



NEGROES LIVE NEXT DOOR

Vancouverites have 700 neighbors about whom they know very little

- The Hogan's Alley community in "Vancouver" was a haven for Black men, who were employed as car porters.
- From 1919 onwards, Hogan's Alley was an ethnocultural hub in Vancouver for Black people. It was full of Black businesses, housing, nightclubs, restaurants and the African Methodist Episcopal Church.
- In 1972, the community was displaced and houses destroyed as a result of the City of Vancouver's urban renewal policy. This racist policy targeted the Black community as a "blight."
- The fragmentation of Vancouver's Black community was a purposeful action that left Black people without cultural centring in the city.
- As the City of Vancouver voted in favour of the removal of the Georgia Viaduct, Black activists seized the opportunity to reclaim community. The Hogan's Alley Working Group (HAWG) was formed and worked with the city's staff and architects to imagine the future of "Vancouver's" Black community.

- At the behest and direct activism of the Black community, the North East False Creek Area Plan, including a Hogan's Alley Block and Cultural Centre, was approved by city council. The all-Black HAWG worked together with the community, architects and city planners to design a new blueprint and vision for a Hogan's Alley recentring.
- In March 2019, Black-prioritized and -focused modular homes were opened on Hogan's Alley Block. Nora Hendrix Place was named after community leader and legend Nora Hendrix, mother of Jimi Hendrix, who grew up in the Hogan's Alley community.

Newspaper clipping ("negros next door")
Headline and article from the *Vancouver Sun*, July 19, 1952.
The headline reads "Negroes Live Next Door."

SCATTERED throughout Vancouver, the city's Negro population, numbering some 700 persons, is striving for self assertion and equality, against what might be described as a gradually weakening stone wall of resistance.

The practice of "Jim-Crowism," prevalent in many parts of the United States, is practically unknown in Canada, and on the surface at least, all men are equal. But, in practice, this unfortunately is not the case. Many large companies still continue to draw the color line when hiring, even though the negro boy or girl possesses equal, and in some cases better, qualifications than the non-negro. It is the credit of the young negro population in B.C. that they have not entirely given up the idea of trying to better themselves, and drift with the tide, as would be the easy thing to do.

Most of the men in the community are employed with the railways, as either porters or observation car stewards. Some, like Charlie Howard, have gone into other fields of endeavor. Howard is in a partnership with a Chinese and a white man in the contracting business. They've as much work as they can handle. Not a few of the little community have distinguished themselves in the arts.

Their main trouble appears to be lack of organization

months of hard work, some definite results have been achieved.

Unlike the larger ethnic groups, notably the Chinese, there is no one locality in Vancouver which can be described as being Negro. The only thing which is identifiable with these folks are the half dozen southern fried chicken establishments located throughout the downtown area, mostly in the parts east of Main Street.

There are no negro community centres, social clubs, nor is there a theatre to preserve and develop their rich culture.

So, the community turns to its only institution, the 40-year-old frame-structured Fountain Chapel, at Jackson and Prior.

For years, the parish has struggled along with a number of pastors, all of whom came from south of the border and were not too familiar with the problems of the Canadian Negro. Mr. Moore is the first Canadian-born minister to take charge of the Vancouver parish.

Born in Guelph, Ontario, and raised in Bramford, he attended the great Negro university at Wilberforce, Ohio. He was ordained to the ministry in New York in 1935, and for

church stipend, he turned to his other profession, mortuary science.

When he took full charge of Fountain Chapel last Easter, he immediately plunged into what he considers one of the most important jobs of his calling—youth work.

With the assistance of Mrs. Pearl Hendrix, remembered for her performance several years ago in the Little Theatre presentation of "Deep are the Roots," well attended young peoples' meetings are held every Wednesday night in the church.

The local negro population has given the police very little trouble. One high law enforcement officer recently said that amongst the Vancouver negroes "there is very little trouble, with only the odd little rascal attracting our attention." But, keeping the youth off the streets is not the main motivating idea behind Mr. Moore's youth plan. Rather it is an educational one, with more and more of the older people realizing that lack of education is one of the greatest obstacles standing in the way of the advancement of

scholarship have made a name for themselves in the world of the dance. Lionel Mitchell played with the late Jimmy Lunceford's band. Evelyn Jones, singing professionally as Maxine Ware, is heard on a coast-to-coast CBC hookup from Winnipeg.

