

# The African Diaspora in Atlantic Canada History, Historians, and Historiography

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# HISTORIOGRAPHIC COMMENTARY/ COMMENTAIRE HISTORIOGRAPHIQUE

## The African Diaspora in Atlantic Canada: History, Historians, and Historiography

BLACK MIGRATION IS ONE OF THE HALLMARKS of Atlantic Canadian history. These migrations, forced and voluntary, connected the Atlantic region with Africa, Europe, and the Caribbean. Between 1750 and 1820, thousands of black people migrated to the Atlantic colonies.<sup>1</sup> The intricacies and complexities of these black migrations are captured in several documents. An exploration of slave for sale notices, runaway advertisements, and other sources highlight the multifaceted migrations of people of African descent to and from Atlantic Canada. This essay highlights several primary source documents – the sale of Halifax slaves in Boston in 1751, Joshua Mauger’s 1752 slave sale in Halifax, Hector and Peter’s runaway notices, and opposing letters about race and immigration from two Nova Scotian writers – that are part of my research into slavery, the Black Loyalists, and the War of 1812 Black Refugees. Taken together, they prompt a reflection on the historiography of the African Diaspora in Atlantic Canada. Since the late 19th century, there has been an outpouring of scholarship about people of African descent in the Atlantic Region. This essay explores the trends and patterns that have emerged in the historiography and highlights the role that migration and various historical contexts – especially the local, national/continental, and imperial – have had on the black population.<sup>2</sup>

Regional history is intimately related to the wider African Diaspora through immigration, emigration, enslavement, freedom, commerce, and family

1 The exact number of black people who migrated to Atlantic Canada between 1750 and 1860 is necessarily impressionistic due to the lack of precise documentation. An estimate of the numbers is as follows: 3,000 Black Loyalists, 1,500-2,000 Loyalist slaves (other historians think this number is closer to 2,500), 2,500-3,000 Black Refugees, 550 Jamaican Maroons, several hundred in Île Royale, an unclear number of New England Planter slaves, a small number of black people brought to the Maritimes in the coastal slave trade (an example is Joshua Mauger’s slave sale in 1752), and a small number of American fugitives brought to the region after 1820. Alan Taylor’s fresh research shows that my number for the Black Refugees is low. He estimates that 2,811 Black Refugees went to Nova Scotia and a further 381 arrived in New Brunswick; see Alan Taylor, *The Internal Enemy: Slavery and War in Virginia, 1772-1832* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2013), 442. See also Catherine Cottreau-Robins, “The Loyalist Plantation: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Early African-Nova Scotian Settlement,” *Journal of the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society* 17 (2014): 52n7; Harvey Amani Whitfield, *North to Bondage: Loyalist Slavery in the Maritimes* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2016), 119-20; and Harvey Amani Whitfield, *Blacks on the Border: The Black Refugees in British North America, 1815-1860* (Burlington, VT: University of Vermont Press, 2006), 108-15. From her preliminary research, Karolyn Smardz Frost argues that there may have been as many as 200 enslaved New Englanders in the initial Planter migration. She also notes that additional slave importation occurred after the initial migration (private conversation, 26 February 2015, Wolfville, NS).

2 We know much less about the interaction between black people and the Mi’kmaq. However, Ruma Chopra has an essay on this subject in this same issue of *Acadiensis*.

Harvey Amani Whitfield, “The African Diaspora in Atlantic Canada: History, Historians, and Historiography,” *Acadiensis* XLVI, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2017): 213-232.

connections. For example, in 1751 a Boston merchant offered several slaves for sale in the *Boston Post Boy*: “JUST arriv’d from Hallifax, and to be sold, Ten Hearty Strong Negro Men, mostly Tradesmen, such as Caulkers, Carpenters, Sailmakers, Ropemakers: Any Person inclining to purchase may enquire of Benjamin Hallowell of Boston.”<sup>3</sup> One year later, after returning from a trip to the Caribbean, Joshua Mauger attempted to sell several slaves in Halifax. These people included men, women, and young teenagers with a variety of skills, traditions, and backgrounds. They might have been family or completely unrelated:

