

Community-University Talks/ Conversations Universités-Communautés
2013-2014 Annual Report

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22 March 2014

A major goal moving forward into the next school year is to organize a Black speakers series at McGill, in collaboration with a number of academic and community partners. We will continue to work on building the collective, as it has been a significant challenge to sustain active participation, particularly across Francophone and Anglophone Universities as well as between students and members of the Black communities at large.

– C-Uni-T 2012-2013 annual report

The Community-University Talks Collective has achieved significant success in meeting our goals for this year as stated above. We have continued building of our Collective and have worked particularly hard on including more Francophone students and community members.

CREATE DANGEROUSLY: 2013 CONGRESS OF BLACK WRITERS AND ARTISTS

The biggest achievement of this year has been the organizing of a Congress of Black Writers and Artists from October 18-20th 2013. The idea for this event emerged out of a goal of organizing a speakers series and the realization that October 2013 marked the 45th anniversary of the 1968 Congress of Black Writers that was held at McGill in the SSMU building. Our Congress was organized by a working group of ten members, some of whom were new to our collective, and also held in the SSMU building. We collaborated with other groups with a social justice/ anti-oppression orientation and sought to actively challenge some of the norms of academic conferences, particularly around hierarchy, individualism and competition. The event was entirely bilingual, with presentations in French and in English, and simultaneous translation throughout.

As are all C-Uni-T activities, the Congress was an inclusive and accessible event in which the diversity of experiences and strengths of Black communities were centred. Congress participants included a wide range of writers, visual artists, performers, community and labour activists and organizers, students and academics. We welcomed 180-200 participants over the weekend, and offered thirty-five presentations and performances representing a diverse range of identities and experiences across differences in age, language, social class, sexual orientation, gender, ability, politics and national background. Through donations at the Congress registration tables and several presenters donating their honorariums, we were able to raise \$300 for the Black Canadian Studies Association (\$150 of which they donated to the Congress); \$150 for QPIRG-McGill; \$300 each for *Midnight Kitchen* and the *Montreal Childcare Collective*, both of

whose members enthusiastically provided free services to the Congress; \$625 for *DESTA Black Youth Network*, serving 18-25 year old Black youth in Montreal, and \$860 for C-Uni-T.

Post-Congress follow-up

Archive: The event was very well documented, and we have photographs and video recordings of all presentations and saved samples of the memorabilia (posters, pins, congress bags). Photographs and an updated event program are available on the C-Uni-T website under the “Congress/ Congrès” tab.

An extensive *Congress Summary Report* was written and sent to all participants, as well as posted on the C-Uni-T website. The report includes all of the organizing details including sources of income and spending. See the complete report here: <http://c-uni-t.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/CongressSummaryReport-final.pdf>

Community Contact: Following the Congress, a commentary piece by N Oji Mzilikazi’s titled “Showing How Disjointed We Are,” was published in the November 14th issue of the *Community Contact* (Vol. 23, no. 23, p. 27), an Anglophone Black community newspaper. Mzilikazi described the Congress as having done “no promotion in our community” and as having been “kept a secret.” He claimed that he was not aware of the event, and accused the Congress of “ignoring our community.” As these claims were simply not true and we had in fact contacted N Oji and the editors of the *Community Contact* to invite them to the Congress, the Congress working group wrote a response and submitted it to the paper on November 22nd. Our response was published as a letter to the paper, on page 6 of the December 12th issue (Volume 23, Number 5).

À Bâbord: An article about the Congress was published (in French), in the December 2013 issue of *À Bâbord*. [citation: Hampton, R. (2013). *Créer dangereusement. À Bâbord: Revue Sociale et Politique* 52(Décembre 2013/Janvier 2014), 41]

EGSS conference: Rosalind Hampton and Délice Mugabo gave a presentation at the EGSS conference on March 21st, 2014 titled *Theorizing and practicing dangerously: Black feminist praxis in Canada*, that shared our experiences of organizing and participating in the Congress.

COMMUNICATIONS

Website

Community-University Talks now has our own website, set up during the summer of 2013 at www.c-uni-t.org

Rosalind set up and managed the website on her own with support from friends for the first few months, however the collective has recently hired a website assistant for a modest honorarium. This role will be worked in to our budget for next year.

There are currently two C-Uni-T members in addition to the coordinator (rosalind) who have accounts on the C-Uni-T website.

Goal: to increase members' use of the website; to increase French content on the website

Facebook

The C-uni-T FB group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/C.UniT.Collective/>) used to be for Black-identifying people only, however we agreed following the Congress to make the group "for people who identify as Black and our allies who share our mission." The FB group currently has 94 members and is used primarily for sharing resources and information about upcoming opportunities and activities. It also serves the purpose of further forging a sense of community, as daily posts and threads enable members to engage in dialogue and exchange opinions and ideas.

