



ISLANDS OF INFLUENCE



ISLANDS OF INFLUENCE



### BRANDON'S LINER NOTES

Poets and poems have become my teachers, my guides. As a Canadian poet born to a Jamaican father and Barbadian mother, the poets who make up this Islands of Influence mixtape are those whose work has guided me toward a deeper appreciation for the ways that Caribbean culture, knowledge and writing have been very important in shaping our ideas of what Canadian literature is, and what it can be. There can be no discussion of poetry produced in Canada that does not mention the brilliance of Trinidadian-born poet, essayist, novelist and teacher Dionne Brand. Her work in books like *A Map To The Door of No Return: Notes on Belonging* and *Land to Light On* taught me how to think about water, how to hear, in poetry, the seas and oceans each of my parents were raised in the shadow and music of. The poems in these and other books taught me how to dream of my mother's childhood, or the difficulty of my grandparents making a life for themselves in Canada. Perhaps that is the essence of why I am drawn to writers who have gathered life experiences both in the Caribbean and in Canada; such writing helps me know myself and imagine a space for myself in this country even beyond the stories my parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts are willing to tell, the memories they can still recall. Caribbean poetry remembers. Caribbean poetry re-members, puts me back together.

Continue on back >>>





## ISLANDS OF INFLUENCE



## ISLANDS OF INFLUENCE

Just the same, the work of Afua Cooper as a historian and poet guides me through histories, migrations and wisdoms that help me make sense of what it means to be Black in Canada. Her most-celebrated book of poetry, *Copper Woman & Other Poems*, reminds me, over and over, of the ancient power of the earth when it is tended by patient, caring human hands. As both a writer and performer, Lillian Allen reminds me what it feels like when poetry is allowed to move, shake, rumble, shout and chant as it speaks directly to human experience in ways that only the intelligence and urgency of dub poetry can accomplish. Canisia Lubrin, Jillian Christmas and Aja Monet show me what it means for poetry to carry its readers toward stark, lively visions of justice through the coming together of poetic image and sound. Poets like Lorna Goodison, Pamela Mordecai and Kwame Dawes are masters of their craft whose poems often sing with deep, deep respect for the ways-of-knowing that make Jamaican cultural life so full of meaning and so worthy of poetic attention.

All together, I hope these poems will delight you. I hope that these cherished poems will do the work of helping you remember something about yourself that is also worth cherishing. Above all, I trust that the words found in this *Islands of Influence* collection will help you trust the quiet wisdom that often waits inside your favourite poems. I hope you will be reminded that water, soil, air, music, voice and writing of the Caribbean has helped the world better know and express itself. May these poems do the very same for you.



### THE POEMS

**I SAW A PERFECT  
TREE TODAY**  
by Lillian Allen

**SONS OF ORION**  
by Canisia Lubrin

**FROM VERSO 4**  
by Dionne Brand

**THE GHOSTS OF WOMEN  
ONCE GIRLS**  
by Aja Monet

**NORTHERN LIGHT**  
by Jillian Christmas

**MY SISTER CRIES THE SEA**  
by Pamela Mordecai

**AT THE CENTRE**  
by Afua Cooper

**IDEAS OF HOME**  
by Lorna Goodison

**PEOPLE ARRIVED**  
by Kaie Kellough