one hand and the reality of the ephemeral and overwhelmingly youthful nature of queer and trans of color community initiatives on the other. Elizabeth Freeman (2010) provides a way to approach this tension in her text *Time binds*. In her brief analysis of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer's Night Dream*, she illustrates the differences between the temporal rhythms in the lives of craftsmen and nobility and argues that the play "suggests that temporal misalignments can be the means of opening up other possible worlds" (2010, p. 16). In this particular case, what other possible worlds come into view when the idealization of longevity and the co-existence of multiple generations meets the reality of ephemerality and the over-representation of youth? An examination of cases in which individuals are similarly positioned to negotiate relationships among time, love and money may prove to be instructive for queer and trans of color organizers as to the kinds of possible worlds that they may bring forth.

In their analysis of the workings of the garment industry in Lesotho, Ansell, Tsoeu, & Hajdu (2014) examine how processes of economic transformation bring about changes in space

time¹⁸ that reconfigure existing practice of care among factory working women. Ansell and colleagues outline how the Lesothian state has sought to pursue economic development through the cultivation of export led industrialization in the form of garment manufacturing. They show that while women's increased incomes expand women's opportunities and capacities to fulfill social obligations to their families, they also point out that employment in the garment sector brings about what they refer to as "space time restructuring" or the way in which the space time of their work both constrains their actions and enables new social relations. The time intensive nature of garment factory work and the fact that women often have to travel far distances to their work places means that they are less able to physically care for their children and sick relatives (though they are increasingly better positioned to provide financial resources to support this care). Ansell and colleagues document the different strategies that women adopt in order to be able to provide care for their families despite the way in which the space time of their work structures their non-working lives. For instance, instead of commuting far distances from their homes, women might find living accommodations that are closer to their workplaces (but not too close as to be prohibitively expensive, as housing near the factories tends to be pricey). With the money they save from not living too closely to their work, they can afford to have their children live with them and pay for someone to take care of their children while they are at work. While the work of Ansell and colleagues is useful in thinking through how social actors navigate the ways in which the spatio-temporal dimensions of lives are structured, Toronto-based queer and trans of color organizers are seeking a different approach. Rather than trying to maneuver around the constraints of existing space-times, QTPOC community arts organizers are attempting to change the very nature of these space times to begin with.

¹⁸ Ansell Tsoeu, & Hajdu's conceptualization of space time is closely related to the notion of space time mobilized in this chapter. Much like Bakhtin's notion of chronotope, they characterize space time not as a container for social action but rather as an intertwining of time and space that is both produced by and productive of social processes.

In their attempts to change their initiatives from short lived youth programming to sustained inter-generational initiatives, queer and trans of color organizers do not seek to negotiate around the limitations imposed by existing space times but rather to bring about transformations in the chronotopes themselves. In contrast to the situation of Lesothian garment factory working women, Lemon's (2008) analysis of pedagogical moments at the Russian Theatrical Academy in Moscow provides a way to begin to think about how to bring about these transformations. Lemon focuses on the dialogue between teachers and their students over how to interpret personal ads that students were required to perform. These discussions centered on how to look behind textual forms that were treated as variables (love, time, space and value) in ways that might shed insight onto human motives and broader social contexts. In one example, Lemon focuses on how a teacher disagrees with the way that Marie, one of his students, has performed a personal ad placed by a young woman. While he agrees with Marie's analysis that the woman's motivation for placing this ad is boredom, he disagrees with the other students' conclusion that the woman in the personal ad is only seeking material gain. He pushes all of the students present during this performance to critically examine the relationships between the phrases of the text in the personal ad. He asks the students to consider that the woman placing the ad might be attempting to change her relationship to time and space. In forwarding his own opinion, he states, "she wants to end the absurd temporality of repeated dull actions. To make time as measured by clock and calendar disappear...to exit boredom, to leave it with explosive force" (2008, p. 256). For the teacher, love and financial gain do not necessarily exist in opposition to each other; he forwards the possibility that the woman placing this ad seeks to solve her spatio-temporal dilemma (boredom) by "combining variables that are usually kept on opposite sides of the equation 'I will be your faithful girlfriend *and* help you spend your money'" (2008, p. 256).

In much the same way that the instructor interprets the motivation for placing this ad in the desire to bring about a different space time through reconfigurations of love and money, I contend that QTPOC community organizers may enact different chronotopic realities by transforming the affective and political economic contexts in which their initiatives occur. On the one hand, it seems quite simple to see how changing the way in which these initiatives are funded would change the temporal nature of their existence. If government institutions were to replace short term funding with “core” or long term funding programs and change granting procedures to ensure the accessibility of arts funding to people of all ages, it would not be altogether surprising to see an increase in the longevity and a transformation in the generational character of QTPOC community arts programs. While the oft-cited mantra “if you build it, they will come” does not always ring true, it is indeed possible that the greater availability of resources for the production of particular social forms will increase the likelihood of these forms coming into existence. This is not to say that the work of enacting such policy changes within public arts funding programs would be without its challenges, but that it is fairly easy to see the broad outlines of what these changes would need to be.

Yet resolving the issue of financing alone would not unilaterally bring about the chronotopic transformations that QTPOC seek. In response to Shaunga's comment about wanting to win the lottery in order to establish a community arts center during the Asian Arts Freedom School workshop discussed earlier, Rose asked, "why is it always about winning the lottery and putting a lot of money in it?... we think that we need money to do it. But do we need that much money? I don't know.... Because even if you won the million dollars...you're going to have some issues still right? (laughs) How can we challenge ourselves to think beyond [money]?" Rose's insights remind us that the bare existence of financial resources in and of itself is not

capable of bringing out the changes that QTPOC community organizations desire. Her caution to Shaunga encourages us to think not only about how social actors may use these resources for their own ends, but also how the introduction of these resources into existing social relations may also change the way in which these relations are configured.

While recognizing the importance of attending to political economic conditions, an altogether more interesting and complex issue revolves around the transformation of the affective dynamics of QTPOC community arts necessary to foster sustainability and the involvement of multiple generations. Clifford Geertz's (1973) essay "Person time and conduct in Bali" serves as an important starting point for thinking about the affective dynamics that may support this desired chronotope. In this text, Geertz attempts to draw connections between the way that Balinese perceive themselves and others, how they experience time and the affective tone of their collective life. He outlines Balinese notions of personal identity and the extent to which "virtually everyone... [is a] stereotyped contemporary, abstract and anonymous" (1973, p. 389). He links this depersonalizing concept of personhood to a detemporalizing conception of time in which the sense of time is experienced as "disconnected, dimensionless, motionless particles" (1973, p. 399). The extension of these two concepts is manifest in the ceremonialization of social life which is closely associated with *lek* or what Geertz refers to as "stage fright". He describes *lek* as a kind of nervousness before the prospect of social interactions, a chronic low grade worry about the inability to properly carry out these interactions. Altogether, this multifaceted cultural pattern produces a situation in which collective activity fails to build toward consummation. He states, "quarrels appear and disappear, on occasion they even persist, but they hardly come to a head...ritual often seems as...to consist largely of getting ready and cleaning up...Balinese social life lacks climax because it takes place in a motional present" (1973, p. 404). The affective

temporal complex that Geertz describes is a far cry from the affectively volatile and short term nature of queer and trans of color community arts initiatives. The intense passion that organizers have for their work that, over time can lead to burn out, and the vituperative conflict that tears apart personal relationships and the initiatives on which they depend are markedly different from Geertz's description of the more affect-neutral character of Balinese social life.

But Geertz is not the only one to conceptualize the longevity of social forms in terms of affective stability. In her text, *An archive of feelings*, Cvetkovich (2003) quotes Amy Baur in her description of what it was like to participate in the AIDS activist organization ACT UP, "For a lot of people ACT UP was like a zombie from outer space that ate away at the rest of their life...and since ACT UP couldn't meet their needs, eventually they got really mad at it and they burned out" (2003, p. 171). Cvetkovich concludes, "the key to long term involvement was not to make ACT UP the center of social life...the preciousness of activist relationships...were specific to the context of activism and in many cases their intensity could not be sustained" (2003, p. 174)

The notion that supportive political economic conditions and measured affective dynamics can potentially give rise to sustained and inter-generational social forms is borne out by the example of queer and trans of color community arts initiatives like BlacknessYes! whose existence runs counter to the "flash in the pan" trend so common among other similar programming. BlacknessYes! describes itself as a community-based committee that seeks to celebrate the histories, creativity and resistance of Black, African diasporic and Caribbean queer and trans people. Its most well-known initiative is Blockorama (or Blocko for short), an event held during Toronto's Pride weekend featuring a day-long series of programming of DJs and performers. In 2014, BlacknessYes! hosted the 16th annual Blockorama. I know of no other explicitly queer and trans of color community arts group in Toronto that has existed for this long.

Additionally, the BlacknessYes! committee members come from different generations of organizers throughout the City. Between Nik Redman who has been involved with the committee from its inception and me, the newest member who joined in 2013, the other members have been involved with BlacknessYes! for widely differing periods of time. Unlike many of the other initiatives discussed in this chapter and throughout this dissertation, BlacknessYes! does not financially compensate its members for their organizing work; all committee members are volunteers. Thus, contrary to ILL NANA or Asian Arts Freedom School, BlacknessYes! members do not rely on this organizing work as a source of income: they financially support themselves through efforts outside of the committee. And while BlacknessYes! is responsible for raising funds for the smaller activities that it seeks to undertake, its main initiative, the event that occupies the majority of the committee's work, is financed through Pride Toronto (which in turn receives most of its funding from the City of Toronto). In contrast to many other queer and trans of color groups, this source of funding for Blockorama is not tied to the political economic prioritization of youth arts. The enduring and inter-generational nature of BlacknessYes! is thus related to economic dimensions of the committee in which its members are expected to volunteer their labor and the funding for its headline event is secure (and not youth-specific).

But economic considerations do not completely account for the temporal character of BlacknessYes! as questions of affect are also at play. The love that committee members have for their work and the conflicts that they have with each other are not altogether different from the kinds of feeling-based interactions that occur in other queer and trans of color initiatives. However, the spaced out nature of this work provides an opportunity for the dissipation of potentially destructive affective dynamics. That Blocko happens once per year means that while BlacknessYes! prepares for this event over a 12 month period, the large majority of the

organizing work takes place in the two to three months leading up to the event itself. There is no doubt that conflicts occur within the committee, especially in this intensive work period. In the first year that I was part of the committee, one member decided to discontinue his involvement partly because of the severity of such a conflict that revolved at least partly because of different approaches to doing community work. In my interview with this member he shared:

Steve: The challenges in any other situation would be financial, getting money or getting promotion and stuff like that, those are the things we would have actual trouble with but it was getting people to pay attention or answer emails or meet you half way with work.

Matthew: So it wasn't resource problems it was personnel problems?

Steve: Right, normally I'm in a position of being in control of everything and not to say that I can't be a participant, I don't always have to be leader but I felt it was hard. It's actually hard working in a collective of people that is not getting paid, I think that's a big part of it.

Matthew: Because the incentive?

Steve: Right.

Matthew: So the drives...

Steve: Are different...I'm used to structure, whether in communication or meeting or dates... and it wasn't that at all, it was very unstructured and it was new for me in that sense... there were challenges that were happening and I kind of got it but it was my first year and I just want to get this done. I just wanted to be structured and organized and thought that was what I was fighting against

In my interview with Steve, he explained that working with BlacknessYes! was a steep learning curve for him as he had never been involved in this kind of community organizing effort before and struggled to feel comfortable with the more unstructured working style. Eventually Steve brought up his concerns in a BlacknessYes! meeting that quickly became quite heated with raised voices and negative remarks being made on the personal character of other members.

These kinds of affective tensions that build up over a fairly short time period are eased in later months when the committee takes a long break after Pride. This break and the slow pace of getting back to work allows for the dispersal of the potentially destructive affective forces built up during more intensive work periods. In asking another committee member, Craig, about his experience working on Blockorama, he shared, “It can be frustrating. I enjoy it and that’s why I’m still doing it. [But] This last year was really difficult because there was a lot of infighting, there was a lot of tension, there was a lot of anger and I really didn’t like most of it but I knew what it was going to end up being so I think it was worthwhile. After blocko we didn’t meet up for a long time and we just needed a break...I think afterward I just needed to decompress.”

While Cvetkovich argues earlier that a high level of affective intensity cannot be sustained within social justice initiatives, this point is irrelevant in the case of BlacknessYes!: the fact that Blockorama occurs once a year means that sustaining a certain level of affective intensity is not necessary. The build-up and let down that I describe side steps much of the destructive affective dynamics that characterizes other initiatives and that are a major factor in how organizers burn out/break up with each other.

In attempting to think through the kinds of conditions necessary for Toronto-based queer and trans of color organizers to build create sustainable, inter-generational initiatives, I do not mean to detract from the power of short-term organizing efforts. In his analysis of the 2008 protests that occurred in South Korea over the importation of potentially tainted US beef, Lee (2012) argues for the importance of understanding the dynamics of short term processes of mobilization. Despite the fact that these protests lasted a mere 121 days, they were effective in bringing about a change in the agreement between the Korean and US governments as to the sale and importation of US beef to South Korea. Ultimately, Lee contends that it is these often

ephemeral social actions, like the pro-democracy protests that took place in Tiananmen Square in 1989, that have historically played a central role in reshaping political landscapes. The argument of this chapter is thus not to belittle the importance of short-lived social forms. Indeed, as indicated earlier, many of the people involved in this project spoke fondly of fleeting queer and trans of color art initiatives that were nevertheless crucially significant for their own personal development or for bringing about important changes in community norms. What this chapter does hope to point out however, is that by transforming the affective political economic contexts in which they work, queer and trans of color community organizers may bring about the chronotopic realities that they envision. In this case, questions of time are also question of love and money.

**CHAPTER FOUR: ON AFFECT, VIOLENCE AND (UN)MAKING HUMANITY: THE LIMITS OF ANTI-
OPPRESSION AND THE TURN TO TRANSFORMATIVE JUSTICE**

In this chapter, I examine how changes in queer and trans of color community practice reconfigure the relationship between affect, violence and humanity. While many QTPOC adhere to anti-oppression principles to combat systemic inequalities, how these principles are mobilized has adverse consequences on queer and trans of color social relations. For instance, QTPOC organizers understand “calling out”, or the process of publically censuring individuals for failing to adhere to anti-oppression politics, as a kind of dehumanizing violence that creates affective environments of fear and shame. As an alternative community practice, many QTPOC are turning to transformative justice as a way of addressing political conflict. I argue that this move operates as a local practice of humanization in which queer and trans of color organizers reorient their relationship to the connection between affect and violence.

By illustrating the challenges faced by minority community practitioners, this chapter shows the limitations of scholars who praise the work of these practitioners as a way of demonstrating the shortcomings of more conventional approaches to social life. For instance, in his text, *The trouble with normal*, Michael Warner (2000) draws attention to a division within what he refers to as the "gay movement" in the United States. Mobilizing Erving Goffman's (1963) distinction between "sitgmaphobe", contexts in which conformity to dominant culture is ensured through a fear of stigma and "stigmaphile", spaces where stigmatized groups come

together among themselves, Warner problematizes how an increasingly powerful segment of this movement has come to align itself with stigmaphobe politics in its valorization of "normal". In response to the equation of sexual difference with pathology, groups like the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) have emphasized the importance of seeing gay people as "normal". Warner argues that such a stance is built on embarrassment and defensiveness in an embrace of a respectability politics that is both desexualizing and depoliticizing. He contends that the main problem with such a stance is that it "throws shame on those who stand further down the ladder of respectability" (2000, p. 60) in the reinforcement of other hierarchies around gender, race, class and urban geography.