Just imported, and to be sold by Joshua Mauger, at Major Lockman’s store in Halifax, several Negro slaves, viz. A likely Negro Wench, of about thirty five years of Age, a Creole born, has been brought up in a Gentleman’s family, and capable of doing all sorts of work belonging thereto, as Needle-Work of all sorts, and in the best Manner; also Washing, Ironing, Cookery, and every other Thing that can be expected from Such a Slave. Also, 2 Negro boys of about 12 or 13 Years old, likely, healthy . . . likewise 2 healthy Negro slaves of about 18 Years of Age, of agreeable tempers, and fit for any kind of business; and also a healthy Negro Man of about 30 years of age.<sup>4</sup>

It is telling that Mauger decided to sell these slaves in Halifax. He could easily have unloaded them in Charleston, Philadelphia, or Boston. But Mauger brought the slaves back to Halifax because a local market clearly existed for them. These two for sale advertisements illuminate one of the less understood forms of migration – the trade in slaves – between Nova Scotia and the Atlantic littoral that connected Nova Scotia with New England and the Caribbean.

In addition to this trade in slaves, black people also migrated to Île Royale (Cape Breton) and alongside the New England Planters to various parts of mainland Nova Scotia. For Île Royale, historian Ken Donovan has illuminated the lives of over 400 slaves between 1713 and 1815.<sup>5</sup> After the founding of Halifax in 1749, the British government wanted to encourage the settlement of Protestants and this resulted in an influx of New England Planters who brought slaves to various parts of the Maritimes. Although the numbers of slaves in the region were not large, there were several basic trends among slaves and slaveholders that would be greatly expanded after the Loyalist settlement. In both Île Royale and New England Planter settlements, slavery was defined by close interactions between owners and slaves due to the small number of slaves per household, multi-occupational slaves who worked with their owners in a mixed economy, and trading connections with Atlantic world especially in the West Indies. Thus, before the arrival of Loyalist

3 *Boston Post Boy*, 23 September 1751.

4 *Halifax Gazette*, 30 May 1752.

5 Ken Donovan, “Female Slaves as Sexual Victims in Île Royale,” *Acadiensis* IX, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2014): 147-56; Kenneth Donovan, “Slaves and Their Owners in Île Royale, 1713-1760,” *Acadiensis* XXV, no. 1 (Autumn 1995): 3-32; Kenneth Donovan, “A Nominal List of Slaves and Their Owners in Île Royale, 1713-1760,” *Nova Scotia Historical Review* 16 (1996): 151-62; Kenneth Donovan, “Slaves in Île Royale, 1713-1758,” *French Colonial History* 5 (2004): 25-42.

slaves the pre-existing structures of black labour exploitation, racism, and trade connections to the West Indies were already well established.

In the 1780s, at least 30,000 Loyalists migrated to the Maritimes including a few thousand free black people. Additionally, there were probably between 1,500 and 2,000 slaves.<sup>6</sup> These people of African descent came from various points of the Atlantic world. In 1783 former South Carolina resident Hugh Kirkham complained about his “smart Well-looking Negro BOY named Peter, about Seventeen Years of Age,” who had run away. Peter had, according to Kirkham, “his Country marks on his back in the form of a Square,” which means that he was probably born in Africa.<sup>7</sup> So, in his short life, Peter had lived in Africa, South Carolina, and then Nova Scotia before running away hoping to find liberty among the population of free Black Loyalists. One year later, in New Brunswick, New York Loyalist Frederick William Hecht placed an advertisement in the local paper, which provides a superb description of his enslaved property:

RUNAWAY from the subscriber, on Saturday evening the 26th ult. a negro man Slave, named Hector, by trade a cooper, a tall slender fellow, speaks English like the West India negroes, and is very talkative; he came from St. Augustine [Florida] to this place, via New-York, on December last, had his feet frost bitten on the passage, and has a very lazy gait. Whoever secures and delivers him up to me shall have the above reward.<sup>8</sup>

Hector and Peter were part of the much larger dispersion of black people outside of the United States in 1783. This Loyalist diaspora, overlapping with slavery in the region, included widely divergent endpoints such as the Bahamas, Jamaica, England, Nova Scotia, and eventually Sierra Leone.

