

brings to mind Dionne Brand's book of poetry about Toronto, in which she writes, "how come I anticipate nothing as intimate as history"? For it is in this loving spirit that Jalani invites people into his work and the generative spaces of unforgetting Black histories.

- 1 What is today called Our Lady of Mount Carmel.
- 2 43.64484 x -79.404229.
- 3 Jalani Morgan & Nicole Bernhardt, "Unforgetting Blackness – Beyond Black History Month," *NBS Consulting Blog*, February 24, 2015. <http://www.nicolebernhardt.com/unforgetting-blackness-beyond-black-history-month/>
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Alfred Holden, "The Forgotten Stream: The real Taddle Creek—a brief history," *The Christmas*, no. 1, 1997. <http://www.taddlecreekmag.com/the-forgotten-stream>
- 6 David Canton, "Where Are All the Black Baseball Players? 3 socioeconomic reasons for the declining percentage of black players in MLB," *US News*, July 10, 2017. <https://www.usnews.com/opinion/op-ed/articles/2017-07-10/3-reasons-for-the-declining-percentage-of-black-baseball-players-in-the-mlb>
- 7 Dionne Brand, *Thirsty*, Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2002.

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JALANI MORGAN is a Toronto-based photographer, visual historian and photo editor known for his editorial, documentary and gallery collected work both nationally and internationally. Morgan's creative work explores visual representations within a Black Canadian context and focuses on documenting and portraying images of Black life both in Canada and internationally. As a commissioned photographer, he covers the spectrum of portraiture and current events documenting the architectural, racial, musical and cultural landscapes of Toronto. Over the past fifteen years, Morgan has built an impressive portfolio creating pieces for: Black Lives Matter Toronto, National Film Board of Canada, The Fader, Nike, Sportsnet Magazine, TVO, National Screen Institute, Converse, Manifesto, ArtReach, TEDxToronto, Daniel Spectrum, Nia Centre for the Arts and has contributed to exhibits for Photoville New York, The Wedge Collection, Art Gallery of Ontario, Art Gallery of Windsor and CONTACT Photography Festival. Originally from Scarborough, Morgan has been dedicated to giving back to his community through mentorship and community empowerment programs that have included The Remix Project, LAMP and We Are Lawrence project created in partnership with City of Toronto and Manifesto. He is a passionate Toronto Blue Jays fan and has a soft spot for Montreal.

ELLYN WALKER is a writer and curator based in the place now known as Toronto, where her work engages with the politics of representation, inclusion and social justice work in the arts. Her writing has been widely published by McGill-University Press, Inuit Art Quarterly, Prefix Magazine, BlackFlash Magazine, Journal of Curatorial Studies, Public Journal, amongst others. She was recently awarded the 2016 Thematic Exhibition of the Year Award by the Ontario Association of Art Galleries for her curated exhibition *CANADIAN BELONGING(s)* presented by The Art Gallery of Mississauga. Ellyn is currently a PhD candidate in the Cultural Studies program at Queen's University. Walker is a YYZ Board member.

VOL. 1: THE WARD PLAYERS

BY ELLYN WALKER

In 1942, Mount Carmel Church,¹ located on St. Patrick Street in the area known as the Ward, had an inter-racial baseball team that featured two Black players. This was two years before Ontario would pass the Racial Discrimination Act in 1944; four years before Jackie Robinson played for the Montreal Royals during the 1946 season and led them to the International League title; and five years before Robinson would go on to officially break the Major League colour barriers signing to the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947.

Indeed, histories of sport contain numerous social, cultural, and political narratives, many of which tell important stories of place and place-making across the lands now known as Canada. Both within and outside of these borders, there has existed a very narrow story of Black baseball within the public imaginary, in which Toronto-based artist Jalani Morgan intervenes with his new exhibition at YYZ Artists' Outlet.

Reminding us of the richness contained in baseball as a simultaneous site of blackness, masculinities, dexterity, love, family, community and resistance, *Vol. 1: The Ward Players* is the first iteration within Morgan's larger body of work called *The Unforgetting of Black Canadian Baseball*. In it, he focuses on Black histories of baseball in the area in which the gallery is located—the *Ward*—where Morgan also works and lives, turning his attention towards two Black players documented in a 1942 archival image of the local Mt. Carmel Church baseball team. Inspired by this image (now housed in the Ward Museum's collection), Morgan began searching for stories of these players, whom still have yet to be identified. This brings to mind a number of considerations, namely, how to honour people whom you know limited things about?

The Ward Players commemorates these men's stories through what is known: *they played baseball*. Using materiality in careful ways to pay respect to them, Morgan's installation draws on the cultural objecthood of baseball customs and protocols to reference popular remembrance practices such as used for display in museums or sports halls of fame. Featuring a pristine display case in the middle of the gallery with two baseball jerseys stoically exhibited inside, this particular type of display suggests the aftermath of a retirement ceremony, where an athlete's decorated equipment or uniform would be forever on view, safeguarded and

appreciated in a hall of fame. Within Morgan's artwork, the encasement offers a heightened level of visibility and protection to the jerseys' objecthood and, in doing so, insists on a kind of formal acknowledgement that is long overdue.