In contrast to a politics based on the claim of normality, Warner argues for the importance a stigmaphile politics associated with minor queer counterpublics or

pockets of alternative culture in the suburbs, among younger queers, in drag culture, among Black and Latino cultures, in the club scenes and the arts, on websites and in queer zines...that find expression in many local organizations: health service organizations, community centers, motorcycle clubs, theater groups, churches, anti-violence campaigns, transgender alliances, racial or ethnic groups, private support groups (2000, p. 67)

Within these circles, Warner states that to be queer is a way of saying "we're not pathological, but don't think for that reason we want to be normal" (2000, p. 59). While those associated with this kind of stance tend to have less money and visibility than groups such as the HRC, they are more directly accountable to those they claim to represent. Ultimately, Warner argues that "the world has much to learn from the disreputable queers who have the most experience in the politics of shame, but who for that very reason have been least likely to gain a hearing - either in the official policy circles where their interests are allegedly represented, or in the theoretical and

philosophical debates about morality sex, and shame, where their point of view can be most transformative" (2000, p. viii)

In this chapter, I seek to trouble Warner's call for the valorization of minor queer counterpublics. While Warner positively appraises a stigmaphile politics that counters the kinds of normativizing tendencies to which mainstream gay organizations adhere, I argue that a queer politics founded on the valorization of radicalism brings with it other kinds of limitations. These limitations are particularly salient in Toronto-based queer and trans of color community organizing circles where anti-oppression politics becomes the framework for moral evaluation. Though this approach to appraising social life certainly differs from the emphasis on mainstreaming often found in more prominent gay organizations, I show how the enactment of the valorization of radical politics within queer and trans people of color (QTPOC) communities does not necessarily serve as an antidote to the exclusions created by an adherence to respectability politics.

By showing the limitations of an orientation toward anti-oppression politics as a kind of radicalism within queer and trans of color organizing in Toronto, this chapter ethnographically elaborates the insights made by Jasbir Puar (2007) in her text *Terrorist assemblages*. Puar identifies queerness as "the modality through which 'freedom from norms' become a regulatory queer ideal that demarcates the ideal queer" (2007, p. 22). While she points to the way in which queer of color analyses mobilize intersectional models that challenge, for example how race and class norms are complicit with heteronorms, this adherence to a regulatory queerness, "holds queer of color organizing and theorizing to impossible standards and expectations, always

beholden to spaces and actions of resistance, transgression and subversion"¹⁹ (2007, p. 23).

Ultimately, she argues that the notion of queerness as automatically and inherently transgressive enacts specific forms of discipline and control. In this chapter, I detail how these regulatory processes operate within Toronto-based queer and trans of color community organizing circles through the public practice of “calling out”.

“Calling out”: Unmaking humanity through political surveillance

Activists have long used the strategy of drawing public attention to the wrong doings of others as a way of challenging social inequality. In the context of this strategy, it is only by pointing out the shortcomings of existing social practices that they can then be subject to transformation. In this section, I examine what happens when social justice oriented groups like queer and trans of color community organizations, use these tactics among themselves. I show how the practice of public censure for improper political acts works to call into question the humanity of the censured subject(s). In describing her experience of being “called out” Filipina community artist Catherine Hernandez illustrates how these dynamics unfold.

I first met Catherine in 2008 when she visited the house that I was living in with other queer people of color. At the time, she was “new to community” and was dating an artist who was more established than she was in Toronto’s queer scene. I am not sure if it was because she

¹⁹ The way in which queer and trans of color organizers come to be constrained in their political practice echo the works of others who examine the limited nature of how marginalized groups contest the conditions under which they are subject to mechanisms of exclusion. For instance, Partridge (2008) forwards the concept of “exclusionary incorporation” to describe how Black men gain access to German citizenship through marriage only to the extent to which they play into sexual stereotypes held by White German women. Likewise, Lemon (2002) shows that while some Roma in Russia disagree with the way in which their language appears in popular representations, how they mount their criticism often precludes a more powerful critique of the way in which processes of marginalization are secured through language. Thus, questioning the extent to which specific Romani words fit appropriately into their surrounding dialogue side steps a discussion that questions how and why Romani comes to be placed in that context to begin with.

was around people she had not met before, but I remember her as being a quiet, somewhat shy person. When I reconnected with her several years later as part of this study, I had a hard time reconciling the introverted person I initially met with the loud, rambunctious and outgoing woman who came to facilitate the Asian Arts Freedom workshop cycle in the fall of 2013. In order to make it to these workshops in downtown Toronto, Catherine had to travel quite a ways from Scarborough where she lived with her daughter and ran an independent day care business out of her home. She would burst into the room running a few minutes late with all of the energy of a fire cracker, coffee cup in one hand and purse in the other, fully ready to start the session with an arsenal of activities that she had picked up over the years from her extensive training in theatre and acting. While she readily consented to an interview with me, her busy schedule of parenting, running her own business and trying to find time for her own artistic practice meant that it was difficult for us to settle on a date and time to meet. Eventually however, we were able to arrange a skype interview where she shared some of the rude awakenings that she experienced once she became more embedded in QTPOC community.

I started performing at Read Good²⁰ [a community bookstore in Toronto] and performers had a choice of being given an honorarium or being given rental space there... At that time, Kim Crosby and I were planning a fundraiser for the Brave New Girls retreat, which is designed specifically for queer femmes of color. We were looking for a space that was affordable and of course I thought about Read Good because I had already earned 8-10 hours of space there and we would basically get it for free. But I knew that there were some conflicts in that some QPOC did not feel welcome there as people of colour or Black people or Indigenous people... We tried to figure out different ways so that people who felt the space was not QPOC friendly would understand our decision -- including me approaching one of the co-owners re: their concerns as a QPOC myself and Black ally -- but I got

²⁰ This is a pseudonym. I originally designed this study to be anonymous and confidential out of the desire to protect the privacy of the individuals and organizations that I was working with. During the course of the project however, I learned that several people and organizations wanted to be identified given the lack of documentation of queer and trans of color organizing in the city. The project thus became one in which individuals and organizations could decide if and how they were to be identified in this study. Although I have been to many events at ReadGood and am socially connected to some of their staff, the fact that I did not formally speak to the bookstore about this project obligated my use of a pseudonym.

numerous angry letters telling me, for instance, that I was anti-Black for wanting to book there. It was the first time that I was “called out” and to be quite honest with you, it was abusive and brutal. It was not progressive. Boycotting is not progressive. It's easy. Allyship looks like difficult discussions and care. Not shaming a woman of color and bullying her on a regular basis for years without a willingness to talk things out. It was the first time that people started to call me “activist” and I didn't, and still don't, feel comfortable with the word...I learned that as soon as you become public about your political views, some people will publicly shame you, I was being publicly shamed on facebook and in community spaces.

In sharing her experience of trying to coordinate a fundraiser for a queer femme of color initiative, Catherine spoke about the harsh public criticism that she received as a result of associating with ReadGood, an organization considered to be unwelcoming to QTPOC. Through countless hours of conversation with QTPOC community arts organizers and those who participate in their programs, I came to learn that, like Catherine, one could be “called out” for any number of reasons: for making a comment considered to be trans-misogynist, for behaving in ways interpreted to be racist, for organizing an event whose admission fees are deemed to exclude people with limited incomes etc. The term "anti-oppression" was ubiquitous in these discussions and the pervasiveness of the term within queer and trans of color organizing conversations was such that abbreviations like "anti-o" or "AO" were frequently bandied about with the expectation that parties to the dialogue would not only automatically grasp the longer term that these shortened forms referenced, but also understand the complex theoretical arguments that these forms indexed.

Anti-oppression is strongly associated with the field of social work (especially in the UK). These approaches developed out of radical and critical social work movements in 1960s and 1970s and were deeply informed by social justice efforts led by various groups such as feminists, ethno-racial minorities and people with disabilities, just to name a few (Dominelli, 2002). In this regard, anti-oppressive orientations to social work moved to augment a strong class analysis with

the acknowledgement of the need to address other forms of social exclusion such as race and gender (Day, 1992). In contrast to micro-oriented approaches that often located the source of social problems within individual human behavior, anti-oppressive approaches understood social problems as a product of unjust legal and institutional processes. Darlymple and Burke maintain that anti-oppressive frameworks, "recognize that macro social structures have an impact on social relations at all levels of society and provide a way of analyzing the causes of oppression and transforming the structures that sustain inequality" (2006, p.11). If anti-oppressive approaches provide the framework through which social action is evaluated, we can see that Catherine was "called out" or publically criticized because her actions supported an institution whose operation was considered to enact social exclusion on the basis of race and sexuality.²¹

Within Puar's framework, anti-oppression as a form of radical politics becomes the "regulatory ideal" which produces specific forms of discipline among Toronto-based queer and trans of color community organizers. The public practice of "calling out" is thus tied to a mode of evaluation whose enactment produces social pressure among queer and trans of color community artists who feel the need to take on a particular type of politics. Emerging multi-media artist Melisse Watson explained to me, "sometimes now I'm worried in this community that I'm not being radical enough, or not digging deep enough, or I'm way off base or I'm being

²¹ The type of evaluation that this chapter describes is of a particular kind. It is concerned with political assessment and is directed toward the "offending" individual in (semi) public settings. Queer and trans of color artists and organizers also discuss how the similar types of criticisms may be aired in the absence of the person to whom these comments pertain. These kinds of criticism often circulate within social circles through what may be considered gossip and they influence the way in which particular individuals are perceived and treated. These individuals are often not aware of (and thus have no conscious control over) their social reputation and the kinds of information that is being shared "behind their back". QTPOC artists and organizers shared with me that they were frequently preoccupied with the kinds of information circulating about them without their knowledge. In this sense, as much as they feared being "called out", they were also worried about what was *not* being "called out" as well. While I was privileged to be privy to some of these dynamics, the very delicate nature of these social relations and my personal connections to many of the individuals involved prevent me from writing about them in this chapter.

politically incorrect... In this community it can be terrifying to say something about something I'm experiencing and say it properly".

In many ways, queer and trans of color community organizers and artists are justified in their fear of being "called out". The stakes can be quite high when their ability to make a living depends on their reputation as a particular kind of political person within relatively small and insular social circles. In his interview with me, Vivek Shraya, a Toronto-based artist said, "I've had years of experience [in commercial arts settings] where people don't like my stuff. But when someone calls your work ...discriminatory that's a whole other level because these are people I work with. If you don't like my CD and I see you the next day, it doesn't matter what you think. But if you think I'm discriminatory and this is my job...I'm supposed to be a community organizer. It has such a broader impact, right?" In this statement, Vivek points out how being "called out" for failing to live up to the ideal of radical politics can have material consequences for those whose ability to work is tied to their capacity to translate these politics into practice.

While Warner contends that the respectability politics adopted by mainstream gay organizations reinforces existing social hierarchies by throwing shame onto minor queer counterpublics, some queer and trans of color community organizers use the language of humanity to argue that the enactment of the valorization of political transgressiveness is not necessarily any less limiting. For instance, in my interview with Jeff, one of the facilitators of Asian Arts Freedom School, he spoke at length about the challenges of "call out culture" in relationship to the notion of humanity. He states,

If I go to a space and someone is doing fucked up shit...I might talk shit to the people I'm with to process and vent and whatever, but I think that it's really important to realize that it's super easy to critique people whenever we want but it's like, in what ways do we do that? And how often does that critique serve as a means to dehumanize other people? And

once a critique is used as a means of dehumanization then isn't it often feeding into and supporting a pre-existing cycle of violence?

For Jeff, a regulatory ideal of radical political practice is problematic because as an evaluative framework, its enactment compromises the humanity of those who are perceived to fall short of political transgressiveness. While scholars of humanity have demonstrated how dominant groups write subordinate populations outside of the category of humanity as a central means of subjugation, this chapter illustrates the way in which processes of conflict and hierarchy within subordinate groups operate through the discourse of humanity as well. For instance, queer of color analyses have been keen to point out how the notion of humanity is constructed through the exclusion of racialized, gendered and sexualized difference (Agathangelou, 2013; Eng, 2010; Reddy, 2011). Within this line of inquiry, humanity is not an a priori natural state of affairs but rather the product of a set of exclusionary social practices whereby humanity is created by simultaneously making non-humans. This approach consolidates the claims of scholars like Ticktin who argue "the category of humanity also requires attention to its complicated relations with various cognates. The human, the humane, the humanitarian, and the inhumane are clearly all at play in the elaboration of humanity...the inhumane is not only a threat to humanity, however. Sometimes it is a threat that defines humanity" (2010, p.4). By drawing attention to how QTPOC mobilize anti-oppression practices in ways that call into question their own humanity, Toronto based queer and trans of color organizers demonstrate that discourses of humanity are found not only at the interface of subordinate populations and dominant bodies but also among subordinate populations as well.

Among queer and trans of color organizers, humanness is indexed by one's ability to be a properly political person, by one's capacity to act in ways that align with anti-oppression

principles that valorize political transgression and subversiveness. What is curious about this set of circumstances is that while the framework of anti-oppression is (theoretically) oriented toward the elimination of social inequality, its operationalization among subjugated populations works to further marginalize the groups it aims to support. The premise on which these mechanisms of dehumanization operate differ from the basis on which they unfold in Paolo Freire's (1970) model of horizontal violence whereby subjugated populations lash out amongst each other in their bid for humanization because they have internalized the processes of oppression to which they have been subject. Among Toronto-based QTPOC, dehumanization occurs not through the internalization of damaging societal norms but through the enactment of moral positions that seek to oppose these norms. In the following section, I delineate more clearly what these processes entail.

On fear shame and lateral violence

The dehumanization of those who (are perceived to) fall short of appropriate political practice as per the evaluative framework of anti-oppression has particular consequences among Toronto-based QTPOC. I argue that the anti-oppression fueled practice of “calling out” functions as a kind of lateral violence that produces affective environments of fear and shame. I provide an example from my own experience of calling someone out as a way to counterbalance the perspectives of other QTPOC who speak primarily from the perspective of being called out.

In 2008, I was hired to work as an outreach worker for a lesbian gay bisexual transgender (LGBT) youth social service agency. However, I soon left the organization because I had a difficult time navigating what I understood to be racist dynamics. I was confused as to why my attempts to connect with minority organizations that were not necessarily LGBT focused were

not seen as “proper” outreach. I operated from an approach that recognized the interconnectedness of all lived experiences and acknowledged that issues of, for instance, racism and disability justice were also issues that affected LGBT people. I decided to leave the agency as a result of encountering difficulty in trying to justify my work to an organization that understood LGBT issues within a narrow frame of reference. I was happy to learn that in my exit interview, I would be speaking with both Sarah, the chair of the board and Jaden, a board member who was selected to be on the board because of his status as a “community member”. Though Jaden was only an acquaintance, I knew we had several friends in common and thought that he would be sympathetic to my concerns. During the interview however, I was disappointed that when Sarah dismissed my concerns and said that she was unable to understand how my experiences with the organization could be interpreted as racism, Jaden remained silent. I followed up on this interaction with an email, an excerpt of which I include below:

The reason that I am writing to you is because I wanted to talk about your silence. Your silence when Sarah said these things. In remaining silent when Sarah said that she did not see how my experiences could be interpreted as racism, thereby taking away my power to name my experiences, you were essentially in agreement with her. I am writing to you because I thought that you would have said something to counter Sarah, to say that everyone has the right to name their own experiences.

