



THE BLACK LIVES MATTER MEMORIAL PROJECT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Black Lives Matter Memorial Art Exhibition Debuts in Vancouver

Vancouver, BC, July 24 - The Black Lives Matter Memorial Project is dedicated to honoring Black lives lost to racial injustice and police violence. It will be held at Alternatives Gallery in Vancouver from July 26 to August 2, 2023.

The exhibition features powerful artworks by renowned artists Dr. Syrus Marcus Ware, Maestro Jason Ikeem Rodgers, Orchestra Noir, and Toni Latour.

This memorial aims to shed light on the systemic racism that has led to the tragic deaths of Black individuals in both Canada and the United States. Through art, we have the power to spark empathy, understanding, and unity. The Black Lives Matter Memorial Project invites Vancouverites to engage with the artwork, learn about the lives cut short, and reflect on the immense loss suffered by Black families and communities.

The project has been three years in the making, and is funded by the Canada Council for the Arts, the B.C. Arts Council, and the Vancouver Biennale.

The exhibition comprises three components:

- The first component showcases ten portraits drawn by Dr. Syrus Marcus Ware, depicting Black individuals who lost their lives at the hands of law enforcement. Accompanying each portrait is a text panel describing the person's full and rich life and the circumstances surrounding their untimely death. The panels are complemented by analog clocks moving forward and reverse, and screens displaying digital life-long clocks counting forward from birth to death and backward from death to birth. This poignant display emphasizes the injustice of lives cut short by racist police forces and the oppressive systems that perpetuate them.
- The second component features black stone slabs engraved with the names, birth and death dates, and ages of over 400 Black people killed by police since 2012.
- The third component of the exhibition is the video installation titled "black elegy." Maestro Jason Ikeem Rodgers, founder of Atlanta-based Orchestra Noir, composed an original piece of music specifically for this project. The video recording of the performance by his all-Black orchestra, capturing the emotions of the composition, will be on display during the exhibition.

The Black Lives Matter Memorial Project offers free admission to the public, and an opening reception will take place on July 29 from 3-5pm with refreshments and food from Riddim & Spice on Commercial Drive. A media preview will take place from 2-3pm. The reception will feature guest speaker **Krystal Paraboo**, lead curator for the Black Strathcona Resurgence Project with Vancouver Mural Festival. Guest speakers also include Renee Austin will also contribute her insights on racial justice and commemoration. And Phabion Sutherland will offer an Indigenous welcome and blessing.

FEATURED ARTISTS

Syrus Marcus Ware (he/him) is a Vanier Scholar, visual artist, activist, curator, and educator living and working in Toronto, ON. Using drawing, installation, and performance, **Syrus** explores social justice frameworks and Black activist culture. His work has been shown widely, including solo shows at Grunt Gallery in 2018 and Wil Aballe Art Projects in 2021 (*Irresistible Revolutions*). His work has been featured as part of the inaugural Toronto Biennial of Art in 2019 in conjunction with the Ryerson Image Centre (*Antarctica and Ancestors, Do You Read Us? (Dispatches from the Future)*), as well as for the Toronto Bentway's Safety in Public Spaces Initiative in 2020 (*Radical Love*).