One of the last major influxes of black people to the Atlantic region occurred during the War of 1812. Thousands of Black Refugees escaped to British lines, supported the King’s military effort in various ways, and eventually migrated to Nova Scotia and New Brunswick via the Royal Navy. Once in the Maritimes, they created new communities in Preston, Hammonds Plains, and Loch Lomond.<sup>9</sup> Although on marginalized land, they slowly built community institutions like churches, mutual-aid associations, and political organizations. Unfortunately, they often faced racial discrimination. In 1815 the Nova Scotia Assembly attempted to block further black immigration, stating that people of African descent were “unfitted by nature to this climate, or an association with the rest of His Majesty’s colonists.”<sup>10</sup> Echoing this statement, a letter writer to the *Acadian Recorder* named

6 Whitfield, *North to Bondage*, 10-16, 199-120.

7 *Nova Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle*, 20 May 1783.

8 *Royal St. John’s Gazette*, 15 July 1784.

9 Whitfield, *Blacks on the Border*; Taylor, *The Internal Enemy*; Harvey Amani Whitfield, *From American Slaves to Nova Scotian Subjects: The Case of the Black Refugees, 1813-1840* (Toronto: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2005); W.A. Spray, *The Blacks in New Brunswick* (Fredericton: Brunswick Press, 1972).

10 House of Assembly, 1 April 1815, RG 1, vol. 305, doc. 3, Nova Scotia Archives (NSA), Halifax, Nova Scotia.

“W.W.” decried that “thousands availed themselves of the invitation [from the British government during the War of 1812, which encouraged slaves to leave their owners and come to the British]; we hope for the sake of people of colour, they were the most worthless of that community. Our poor-houses and prisons were soon filled with them, and to steal was easier than to labour.”<sup>11</sup> This unfair portrait of the Black Refugees ignored the fact that plenty of indigent white immigrants also occupied poor houses and were reliant on government rations.<sup>12</sup> Another letter writer to the same newspaper, “ENGLISHMAN,” opposed the simplistic musings of “W.W.”:

Nobody who pretends to sense or decency, thinks any longer, that a difference of *colour* in human beings implies inequality of rights, or that because we find men *ignorant*, we ought to make them *Wretched*. Ought we not rather to inculcate into their minds the blessings of Religion, of Education, of Civilization and of Refinement? We need only look at home amongst our own *black whites* who without possessing comparable disadvantages occupy nearly a whole street (from the North to the South Barracks) in the exercise of all manner of vice and dissipation; and that too in a more prerogative degree; and we shall soon be satisfied, it is *prejudice* alone we have imbibed against the African race.<sup>13</sup>

The words of “ENGLISHMAN” underline the variety of racial attitudes that confronted and sometimes comforted black migrants to Atlantic Canada. We must understand black immigration and settlement as multifaceted, contingent, and complex. Some of the migrants from these various influxes stayed for less than a year, while others came as young children and remained in the region for their entire lives. Black people came to the region as both enslaved individuals and free persons. The labels of “free” and “slave” do not necessarily capture the experience of black migrants in Atlantic Canada as their status could shift rapidly through running away or re-enslavement. A black person might arrive in New Brunswick as a slave only to escape from her owner before being recaptured and sold to the West Indies. Another individual could begin his sojourn in Nova Scotia as a free person, be subjected to indentured servitude, followed by re-enslavement, eventually escape, and finally enjoy freedom in Sierra Leone. The vicissitudes of life that often faced black migrants between 1750 and 1820 were the result of local challenges and wider imperial ideas of race, slavery, and the exploitation of cheap black labour.