I did not write to or contact Sarah because Sarah is not in my community. YOU are in my community. You are friends with the folks that I am friends with and we are often at the same social gatherings and events. As a person with significant power as a board member and as someone that I saw as an ally with a significant support network of anti-racist feminists, I specifically selected you to be in the exit interview. I was disappointed in your silence.

I now cringe when looking back on this email. I was so caught up in the pain and hurt that I experienced in being let down by an organization that I believed was advancing social justice that I was not able to consider Jaden’s position. I could not see that as a very young person (he

was in his early twenties at the time) he might not have had the experience or skills to navigate this situation. I could not see that even if he had these skills, it would have been difficult for him to speak up to the chair of the board who not only occupied a more senior position in the organization but who was also significantly older than him. In writing this email, I also assumed (perhaps erroneously) that he did not do or say anything after the interview ended. I did not receive a response from Jaden. Once, when we ran into each other at a social event, he mentioned receiving my email and that he would get back to me, but that did not end up happening.

I include this anecdote to demonstrate the harshness of the calling out process. However, my email is not necessarily indicative of the extreme levels of scathing criticism that calling out can possibly entail. My interview with community artist Elisha Lim perhaps gives a more revealing sense of the intensity of “call out culture”. Lim’s artist bio identifies them as taking “great pleasure in creatively portraying the beauty, dignity and power of being neither straight nor white nor cis-genderd”. Toward the end of our conversation, they insisted on talking about how the expectation of an anti-oppressive political practice can result in a "toxic" social scene.

Elisha: One of the dangerous aspects in Toronto is what happens in safe spaces, the way that we just attack each other. It's like we're animals with each other. We tear each other down all the time... The threats that you're going to ostracized if you don't follow the rules. You can so easily be, what's the word that parents do with their children? If you cut off your kid?

Matthew: Disowned?

Elisha: Disowned! People are disowned, exiled, excommunicated from the community. You can be people who are in the goods [and people who are] in the bads. I think it's [the community] getting bigger so it doesn't matter if you get kicked out of one [sub group] you can find another but... I think it's a form of danger.

I argue that lateral violence serves as a useful framework to understand the harsh dynamics of calling out among QTPOC. The concept of “lateral violence” was developed as a way to make sense of the kinds of abuse that indigenous community members inflict on each other as a consequence of the ongoing impact of residential schools. Within Canada, these institutions were funded by the government and run by church missionaries with the aim of assimilating indigenous populations (Milloy, 1999). Native children were removed from their families and communities and subject to religious conversion and processes of "civilization" in which Native languages and cultural practices were actively suppressed (Miller, 1996). While the last of these schools in Canada closed their doors in 1996, at the height of the residential school system in the 1930s, approximately 75% of First Nations children attended these institutions as well as a significant proportion of Metis and Inuit children (Fournier & Crey, 1997). Much has been made of the way in which Native children were subject to abuse and neglect by residential school staff including public beatings, humiliation, sexual abuse, food deprivation, emotional neglect and solitary confinement (Knockwood, 1992). Yet a smaller body of scholarship has also noted how the impact of residential schools can be evinced in the violence that Indigenous people enact amongst themselves (Haig-Brown, 1988). For instance, Bull (1991) argues that former students internalized the normalized violence that they experienced within residential schools and that this violence continues to characterize the social relations among Indigenous peoples as a consequence of collective trauma. Framing this situation in terms of “lateral violence”, the now defunct Aboriginal Healing Foundation states, “residential schools have been suggested as the primary cause of a cluster of behaviours known as lateral violence thought to be prevalent within Aboriginal communities. Lateral violence can occur within oppressed societies and include bullying, gossiping, feuding, shaming, and blaming other members of one’s own social group as

well as having a lack of trust toward other group members” (Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2014, p. 2). In their study of the student-to-student abuse that occurred within Canadian residential schools, the Foundation writes, "it's not uncommon for people to injure one another with acts of gossip, blame, shame, anger, jealousy. As oppressed people it is not surprising that we oppress our own people out of anger and frustration" (2014, p. xi).

While the concept of “lateral violence” can help to make sense of the ways in which groups who are constituted as outside of various dimensions of normativity direct negative behaviors toward each other, I do not make the claim that is possible to equate the historical and ongoing colonial violence experienced by Native populations to the kinds of exclusions and marginalizations to which queer and trans people of color are subject. The ethnographic descriptions I offer here are in no way comparable in either scale or severity to colonial violence enacted on Native bodies (neither is this comparison meant to discursively extinguish the existence of 2 spirit and/or indigenous queer and trans people). In talking about the making and unmaking of social relations wrought by the idealization of anti-oppression, it is important not to lose sight of the ways in which analyses of oppression can elide and even contribute of other kinds of violences. Wolfe (1999) describes settler colonialism as a structure (and not an event) premised on the extinction of Native people and Trask (2008) argues that mechanisms of settler colonialism can unfold by the foregrounding of settler group's relationship with each other (and/or settler states) and ignoring the relationship between native peoples and the ancestral lands on which settlers occupy. Thus, in using the concept of lateral violence to more clearly understand the negative consequences of how radical politics in the form of anti-oppression operate as a regulatory ideal within queer and trans of color community organizing circles, I seek to draw attention to the similarities between the kinds of *dynamics* produced by student-to-

student abuse within residential school and QTPOC “call out culture”. My analysis does not compare the violences and exclusions on which these dynamics are founded.

The workings of calling out as a form of lateral violence have particular affective consequences as QTPOC identify both shame and fear as salient to the experience of being called out. During our interview at the Gladstone branch of the Toronto Public Library, community artist Nadijah Robinson shared with me her thoughts on the relationship between fear, violence and calling out. In response to my question about the changes that she would like to see in QTPOC community organizing circles, she stated:

Nadijah: I think that that's probably something that we could work on more. Becoming more of a community... I think there's a lot of fear of being called out in this community that makes us only able to connect on certain levels.

Matthew: What do you mean?

Nadijah: In order to create a safer space for everyone, there are a lot of things that we can't do, words that we can't say, things that support oppression basically. Which is fine and great but I think the danger is when someone slips up and does something like that, everyone jumps on them and it's just like, 'Oh you did this bad thing! We have to call you out. We have to make you accountable for your crime of saying this word.' There's so much fear of that happening to you and you being known as the person who fucked up or the fucked up person that nobody can say anything... it feels very violent sometimes.

Nadijah's description of the (anticipatory) fear that "call out culture" produces among community artists stands in stark contrast to QTPOC organizers attempts to create "safe space" through their initiatives as described in chapter one. Whereas safe spaces are constructed to be settings of tenderness and allowing so that queer and trans people of color may create art derived from their own difficult lived experiences, harsh public practices of “calling out” in contrast are productive of fear and shame.

Given that public censure for inappropriate political practice is relatively commonplace, it is not surprising that fear and shame comes to characterize the affective landscape of QTPOC community arts. In describing their experience of being “called out” for the lack of representation of trans women in their work, one queer artist of color (who asked not to be named in this study) said, “[calling out] instills fear. I mean now, I will always remember to include this group, and this group and this group when I organize, but not from a place of education as to why that's important but because, oh my god, I don't want to get ‘called out’ ...I had an idea for another community project but I shelved it because I don't want someone to shit on me”. The socially repressive consequences of the way in which fear is produced through “call out culture” is thus seen in the trepidation that queer and trans of color community organizers and artists have in opening themselves to potentially vociferous criticism. Like many other QTPOC community artists, Catherine shared that both her fear of being publically criticized and the shame that arises should this occur (as she related earlier), prevents her from learning more about the kinds of anti-oppression politics that serve as the criteria against which she may be found wanting. She states, “I feel like I have actual questions and there's a difference between ignorance and questioning. When you pose questions publicly about oppression, when you are actually in a place of wonder and wanting to listen, you can expect to be shut down and shamed for not knowing the answers inherently. Shame on me for not being enlightened and evolved enough to have your progressive language.”

The challenge with existing analyses of fear and shame is that, like studies of humanity, they have largely focused on the creation of affective complexes as a result of the interactional dynamic between dominant and subordinate groups. For instance, Heather Love (2007) focuses on sentiments such as shame, isolation and self-hatred in order to emphasize the importance of

the attending the way that queers “feel backward” despite increasing legal protection from the state. In a similar fashion, Arjun Appadurai (2006) conceptualizes fear as a consequence of the relationship between majority and minority groups. He argues that fear is produced as an affective reaction of majority groups to the potential permanence of dissent within national social formations that minority populations represent.

In contrast to much of the literature on the politics of affect, violence and humanity, this chapter attempts to work through what it means to understand how subaltern populations negotiate these questions among themselves as opposed to how these questions arise out of the interaction between these populations and dominant groups. Though QTPOC adopt anti-oppressive approaches to combat systemic inequalities, the ferocity which with they attempt to ensure that this becomes the default mode of social action among themselves enacts a form of violence upon those who are perceived as failed adherents. This failing is not only a failure of one’s political practice but often comes to be understood as a failing of one’s humanity. The intensity of this dehumanizing form of lateral violence is such that it produces affective environments of fear and shame in which QTPOC experience not only a kind of anticipatory fear of being “called out” but also a sense of shame once this comes to pass. Within this set of circumstances, violence becomes the means through which dehumanization is secured as an inherently social project of political evaluation and fear and shame emerge in response to how this violence operates to secure adherence to a particular political orientation.

Struggling for humanization through transformative justice

I experienced great trepidation in writing this chapter. As someone who lived, worked and socialized among the people in this account before I began to undertake this study, I worried

that sharing some of the negative aspects of the social dynamics that characterize queer and trans of color organizing constituted a kind of betrayal. I also worried about the potential negative repercussions of the representations that I have offered. Would discussing the harm that QTPOC inflict on one another enable a discussion as to how they are to blame for their challenges and/or detract attention from the mechanisms of racism, sexism, homo/transphobia, class oppression that viscerally characterize their daily realities? In their report on lateral violence within Native communities in Canada, the Aboriginal Healing Foundation shared similar concerns as a consequence of their investigation into student-to-student abuse within residential schools. They state "non-Aboriginal Canadians may choose to use this information [in this report] to lay blame on Aboriginal people for the adverse events encountered. (Some comments heard include "It's their own fault" and "They did it to themselves.") (2014, p. 17).

As made clear in the previous section, I am not separate from this discussion of "call out culture". The fact that I am presenting what may be considered a problematic social dynamic with potentially negative repercussions for the individuals and groups who I worked with and that I am complicit with the dynamics that I describe, obligate me to mount a generative, productive response to these criticisms. How might we begin to address the negative consequences that stem from the enactment of a regulatory ideal of radical politics in the form of anti-oppression? The key term in this question is "enactment". Queer and trans of color organizers note that it is not the principles of anti-oppression politics in and of themselves that bring about harm within community arts settings, but rather the way in which the principles come to be manifest in social relations. Thus, QTPOC in this study would never say that they oppose the dismantling of racism or the destruction of heteropatriarchy. They do however take

issue with the way in which challenges to racism or heteropatriarchy inflict harm on other queer and trans people of color (as in the case of "call out culture").

The key question in the previous paragraph used the term "we" because I am not the first to point out the ways in which the struggle against oppression can perpetuate harm within queer and trans of color social circles. And not only are QTPOC organizers, activists, artists and scholars well aware of the kinds of social dynamics that I describe, but many have also begun to develop a wide range of analyses that seeks to address the violence that these dynamics produce within marginalized communities. In the final section of this chapter, I focus on one of these analyses, "transformative justice", alternatively known as "community accountability", as a response to the ways in which gaymousness and "calling out" emerge from the enactment of political transgressiveness as a regulatory ideal among queer and trans of color organizers. I argue that in its attempt to correct for the dehumanizing practice of calling out, transformative justice operates as a means of humanization.

In the preface to *The revolution begins at home*, Andrea Smith (2011) elaborates the emergence of transformative justice as a counterpoint to both the formal criminal legal system and newer models of "restorative justice". Drawing from her own experiences with anti- (gender-based) violence organizing in the United States, she points to a problem with earlier iterations of these efforts in their reliance on the criminal legal system as an approach to end violence against women of color. She asks, "[why were we]... supporting a system that was increasingly incarcerating poor communities and communities of color?" (2011, p. xiv). In contrast to the criminal legal system which operates through a punitive framework, models of restorative justice emphasize restoration and reconciliation. Thus, while the criminal legal system focuses on punishing perpetrators and removing them from society through incarceration, restorative justice

approaches attempt to involve all parties in determining the appropriate response to a crime in the bid for community restoration. Yet Cheng, Dulani and Piepzna-Samarasinha question the extent to which “community restoration” is necessarily positive: "there are serious limits to restoring the situation to what it was before the harm- what if the situation was shitty in the first place?" (2011, p. xxvi) For Smith, problematic social dynamics within collectives jeopardize their ability to hold perpetrators of violence accountable for their actions. In contrast to a punitive criminal legal system and a model of restorative justice that leaves problematic community dynamics intact, approaches to transformative justice seek to create communities of accountability. The group Generation Five states, "Transformative Justice seeks to provide people who experience violence with immediate safety and long term healing and reparations while holding people who commit violence accountable within and by their communities" (2007, p. 5). Ultimately, transformative justice seeks to address the way in which social justice movements tend to replicate the patterns of oppression they claim to oppose with the understanding that successful movements must prefigure the kinds of societies they seek to build.

Like many queer and trans people of color, I look to transformative justice or community accountability as a way to address the harmful social dynamics that I have described in this chapter. The way in which the ideal of anti-oppression politics are enacted among QTPOC community organizers brings about a kind of dehumanizing lateral violence that produces affective atmospheres of (anticipatory) fear and shame. This ideal negatively affects those who are viciously “called out” for their improper politics as they are constantly vigilant of maintaining a particular kind of political personhood. In many ways the practice of “calling out” replicates the criminal legal system because of its harsh punitive nature. In both cases, the perpetrator of violence can be isolated from their communities: while this occurs through

incarceration in the criminal legal system, "calling out" can push perpetrators out of their social circles and the shame that they experience for their political "crime" can keep them away.²²

As a transformative justice alternative to "calling out", Ngọc Loan Trần (2013) proposes the practice of "calling in" in their post on the blog, Black Girl Dangerous which "seeks to, in as many ways possible, amplify the voices, experiences and expressions of queer and trans* people of color." (Mackenzie, 2015) Trần writes,

[T]he first part of calling each other in is allowing mistakes to happen...When confronted with another person's mistake, I often think about what makes my relationship with this person important. I start "call in" conversations by identifying the behavior and defining why I am choosing to engage with them. I prioritize my values and invite them to think about theirs and where we share them. And then we talk about it. We talk about it together, like people who genuinely care about each other. We offer patience and compassion to each other and also keep it real, ending the conversation when we need to and know that it wasn't a loss to give it a try. Because when I see problematic behavior from someone who is connected to me, who is committed to some of the things I am, I want to believe that it's possible for us to move through and beyond whatever mistake was committed.