However, the great tragedy of the negro people not only in Vancouver but throughout Canada is their smallness in number which limits their field of activity. To get ahead, the younger negro feels that certain parts of the United States with its greater negro population has more to offer.

There is little that can be done to prevent their migration, but with the breaking down of prejudice barriers here, more and more of the younger generation are thinking in terms of "I am a Canadian" and are sticking close to their homes. But the end of the flow is not yet in sight.

The current advancement movement by the negro population of Vancouver has received much strength from or-

ganizations outside those directly centered around Fountain Chapel. The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters has done a highly commendable job in fighting racial discrimination and creating a better understanding of the problem amongst the negroes themselves.

Within the loosely knit community are two fraternal organizations. The Kuvannah Chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star, which though small in numbers, is doing a good work. The other, and larger society with about 50 members, is the True Resolution Lodge, No. 16 of the Free and Accepted Masons. This lodge was honored earlier this week (July 13-16) with the Grand Communication of the Washington jurisdiction being held in Vancouver. Some 300 delegates and observers from all over the United States were on hand. And, at the opening ceremonies — a service of Thanksgiving. Mr. Moore preached the sermon.

Around the framework of the Fountain Chapel, and the secular organizations, a great new future awaits the patient negro in Vancouver. And Rev. J. Ivan Moore is ready to help his race along the hard road which lies ahead. ●

ME...
Hogan's Alley
Civic Officials Inspect
Slum Area

Rats, Filth,
Neatness in
Hogan's Alley

Civic Officials Inspect
Slum Area

By SYD WILLIAMS
Squalor and neatness side by side, with the reputation of a street of crime. That is Hogan's Alley.
One short block of hutches and tenement shacks...

WHAT HAPPENED TO OUR CULTURAL HOME IN "VANCOUVER"?

For Black people who came to "Vancouver," Hogan's Alley was a sort of Home in a city that often denies basic services to Black people. Some came to live permanently, and others, such as famous jazz artist Louis Armstrong, came to visit and perform in Vancouver, only to be denied entry and service in other areas of town. Thus they were directed to Hogan's Alley, where they could find welcoming faces and community.

Squalor and neatness side by side, with the reputation of a street of crime. That is Hogan's Alley.
One short block of cabins, hutches and tenement shacks, it is in the lane between Union and Prior Streets, stretching from Railway Street to Gore Avenue.

YET WHAT IS OUR STORY, THE STORY OF OUR HOME IN VANCOUVER THAT WAS HOGAN'S ALLEY?

Friday I accompanied civic sanitary, health and building inspectors on a tour of inspection. Some of the buildings will surely be condemned as a result of that inspection.
There are several neatly kept buildings but the majority are tilted, sagging and leaning crazily, worn out with their years, and scummy with filth. Sanitary accommodations are of stone age variety in most instances. Furnishings, usually, a stove, a ramshackle bed, a table and a box or two for a seat.

Under the banner of urban renewal, the City of Vancouver, with support from the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and provincial government, devalued Black lives and property. As part of this white supremacist logic, our lives were intentionally constructed as blights, our businesses destroyed, our collected joys dissipated to provide a highway to nowhere for the white community.

Working with provincial and federal programs and supported by the CMHC, the construction of the Georgia Viaduct completed the displacement of the Black community, a process of divestment and dislocation that had started much earlier through the abandonment of services and resources.

The Vancouver Sun, April 22, 1939.
Reads "Rats, Filth, Neatness in Hogan's Alley."

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In the worst sense of the word, with huge rats basking in the sun, unmindful of the presence of mongrel dogs that yap and bark incessantly. A stable is wedged in between buildings. In some spots an old man carries off filthy refuse. Some plumbing fixtures are rusted and decrepit they drip with their sewage through holes in the ceiling. In some instances, with an effluvia of sewage in the gutter, a huge manure stable.
A strange row of habitations. It is the history of the seamy side of Vancouver, a man nature.



THE LOSS OF THE HEART AND HEARTBEAT OF THE COMMUNITY HAS HAD ONGOING IMPACT

With the Black community gone, scattered into neighbourhoods that did not welcome them, ongoing waves of Black people who moved here to make “Vancouver” home were robbed of a community to welcome and support them. The loss of the heart and heartbeat of the community has had ongoing impacts on the social, cultural, spiritual and economic wellbeing of Black people here.

Viaduct
The Georgia Viaduct amid construction, November 1, 1970.

