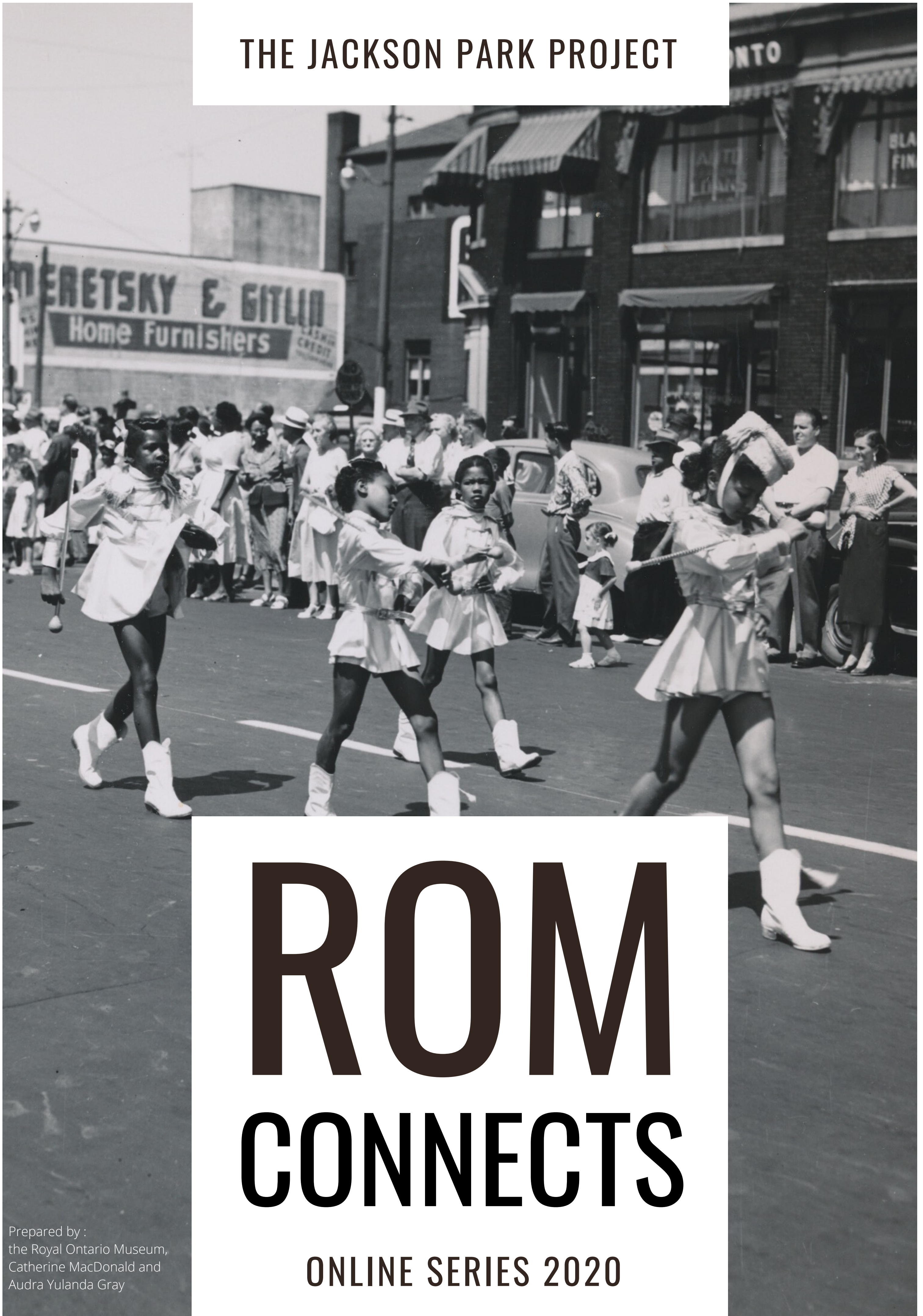


THE JACKSON PARK PROJECT



ROM CONNECTS

ONLINE SERIES 2020

Prepared by :
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SESSION ONE

JULY 22

Emancipation Day: The Greatest Freedom Show on Earth

From 1834 to today Emancipation Day represents both a celebration of freedom, and an act of resistance to ongoing racism. Join Natasha Henry (President, Ontario Black History Society) and Irene Moore Davis (President, Essex County Black Historical and Research Society) as they discuss the history and ongoing relevancy of Emancipation Celebrations across Canada, and specifically the “Greatest Freedom Show on Earth” the Emancipation Day celebrations at Jackson Park in Windsor, Ontario.