One of the most notable features of the historiography of the African Diaspora in Atlantic Canada is that late 19th- and early 20th-century historians quite often focused on the region’s experience with slavery.<sup>14</sup> After this illuminating beginning, though, historians ignored the study of regional slavery as the exploration of free

11 *Acadian Recorder*, 23 December 1815.

12 Whitfield, *Blacks on the Border*, 43-83.

13 *Acadian Recorder*, 30 December 1815 (emphasis in original).

14 C.W. Vernon, “The Deed of A Slave Sold at Windsor, N.S., in 1779” *Acadiensis* III (October 1903): 254; W.O. Raymond, “The Negro in New Brunswick,” *Neith* (1903): 27-33. See also William Renwick Riddell, “Slavery in Canada,” *Journal of Negro History* 5 (1920): 261-77.

blacks in Atlantic Canada became the primary concern of scholars throughout much of the 20th century. This new approach to the study of black people, specifically free blacks, elicited a number of remarkable studies, including James Walker's seminal *The Black Loyalists*.<sup>15</sup> But this scholarship made it easy for scholars and the general public to forget the dynamic and powerful history and historiography of slavery in Atlantic Canada. The earlier studies realized that slavery was part of the Canadian or Maritime experience and could not be ignored. These scholars also well knew that the increasing Canadian identification with the Loyalist past in the late 19th century also meant having to accept that these people, especially the elite, owned thousands of slaves in the Maritimes and Upper and Lower Canada.<sup>16</sup> As a result, they wanted to know more about this missing slaveholding chapter of Canadian history. In 1898, I.A. Jack published an extensive study entitled "The Loyalists and Slavery in New Brunswick."<sup>17</sup> Using letters and other primary sources, Jack's work highlighted the role of judges in ending slavery in the Maritimes. Jack showed how legal experts in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick such as S.S. Blowers and Ward Chipman discussed the reasons behind slavery's eventual demise. One year later, T.W. Smith published his comprehensive and richly documented "The Slave in Canada." This

15 On the Black Loyalists, see Ruth Holmes Whitehead, *Black Loyalists: Southern Settlers of Nova Scotia's First Free Black Communities* (Halifax: Nimbus, 2013); Alan Gilbert, *Black Patriots and Loyalists: Fighting for Emancipation in the War of Independence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Ellen Gibson Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1976); Alexander X. Byrd, *Captives and Voyagers: Black Migrants Across the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008); James W. St. G. Walker, *The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone, 1783-1870* (1976; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992); Gary B. Nash, "Thomas Peters: Millwright and Deliverer," in *Struggle and Survival in Colonial America*, ed. David G. Sweet and Gary B. Nash (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 69-85; Mary Louise Clifford, *From Slavery to Freetown: Black Loyalists after the American Revolution* (Jefferson: McFarland, 1999); John W. Pulis, ed., *Moving On: Black Loyalists in the Afro-Atlantic World* (New York: Garland, 1999); Simon Schama, *Rough Crossings: Britain, the Slaves and the American Revolution* (2005; New York: Harper Collins, 2006); Cassandra Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom: Runaway Slaves of the American Revolution and Their Global Quest for Liberty* (Boston: Beacon, 2006); Christopher H. Fyfe, "Thomas Peters: History and Legend," *Sierra Leone Studies* no. 1 (1953): 4-13; Anthony Kirk-Greene, "David George: The Nova Scotian Experience," *Sierra Leone Studies* no. 14 (1960): 93-120; Benjamin Quarles, "Lord Dunmore as Liberator," *William and Mary Quarterly* 15 (1958): 494-507; George A. Rawlyk, "The Guysborough Negroes: A Study in Isolation," *Dalhousie Review* 48 (1968): 24-36; Phyllis R. Blakeley, "Boston King: A Negro Loyalist Who Sought Refuge in Nova Scotia," *Dalhousie Review* 48 (1968): 347-56; Evelyn B. Harvey, "The Negro Loyalists," *Nova Scotia Historical Quarterly* 1 (1971): 181-202; Mary Beth Norton, "The Fate of Some Black Loyalists of the American Revolution," *Journal of Negro History* 58 (1973): 402-26; John N. Grant, "Black Immigrants into Nova Scotia, 1776-1815," *Journal of Negro History* 58 (1973): 253-70; Barry Cahill, "The Black Loyalist Myth in Atlantic Canada," *Acadiensis* XXIX, no. 1 (Autumn 1999): 76-87; and James W. St. G. Walker, "Myth, History, and Revisionism: The Black Loyalists Revisited," *Acadiensis* XXIX, no. 1 (Autumn 1999): 88-105.