Note that in Trần's formulation of "calling in" the solution is not to do away with the ideal of anti-oppressive politics but rather to change the way in which this ideal is enacted; or to change the social orientation of this ideal without necessarily diminishing its normative power. While it continues to be important to engage in an anti-oppressive political practice, "calling in" helps to ensure that the perception of failing to live up to this ideal does not lead to shame-inducing, harsh public criticism or to an environment in which queer and trans people of color are fearful of making political faux pas. The importance of the principles of transformative justice on which practices like "calling in" are based are made apparent by writer, community educator and organizer, Mia Mingus (2012) who states, "If we are truly committed to ending oppression and

²² As an important caveat, during one of this project's community feedback sessions a friend of mine pointed out that it is important to qualify the comparison of "call out culture" to the workings of the criminal legal system because 1) queer and trans people of color and the state occupy vastly disparate positions of structural power and 2) the (social) consequences of being publically chastised are not comparable to actual experiences of incarceration.

violence, then we must be committed to each other. Then we must live out of the simple truth that *we need each other*. We need each other."

These principles, concepts and practices are by no means new. Cheng, Dulani and Piepzna-Samarasinha concede, "What we call 'community accountability' (some call it transformative justice, others call it as many names as there are people) has existed for as long as we hold collective memory" (2011, p. xxiii). An example of a transformative justice alternative to "calling out" may be evinced in the open letter that Audre Lorde (1981) wrote to Mary Daly published in *This bridge called my back: Writing by radical women of color*. In this letter, Lorde takes Daly to task for her failure to account for the diversity of experiences among women in her text *Gyn/ecology: The metaphysics of radical feminism*. She states that the work, "feels like another instance of the knowledge, crone-logy and work of women of color being ghettoized by a white woman dealing only out of a patriarchal western-european framework of reference" (1981, p. 96). For Lorde this approach is problematic because, "to imply...that all women suffer the same oppression simply because we are women, is to lose sight of the many varied tools of patriarchy. It is to ignore how those tools are used by women without awareness against each other" (1981, p. 95). It might be tempting to understand Lorde's letter as an instance of "calling out", as a prime example of the (arguably justifiable) acerbic criticism that women of color came to level against white feminists in the what would later be referred to as third wave feminism in North America. Yet, why I argue that this letter must be understood as so much more, and in fact may be considered an example of transformative justice is because Lorde refrains from "writing off" Daly. Instead, she emphasizes the importance of working through differences. She states, "As outsiders, we need each other for support and connection and all the other necessities of living on the borders. But in order to come together we must recognize each other...I would like

not to have to destroy you in my consciousness. So as a sister Hag, I ask you to speak to my perceptions. Whether or not you do, I thank you for what I have learned from you” (1981, p. 97).

I argue that the way in which QTPOC mobilize transformative justice to address the violence of calling out as a kind of anti-oppression practice operates as a means of humanization. By making this claim, I align with the work of Alexander Weheliye (2014) who pays close attention to how humanity is made in the traditions of oppressed groups. In proposing the notion of *habeas viscus*, he advocates for an understanding of humanity constructed through the application of knowledge to the practical aims of human life. Within this framework it is important to understand the workings of these applications among subaltern groups because they constitute a distinct assemblage of what it means to be human in the modern world. I argue that, in the case of QTPOC, this meaning is manifest in the attempt to sidestep the enactment of violence that calling out often entails and to build alternate ways of relating to each other. Transformative justice thus operates as a technological assemblage of humanity designed to work against the dehumanizing hierarchization produced by anti-oppression practice.

Yet while queer and trans of color community artists and organizers recognize the toxicity in how the valorization of radical politics comes to manifest in their social relations and identify transformative justice/community accountability as a way to address this issue, they nevertheless acknowledge the incredibly difficulty of actually changing the way that they interact with each other. Farrah, a Toronto-based queer of color community organizer shared the challenges that she experienced in trying to resolve a conflict along the lines suggested by Trần, "It's heartbreaking because you're like, 'Can we sit down and talk about it?' But the scary thing is that people can't actually do that. They can vilify you online, write a blog post about you, they can talk about you at parties, but to actually have a conversation with you is a challenge". Farrah

highlights a difficulty in practicing transformative justice that many queer and trans people of color have identified in their attempt to resolve conflicts based on political (and personal) differences. The painful nature of the circumstances that necessitates these kinds of conversations that Farrah refers to may serve to block these conversations from happening at all. As Lorde notes in her letter to Daly, “As an african-american woman in white patriarchy, I am used to having my archetypal experience distorted and trivialized but it is terribly painful to feel it being done by a woman whose knowledge so much matches my own” (1981, p. 95). What is one to do when the other person does not want (or finds themselves unable) to engage in these kinds of difficult discussions?

This issue came up in my interview with Patrick who raised the point that securing consent can serve as a stumbling block to practicing transformative justice.

Patrick: Community accountability is the way to go

Matthew: Do we practice that?

Patrick: No, no, no. When you do that stuff, you need people to consent to it. And the thing is that when it comes to certain things people are not going to be part of the process. In the regular [criminal legal system] you can force someone, but in this situation you can't have a mediation process and force someone. That's what makes it complicated...but you have to learn to live in community, we can't 'x' people out

The issue of consent becomes particularly challenging in situations where conflict involves individuals who are positioned in different ways. I became acutely aware of this difficulty in speaking to a former employee of a QTPOC community arts program who described the grossly unjust treatment that she received in her position. For her, this was not an isolated incident but rather, “a pattern... this one thing keeps happening in arts organizations in my life and not just to me but different people... People’s work gets exploited and people get burned out and a lot of

the time it's the people who're doing this work and being exploited... it's gendered. It's not a coincidence that I'm a queer femme of color that got fired from a job without any fair reason". She went on to explain that she felt as though she could not share her experience with others not only because of the celebrity status of the director who she identified as the source of her troubles, but also because she did not want to damage the reputation of a much needed community program. She pointed out the inherent asymmetry in the relationship between an employer and employee and questioned the extent to which someone in such an advantaged position would be motivated to change their behavior. This situation demonstrates that social relations among queer and trans people of color within community arts organizing circles are not automatically horizontal, which poses significant challenges in addressing the kinds of situations to which transformative justice is forwarded as the solution.

Ultimately, while queer and trans of colour community artists and organizers turn to transformative justice to address the harm that comes about as a consequence of how the regulatory ideal of anti-oppression is manifest in QTPOC social relations, they both recognize the challenges of implementing this practice as well as the importance of pushing against this harm to find different ways of interacting with each other. Unfortunately, I do not have much insight to share in terms of how to make these kinds of struggles any easier. While scholars such as Ahmed (2010) speak to the significance of not pushing for a happy ending, as a social worker, I nevertheless feel remiss at my inability to address the harmful dynamics that I have described. As a consolation, I hope to have offered a clearer understanding of how we might begin to think about the problem. In this spirit, I conclude with the words of writer, community educator and organizer, Mia Mingus, who so eloquently captures the urgency and difficulty of working through the kinds of challenges that QTPOC are currently grappling with:

We cannot, on the one hand have sharp analysis about how pervasive systems of oppression and violence are and then on the other hand, expect people to act like that's not the world we exist in. Of course there are times we are going to do and say oppressive things, of course we are going to hurt each other, of course we are going to be violent, collude in violence or accept violence as normal... We must roll up our sleeves and start doing the hard work of learning how to work through conflict, pain and hurt as if our lives depended on it—because they do. We have to learn how to have hard conversations and get skilled at talking about and dealing with shame, guilt, trauma, hurt, and anger... We must work to transform our selves, each other and the systems we're up against. The task in front of us is to learn how to value and practice individual, collective and systematic change together... because the truth is we need each other. (Mingus, 2012)

**CHAPTER FIVE: MAKING QUEER AND TRANS OF COLOR COUNTER-POLITICS: DISABILITY,
ACCESSIBILITY AND THE POLITICS OF INCLUSION**

This chapter focuses on the work that queer and trans people of color (QTPOC) community arts organizers undertake in order to make their initiatives more accessible for those who typically do not participate. Drawing from my experience as the accessibility coordinator for Unapologetic Burlesque, an anti-racist, queer, consensual burlesque performance series, I point out the tension between the production and reception of accessibility work among QTPOC as a way to think about the significance of accessibility in relation to the practice of community organizing in general. Drawing from the work of disability justice activists, queer and trans of color organizers have adopted a number of practices to ensure that people with disabilities can take part in their events. Given that disability has often been the foundation on which ethno-racial, gender and sexual minorities have been subject to disqualification from the category of human, disability justice organizing among QTPOC serve as a reminder of the interlocking nature of both the mechanisms of exclusions and the means through which these exclusions are refuted. Yet some queer and trans of color organizers have criticized the way in which disability justice organizing is implemented, arguing that these practice are opaque to those who are unfamiliar with Toronto's QTPOC community arts scene. Echoing the works of community building/organizing scholars who speak to the importance of expanding social collectives that tend to adopt an inward orientation, QTPOC organizers also stress the importance of encouraging the participation of newcomers. In contrast to a negative analytic that focuses on

questions of exclusion, this tension between disability justice organizing and efforts to ensure the participation newcomers allows for a more productive approach that asks how these organizing practices anticipatorily imagine the people they seek to include. Ultimately, I argue that in this process of anticipatory imagination, QTPOC accessibility efforts construct relationships among unknown others in the creation of subaltern counter public spheres.

Accessibility and disability justice organizing

I first came to understand the significance of accessibility within (queer and trans of color) community organizing initiatives through my experience as the accessibility coordinator with Unapologetic Burlesque. In April 2013, I received an email from Shaunga, one of the co-founders of the initiative, asking if I would be interested in taking on this role. She wrote,

kumari [the other co-founder of Unapologetic Burlesque] and I are re-structuring the behind the scenes work that goes into this event a little bit in order to share tasks and keep the work load more manageable and sustainable for us. For that reason we've created two separate roles, a crew coordinator and an outreach/accessibility coordinator.

We thought of you as someone really awesome to work with and would love it if you were interested in taking on the outreach/accessibility coordinator position! Also thinking because you had asked us if the show could somehow be incorporated into your research - so doing this work might be a way for you to understand through experience how the work comes together that would benefit your research.

The main part of this role would be around overseeing the process of getting ASL [American Sign Language] interpretation and active listeners²³ at the show, and keeping track of performer and community accessibility needs. We'll definitely be around as back-up for everything so you wouldn't be doing it without support.

Meeting up with both kumari and Shuanga the week afterward to talk about the position, I explained that I would be happy to help out but that I was hesitant because I had no prior

²³ As part of my role as accessibility coordinator, I organized a skills sharing workshop so that people could learn active listening skills from each other. The two people that I recruited to facilitate the workshop wrote a description of this event and identified active listeners as "community members who support those who are [emotionally] triggered, need help strategize around safety or need to talk to someone at community events"

experience around accessibility work. In response, they suggested that I reach out to people who were already doing this kind of organizing to learn from them and provided me with a list of contacts. Over the course of preparing for the show, it became apparent that while they had initially envisioned my role as encompassing both outreach and accessibility activities, the sheer volume of accessibility work required meant that I focused my efforts solely in this arena.

In that same month, I did an interview with Masti Khor, a queer South Asian performance artist and community organizer who explained to me that Unapologetic's efforts to focus on accessibility are part of a broader trend,

"I think that access is becoming a huge deal in QTPOC [queer and trans people of color] communities because of disability justice and the work that Stacey Milbern, Mia Mingus and Leah [Lakshmi] do and have been doing for a long time now, but moving from disability rights from disability justice, which basically means moving from whiteness to POC'ness [people of color-ness]. It's been influential in our communities the past few years and as more crips of colour come out as being disabled...it's less and less okay to not have ASL... [we won't have a] politicized QTPOC event...at places that aren't wheelchair accessible. But 2 years ago it was okay to do that. It's awesome we're growing politically and that's exactly where we should be going. I'm really proud of us and part of that access is around emotional pieces too; issues of mental health and taking care of each other. The more and more vulnerable we get in our work, the more we need to have trigger warnings²⁴. I think we always needed to have trigger warnings we just didn't necessarily have the tools or the skills or the normalization of it."

Indeed, it was because of this upswing that Masti indicated that I was able to get in touch with several disability justice activists to learn about what I would need to do as an accessibility coordinator for Unapologetic. Leah Henderson was one of the people that I met and we had a

²⁴ Part of my role as accessibility coordinator involved organizing and passing along the information submitted by performers to American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters so that they could be as prepared as possible to interpret during performances. Trigger warnings were part of the information elicited from performers and the form that performers were required to submit as part of their application process described trigger warning in this way: "Trigger Warnings give folks at the show opportunities to prepare for subject matter that may elicit heavy, difficult or complicated emotional responses, as well as allow us space to be in control of how/if we engage with the material. Is there any heavy/difficult content in your piece that requires a trigger warning? FYI, there will be active listeners at the show to support folks backstage and in the audience. (Example: This piece deals with misogyny and contains specific misogynist/violent language. Feel free to take a break from the space or speak to an active listener if you need to.)"

conversation about accessibility sitting in the backyard of the house that she shared with two other queers. Between munching on the grapes that I had brought, I peppered her with questions. Was it feasible to have offsite childcare? Did she know how to make closed captioning for the videos that would be shown? Should we have a capacity limit for the event so that it would not get so crowded that people with mobility issues or those using wheelchairs would have trouble navigating the space? Over the course of an hour we continued to talk about the different kinds of work that I would need to coordinate in order to make the next Unapologetic Burlesque show as accessible as possible and she suggested other people that I could get in contact with to help me through this process.

As a way to demonstrate the kinds of accessibility work that goes into an Unapologetic Burlesque show, I include below the accessibility information section that was posted to the facebook event page of the Unapologetic show hosted in December 2013.

“Trigger warnings: Coming soon!

The first two rows of seating at this event will be reserved for folks with chemical sensitivities/injury, folks who have wheelchairs or mobility devices, who need to sit, read the screen, or have access to ASL interpreters, and people of colour.

Two ASL interpreters will be present at the Monday December 16th show. For both shows, all text (performer bios, song lyrics etc.) will be projected onto the screen that will be set up on the stage

We will have active listeners present on both nights in case something happens at the event that brings up things for audience members and/or performers that they may want to talk with someone about. If at any time you feel as though you need to leave the space, we welcome you to take best care of yourself and we offer this tips to support you: [website address]

So that folks with chemical injury can attend and perform at this event, please come fragrance free. Good information about how to do this is here [website address] At minimum, please refrain from wearing cologne, perfume and essential oils and products containing them.

The venue is wheelchair accessible.

Unfortunately we are not able to provide onsite childcare for this Unapologetic Burlesque Show. We are going to try to make this happen for the next show!

Finally, we are always learning about how to make our spaces more accessible. This is an ongoing process and we will continue to update the event page with information around accessibility. Please contact Matthew at [email address] with any questions, concerns or issues that you may have about accessibility at this event.”