SESSION TWO

AUGUST 5

Emancipation Day: Canada's Past, Present & Future

Emancipation Day represents both a Canadian and International celebration, as well as a movement that challenges racism in former British colonies across the globe. Join Dr. Cheryl Thompson and Rosemary Sadlier to explore the global roots of the movement, its local connection to Caribana and the Caribbean Festival, and the current Petition and Bill before Parliament to have Emancipation Day acknowledged as a national day of recognition in Canada.



SILVIA FORNI

Silvia Forni is Senior Curator of Global Africa in the ROM's Department of Art & Culture. She oversees the large African collection, and is responsible for the permanent and rotating display of African artworks in the Shreyas and Mina Ajmera Gallery of Africa, the Americas and the Asia Pacific. Since joining the ROM in 2008 Silvia has curated and co-curated several partial gallery reinstallations and exhibitions. Her most recent exhibition projects have been *Here We Are Here: Black Canadian Contemporary Art* (2018), which traveled to the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia; *Isaac Julien: Other Destinies* (2017); *Art. Honour and Ridicule: Asafo Flags From Southern Ghana* (2016); and *Worn: Shaping Black Feminine Identity* (2014). From 2013 to 2018, together with Julie Crooks and Dominique Fontaine, she co-curated the *Of Africa* initiative, a multiplatform project aimed to support a sustained and long-term promotion of the cultural and creative diversity of Africa and its diaspora through an engagement with the collections in the museum and in dialogue with contemporary artists and creators. The spirit of the initiative continues to this day through a continuing commitment to acquisitions, programming, exhibitions, and internships. Silvia's interest in African art encompasses both historical and contemporary works. Her research focuses on the significance of art both in local contexts and as part of exchange networks. She is interested in the tensions, dynamics, and feedbacks that inspire contemporary creators in Africa and the way art challenges the way Africa has been constructed in the Western imagination. She has conducted long term research in Cameroon and Ghana, and traveled extensively throughout the continent. More recently she has been focusing on the circulation and interpretation – both in scholarship and museum displays – of 20th century African art. She has also been working extensively with contemporary artists from the Continent and the diaspora and adding to the collection a number of contemporary artworks that defy and complicate academic and museological art taxonomies. Silvia is also Associate Professor of anthropology at the University of Toronto where she teaches Anthropology of Material Culture, Ethnography of Africa and African Art. She has participated to numerous working groups and seminars. Since 2017 she co-lead the Museum And Public History quadrant of the Mellon funded research project *Aesthetic Education: A South-North Dialogue*. She is a Fellow of the Center for Curatorial Leadership, class of 2020. From 2015 to 2017 she was President of the Art Council of the African Studies Association (ACASA).

**AUDRA YULANDA GRAY**

A member of the Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists (ACTRA), Canadian Actors' Equity Association (CAEA) and Women In Film and Television (WIFT-T) in Toronto. She is an emerging producer, writer and actor. She most recently produced *Journey Back to Jackson Park*, a short documentary. It has currently been screened at the 2020 Dividing Lines: An African American & Native American Symposium, the 2019 Toronto Black Film Festival, the 2018 Ontario Black Historical Society's Emancipation Day Event and the 2018 Ontario Archeology Society's Symposium.

**TONYA SUTHERLAND**

An emerging museum professional with a background in English and History. Tonya is a new graduate of the Master of Museum Studies program at the University of Toronto, and has worked in partnership during her degree with the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre and the Ontario Science Centre. For her Master's capstone project, Tonya conducted a feasibility study for the development of a digital archive for the Jackson Park Project, and continues to explore strategies for the development of this archive. In addition to the Jackson Park Project, Tonya has also volunteered with the Multicultural History Society of Ontario and the Art Gallery of Ontario. Her academic interests include Black history, poetry, digital heritage, community-based heritage, and collection management.

**IRENE MOORE DAVIS**

Born and raised in Windsor, Ontario, Irene Moore Davis is an educator, historian, author, and activist who enjoys speaking about equity, diversity, and African Canadian history to a wide variety of audiences. She fulfills community roles including President of the Essex County Black Historical Research Society, Chair of the Annual Buxton National Historic Site History Conference, Programming Chair at BookFest Windsor, and co-host of the All Write in Sin City podcast. Irene's previous publications include both poetry and history, including a chapter in the recent collection *A Fluid Frontier: Slavery, Resistance and the Underground Railroad in the Detroit River Borderlands*; her forthcoming book is titled *Our Own Two Hands: A History of Black Lives in Windsor from the 1700s Forward*. She is a graduate of the University of Windsor, Western University, and Queen's University. In her professional life, Irene is an administrator at St. Clair College, where she also teaches Underground Railroad history.

**NATASHA HENRY**

Natasha Henry is an educator, historian, and curriculum consultant. She is the author of *Emancipation Day: Celebrating Freedom in Canada* (June 2010) and *Talking about Freedom: Celebrating Freedom in Canada* (January 2012). Natasha is the president of the Ontario Black History Society. Through her various professional, academic, and community roles, Natasha's work is grounded in her commitment to research, collect, preserve, and disseminate the histories Black Canadians..