16 Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* (New York: Random House, 2011), 358; Jerry Bannister and Liam Riordan, eds., *The Loyal Atlantic: Remaking the British Atlantic in the Revolutionary Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012).

17 I. Allen Jack, "The Loyalists and Slavery in New Brunswick," *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Canada* 4 (1898): 137-85.



work set the standard for the exploration of slavery in Atlantic Canada. Smith's use of runaway advertisements, letters, government documents, and legal cases elucidated the major contours of regional slavery. Smith's purpose for writing about slavery was that Canadian historians had ignored it. As he noted in the preface to his lengthy article:

THIS paper, read in part before the Nova Scotia Historical Society on March 18, 1898, is an attempt to supply a missing chapter in Canadian history – a sombre and unattractive chapter, it may be, but necessary nevertheless to the completeness of our records.

If instances given seem to numerous, it must be remembered that the scepticism of many of the best informed Provincials as to the presence at any time of Negro slaves on the soil of Canada has challenged the production, on the part of the author, of more repeated facts than he would otherwise have deemed necessary.

In our collection of these facts not a little difficulty has been encountered. Our historians have wholly ignored the existence of slavery in Canada. A few references to it are all that can be found in Kingsford's ten volumes; Haliburton devotes a little more than a half-page to it; Murdoch contents himself with the reproduction of a few slave advertisements; Clement, the author of the school of history accepted by nearly all the provinces, dismisses it with a single sentence; and in the long manuscript catalogue of Canadian books, pamphlets and papers gathered during a long life-time by the late Dr. T.B. Akins – a large and very valuable collection – the word "slavery" nowhere appears, even as a sub-heading.<sup>18</sup>

Despite Smith's first-rate work – it would not be too much to call him a less racist Canadian version of groundbreaking southern historian U.B. Phillips – few followed in his footsteps to further examine Canadian slavery.<sup>19</sup> Instead, 20th century scholars became increasingly interested in the large influx of free blacks to the region during the American Revolution and War of 1812.

In the 1940s, archivist and historian Charles Bruce Fergusson began research on his history of the War of 1812 Black Refugees. A monumental piece of research, but somewhat thin on interpretation, *A Documentary Study of the Establishment of the Negroes in Nova Scotia* is a treasure trove of primary source documents.<sup>20</sup> Fergusson unearthed many of these sources himself and without his original research several

18 T.W. Smith, "The Slave in Canada," *Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society* 10 (1899): 1-161, esp. 1.

19 Riddell, "Slavery," 261-77; in using the term "Canadian slavery," I mean the region that includes present-day Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, and Quebec. Technically, of course, "Canada" as a country did not exist before 1867 – only the United Province of Canada, which did not include the Maritimes.