While the role of accessibility coordinator had sensitized me to the increasing emphasis on disability justice within queer and trans of color community organizing initiatives, it was not until I attended the BlacknessYes! meeting in May that I became aware of the legal significance of attempts to ensure accessibility for people with disabilities. BlacknessYes! describes itself as a community-based committee that celebrates the creativity, histories and resistance of African diasporic, Black and Caribbean queer and trans people in Toronto. In this meeting we were discussing plans for Blockorama, a stage of programming organized each year that takes place during Toronto Pride. More specifically we were talking about the logistics of securing two American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters²⁵ for the event. In the exchange that I detail below, Nik brought up this issue by recounting his conversation with Amy, a staff member at Pride Toronto.

Nik: I asked her if there was any movement on our second [ASL] interpreter and she said "no" and I said, "how come?"

Syrus: She should have gotten one by now

Nik: I said that you should have booked people months in advance, you have the dates. She said that she's going to ask a few people for us

Matthew: Why do we need ASL for? Is it for the whole...?

²⁵ It is typical to have two ASL interpreters at any event because the work of interpretation is quite arduous especially for longer periods of time (more than two hours). The two interpreters will often take turns interpreting roughly every 15-20 minutes.

Nik: [interrupts] No it's just from 4-10 [pm]. Mostly when there is talking and performances, I guess even the dance performers. When we give them [the ASL interpreters] the lyrics in advance they can interpret them.

Matthew: So we don't book our own ASL?

Nik: It's supposed to come from Pride [Toronto] and their budget as a big organization and it has to basically [pause] they have all these laws that they have to adhere to and I haven't really put that to her

Syrus: It is a law because all we need is one person to make a request in advance [for ASL] and because of the AODA guidelines [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act], if someone is requesting for customer service access, you have to provide it unless you can provide evidence of undue hardship, which is the wording of the law, which it [Pride Toronto] is not because it is one of the major [festivals]

Because BlacknessYes! works in partnership with the registered charity, Pride Toronto to host Blockorama, the legal stipulations that they face around accessibility are quite different from the situations of other queer and trans of color community organizing groups who, given their informal status and more tenuous links to formal institutions, are not legally obligated in the same way. Nevertheless, I bring up BlacknessYes! and the AODA guidelines, as an entry point to discuss the specificity of disability legislation in the province of Ontario in order to unpack the way in which accessibility work is conceptualized and practiced.

While earlier legislation such as the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Ontario Human Rights Code drew attention to the disadvantaged position of people with disabilities, disability activists and community organizations have more recently identified the need for greater efforts to remove barriers to full participation for people with disabilities within Canadian society (Beer, 2010). The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act came about as a result of their work to improve the living conditions of people with disabilities. The AODA passed into law through the Ontario legislature in 2005 and it states:

"Recognizing the history of discrimination against persons with disabilities in Ontario, the purpose of this Act is to benefit all Ontarians by,

(a) developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards in order to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises on or before January 1, 2025; and

(b) providing for the involvement of persons with disabilities, of the Government of Ontario and of representatives of industries and of various sectors of the economy in the development of the accessibility standard" (Government of Ontario, 2005)

Disability scholars have linked policies like AODA to specific understandings of disability.

In her analysis of disability policy in Canada, Jongbloed identifies a medical model which "conceptualizes disability as the attribute of a person who is functionally limited and biologically inferior and represents the individual as a patient with special medical needs who deserves a charitable response in the form of provision of health services" (2003, p. 205). From the 1920s to the 1970s this approach to disability in Canadian society meant that policies were oriented toward providing medical treatment and support services. This state of affairs began to change in the 1970s with the emergence of disability activists and groups such as The Coalition of Provincial Organizations of the Handicapped (now known as the Council of Canadians with Disabilities) who rejected individualized and pathologizing understandings of disability and instead focused on social factors (Jongbloed, 2003). Shakespeare (2013) identifies this "social model" as one in which disability is conceptualized in terms of a dichotomy between individual and private impairment on the one hand and a structural public disability on the other. As opposed to the medical model in which disability is seen as an individual deficit, the social model conceives of disability as the relationship between people with impairment and a disabling society. Ginsburg and Rapp state "this paradigm insists that disability is not simply lodged in the body, but created by the social and material conditions that "dis-able" the full participation of a

variety of minds and bodies. Disability is thus recognized as the result of negative interactions between a person with an impairment and his or her social environment" (2013, p. 54). Instead of focusing on individual intervention as in the medical model, the policy implications of the social model emphasize the importance of removing the barriers that have been imposed on people with disabilities. The AODA and indeed the notion of accessibility itself fits squarely within the realm of the social model as the goal is the transformation of the social conditions that are responsible for the challenges faced by people with disabilities.²⁶

Organizing for disability justice, organizing for the un-initiated

Yet exploring QTPOC's efforts to secure disability justice by examining the conceptual and juridical underpinnings of this work does not necessarily serve as an exhaustive analysis of the accessibility organizing carried out by groups like Unapologetic Burlesque. One way to get a better sense of the import of QTPOC accessibility work is to examine its reception among various audiences. In this section, I highlight the different kinds of responses that audience members offered to the accessibility efforts implemented at "Superqueero Holiday Potluck Dinner", the Unapologetic Burlesque show hosted on December 16, 2013. The show took place

²⁶ Disability scholars have noted that the social model has been useful to disability movements not only in its effectiveness as a means of leveraging resources to transform disabling conditions but also as means of building a positive sense of collective identity. Instead of understanding disability as a personal failing, the problems of disability are relocated from the individual to the conditions that disable them (Shakespeare, 2013). At the same time, some scholars have noted the weaknesses of a social model of disability. If the challenges associated with disability are seen to be the result of external conditions it is easy to downplay the very important role that impairment plays in the lives of disabled peoples. Tobin Siebers states, "changes in the built environment will not improve the situation of some people with painful disabilities. The reality of certain bodies is a fact, while harsh, that must be recognized" (2008, p. 5). In seeking to draw attention to the way that, "the medical model pays too much attention to embodiment while the social model leaves it out of the picture," (2008, p. 25) Siebers proposes a theory of "complex embodiment" in order to address these limitations. Such a theory,

"raises awareness of the effects of disabling environments on people's lived experience of the body but it emphasizes as well that some factors affecting disability (such as chronic pain, secondary health effects and aging) derive from the body... The theory of complex embodiment views the economy between social representations and the body not as unidirectional as in the social model, or nonexistent as in the medical model, but as reciprocal. Complex embodiment theorizes the body and its representations as mutually transformative." (2008, p. 25).

at the Gladstone, a boutique hotel located in the west end of downtown Toronto. The facebook event page provided the following description of the event, "to honour our tradition of messing with holiday stereotypes/expectations and to challenge, create new meanings, and continuously surprise ourselves, this winter we are organizing our very own superqueero holiday potluck - dinner is the show, and you're invited!"

That night, as soon as the show cut for intermission, one of the accessibility volunteers came up to me with an urgent look on her face. She told me that several audience members had approached her because someone who was wearing heavily scented products was sitting in the first two rows. This section was reserved for people with chemical sensitivities/injuries who need a fragrance free environment in order to be present at the show. In the throngs of people milling around and chatting with each other, kumari quickly approached me and asked if I had heard of the problem. Apparently, other volunteers had also approached kumari and informed them that the photographer Unapologetic had asked to take pictures of the show that night was the person who was wearing heavily scented products. Ever the problem solver, kumari said that they would ask the photographer to relocate from the front row. They also asked if I thought it would be appropriate to make an announcement once the second half of the show started, reminding people about the need for a fragrance free environment and asking people wearing scents to move to the back of the room. I said that this sounded like a great idea and kumari soon took to the stage afterward, microphone in hand to make this announcement.

Once the show had ended and all the lights had come up, I was wandering around in the audience, checking in with the people I had asked to volunteer at the show and thanking audience members for coming. I was quite surprised that three different women responded quite positively to the show's accessibility work. One of them was considered to be a well-known

disability justice activist and commented that Unapologetic's accessibility efforts were "right up there with Sins Invalid". I took this to be quite a compliment as Sins Invalid, which describes itself as "a performance project on disability and sexuality that incubates and celebrates artists with disabilities, centralizing artists of color and queer and gender-variant artists" (Sins Invalid, n.d.), is well known for its disability justice work. Trying to be modest, I confessed that I knew nothing about accessibility and that everything that was implemented that night was as a result of learning from other disability justice activists. She countered by saying that what matters is that Unapologetic is doing the work to make accessibility happen which does not necessarily take place within other community organizing initiatives. As I was still new to doing accessibility organizing, it felt good to get positive feedback from someone who had so much more experience than I did.

Several days later however, I had a conversation that made me question my work with Unapologetic and to think more deeply about the relationship between disability and accessibility. Later that week, I hosted an open house. I cooked a mountain of food and invited my friends to pass through at any point during the day. I had not had the chance to see my friend Scott in a several weeks and he agreed to come to my apartment an hour earlier so we could have some one-on-one catch up time before other people arrived. After making some tea for both of us and opening the box of pastries that he had brought from the neighborhood bakery, we sat on my blue couch and began to talk. Our conversation invariably turned to the Unapologetic Show that he had attended a few days before. As Scott works at the office of sexual and gender diversity at a local university, he had told several students from the school's queer of color group about the event and had sat with some of them during the show. He said that he really enjoyed the event

and the variety of the performances: while some were more professional and polished, others were performed by those who were clearly new to the stage.

As much as he appreciated the content of the show however, he also gave me some feedback in terms of how the event was organized. Having sat with several of the students who came to Unapologetic for the first time and who were relatively new to the queer and trans of color community arts scene, he shared some of the reactions of the un-initiated. Scott introduced one of the students, Harry to his friend, Kay who had agreed to volunteer as an active listener that night. Harry asked Kay why she was wearing a ribbon on her arm. She explained that the ribbon was meant to identify her as an active listener in case anyone needed to talk to her for support during the show. Harry was not clear about why such a role would be needed and laughed when he heard the explanation. Scott explained to me that not everyone was familiar with the concept of "active listener". Having invested so much time and effort into the accessibility work for the show, I responded somewhat defensively that we described the role of active listeners on the facebook event page and in the actual space of the venue itself we had put up signs at the entrance and within the performance space explaining what "active listeners" were. Scott responded that the problem is that people have to understand themselves in particular ways in order for these categories to make sense: if you do not perceive yourself as someone who can be emotionally triggered, the notion of an active listener will not be relevant to you. As newcomers to Unapologetic (and to a particular queer and trans of color scene) these students were still trying to get accustomed to the space and it is unlikely that they would have felt the need to speak to an active listener in the way that was intended. Yet Scott shared that even though Harry had expressed incredulity at the realization that a role such as active listener existed, Harry nevertheless periodically spoke to Kay throughout the night asking questions

about things that he did not understand. Scott explained that the role of active listener presumed that audience members would need to talk about emotionally difficult issues when in fact they may find it useful to engage with volunteers in a range of different ways. He also pointed out that it was through his introduction of Harry to Kay that made Harry feel comfortable enough to approach her in ways that might otherwise have been difficult for those who did not have a similar social intermediary.

Scott also shared that the students that he invited were not always sure of what was expected of them as audience members. During the show's intermission, when Kumari made the announcement asking folks wearing scented products to shift to the back of the room, they had also made a plea to audience members to cheer loudly for the performers. Scott relayed that some of the students that he was sitting with felt taken aback by this comment because they already felt as though they were cheering loudly. At the same time, he could also tell that some of them were not altogether sure of how to react to some of the performances because of their intensely personal nature. Having the set list still fresh in my mind and thinking about the performances that preceded the intermission, I could see how newcomers to Unapologetic would be uncertain of the response to give to some of the pieces. For instance, one of the performers presented a deeply moving dance piece about the connection between their relationship to their father and their Christian faith and the need to break the pattern of trying to please both of them to the extent of sacrificing their own wellbeing. While performers sometimes indicate the type of responses that they want to hear from audience members in the biographies that are read out loud by the hosts of the show prior to their performances, this is by no means a universally common practice. Hearing Scott share the experiences of those who had

never been to Unapologetic Burlesque made me think about how accessibility organizing is not exhausted by a focus on issues of disability justice.

I came to realize that I had to think about accessibility in broader ways. If my goal as the accessibility coordinator was to address barriers to the participation of those who normally do not take part in Unapologetic, I not only had to take into consideration people with disabilities, I also had to think about people who had never been to this kind of event before. While I had been hearing queer and trans of color community organizers talk about the need to tailor programming toward newcomers to the QTPOC community arts scene for quite some time, listening to Scott relay his students' responses to the event made me viscerally aware of this need in a way that I was not able to comprehend before. In my interview with Jeff, one of the facilitators for Asian Arts Freedom School, he offered a critical assessment of the way in which accessibility work is performed in queer and trans of color community arts circles, "[there are] events where there are paragraphs and paragraphs of what it means to be accessible but that makes it accessible to folks who have that language and have the time to read it and will read it". Likewise, Patrick, coordinator of Asian Arts Freedom School's Drag Musical program explained that it was important in community organizing work not only to engage people who are already in the "scene" and that accessibility was also about reaching out to others. He states, "for me, community is about expanding it too. It's not just QTPOC. I'm part of a larger community that wants to grow...when you are community organizing and building a movement, it's not just about the people who agree with you, it's about how to get everyone in". In trying to work with this principle in the Drag Musical, Patrick explained to me that in the selection process for the program, the team purposefully reached out to people who were not already within the queer and trans of color community arts scene and decided that most of the participants would be selected

for the program on the basis that they had not already been involved with these and similar initiatives.

Patrick and Jeff's concern about the importance of reaching out to those who were not already "in the know" resonates with the insights generated by scholars whose work focuses on community organizing and community building. Walter and Hyde (2012) argue, "if we perceive community not as an existing unit that needs to be organized differently but as a dynamic and emergent whole embodying varying degrees of community-ness that is continually being built or created, then the building of community will be one of the central concerns and activities of community practice. Community is created or built, or not, with each of our actions; with our consciousness concerning ourselves, others, and the issues; and with our relationships" (2012, p. 84). In discussing a case study of how a feminist health center engaged in organizational change in order to meet the needs of immigrant communities in its neighborhood, Walter and Hyde point to the importance of building relationships with individuals and groups who were not initially envisioned in community building efforts.

Weil (1996) explains that in the field of social work, relationship building has a central role in community practice. Many community organizing scholars have turned to Pierre Bourdieu's work on social capital as a way to think more carefully about relationship building activities and their consequences. Bourdieu defines social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition" (1985, p. 248). While research around this phenomenon initially focused on the potential benefits accruing to actors who obtain social capital through their participation in broader networks, more recently, political scientists such as Robert Putnam (1993) have analyzed social capital in ways that have equated

it with the level of participatory behavior in community activities. Walter and Hyde forward three different kinds of social capital and describe how they contribute to community building in different ways: "bonding- strengthening existing relationships; bridging - building new relationships; and linking - fostering linkages between community members and community organizations " (2012, p. 81). In this context, the Drag Musical's attempt to reach out to those who have previously not been involved in the queer and trans of color community arts scene can be understood in terms of both bridging and linking forms of social capital. The initiative attempts to build relationships with individuals who previously had little to no contact with the QTPOC arts scene and connects them to a community program.