Positioned diagonally in the room with each jersey facing opposite the other, the display case demands an investment in looking, as visitors must physically walk around its entirety in order to see its full contents—the front and backs of each jersey. Replicating the original jerseys worn by the Mt. Carmel team in the 1942 photograph, the front side of each jersey features a dark green clover patch over the right breast that contains the team's insignia. The backside of each jersey features slightly different markings from what the original player's would have worn, with the word "NAME" at the top-centre and the Ward's GPS coordinates underneath². By including this precise locationality, Morgan insists on a number of things: foremost, the players' (and Morgan's) contributions to this place—the same place in which viewers of the display case will be physically standing.

"NAME" is sewn in graphic capital letters where the player's original last name would have been, acting as a kind of space-holder for a name we should know but unfortunately do not. This conceptual gesture holds space for not knowing (alongside the potentiality of future knowing), as neither Morgan nor myself have been able to identify or locate the Black Mt. Carmel baseball players thus far from the original church photograph. Though they remain unnamed, this does not make them unknown.

Morgan is thoughtful to distinguish this act from popular gestures of 'remembering,' explaining in a co-written article with scholar Nicole Bernhardt that "unforgetting involves [the] critical examination of existing narratives that were developed by the dominant power elite, and re-establishing the story through the voices of those who were disenfranchised in the original narrative."³ This recalls critical feminist and anti-racist practices that seek to recover and re-centre marginalized and thus invisibilized voices. Morgan and Bernhardt explain, "the process of 'unforgetting' [requires] both an unearthing of neglected histories of blackness within Canada and a call to become [more] attentive"⁴ to them, as they exist all around us. This is clear in the sited implications of the gallery, which is also located in the Ward—an area that has an extensive Black history that

still remains largely unknown to the general population.

Annexed by College Street, Queen Street, Yonge Street and University Avenue, the Ward is situated on traditional Indigenous lands that are now part of Treaty 13 territory—an area that carries with it many histories and thus claims to it, some of which span back as far as the last ice age.

The Ward was also home to arrivants from the Underground Railroad, such as Thornton Blackburn, an African-American escaped slave whose legal case established the principle that Canada would not return slaves to their masters in the US no matter what they had done. Blackburn's escape also caused The Blackburn Riots—the first race riots in the history of Detroit—before reaching his freedom in Upper Canada. Upon reuniting with his wife Lucie in 1834 and settling in the newly incorporated City of Toronto, the Blackburns opened the city's first taxi service called "The City" in 1837. They soon began acquiring properties throughout the Ward to provide for other escaped slaves who would need safe and affordable housing. By 1855, more than 500 Black people lived in the Ward, where it would continue to thrive for a short period as a tight-knit entrepreneurial Black community.

Due to its close proximity to Union Station and the port, the Ward would go on to be home to refugees from the European Revolutions of 1848, the Irish Potato Famine, and later from Russia and Eastern Europe, where crowded parcels of land were often subdivided by landlords into highly condensed mixed-use neighbourhoods. This is where successive waves of new immigrants would initially settle, creating 'slums' in the process through rapid conditions of overcrowding, such as the spread of disease. For instance, St. Mary's Church, a Roman Catholic Gothic-Revival style church established by Irish immigrants in 1852 at Bathurst and Adelaide, was built on top of a mass grave of cholera victims from the outbreaks of 1832 and 1834.

This is the same area in which YYZ is located and Morgan both works and lives—where fresh water continues to run underground from a disappeared body of water known as Taddle Creek that, like the mass cholera grave, remains unbeknownst to most of us. However, in 1985, when the Toronto Metro Police began constructing their new headquarters near Bay and College, Taddle Creek miraculously emerged in the building process from seventy feet below,

interrupting and delaying the project. The fact "that these waterways continue so strongly in a big city's stream of consciousness, long vanished but somehow known by citizenry who cannot have known them, demonstrates the power of collective memory [...] to persist,"⁵ as well as the ways in which what may seem invisible is simply just out of view.

This is not unlike histories of Black life and community-making in Toronto (and in Canada more broadly), which have significantly shaped the cityscape and its practices, while continuously being elided from it/them. We know this well, while we also importantly know *otherwise*—such as the work of Black poets, critics, scholars, curators, artists and musicians in this very city has shown us for so long (see the work of Austin Clarke, Dionne Brand, Rinaldo Walcott, M. NourbeSe Philip, Andrea Fatona, Betty Julian, Sandra Brewster, Abdi Osman, Camille Turner, and the Black Jays, to name but a handful).

When viewers encounter the marking "NAME" on the back of the jerseys, they may interpret it in a number of ways. Those familiar with art history will know that there already exists a long colonial tradition of depicting Black subjects as nameless, and thus beneath the white artists and photographers that frequently depicted them. Alternatively, visitors to the work may see the potential for their own name to be emblazoned on an iconic sports jersey, such as a younger version of Morgan would have done while growing up in Scarborough watching the Toronto Blue Jays at their peak, capturing two championships in 1992 and '93.

From 1983 to 1993, the Blue Jays had won more than one thousand games and reflected relatively diverse (specifically, Black) teams. However, Morgan describes his family's disengagement precisely when that representation started to change.

Indeed, representations are powerful inasmuch that they are thought to portray what is possible. For example, while scholar David Canton notes that 70 years have passed since Jackie Robinson desegregated Major League Baseball, he explains only 7.7% of all MLB players today are Black.⁶ Jalani Morgan's exhibition and broader project tells an important counter-story to what these stats suggest, insisting on the importance of Black histories of baseball regardless of data, popular narratives, neighbourhood demographics, or unidentified persons. Focusing on the Ward as his particular site of/for unforgetting, Morgan