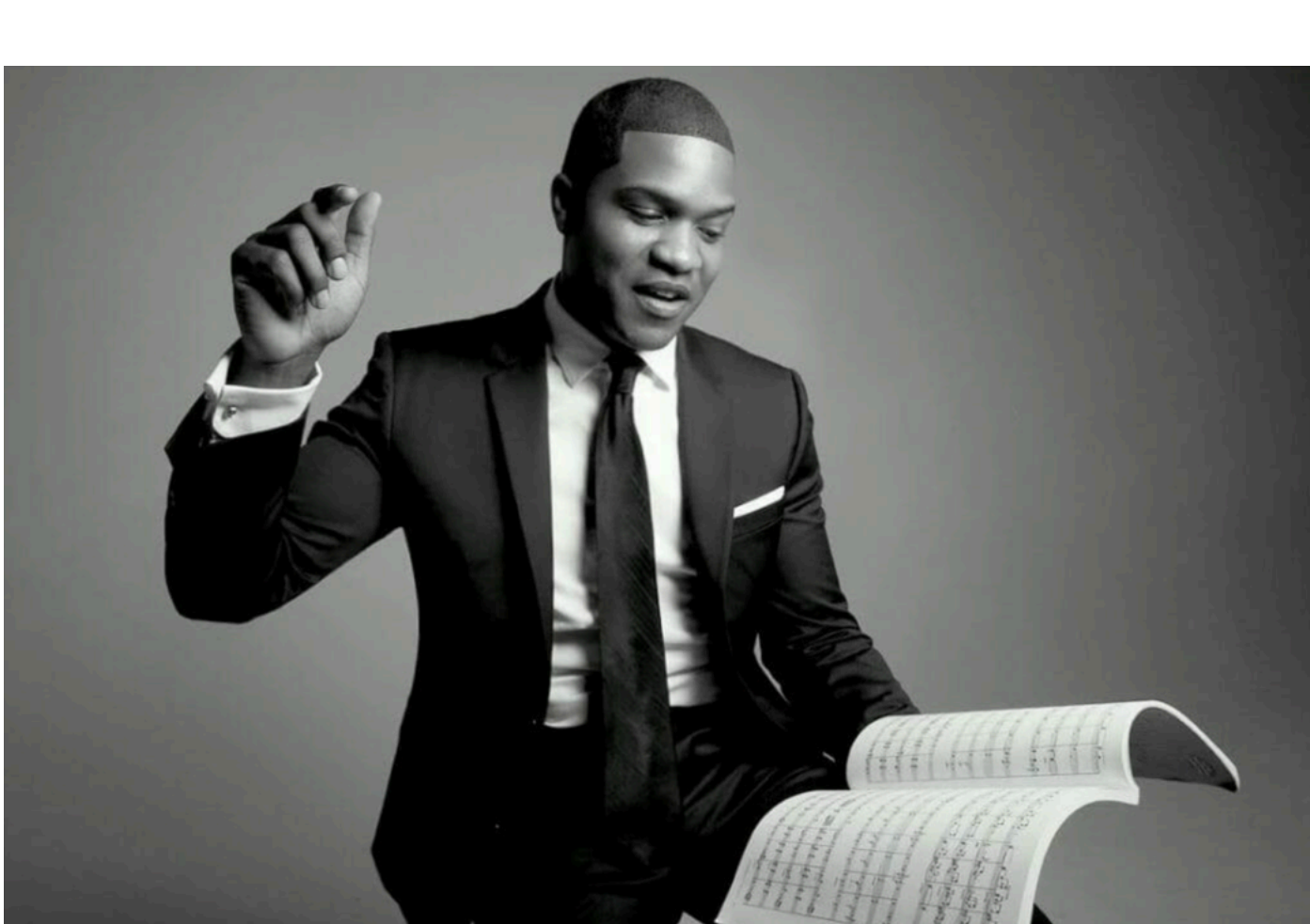
Syrus has participated in group shows at the Never Apart in Montreal, the Art Gallery of Ontario, the University of Lethbridge Art Gallery, the Art Gallery of York University, the Art Gallery of Windsor, and as part of the curated content at Nuit Blanche 2017 (*The Stolen People; Won't Back Down*). His performance works have been part of festivals across Canada, including *Crippling The Stage* (Harbourfront Centre, 2016 & 2019), *Complex Social Change* (University of Lethbridge Art Gallery, 2015) and *Decolonizing and Decriminalizing Trans Genres* (University of Winnipeg, 2015).



Jason Ikeem Rodgers (he/him) is a renowned Atlanta-based conductor, composer, and arranger. He is the Founder and Music Director of **Orchestra Noir**, the Atlanta African-American Orchestra. He began his conducting career as an apprentice to John Mauceri, the founding director of the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra and protégé of Leonard Bernstein. Since then, Maestro Rodgers has achieved international recognition, winning prestigious awards such as first prize in the London Classical Soloists Competition and the International Conducting Competition in the United States. He has conducted orchestras in various locations, including Europe and North America, and made his debut with the Orchestra Di Toscana Classica in Italy.

His work has been exhibited at the Atlanta High Museum of Art and he has gained notoriety for his arrangements, including one for hip-hop artist 2Chainz's song *Forgiven* featured on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*. He has also contributed to Oprah's OWN Network and the Amazon's series *Harlem*.

Maestro Rodgers holds degrees in Orchestral Conducting from the Cleveland Institute of Music and the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, where he studied under notable mentors such as Carl Topilow, Louis Lane, and Serge Zehnacker. Additionally, he has a Bachelor's Degree in Piano Performance from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, where he was mentored by Clifton Matthews.



Toni Latour (she/her) is a queer femme white settler and second generation Italian Canadian artist. Toni is both a visual artist and a professor. She works in photography, installation, text-based practices, drawing, video, sound, public and performance art.

Toni received her BFA from the University of Windsor in 1998 and her MFA from the University of Western Ontario in 2000. Her work has included social commentary public art work, and large-scale installation work that concerns itself with representation within the queer/trans/non-binary communities in Coast Salish Territory (Vancouver).

Toni has exhibited her work nationally and internationally in both solo and group shows since 1994. Her work is held in private and public collections, including the National Portrait Gallery of Canada, the Surrey Art Gallery, and the Vancouver Biennale.

She is the Non-Regular Union Executive Representative at the University of the Fraser Valley where she advocates for labour rights and equity. Toni is also an active member of UFV's RAN (Racism and Anti-Racism Network) and the SOCA: EDI Committee (School of Creative Arts: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion).

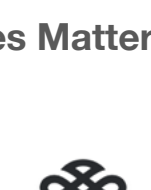
Toni is also a single mother to an Autistic neurodivergent daughter and they live together on the unceded territory of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, colonially known as Vancouver.



For media inquiries and further information, please contact:

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The Black Lives Matter Memorial Project is grateful to its exhibition sponsors:



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