In some ways, the kind of approach for which Patrick and Jeff are advocating may seem quite different from the efforts that I describe in chapter one where QTPOC organizers draw on a history of community organizing efforts led by women of color in order to create "safe spaces". In contrast to attempts to reach out unknown others, Stall and Stoecker associate modes of safe space organizing with a private sphere that emphasizes "the maintenance and development of personal connections that provide a safe environment for people to develop, change and grow" (2005, p. 202). At the same time, they maintain that even more privately oriented modes of community organizing work cannot maintain a strictly inward orientation. They argue that this type of organizing ultimately, "extends 'the boundaries of the household to include the neighborhood' and, as its efforts move ever further out, ultimately tries to 'dissolve the boundaries between public and private life, between household and civil society' (Haywoode 1991, 175)" (2005, p. 198). In building on Stall and Stoecker's conceptualization of community organizing in relation to public and private domains, the following section brings together the separate strands of this chapter and uses the notion of publicity to think about relationship among

accessibility, disability and strangerhood (or those who are unfamiliar with/ not involved in a particular social collective).

Accessibility organizing as (counter) public making

The experiencing of receiving two different kinds of responses to my organizing work at the Unapologetic Burlesque Showcase gave me the opportunity to reflect on the notion accessibility. Is there necessarily a tension between disability justice organizing and coordinating events with newcomers in mind? What is the significance of the fact that efforts to include people with disabilities were off putting to the show's newcomers? In what way does this significance allow community organizers to re-think the way that they go about accessibility work?

In his conversation with me Scott explained that the students he invited to Unapologetic were not familiar with the kinds of disability justice organizing practices that I coordinated. Sharing his thoughts on why this might be, he explained that as much as signs and announcements may define the concept of "accessibility usher" or "active listener", to the extent that the show was organized around the work of these volunteers and the fact that a understanding of these roles "went over the heads" of the shows newcomers, these practices effectively had the consequence of alienating newcomer participation. I would argue however that these accessibility activities not only had the negative effect of mis-recognizing the audience members in attendance but also the discursively positive effect of constructing a particular kind of participant through the accessibility practices put in place. In this particular case, organizing the show around practices like trigger warnings and active listeners not only is off putting to

some event newcomers, but is also anticipatory of the kinds of audience members that the event imagines.

This process of anticipatory imagining is central to existing scholarship on the study of publics. Warner (2002) proposes three different though not entirely separable understandings of a public: a social totality, a concrete audience and a space of discourse. Focusing on the latter, he argues that a text can be described as public if it addresses people who cannot be known in advance and who are identified primarily through their discursive participation. Yet enrollment into a public is not always a straightforward process, "the magic by which discourse conjures a public into being, however, remains imperfect because of how much it must presuppose...It appears to be open to indefinite strangers, but in fact selects participants by criteria of shared social space (though not necessarily territorial space), habitus, topical concerns, intergeneric references, and circulating intelligible forms" (2002, p. 75) For Warner, the very act of constituting a public is a selective process in which not everyone takes part.

Althusser's (1971) work on ideology and subjectivity is helpful in thinking through this process of "selecting" participants for a public. He argues that ideology,

"functions in a way that it 'recruits' subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or 'transforms' the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called interpellation or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: 'hey you there!' Assuming that the theoretical scene I have imagined takes place in the street, the hailed individual will turn round. By this mere one-hundred and eighty degree physical conversion, he becomes a subject. Why? Because he has recognized that the hail was 'really' addressed to him, and that 'it was really him who was hailed' (and not someone else) (1971, p. 129)

In her analysis of the efficacy with which clients of a drug treatment center are able to petition the center's board for specific demands, E. Summerson Carr (2009) provides a

contemporary ethnographic example of how identities are formed through this process of interpellation. She forwards the concept of “anticipatory interpellation” (reading how one is hailed as a particular subject and responding as such) as a way to account for client’s success. She points out that while norms of speaking differ within therapeutic and administrative settings, drug center clients are still expected to adhere to therapeutic norms when they enter the boardroom as client representatives. She shows how one client, Rhonda, was able to secure childcare for the program because she deliberately petitioned the board members as a client, couching the importance of childcare in the context of her journey as a recovering addict. By anticipating how she would and could be heard by the board and adjusting her actions accordingly, Rhonda’s appeal was met with success in a way that Louise, in failing to adhere to therapeutic norms of talk, was not able to replicate.

Situating Unapologetic’s accessibility work within a model of interpellation, audience members may “turn around” when hailed by efforts intended to include those who typically do not participate in these events. Yet turning around, Althusser’s metaphor of coming into subjectivity, is dependent on the ability to recognize the means through which this hailing occurs. In Carr’s example Louise is kicked out of the program because she does not behave in ways that are expected of her; she does not conform to the terms on which she is hailed. Similarly, newcomers to Unapologetic are unfamiliar with the event’s accessibility practices. These efforts (trigger warnings active listeners, accessibility ushers, ASL interpreters, reserved seating for particular groups etc.) are not universally legible. Instead they imagine particular kinds of participants who would respond to these practices in specific ways. For instance, audience members were invited to talk to active listeners in case they needed to deal with issues around emotional support or safety, not necessarily if they had clarifying questions about the

show itself. By recruiting active listeners, Unapologetic thus anticipated the kinds of audience members in attendance and how they would engage with these volunteers.

The tension between how the accessibility efforts of this showcase anticipatorily imagine their audience members and the ways in which flesh and blood event attendees engage with these overtures allow us to take seriously Cody's argument that "the political subject of publicity is deeply entangled in the very technological, linguistic and conceptual means of its own self production" (2011, p. 47). Cody's elaboration of a "political subject of publicity" highlights one of the challenges of using Althusser's model of interpellation as a way of understanding the accessibility efforts of queer and trans of color community organizers. While Althusser envisions the process of hailing as the means through which an individual becomes a subject, QTPOC accessibility organizing efforts are not concerned with individual subjectivity per se but rather with the creation of a particular kind of public (subject). In this case, I follow Warner's (2002) discursive concept of publicity, which is (partly) defined through the hailing of unknown others. Thus, while QTPOC accessibility organizing practices create a particular kind of public, the logics of these practices rest on an understanding that it is not possible to know beforehand exactly who these participants might be.

In trying to get a sense of what is happening within this public making process, it is important to consider those who are in the business of creating these publics, their (un)intended audiences and the relationships between them. Thus QTPOC accessibility organizing does not address unqualified unknown others, but rather unknown others who are nevertheless discursive participants. For instance, Unapologetic Burlesque describes itself as an anti-racist, queer, consensual performance series and while it does not attempt to restrict participation in its events,

it nevertheless does anticipatorily imagine some social parameters that characterize its participants. As indicated on its website, Unapologetic Burlesque states,

performers, audience members and people who make all of this possible include, but are not limited to folks who identify as; queer, youth, people of colour, Indigenous, fat, chronically ill, disabled or with a varying set of abilities/disabilities, and folks from a wide range of class, work and educational backgrounds. We are continuously engaging in dialogue with community members and individual/group reflection processes of who gets access to stage or learning spaces, who gets left out and why, and what structures can be built in order to increase accessibility and representation (Unapologetic Burlesque, n.d.)

Within the framing of its accessibility work, Unapologetic is not interested in reaching just anybody and everybody; rather it seeks to explicitly address unknown others whose life experiences are characterized by subordination in some way.

However, as can be seen earlier, Unapologetic is concerned not only with subordinated populations in general but with people with disabilities in particular. The fact that queer and trans people of color are engaging in disability justice work has important implications for the study of the interconnected nature of the politics of difference. By examining the interconnectedness of the mechanisms of social difference on the basis of disability, race, gender and sexuality, we can more clearly understand the significance of queer and trans of color organizers seeking to make their initiatives more accessible to people with disabilities. If the terms on which people with disabilities are subject to human disqualification are also the terms on which racialized, gendered and sexualized minorities are constituted as "other", the fact that QTPOC organizers are working on issues of disability justice can also be seen as a way in which they are working against their own subordination.²⁷

²⁷ In making such a statement however, it is important to refute two possible though contradictory entailments. The first is that although disability scholars have tried to show how disability is often the foundation on which other modes of social difference are devalued, the way in which mechanisms of devaluation are manifest vary widely across these different modes. Thus for instance, while racism and ableism may be related to processes of

For many critical disability scholars, it is the notion of disability that serves as the basis upon which other subordinate populations are subject to mechanisms of exclusion. For instance, Siebers maintains that disability frequently anchors the status of marginalized identities. He argues,

disability functions according to a symbolic mode different from other representations of minority difference. It is as if disability operates symbolically as an othering other. It represents a diacritical marker of difference that secures inferior, marginal, or minority status...the pathologization of other identities by disability is referential: it summons the historical and representational structures by which disability, sickness and injury come to signify inferior human status (2008, p. 6).

For queer and trans people of color in particular, issues of disability are particularly salient because the inferiority of racialized, gendered and sexual difference is premised on its association with disability. For instance, in examining the relationship between disability and race, Snyder and Mitchell contend, "if we consider racism to be tethered to biology, then drawing parallels between racism and ableism seem necessary particularly given that disability is inevitably seen as degraded biology" (2003, p. 859). In the realm of gender and sexuality, McRuer makes an analogous connection between queerness and disability and argues that "the system of compulsory able-bodiedness, which in a sense produces disability, is thoroughly interwoven with the system of compulsory heterosexuality that produces queerness: that, in fact, compulsory heterosexuality is contingent on compulsory able-bodiedness and vice-versa" (2006, p. 2).

disqualification on the basis of biological inferiority, racist and ableist practice may be enacted and experienced in very different ways. Secondly, though racism and ableism are related but distinct modes of devaluation, the existence of sick and disabled queer and trans folks of color (of which there are many in this project), make it impossible to understand the categories of disability, race, gender and sexuality as isolable dimensions of social difference in terms of lived experience.

Now the fact that queer and trans of color community initiatives like Unapologetic are committed to a specific kind of accessibility organizing practice has important implications not only for the kinds of audiences that it is able to bring into its events but for the study of publics in general. While all accessibility-as-public-making efforts involve reaching out to unknown others, the fact that these QTPOC organizations are concerned specifically with marginalized groups means that they are not just involved in creating undifferentiated publics but rather what Nancy Fraser (1990) calls “subaltern counter publics”. She describes these publics as, "parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs" (1990, p. 67).

Warner (2002) highlights the significance of the creation of counter publics in relation to the workings of dominant public spheres. He argues that in contrast to dominant publics which take their life-worlds for granted and misrecognize the scope of their address as universal, counter publics engage in scene making as a means of transformation and not merely replication of the status quo. He contends that the claim to be oppositional is not what makes a public a counter public, but rather "counter publics are 'counter' to the extent that they try to supply different ways of imagining stranger sociability and its reflexivity; as publics they remain oriented to stranger circulation in a way that is not just strategic but also constitutive of membership" (2002, p. 88). For those involved in Toronto’s QTPOC community arts scene, the significance of Unapologetic Burlesque’s accessibility work lies in the way in which certain groups may be prioritized over others in the attempt to foster the involvement of those who normally do not take part in this event. However, if queer and trans of color accessibility organizing is taken as a practice of counter public making, we can understand the significance of

this organizing not only in negative terms (through mechanisms of exclusion) but also productively, the way in which it configures relationships among imagined strangers.

CONCLUSION: VISIONING WHAT COMES NEXT

This study has examined the role of the arts in the relationship between urban government institutions and queer and trans of color community organizations in Toronto, Canada. In so doing, it has focused on a series of challenges that these organizations face in their self-conscious attempts to construct social relations that center on racialized, gendered and sexualized difference. In drawing this project to a close, I narrate the story of one of these initiatives, The People Project, as a way to ethnographically illustrate how these challenges cohere and to gesture to what the future might hold for these and other kinds of grassroots minority community efforts. While I am not in the business of predicting the future, I draw attention to a set of questions that The People Project and other Toronto-based QTPOC community arts organizations are beginning to ask themselves as they think about what comes next. Is sustainability necessarily a desirable goal? For those seeking to secure longevity, how can this be obtained given the limited nature of government funding as the primary source of financial support? What kind of continued existence is possible for organizations committed to subversive political agendas as they navigating subordinate fiscal relationships with government institutions? While these questions are derived from the particular dilemmas that Toronto-based queer and trans of color organizers face, they speak to much broader concerns about the ongoing nature of politically subversive minority social forms under the pressure of state assimilation.

The People Project was founded in 2008 and grew out of the romantic relationship between Naty Tremblay and Kim Crosby (now Kim Milan). In many ways, the fact that these two very different individuals could come together at all is a testament to Toronto's multicultural character. While Kim was raised by her single mother in a predominantly lower income neighborhood in the northwest part of Toronto, Naty was born into a rural Metis community in Southwestern Ontario and grew up performing intensive agricultural labor. The differences between them are apparent even in their appearances. While Kim's dark skin only hints at her mixed Venezuelan, Arawak, Indian, Scottish and Afro Dominican heritage, there is no mistaking her curvy figure and well cultivated feminine gender presentation. Seeing them together only highlights Naty's very pale skin tone, and their lean frame, angular facial features and off beat fashion choices (including the sparse mustache that they sometimes wear) very much flags their understanding of themselves as gender queer.

Despite these differences they both came to love art from a young age. Though she complained about the long bus ride that she had to take from the shabby one-bedroom apartment that she shared with her mother, Kim also spoke fondly of the high school for gifted children that she attended and the creative activities that she was involved with: creating video documentaries, making feminist art installation pieces with period blood and performing as part of the cheerleading team. Coming from an expressive family and a long line of story tellers as well as a community that was invested in everyday artistic practices like harvest festivals, the arts were also a pervasive part of Naty's life. However, it wasn't until they took a road trip after high school with their twin and saw how the arts were being used in the 1999 World Trade Organization protests in Seattle that they came to understand the power of the arts to bring about

social change. Indeed it was the arts that brought Naty to Toronto because they wanted to find critical, radical, queer arts communities.

Kim and Naty first met at a Body Bliss, a spa for women in Toronto and shortly afterward, they developed an intense romantic relationship. Naty says, “we ended up hanging out, having a date and fell madly in love. She [Kim] moved into my house three weeks later and our relationship was rooted in passion and politics and big dreams”. At the time, Naty was doing environmental education work with students and Kim was working with a company that provided organic meals to children in schools. They both knew that they were doing good work but wanted to actualize their dream of working for themselves and working to support their communities. They then quit their jobs and despite having no money, committed themselves to creating what would become the People Project. As a way of sustaining themselves in the interim, Naty picked up short term arts-based social service contracts and Kim began teaching yoga. With the People Project, they wanted, as Kim states “to do functional community building in a way that is also artful” working specifically with gender and sexual minority youth with a focus on people of color and Native youth. The People Project’s website states that this organization,

[I]s an every growing movement of LGBTTQQ2SIA [lesbian gay bisexual transgender transsexual queer questioning 2 spirit spectrum intersex and asexual] youth of color and our allies, committed to individual and community empowerment. We are an organization facilitating innovative arts and leadership opportunities for and by Queer & Trans young people of colour and our allies. (The People Project, n.d.)

The way in which the People Project goes about doing their work is closely related to issues of “safe space” and the politics of inclusion that this study addresses in chapters two and five. Naty states that one of the main goals of the People Project is to “create the conditions for a

moment of belonging for someone, a moment where you feel like you have a community, a family, where you will share something important. And it takes time and it takes a lot of trust building...and intentionally creating space to use art for critical dialogue”.