... A SMALL GROUP OF
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The City of “Vancouver” in 2015 voted to replace the Georgia Viaduct not because it was a symbol of Black erasure and oppression, but rather because it had become seismically unstable. As the city presented plans that ignored the deep and controversial history of this area, a small group of local Black activists, galvanized by this blatant erasure, formed a pocket of resistance, advocating for the city to redress past wrongs by returning the city block to the stewardship of the Black community.

Picture from the Hogan's Alley revival blockade, 2020.
Photograph courtesy of Hogan's Alley Society.





Black Prosperity

Black prosperity can look like the arcs of everyday Black people asserting their Blackness, culture and community in a hostile and white colonial context.

Image from the "Vancouver" Archives titled "CPR Porter Pressing Uniform."

The image shows a Black railway porter pressing uniforms. As with other Black folks from this time period, the man's name and information were not labelled or kept in the records. This man's still-untold story is told here by what record we do have.



SLEEPING CAR PORTERS

Sleeping-car porters were one of the most recognizable guilds of the Black Hogan's Alley community in "Vancouver," as many porters came to live there because discrimination limited their options in housing. Hogan's Alley was the only place they were allowed to live that offered proximity to the railway's terminus. These Black porters played a central role in the expansion of travel across "Canada," benefiting the white settler society of the country. Relegated to Black servitude at the lowest level of work in the railway system, they attended to the needs of white passengers. The railroads replicated the racist antebellum US South by featuring the Black porters as servants who were compensated with the understanding that tips composed a significant portion of their take-home pay. Jobs as sleeping-car porters were the among the few options open to the Black men in Canada.

These men—because these jobs were not available for Black Women— took up the fight for equal union representation against the backdrop of deep racism in the union movement. Building on the work started earlier by Black trade unionists in Canada, they won recognition to be unionized. Their contributions extended to fighting for a multicultural society, and for human rights that would eventually move Canada away from its conception as a white dominion to one that aspires to benefit Canadians regardless of racialization.

Hope Meets Action mural, 2020 (sixth section)
Anthony Joseph, Vancouver, BC





LEONARD LANE AND THE BC UNITY CREDIT UNION

Leonard Lane fought a long and passionate fight against racial discrimination in our province. After being refused service on account of his race in “Vancouver’s” restaurants, Leonard Lane became a member of the British Columbia Association for the Advancement of Coloured People. Whether battling the Minister of Education on racist schoolbooks or taking action against workplace discrimination, Leonard Lane saw past the affront of everyday racial aggression to the structural racism that underlies support systems of oppression in our society. Housing in Vancouver was, and is, extremely difficult to find for Black tenants and aspiring homeowners.

Leonard recognized this and opened the first Black credit union in BC, a branch of the BC Unity Credit Union, in 1959. As a founding member and treasurer, he led the movement for economic racial equity and gave access to credit for Black folks and families until his branch was eventually folded into Vancity credit union in 1971.

Governments and private interests used a variety of formal and informal methods of housing discrimination to negatively affect Black home seekers. Hogan’s Alley in Vancouver is a well-documented example of the use of government-legislated zoning to discriminate. Other systemic techniques used to disadvantage Black and racialized communities were redlining, racist housing covenants that prohibited selling to Black buyers, a retail industry that steered Black home seekers to poorer investments, and loan practices that denied them loans.



BUILDING DIASPORIC COMMUN- ITIES

The Afro-diaspora experience in “British Columbia” can, at times, be one of isolation. New places and white-centring spaces make cold winters colder. Because of this we have often sought to establish our own organizations and communities for support. One such organization that seeks to combat our erasure by creating a living history from which all Black Canadians can find belonging is the BC Black History Awareness Society (BCBHAS).

Black people were brought here, bought here; came here, have been here for more than 400 years; yet our collective history is largely ignored in the history books and textbooks. To combat this erasure, Black history organizations have a recognized presence in most provinces. The BCBHAS, like these others, has taken up the fight to ensure that the Black threads woven into the fabric of this country are acknowledged and respected as an integral part of this country’s strength and resilience.