C-Uni-T also now has a FB page (<https://www.facebook.com/C.Uni.T.Collective>), which is open to the public and linked to our website.

Goal: to continue to increase members' use of the Facebook group; to increase French content on the FB group

Relationship building

Overall, one of the most important functions of Community-University Talks is to bring Black people from Montreal's various communities into dialogue with one another and to build mutually supportive relationships with one another.

As a C-Uni-T member critically observed last year, our goal should not be about promoting another organization or "branding" a C-Uni-T name, rather about the people and the work we can do with/in our communities.

Particularly since the Congress, members of the C-Uni-T collective have been able to support one another and continue our work, whether or not that work is explicitly identified with C-Uni-T. Recent examples of this include the participation of several members in a Black History Month event organized by the Racialized Student Network and the Social Work Graduate Students on February 26th, and Kai Thomas and Shanna Strauss' organization of a RealTalk event at DESTA Black Youth Network (March 19) that was originally discussed and planned at a C-Uni-T meeting, but was a DESTA event without the "C-Uni-T name" on it. What is important is that this work is being done!

Black Studies reading group at York University: Recently rosalind met with a group of Black graduate students at York who have been meeting regularly to discuss their work. One of these students is Sam Tecle, who we met at the Congress. The group of students held a symposium where they presented papers and had professors present to respond. Given a number of common issues and concerns between this group and members of C-Uni-T rosalind and these students discussed with these students the potential for future collaboration and mutual support between the two groups.

Coopérative Café l'Artère: C-Uni-T has recently decided to join the Café l'Artère Cooperative, for a lifetime membership of \$300.00. We support the coop's mission of "creating and maintaining quality employment – at the heart of an autonomous and profitable organization – while supporting the democratic and cooperative values of social economy through [their] horizontal management structure and citizen engagement, all for the good of the neighbourhood." We will use the café for future events and activities and look forward to claiming space there for English- and French-speaking Black Montrealers. For more information see <http://artere.coop/a-propos-about/>

ADDITIONAL EVENTS AND INITIATIVES

Brother Kaba Kamene event organized by One Full Circle

On March 22nd 2014 two members of C-Uni-T (Radney and Kanisha) are attending a day-long series of workshops with Africentric organizer and activist, Brother Kaba Kamene (aka Booker T. Coleman). This event was organized by the group One Full Circle, and C-Uni-T paid for their attendance at the event. Radney and Kanisha will report back to the collective about the workshops they attend.

Story Sharing group

At our January 31st meeting Collective members decided to initiate a story sharing group based on communal story telling/ sharing tradition which will meet monthly to discuss novels by Black authors and films. This group is being organized by Radney.

Annual Talk Forum & Volunteer Dinner

This year's talk forum will be held at Café l'Artère on Saturday April 5th, 2014. The theme of the event will be *Working across differences* and we earnestly anticipate the stimulating conversations that the space will afford, knowing that it will enable us to collectively move forward in our work. The dialogue will be followed by a dinner at which we will thank one another and especially the volunteers who helped us to realize the Congress for our commitment and continued hard work. Members of DESTA will also be invited to this event and will be travel to the café as a group with (member of C-Uni-T and DESTA) Shanna.

Printing project in collaboration with DESTA and Wall of Femmes

Beginning in May we are organizing a DIY stenciling workshop/s with DESTA and Wall of Femmes. We intend to follow this up with a screen printing project at Ste Emilie's Skillshare, and perhaps an exhibition at l'Artère.

Film Screenings and discussions

Mami Wata, with the Women from Maison d'Haiti: Désirée has a copy of Monique Dauphin's film *Mami Wata* and has been discussing an event with Monique

that would bring together members of C-Uni-T and Maison d'Haiti. This is projected to take place later this spring.

Black and Cuba: Rosalind purchased the film *Black and Cuba* from Progressive Pupil, a New York based group promoting Black Studies. She is interested in arranging a screening of the film and discussion about Black people in Cuba.

Youth Participatory Action Research Project

This project will be a collaboration with Anne-Marie Livingstone to enable groups of racialized youth to respond to an anti-gang video being used by the CSDM. Anne-Marie and a colleague have been pressuring the school boards not to use the video due to its stereotypic representations of racialized youth, however the CSDM continues to use the video. Anne Marie and Rosalind met and discussed the possibility of creating a summer youth project deconstructing & critiquing the video with groups of young adults from Little Burgundy and Mtl Nord. (i.e. YPAR [youth participatory action research]). Rosalind has discussed this with Frances, Executive Director of DESTA, who has expressed interest in the project.

Cora-Lee is following up the potential for additional funding through her supervisor at McGill, and she and Sophia are interested in helping to facilitate the summer project and have begun planning with Anne Marie. Kanisha is interested in participating. Additional funding to pay youth (ie 18-25 yrs) project coordinators could perhaps come from gov't summer employment program for students.