These questions of inclusion and belonging were foregrounded in one of the People Project’s initiatives that invited gender and sexual minority immigrant and refugee youth to create a mural that would be showcased at Toronto’s 2013 Pride festivities. I attended the first event in the series (of four events) which was held at a local community health center. Kim began by the session by engaging participants in an activity where we could get to know each other. We played “two truths and a lie” in which we wrote down two true statements and one false statement about ourselves. We then exchanged these statements with other participants, trying to guess which of the three was the false statement. Afterward, Kim facilitated a discussion to create a “community agreement” which served as a guideline for participants to interact with each other in a respectful way. One of the statements that went up on this agreement was about how to receive constructive criticism when you are “called out”. As discussed in chapter one, these kinds of practices are common among queer and trans of color organizers who attempt to create a “safe space” in which participants feel comfortable to talk about the difficult issues that they experience in their daily lives.

After setting the groundwork for how we would work together, Kim then explains to us that the mural will be divided into three parts: the journey to Canada, the experience of being in Canada (or what it means to be Canadian) and the feeling of being grounded in community. She then lead us on a series of journaling and drawing exercises to determine how we wanted to go about representing these three parts. These questions, which ask participants to reflect and express notions of belonging touch on the dilemmas that queer and trans of color organizers face

as outlined in chapter five. As these organizers struggle to make their initiatives accessible to those who typically do not take part in their programming, they come to understand that their attempts to include sometimes also have the unintended consequence of excluding others. There is thus a recursive nature to the politics of inclusion whereby discourses of belonging operate between the nation and minority populations as well as within the community practices of minority populations themselves.

Aside from one-off projects like these, the People Project is also engaged in a range of other initiatives such as providing training around gender and sexual diversity to social service agencies. It has also worked with other QTPOC community initiatives like Color Me Drag, 88 Days and ILL NANA DiverseCity Dance Company to further enable them to pursue their work by, for instance showing them how to apply for grants and helping them to craft vision and mission statements. One of its most significant initiatives is OUTwords, an eight month intensive arts and leadership program for queer and trans youth. The program uses artistic skills building such as creative writing, storytelling, photography and video production to foster critical thinking and the skills necessary to work in community contexts such as community engagement, conflict mediation and collective decision making. While OUTwords has not taken place since 2011, it has had an important impact on Toronto's QTPOC organizing scene as many of those who have participated in this program have gone on to take leadership roles in other community initiatives. For instance, Jeff who is one of the coordinators of Asian Arts Freedom School, and kumari, the co-founder of Unapologetic Burlesque are two of OUTwords past participants.

In outlining this extensive array of programming, it is important to note how recently the People Project came into existence. The fact that they have been able to develop such a large body of work within such a short period of time is a testament to the intense productivity of both

Kim and Naty. During that first year when they lived together in Naty's small apartment visioning the People Project into existence, they were hard at work writing grants. Over the course of its history, the People Project has been able to procure an astonishing amount of public funding, receiving resources from the Toronto Arts Council, the Laidlaw Foundation, the Community One Foundation, ArtReach, the City of Toronto and the Trillium Foundation, among others. But as noted in chapter two, which outlines the concept of sacrificial entrepreneurship, despite the People Project's impressive ability to secure financial resources, it is the intensive personal workload that ultimately takes a toll on the organization. In their interview with me Naty did not hesitate to let me know about the high intensity and pace of their work,

We were fast. We were hustling. We were working very hard. We were not sleeping...In different ways, Kim and I are very ambitious, very driven people, workaholics for sure...we were working so hard, full throttle, very little breaks. I wouldn't encourage folks to work that way, very little self-care practices. [We were] just going, going, going. Definitely inspired by the work we were doing, and, true say, needing to do so financially because contract work was like that. You never know from month to month what you'll get

However, as indicated in chapter three, organizational sustainability is influenced not only by issues of finance and labor but also by the tenor of interpersonal relationships within grassroots initiatives. In 2011, Kim and Naty ended their romantic relationship up which led to drastic changes in the organization. In her interview with me, Kim shared,

When Naty and I started it [The People Project] we were partnered and we were together for three years. We talked about ourselves as married. When we broke up, it shifted everything in our organization. It shifted everything in the way we worked. It changed all our personal relationships. Our break up was hard and surrounding a whole bunch of other things happening in community at the same time. At that time our house was set on fire

The very small grassroots and often informal nature of QTPOC community initiatives means that the nature of the relationships between the leaders of community institutions is closely tied to the wellbeing of the institutions themselves. Naty explained that the People Project was “not just an investment of time and resources but also [of] heart and spirit and that was our [my and Kim’s] baby”. For Naty and Kim it was important to reconfigure their relationship with each other not only for personal reasons but because the tenor of their relationship had repercussions for their “baby”, an important community initiative. Kim states that she and Nat went to counseling in order

To create a stable platform to continue doing our work. That was hard as fuck...[we went over] everything to make sure that the People Project could keep going and so that it could be supportive and relevant for people in the community. Right now, we’re at a place that it works...we work separately in different communities which makes sense because our work is grounded in different places

In 2011 Naty took on the coordinating work for OUTwords and Kim took on the responsibility for the program’s organizational development work, doing anti-oppression trainings and working closely with youth serving organizations to make their services more accessible to diverse populations. With their impressive fundraising skills, Kim and Naty were able to obtain enough resources for one person to be employed full time by the People Project and they decided to rotate this salary between them. Within this period of organizational transition, Naty was able to procure a part time job with the newly established organization Sketch, a community arts institution serving Toronto’s homeless youth. To date, Naty continues their work with the People Project and with Sketch, which has established itself as an important player in the city’s arts scene given an influx of funding into the agency from the City of Toronto. Kim now splits her time between Toronto and New York City and continues to be involved with the People Project as one of her many arts-based social justice initiatives. Out of all of the participants in this study,

Kim has perhaps reached the height of “gaymousness” (a pithy combination of “gay” and “famous”). But unlike other Toronto celebrity activists who are revered only within specific community organizing circles, Kim has also been featured in major media outlets in the US and Canada such as CBC, NBC and MTV for her work.

I outline the birth and evolution of the People Project for two reasons. The first is that the nature of its trajectory is very similar to that of other queer and trans of color community arts initiatives in Toronto and the character of this organization, its triumphs and challenges, are clearly reflected in the analyses offered in this dissertation. Like many other QTPOC community initiatives, the People Project is centrally concerned with the politics of inclusion through the practice of community building. In seeking to build stronger relationships among queer and trans youth of color and their allies, this initiative counters the workings of racism, colonialism, transphobia, sexism, classism and homophobia that operate to exclude these populations from majoritarian spheres. While these questions of inclusion and belonging are most clearly seen in chapter five which documents how QTPOC organizers attempt to make their initiatives accessible to those who typically do not participate, they can also be evinced in chapter one which looks at the conditions necessary for QTPOC to become involved in community art production and in chapter four which investigates how the public practice of “calling out” can excise the politically incorrect from community membership.

Like other queer and trans of color community initiatives, the capacity of the People Project to navigate these complex politics of inclusion are influenced by political economic, affective and temporal considerations. Indeed the fact that the People Project was able to come into existence at all is due not only to the architecture of municipal public arts funding policies but also to the love that Kim and Naty shared both for each other and for the work of arts-based

community building. Yet the longevity of this initiative was called into question under conditions of intensive, fast-paced work, chronic inadequate financial remuneration and the severing of intimate bonds between the organization's founders. These dynamics are quite common among QTPOC community arts organizations, as outlined in chapters two and three. Chapter two examines the infrastructure of municipal funding policies to investigate how QTPOC organizers find themselves sacrificing their personal financial wellbeing for the benefit of their communities and chapter three looks at how organizers affective orientation toward their work and to each other play a role in the longevity of their programs. In a nutshell, the People Project thus reflects the main concern of this dissertation to investigate the politics of inclusion along simultaneously racialized, gendered and sexual difference and how the workings of these politics are intimately related to questions of political economy, affect and temporality.

The second reason I discuss the People Project is because it serves as a fruitful starting point to think about the future of QTPOC community organizing and what this means for the politics of difference and inclusion. As indicated earlier, the People Project has survived two of the major challenges to sustainability that plague grassroots minority community programs: obtaining sufficient funding and affective volatility (both in terms of the relationship between community organizers and the relationship between these organizers and their work). Staving off these challenges has been made possible by an influx of public funding to the arts (see chapter two) and by a community practice increasingly oriented toward transformative justice approaches which emphasize conflict resolution in ways that do not cut off individuals from existing social relations (see chapter four). The fact these conditions, which have allowed the People Project (and other minority grassroots community initiatives) to come into existence are

likely to change raises important questions about if and how these initiatives might persist into the future.

It was a time of great celebration in 2013, when the City of Toronto announced an increase in public funding to the arts to the tune of \$17 million dollars over the next four years. As outlined in chapter two, this boost in funding was made possible by using the taxation of Toronto billboards as a new revenue stream. It is important to note however that the City of Toronto promised to dedicate this funding stream to the arts for only a four year period. This time limited commitment should give pause as it emphasizes the fickle nature of funding priorities that tend to shift with prevailing “trends”. As Rose so insightfully asks in chapter three “What’s the contingency plan...if the money runs out and you don’t get funding?...I think grants are a good thing but I think we also have to take a step back and ask, ‘how do we create sustainable models that aren’t grant funded?’” In that chapter, I followed the logic of Rose’s question to think through what it might take for grassroots QTPOC initiatives to attain sustainability. In this section however, I want to look more closely at sustainability and question what it is that QTPOC might be sustaining.

As can be seen throughout this study, QTPOC grassroots initiatives exist in a kind of limbo where they are able to secure public funding that allows them to do their community work but in ways that are nevertheless constantly threatened by impermanence. But while many of the people in this study emphasized the importance of finding ways to continue these initiatives, it is important to consider how this sustainability is secured and whether sustainability is necessarily desirable at all. For instance, Desh Pardesh represents an important lesson for QTPOC organizers as they struggled to sustain their work over time. This initiative was established in 1998 and began as cultural event designed primarily to raise awareness about the South Asian gay and

lesbian community in Toronto's wider gay community. By the time of its demise in 2001, it had transformed itself into a non-profit organization and had broadened its mandate to challenge stereotypes around traditional South Asian cultures in general through workshops and panels, but more specifically through art forms like film, music and visual arts. From a one day event to a five day festival, Desh Pardesh reached almost mainstream status, with an operating budget of \$150,000 and audiences reaching over 5,000 people. Perhaps the most telling sign of this transformation was the organization's ability to attract corporations to sponsor festival programs. Ultimately, Fernandez writes, "the graduate mainstreaming of the festival over time also meant that it became progressively less radical – a pattern that, if ironic, is also characteristic of what happens when marginalized groups start moving toward the centre" (S. Fernandez, 2006, p. 5). For queer and trans of color organizers committed to political transgression and subversion, this movement toward political conservatism would certainly be an unwelcome outcome of securing sustainability.

But while Desh Pardesh exists as one (of several potential) model of sustainability for QTPOC community initiatives, a small minority of organizers question the desirability of sustainability at all. For instance, in her interview with me, Farrah, who is renowned for her arts-based work with young Muslim women shared, "It's okay if collectives end. How about we start understanding that there will be an ending?... I'm always saying, "think of your end date" because if it goes on forever you're going to be exhausted. If you think of your end date you allow yourself to know you can do other things, you allow yourself to know -- this is how much my energy can go. It's like a video game, knowing how much energy cubes you're going to have". Farrah's views on the acceptability of the ending of queer and trans of color community groups resonates with the existing scholarship on the temporally limited nature of these

activities. For instance, in her analysis of LGBT people of color initiatives in the United States in the 1980s, Christina Hanhardt characterizes them as “a hard to pin down agglomeration of small fleeting and local collectives” (2013, p. 153). Thus, in contrast to organizers who struggle to ensure the longevity of their programs, Farrah’s matter of fact views on the ending of these initiatives are a pragmatic acknowledgement of the reality of what happens to queer and trans of color initiatives over time.

In attempting to think about a future for queer and trans of color community initiatives, is it possible to move beyond the poles of sustainability through mainstream assimilation (and increasing political conservatism) and an ephemeral existence that can nevertheless support a more subversive political agenda? As discussed earlier, Elizabeth Freeman “suggests that temporal misalignments can be the means of opening up other possible worlds” (Freeman, 2010, p. 16). In this particular case, what other possible worlds come into view when the idealization of sustainability meets the reality of ephemerality? Or to put it a different way, what comes out of this tension between the transience of many queer and trans of color initiatives and the desire (of some) for longevity? What does this tension produce and in what ways is this production significant? As QTPOC organizers are currently navigating these temporal dynamics within their working lives, I hesitate to play soothsayer, but I would venture to say that this tension is at the core of their political practice as they move forward in their collective efforts. These questions are salient not only for simultaneously racialized, gendered and sexual minorities but also for all of those who struggle against the workings of injustice writ large. Indeed as QTPOC continue to pursue community organizing, they attempt to address the much broader the question, “is it possible for community initiatives that are committed to a radical politics of subversion to

sustain their work over time without having to assimilate into more conservative political contexts?”

APPENDIX ONE: AN EXTENDED NOTE ON METHOD

The findings from this study are based on three main sources of data: 1) participant observation in community arts initiatives within the city of Toronto; 2) 63 semi-structured interviews with arts administrators as well as community organizers and event participants; 3) grey literature and 4) two community feedback sessions. In the section below, I outline the processes through which these data were collected.

Participant observation:

Between September 2012 and August 2014, I took notes on my experiences, observations and conversations in 1) participating in the organizing activities of three QTPOC community initiatives, 2) attending and participating in the community arts programs, events and shows of nine other QTPOC initiatives and 3) attending community consultation sessions hosted by the City of Toronto, the Toronto Arts Council and the Toronto Arts Foundation.

1) Organizing: As mentioned earlier, my knowledge of specific community arts initiatives derived from the social relationships that I developed prior to beginning fieldwork. Through my own personal networks and internet searches, I tried to learn of other initiatives that I was

not necessarily familiar with and contacted all of these groups in order to find out if they would be willing to be involved in the research project. I ended up working with three of these organizations because they were the ones that not only responded to my initial request and were interested in being involved but they also had the capacity to take on a researcher. I chose not to work as closely with more than three organizations because it would have been extremely logistically difficult to do so. At the same time, for those organizations that I learned about but that I did not end up working with directly, I made an effort to attend and participate in the events, programs and shows that they hosted (see #2). Descriptions of these three initiatives and how I was involved in their work are included below:

ILL NANA DiverseCity Dance Company (ILL NANA DC/DC) describes itself as a “queer multiracial dance company that embraces difference as strength and are committed to changing the landscape of dance by performing our stories on stage as well as providing more accessible education and performance opportunities for LGBTTIQQ2S (lesbian gay bisexual transgender transsexual intersex queer questioning and 2-spirit) communities, prioritizing people of color, various body types, backgrounds, classes and abilities”. Each year, it hosts a weekly drop in dance class, a two month dance intensive program, as well as a dance conference (the last two of these initiatives also often involve a dance showcase). In addition to these three core initiatives, ILL NANA DC/DC also responds to frequent workshop and performance requests from various social service agencies and community organizations both within the City of Toronto and beyond. The work of the company is financially supported through grants, donations and workshop/performance fees. ILL NANA

DC/DC was established in 2007 and is currently composed of 3 collective members: Sze-Yang Ade-Lam, Kumari Giles and Jelani Ade-Lam. To get a sense of the scope/scale/impact of this organization, it currently has approximately 1,700 “friends” on its Facebook page. Its drop in dance class attendance ranges from between 7-20 students, its two month intensive dance program accepts roughly 10 participants, and its annual conference draws about 50 attendees. ILL NANA performs and hosts shows in small venues that typically hold less than 100 people. In spite of these relatively small numbers, the company has a significant impact within Toronto and has been featured several times in both print and radio media in ways that highlight its work in transforming mainstream dance in the City.