This history binds us all as Black people living in so-called “Canada.” Fran Morrison, the secretary of the BCBHAS, is both an agent and symbol of our collective connection and identity. Born in Nova Scotia as a fifth-generation Black Canadian, she is living denial of the myth of an absence of Black history in Canada. Her paternal ancestors came to Nova Scotia via the Underground Railroad, settling on the south shore of Nova Scotia in “Queen’s” County, arriving sometime in the late 1820s. Her maternal ancestors came during the “American” Revolution, among an estimated 8,000 to 10,000 escaped slaves—approximately one-fifth of the total Black American population in 1783—who fought alongside the British in exchange for their freedom. At the close of the war, many relocated to Nova Scotia. These refugees are known as Black Loyalists. Her earliest known ancestors are Samuel Brothers and his wife, Elizabeth, along with two children, who are listed in the *Carleton Papers*, more popularly known as the *Book of Negroes* from the book written by Canadian author Lawrence Hill.



POLITICAL ACTIVISM TO CIVIL DISOBEDI- ENCE



Black activists, organizers and leaders at Black Lives Matter protest in Victoria, 2020. Photograph by Femi.



ROSEMARY BROWN

Rosemary Brown's contributions to "British Columbia" and "Canada" make her one of the most accomplished Canadians in the history of BC. Rosemary immigrated to Canada at the age of 20, and by the age of 26 she had helped found the BC Association for the Advancement of Coloured People, an organization that worked to secure the human rights of Black people. As a politician she had a number of firsts: Her election to the BC Legislature, where she served for 14 years, made her the first Black Woman to be elected to any provincial legislature. In 1975, her run for the Federal NDP leadership made her the first Black Woman to run for the leadership of a major political party in Canada. As an academic she held the Ruth Wynn Woodward Professorship in Women's Studies at Simon Fraser University. She held many other influential posts.

For one group of women in BC, she will always be remembered for being a member of the "Sisters with Books" book club. SWB women debated and discussed their lives as women, and as Black Women inspired by the books they read from Africa and the Black diaspora. They met for lunch, always over Caribbean food prepared by a member, and were able to find intellectual and racial community outside of the white gaze. This was a group of Black Women whose stories were rooted in community and branched into activism and action. One such member is Dr. June Francis, Co-Chair of Hogan's Alley Society, National Congress of Black Women Award winner and, in a most fitting manner, the 2021 Rosemary Brown Award winner—surely an ode to old friends. As Dr. Francis states, "Receiving the Rosemary Brown Award is a highlight of my life, as she was a member of our Sisters with Books book club, allowing me to witness up close one of Canada's and the world's greatest trailblazers."



LEADERS OF PROTEST:

BLACK WOMEN

Trans and cis Black Women, Black femmes and non-binary Black folks have always been central to racial justice activism in BC. Rosemary Brown is a well-known figure for many reasons, including her prominence in formal spaces. However, the story of Black activism does not end with her, but in fact extends deeply across the untold history of those who acted to disrupt outside the system.

From Carolyn Jerome, sister of renowned BC athlete Harry Jerome, and her Militant Mothers of Raymur's CN rail blockade, to years of Black Lives Matter protests building up to the wave of protests in the summer of 2020, direct action and the Hogan's Alley revival blockade, whenever given an inch of daylight Black Women have busted open doors meant to be closed on them.

Ms. Rosemary
Sade Alexis, 2021. Ink and watercolour on paper, 12" x 16" (30 cm x 40.6 cm)

Find more of Sade's work at sadealexis.com.



PROTEST AND OUR INHERENT RIGHT TO BLACK LIBERATION

We as Black people have always had to fight for our rights, for our community and for our story.

From the time we stepped onto Turtle Island, we have fought for the acknowledgement of our inherent right to freedom and liberation. From the start of our journey in “British Columbia” we saw the mass of Black protestors at “Victoria’s” docks, demanding the release of enslaved boy Charles Mitchell, held captive in 1863. Countless community organizing and direct-action efforts have been waged, such as the 1923 mobilization of Hogan’s Alley’s Black community around Fred Deal, a man whose murder conviction and sentence to hanging for the death of a white police officer was seen as racially motivated. As the year of reckoning that was 2020 is an indication, our voice will not be further silenced.

To this day we grip the handle of our future tighter. We have never been mistaken about our inalienable right to liberation, and as the descendants of survivors, we bear the responsibility to keep fighting.

Victoria protest, Nora Hendrix opening
Attendees and leaders of tomorrow at the Black Lives Matter rally Victoria, 2020. Photograph by Femi.

Dr. June Francis of Hogan's Alley Society speaking at the opening of Nora Hendrix Place,
“Canada’s” first Black-prioritized supportive housing. Photograph by Melanie Green.