**CHERYL THOMPSON**

Cheryl Thompson is an Assistant Professor at Ryerson University in the School of Creative Industries. She is author of *Beauty in a Box: Detangling the Roots of Canada's Black Beauty Culture*. She previously held a Banting postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Toronto. Dr. Thompson's essays have appeared in *Emergent Feminisms: Challenging a Post-Feminist Media Culture*, the *Journal of Canadian Studies*, *Canadian Journal of History* *Annales canadiennes d'histoire* (CJH/ACH), and *Feminist Media Studies*. She has also published articles in *The Conversation*, *Toronto Star*, *Montreal Gazette*, *Spacing*, *Herizon's Magazine*, *Halifax Coast*, and *Rabble.ca*. She grew up in Scarborough, and currently resides in Toronto.

**ROSEMARY SADLIER**

Rosemary Sadlier was the president of the Ontario Black History Society (OBHS) from 1993 to 2015. As president, she contributed to the recognition of Black history through education, research and outreach programs. Rosemary's pressure was central to the Canadian government's 1995 decision to make the celebration of Black History Month a national annual event. Rosemary was born and raised in Toronto, and she has degrees in teaching and social work. Her roots in Canada reach back to pre-Confederation: her mother's family can be traced to 1840, while her father's ancestors arrived in New Brunswick in 1793. Along with the 1995 establishment of National Black History Month, the Ontario Black History Society has also recently initiated the formal celebration of August 1 as Emancipation Day. For Rosemary, such events have helped and will continue to help Canadian students and teachers to recognize the contributions of Black people in Canada. Rosemary has presented nationally and internationally – including to the United Nations – on the subjects of Black Canadian history, curricula, and anti-racism. She has also researched and written prolifically about Black history and Black Canadian history. Rosemary has received several honours and awards including the Order of Ontario, the William Peyton Hubbard Race Relations Award, Women for PACE Award, the Black Links Award, the Planet Africa Marcus Garvey Award and the Harry Jerome Award.

WHY THE ROM?

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The Royal Ontario Museum has long been considered the grand repository of the traditional narrative of the history of Canada in the context of British Colonialism. For a number of years now the ROM has vigorously evolved itself into an institution which strives to be inclusive through recognition and inclusion of diverse voices, by re-examining its collections through a multifocal lens of contemporary global cultures. The ROM Connects Series seeks to reach out to new audiences and engage them in experiences and discussions of the complexities of history involving descendent communities in order to challenge the tradition colonial histories with the goal of creating more balanced historical interpretation. These goals are in line with the Jackson Park Project which seeks to create a new template for focusing on the lesser known stories of the Black Community in Canada. The opportunity to present at the ROM will enable us to share the exciting story of the Emancipation Day Celebrations held in Jackson Park from the 1930's to the 60's and give it the spotlight it deserves in our national narrative.



WHAT IS OUR HOPE?

The opportunity to share the Jackson Park Project will help to challenge the long held traditional narrative that there were no racial barriers, racism or a civil rights movement in Canada. Stories of resilience in the Black Community in the face of these challenges will be shared to highlight true heroism in the face of racialized attitudes and suggest a new set of Canadian heroes to today's generation. Our presentation will illustrate the connections between racism faced by Black Canadians today to their historic antecedents. We want to challenge our audience to engage in long overdue conversations about racism in our "home and native land." The Jackson Park story is more than just a Windsor story; it is a local, national, and ultimately global history story. The Emancipation Celebrations in Jackson Park are intimately braided into the histories of Canada, the United States, France, Britain and the African Diaspora. We will also be focusing on the recent campaign to have Emancipation Day declared a nationally recognized day by the Parliament of Canada.



WHO IS OUR AUDIENCE?

Our prospective audience will be members of the Black community as well as the larger public. We want all Canadians to see the critical role played by Black Canadians in our history and to also come to understand the tragedy of racism that has persisted to this day in Canadian society.



WHO DO WE HOPE TO INVITE?

A wide network of audience members will be invited. Prospective invitees will include the political, arts, business, educational, religious, sports, scientific communities, historical societies, descendant communities as well as the general public. Specific examples will include : – bank (sponsors), sports, television, music, veterans, celebrities from Black Community, Ambassadors, MP's MPP's, Senators, Mayor (Toronto, Windsor, Detroit), Deputy Mayor, members of the Windsor and Detroit Communities, members of arts, fashion, business communities, Black Historical societies in Toronto, Guelph, Windsor, Buxton, OBHS, university classes from OISE, Harriet Tubman Institute York University.