In working with ILL NANA, I not only attended all of their programming (drop in classes, two month intensive and conference) as a participant but I also took part in the work of running the organization through various means. Among other things, I attended and participated in their meetings, helped write grants, provided back stage assistance at their shows, attended showings of their works in progress and gave feedback.

BlacknessYes!/ Blockorama: BlacknessYes! describes itself as a community based committee that seeks to celebrate the history, creativity and resistance of African-diasporic, Black and Caribbean queer and trans people. It “works to affirm, celebrate and ensure visible Black LGBTTIQQ [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, intersex, queer and questioning] communities within Pride, to create Black cultural space within Pride that any Black or Black affirming person can be a part of; and to create a vehicle for HIV/AIDS information dissemination”. BlacknessYes! is committed to anti-oppression, (self) love,

freedom and justice and operates as a space of resistances to counter systemic racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, classism and colonialism. Its signature event is Blockorama, the longest running community stage at Pride Toronto which draws crowds numbering in the thousands every year. Paying homage to the strong Caribbean roots of Toronto's Black communities, in the past several years BlacknessYes! has also hosted its own Caribana-themed social event Blocko-bana. (Caribana is an annual street festival held in the City of Toronto that draws inspiration from the Carnivals that take place throughout the Caribbean). BlacknessYes! has also hosted other initiatives such as Back to Our Roots, a collaboration of community organizations in Toronto that programmed a series of activities at Toronto Pride as well as a show exhibiting the art work and materials that the committee has produced over its long history. BlacknessYes! was established in 1999 as a collective whose members volunteer their time to support the committee's work. Membership shifts from year to year, but during my fieldwork period, the committee members included: Nik Red, Syrus Ware, Craig Dominic, Shani Robertson, Kyisha Williams, Travoy Hall and Thandy Young. The work of the committee to host Blockorama is financed by Pride Toronto (which in turn receives funding from the City of Toronto), but its other events such as Blockobana are financially supported through donations as well as through fundraisers that BlacknessYes! hosts in the form of paid entry parties.

In my time with BlacknessYes! I attended all programming meetings and worked specifically on the site committee as well as on the volunteer committee as the volunteer coordinator. The work of the BlacknessYes! is divided into various committees and collective members are part of one or more of these committees which meet separately from the main programming meetings to which all members attend. As one of two volunteer

coordinators, I worked to recruit and train volunteers for Blockorama and supervised the work of the volunteers during the day of Blockorama programming. As part of the site committee (led by Syrus), I worked to create Blockorama banners (a yearly tradition), conceptually lay out the physical space of the event as well as set up and take down the materials at the site itself.

Unapologetic Burlesque Showcase defines itself as a queer, consensual, anti-racist performance initiative. Its website states,

“This is a show where the performers can tell their own stories, not ones that are dictated by what audiences and larger society want to hear, but stories that are unique to them and that no one else can tell. To us burlesque is; storytelling, playing with gender, can incorporate spoken word, singing, acting, dancing and any other talents you have!...This show gives performance space to emerging, first-time, and seasoned performers who are people of colour, Indigenous, queer, genderqueer, trans, people of varying body sizes, people of all abilities, people from varying class backgrounds.”

It was originally co-founded by Shaunga Tagore and kumari giles in 2012 as a one-time cabaret style event at the Gladstone Hotel, a boutique hotel in the trendy, west end neighborhood of downtown Toronto. However, the outpouring of positive audience responses to this show caused Shaunga and kumari to think about making Unapologetic an ongoing event. Though it was originally funded through donations and admission fees, within a year of its existence it was able to secure a community art grant which enabled the initiative not only to host more shows and to provide greater financial compensation to volunteers and performers, but also to hold skills sharing/ building workshops to enable novices to learn about how to practice burlesque. Though its programs are fairly small (each of its shows have

an audience attendance of approximately 100 people and its workshops draw between roughly 5-15 participants), within the short time of its existence it has gained the attention of Toronto media. The showcase has been featured in one of the city's local newspapers as well as on a community radio station.

I initially became involved in Unapologetic Burlesque as a volunteer but as Shaunga and kumari began to host more shows they realized that they needed greater support and asked me to take on the role of accessibility coordinator. In working with Unapologetic, I attended organizing meetings, performed in the showcases and coordinated the initiatives' accessibility efforts which included, among other things: hiring American Sign Language interpreters, recruiting and training accessibility volunteers and attending to the accessibility needs of the audience members and performers. As someone who did not have prior experience with accessibility organizing, I elicited the support of seasoned organizers who were gracious enough to share their knowledge with me. More information about this role specifically can be found in chapter five.

It is important to note that while these three initiatives are in fact separate organizations, like many QTPOC community organizations in Toronto, there are close connections between them. For instance, ILL NANA DC/DC has consistently performed at Blockorama for several years and kumari is a collective member of ILL NANA DC/DC as well as the co-founder of Unapologetic.

2) Attending and participating in other QTPOC community arts initiatives.

During my fieldwork period, I attended and participated in several events held by other grassroots QTPOC community initiatives in Toronto. I came to know of these events through email list serves that I had joined over the years, facebook event invites and postings and by word of mouth. My decision on whether or not to attend or participate in a specific initiative was almost purely logistical. If I had the time to be involved in the work of other organizations, I would try to do so after completing my responsibilities with ILL NANA DC/DC, BlacknessYes! and Unapolgetic Burlesque. I will refrain from providing an exhaustive enumeration of all the programming and events that I attended but I attempt to give a sense of this work here. Some of the initiatives that I connected with include: WriteOn!, Roots, Rhythm Resistance (R3), Mangos with Chili, Femme Fatales, Raging Asian Women, House of Monroe, Krafty Queers, CuePOC, Raunch and Resistance Cabaret and Strange Sisters. I came into contact with these initiatives in various ways through for instance, attending their workshops, shows, and other programming; volunteering; or simply having conversations with specific individuals at parties or coffee shops.

I highlight Asian Arts Freedom School in particular because I participated more intensely with this group than any of the other initiatives. The reason for the level of this involvement is because I wanted to be part of the organizing work of AAFS as with the other three groups mentioned earlier but this did not come to pass for various administrative and logistical reasons.

AAFS was founded in 2005 by Leah Lakshmi and Gein Wong as a pan Asian youth arts-based radical history and activism program. Over the years, it has broadened its mandate to focus on youth of color and indigenous youth more generally. It currently hosts several cycles of writing workshops per year as well as a Drag Musical that specifically solicits the participation

of sexual and gender minority youth. Over the years, AAFS has accessed various avenues of public funding including ArtReach Toronto, the Toronto Arts Council and the Ontario Arts Council. During my fieldwork period, I participated in all AAFS writing cycles and participated in one of the Drag Musicals.

3) Attending events held by arts funding institutions as well as city government

I attended events held by arts organizations and funding institutions that were open to the public as well as events held by the City of Toronto around the issue of community arts. Some of these events included the launch of the Toronto Arts Foundation's research report on community arts in the city, a community consultation event hosted by the City of Toronto to elicit feedback from community members as to how new funding for the arts should be spent, and a session held by the Toronto Neighborhood Arts Network meant to be a space for community artists to share their work with each other.

At each of these events, as was the case for all my participant observation work, I attempted to take part as fully as possible in the activities at hand and to speak to as many people as I could manage. I would then take copious field notes once I returned home.

Interviews:

During the course of fieldwork I conducted 63 semi-structured interviews. 55 of these interviews were with community organizers and event participants and 8 of these interviews were with staff at arts organizations or public institutions that funded the arts. I put community organizers and participants into the same category because there is often no hard and fast line between the two. For instance, during the course of an interview, I discovered that many of the

people I initially came into contact with as fellow participants in a community arts program were also community organizers in their own right: they may have their own program, be running a workshop series or volunteering their time in other initiatives. In deciding who to interview, I focused first on the organizations I worked most closely with, interviewing the members of these groups and then the people who attended their programming. In trying to get a sense of the broader field, I made sure to interview people associated with other QTPOC community arts organizations as well. I almost never approached people who I had never met in person with interview requests. If there were specific people who I wanted to interview, I would try to go to events where I knew they would be present to make an in person connection or I would try to get someone to introduce me. In the case of staff who worked at art organizations or public institutions affiliated with the arts, I did not have the opportunity to make in person connections prior to making an interview request. I chose these individuals because they were often the community arts grants officers at public organizations that funded the arts or they were individuals in arts institutions that worked closely with the QTPOC community initiatives in this study.

In all cases, I contacted potential interviewees by email or facebook message, clearly outlining my interview request and also sending the informed consent document for them to read beforehand. I let interviewees choose the location, date and time of the interview. As per the informed consent protocols, interviewees could decide if and how they were to be identified in this project. Although I took notes during the conversation, I also audio recorded and later transcribed all interviews. Interviews lasted from between 45 minutes to over 2 hours. Community organizers and initiative participants were (partially) compensated for their time and contributions to the research with a \$30 honoraria and 2 public transit tickets.

For all of the interviews that I conducted, I drew up a list of questions beforehand but ultimately let the conversation unfold organically and would refer to the questions if the conversation ran out of steam or became stilted. My interview questions for community organizers and event participants were fairly standard. I asked about: their relationship to Toronto; how they came to be involved in the arts; their thoughts on the term QTPOC; the scenes that they would consider themselves apart of and how they would describe those scenes etc. Because I usually had met interviewees prior to the interview process, I would often have specific questions for them about one of their performances that I had seen, a comment that I had heard them make in a group conversation or ask for their thoughts on a program that we had attended together. The process of conducting interviews with staff at art organizations and public institutions that funded the arts was slightly different. I asked questions about: their specific role in their organizations; how their organization was situated in Toronto's art world; and the field of community arts in general – their thoughts on how the field had changed over time as well as the big discussions and debates that were currently happening. Given the particular organization, I would also have more specific questions about certain initiatives or policies as they related to the QTPOC community organizations that I worked with. I would end all interviews by asking interviewees if they felt that there was something that they wanted to share that we had not touched on in the conversation and I let them know that they could follow up with me in case they had any future questions, comments, thoughts or concerns.

Grey literature

Collecting grey literature was perhaps the most ad-hoc and unsystematic dimension of my data collection process. In the process of working closely with several QTPOC community organizations and attending the events of many others, I picked up a plethora of different kinds of literature including show programs, organizational reports and newsletters. I also collected the annual reports of arts organizations and public arts funding institutions as well as any literature that they produced in the domain of community arts. I amassed local newspaper articles that involved coverage of the community groups that I worked with as well as any coverage on the field of community arts in general and on changes to public arts funding in particular. As more and more people that I worked with became aware of the project, they also began to send me links to blogs and alternative media websites that touched on the very issues that I explore in this study.

Community feedback sessions

I conducted two community feedback sessions as a way to solicit feedback on my preliminary research results from those I had worked with or spoken to during the course of this study. In order to maximize participation in these sessions I sent out individual emails to all of the people I interviewed, I also posted announcements on the facebook pages of all of the groups I worked most closely with and I made in-person announcements at QTPOC community events that I attended as soon as I had set the date and time for the sessions. Both of the sessions were held at a community center and participants were provided with refreshments and snacks as well as 2 public transit tickets. Seven participants came to the first session and nine participants came to the second session. In both sessions I gave a short 15-20 minute power point presentation of

my preliminary research findings as well as a one page hand out outlining the major presentation points. After the presentation, I opened up the session for questions or comments. I initially had several questions ready to guide the discussion in case no specific feedback was forthcoming. Fortunately, it turned out that I did not have to worry about non-responsive participants. The second session in particular proved to be quite generative and all the participants stayed for over an hour past the original scheduled time. Staff at the community center was forced to ask us to leave as the center had closed during the session. For both sessions, I took copious notes which sharpened the analysis of this study.

UNPACKING “TORONTO QTPOC COMMUNITY”

A significant methodological limitation of this study is the use of the term “QTPOC community”. While there are certainly conceptual challenges with “community” (Amit, 2002; Herzfeld, 2005; Joseph, 2002), in this section I address the more concrete and practical difficulties with the term. The majority of the people in this study were young people (between the ages of 20-35) living in downtown Toronto who came from middle to lower class backgrounds with at least some post-secondary education. They tended to identify with the broad ethno-racial markers of “Black” or “Asian” and more often than not, they were assigned female at birth - though they identified as queer women, genderqueer or transmen at the time of the study. Mobilizing the term Toronto QTPOC community is thus somewhat misleading because I am certainly not trying to make the claim that this project captures the experiences and modes of collectivity in Toronto that the term QTPOC attempts to encapsulate. Groups operating outside

of downtown Toronto as well as transwomen, indigenous people and those who identify as latino or latina are underrepresented in this study.

Early on in the research I attempted to correct the downtown centric nature of this project by trying to connect to groups and organizations in Scarborough, North York and Etobicoke. However, given the slow rate at which I was able to make connections in these areas and that I had already started working with several organizations, meant that I could not continue to pursue these connections without having to give up the work that I had already started. This tendency of minority community arts organizations to be found in downtown Toronto has been noted by public arts funding institutions which are increasingly attempting to support community arts outside of Toronto's downtown core. In the process of conducting this study, I also became aware of criticisms mounted by several QTPOC organizations around issues of settler colonialism and transmisogyny. In spite of my attempts to reach out to specifically two-spirit or indigenous queer and trans community arts initiatives and ones that worked with transwomen of color, the underrepresentation of these groups in this project is not altogether surprising given the way that QTPOC collectives are attempting to transform their work to be more inclusive to these groups in particular.

While this project does not presume to account for the range of racialized, gendered and sexual alterity in the City of Toronto, it also does not necessarily assume that those who are associated with these modes of difference necessarily form some kind of natural or primordial bond. Though personal experience, self-professed association and the ascription of identity categories are certainly relevant to the people in this study, the mere fact of non-white racialization and the association with non-normative sexual and/or gender identification are not

sufficient to secure “community” affiliation. Indeed many people who consider themselves to be queer and trans people of color are either uninterested in the kinds of social relations that I describe in this study or are completely unaware of them. As one participant explained to me in the course of her interview, “even though they [ILL NANA DC/DC] are well known, there are still people who don’t know about them. I’ve been here for 2 years and I know people who have been gay for years and don’t know about ILL NANA and they are QPOC.” Alternatively, several individuals who understand themselves to be “white” or “straight” are closely involved with the QTPOC community initiatives that I worked with over the course of my fieldwork. Instead of focusing in identity per se, this study approaches QTPOC community through the domain of social action and examines the collective forms of work carried out in the name of racial, sexual and gendered diversity.

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