20 C.B. Fergusson, *A Documentary Study of the Negroes in Nova Scotia Between the War of 1812 and The Winning of Responsible Government* (Halifax: Public Archives of Nova Scotia, 1948).

subsequent works about the Black Refugees could not have been completed, including my own book *Blacks on the Border*. Fergusson's work offered some contextualization for the Black Refugees by spending an entire chapter writing about slavery, the Black Loyalists, and briefly mentioning the Jamaican Maroons. He took the institution of Nova Scotian slavery seriously, and attempted to understand its extent, how long it lasted, and the court cases that helped end it. Fergusson viewed himself as rather racially progressive for writing this work, but today many readers might find parts of the book rather unfair toward the Refugees. He noted, for instance, that "they had had no preparation for a life of freedom, and no familiarity with conditions in lands and climes which were more demanding than their own." Fergusson argued the Refugees could not have survived without the "private and public assistance of their white neighbours."<sup>21</sup> Yet, this is too simplistic because some of Refugees, such as hotel owner William Dear (also spelled Dair, Dare, and Deer), were successful entrepreneurs or farmers.<sup>22</sup> Fergusson emphasized the struggles that the Black Refugees faced, and examined the amount of money the government spent on relief. While not denying the discrimination black people faced, Fergusson did not fully contextualize their struggles with those of other white immigrants who also struggled – especially if they migrated to Nova Scotia with little capital.<sup>23</sup>

The provincial archivist in the 1940s, D.C. Harvey, outlined the reasons behind the development of the book in the preface to Fergusson's *Documentary Study*. Harvey noted that the work had been "prompted by recent enquiries as to the origin and status of the negro [*sic*] element in the population of Nova Scotia." Although acknowledging the difficult economic circumstances following the War of 1812, Harvey still noted that the lack of plantations in Nova Scotia meant that the previous work experience of black people was unhelpful. He also claimed "the rigorous northern climate demanded more expensive food, clothing and shelter; and long years of servitude had deprived [people of African descent] of that initiative and resourcefulness which the white immigrants had developed in fending for themselves."<sup>24</sup> The reality of early settlement in Nova Scotia shows that many settlers struggled regardless of race. For example, in 1817, Lord Dalhousie commented that without government rations a settlement of disbanded white soldiers would completely collapse.<sup>25</sup> Despite Harvey's beliefs about the Refugees' lack of initiative, he noted that the local government and the Black Refugees "emerge [from the story] with considerable credit."<sup>26</sup> Fergusson's work is a seminal study in the historiography of the African Diaspora in Atlantic Canada. It is foundational because of the documents it chased down, but also because most scholars, including myself, have consulted his research. Fergusson's study of government policy toward black migrants, though unmindful of the Black Refugees'

21 Fergusson, *Documentary Study of the Negroes in Nova Scotia*, 1-9.

22 Whitfield, *Blacks on the Border*, 71-2.

23 Fergusson, *Documentary Study of the Negroes in Nova Scotia*; on the struggles of white and black immigrants, see Whitfield, *Blacks on the Border*, 43-83.

24 Fergusson, Preface, *Documentary Study of the Negroes in Nova Scotia* (unpaginated).

25 Whitfield, *Blacks on the Border*, 52.

26 Fergusson, Preface, *Documentary Study of the Negroes in Nova Scotia*.



agency, allowed scholars of the late 1960s and early 1970s to produce significant works about the African Diaspora in Atlantic Canada.

During this time period, there was an outpouring of truly outstanding scholarly works about black history. Writing in the shadow of the American Civil Rights movement and urban racial unrest (in Watts, Newark, and Detroit), several historians became interested in the history of the regional population of African descent. Although the most important studies were Robin Winks's monumental *The Blacks in Canada* and James Walker's foundational *The Black Loyalists*, several other articles and books also focused on black migration and settlement in Atlantic Canada.<sup>27</sup> These historians illuminated the role that discrimination played in shaping the lives of Black Loyalists who settled on the frontier of Nova Scotia. George Rawlyk's 1968 study of the "Guysborough Negroes," for example, highlighted the problems that Black Loyalists faced, but argued that their counterparts in Guysborough confronted a debilitating form of isolation along with an intensive and virulent form of rural racism.<sup>28</sup> Building on these studies and the work of Robin Winks, in 1972 W.A. Spray published *The Blacks in New Brunswick*. In the preface, Spray noted "this brief study is an attempt, fragmentary as it must be, to try to relate the history of Black settlement in New Brunswick." For Spray, the history of black people in the Atlantic region remained intimately connected to wider and transnational contexts: "The ancestors of the majority of the Blacks living in New Brunswick came from the United States and the West Indies."<sup>29</sup> His short book traced the history of local black people from slavery to the War of 1812 Black Refugees and then to issues facing the community in the 20th century. It also painted black people as complex historical figures, who maintained connections with the wider African Diaspora. Similarly, John Grant's 1973 article about black immigration to Nova Scotia highlighted the significance of multiple movements of black people and their settlement in Nova Scotia between 1776 and 1815.<sup>30</sup> These scholarly works were part of the great exchange of ideas about the local African Diaspora that occurred with such vigor in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Yet these works were not as significant as the major studies of Robin Winks and James Walker.

Winks and Walker wrote full-bodied and comprehensive studies of the African Diaspora in Atlantic Canada and beyond. Robin Winks had a distinguished career at Yale University before he started researching the black experience in Canada.<sup>31</sup> Prior to the publication of *The Blacks in Canada*, Winks authored a series of articles that formed the basis for his book. In these articles, Winks made sweeping negative judgments about the African Diaspora in the Atlantic region and the rest of Canada. In his 1969 overview, Winks argued "The Canadian Negro as a whole does not seem

27 Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971); Walker, *Black Loyalists*.

28 Rawlyk, "Guysborough Negroes," 24-36.

29 Spray, *Blacks in New Brunswick*, esp. 9, 11.

30 John Grant, "Black Immigrants," 253-70.

31 Blacks in Canada: Robin W. Winks Collection, 1956-1972, New York Public Library, Archives and Manuscripts, New York, New York.

to have shown the cumulative pride, energy, enterprise, and courage that the catalog of individual acts of defiance would lead one to expect.” Winks viewed African Canadians as somehow deficient in comparison to their African American counterparts. He condemned them for not producing an educated elite that could compare with African American leaders like W.E.B. Du Bois or Martin Luther King, Jr. Winks lamented that despite “his [black Canadians’] longer period of legal freedom, despite the lack of any historical memory within most white Canadians of an indigenous slave period, and despite his comparative scarcity in Canada, [he] has been considerably less aggressive in seeking out and laying claim to his rights.”<sup>32</sup> This attitude is found throughout Winks’s publications about the black experience in Canada. In an article entitled “Negroes in the Maritimes: An Introductory Survey,” Winks also claimed that African Canadians lacked ethnic pride, unity, and were riven with class distinctions.<sup>33</sup> This essay also carefully tracked the development of slavery in the region and how a few individuals were successful economically and socially. Not surprisingly, Winks concluded that black leadership, “on the whole, was inadequate.”<sup>34</sup> In his monograph, Winks hoped “to examine the history of Negro life in Canada from 1628 to the 1960s” and to explore racial prejudice in the country. Additionally, he hoped to understand how “the Negro’s story” informed Canada’s continuing search for an identity. Winks also claimed to want to show black people as historical actors in Canada’s national history. He saw his work as an “inquiry into Negro history, Canadian history, and Canadian-American Relations.” The result of these broad goals is one of the most significant books about African Canadian history to date. Winks highlighted the role of slavery and some of the discrimination that black people faced, but at times his interpretations were more based in opinion than historical facts. For example, Winks claimed that the War of 1812 Black Refugees “were [a] disorganized, pathetic, and intimidated body who seemed unable to recover from their previous condition of servitude, their sudden voyage up the Atlantic to Nova Scotian shores, and their persistent lack of leaders.” He concluded that they “failed utterly.”<sup>35</sup> These sweeping generalizations were incorrect and simplistic. Winks relied too heavily on growing white racism and the words of colonial officials like Lord Dalhousie rather than carefully mining the documentary evidence to write a more dynamic study of the Refugees.<sup>36</sup>

The shortcomings of Winks’s work should not blind scholars to his significant achievement, but as scholars we must be honest about the book’s problems. One of the more serious problems with *The Blacks in Canada* is that Winks took the writings of white observers of black communities seriously with little attempt to scrutinize them carefully. As Walker noted: “Sources will ever be a problem for the

32 Robin Winks, “The Canadian Negro: A Historical Assessment, Part II: The Problem of Identity,” *Journal of Negro History* 54 (January 1969): 2; see also Robin Winks, “The Canadian Negro: A Historical Assessment, The Negro in the Canadian-American Relationship, Part I,” *Journal of Negro History* 53 (October, 1968): 283-300.

33 Robin Winks, “Negroes in the Maritimes: An Introductory Survey,” *Dalhousie Review* 48 (Winter 1968-1969): 453-71.

34 Winks, “Negroes in the Maritimes,” 467.

35 Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, ix, x, 114.

36 My book *Blacks on the Border* thoroughly challenges the vast majority of Winks’s conclusions.

student of Black history, since most of the documentary evidence comes from the pens of white administrators and observers. This problem puts the onus on the student to read between the lines . . . . There are several examples in *The Blacks in Canada* of mistaken interpretation based on a too-trusting use of official documents.”<sup>37</sup> These mistakes include Winks’s misreading of the British government’s enquiry into Thomas Peters, Black Loyalist land issues, the Black Refugees, and other errors.<sup>38</sup> Walker correctly points out that what “Blacks did in isolation,” such as the creation of distinct communities, cultures, and churches, was ignored or distorted in *The Blacks in Canada*. Moreover, the title of Winks’s book did not reflect its contents, which, as Walker maintained, was more “a history of the Black man as an issue in white Canadian life.”<sup>39</sup> Despite these problems, Winks’s work gave historians an opening to investigate multiple avenues of black historical research. Sadly, in the general field of Canadian history, his book had the opposite effect. Instead of spurring an outpouring of research, many scholars seemed to think Winks had already written everything that needed to be written. And, as a result, after Walker’s 1976 *The Black Loyalists*, the field of African Canadian history did not develop in the ways that African American history did. This was not Winks’s fault, nor was it his intention. Winks wrote that “little more than half of the material gathered has been incorporated directly into the pages of this book,” and that he hoped “someone might wish to pursue various topics further.”<sup>40</sup>

Only Walker took up Winks’ challenge, and published *The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone, 1783-1870*. Originally written as a dissertation at Dalhousie University (under the direction of African historian John E. Flint) during the early 1970s, Walker found himself deeply enmeshed with local black culture and the wider ideas circulating about black power, the soul movement, and discordant strains of black intellectuals who rejected what they saw as the failed integrationist approach of older Civil Rights leaders. Winks served as the external dissertation examiner for Walker’s dissertation.<sup>41</sup> Through his friendship with local black leaders such as Rocky Jones, Walker committed himself to writing about the Black Loyalists, but also being involved in contemporary political issues. Walker led the effort to recruit minority students to Dalhousie through the Transition Year Program, which put him in touch with many of the younger generation of African Nova Scotian and Mi’kmaq people who

37 James Walker, “Review of Robin Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History*,” *Dalhousie Review* 50 (Summer 1971): 286.

38 My co-supervisor, Judith Fingard, sent Winks a letter about some of his mistakes relating to Atlantic Canadian history. She never received a response. One of the reasons that many African Canadian historians criticize Winks to this day is precisely because he did not respond to his critics. In the 1997 reprint of his book, he simply admitted that his most vociferous critic was James Walker.

39 Walker, “Review of Robin Winks,” 285.

40 Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, xi.

41 James W. St. G. Walker, “The Black Loyalists in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone” (PhD diss., history, Dalhousie University, 1973). I am in possession of one of the original copies of this dissertation with the signatures of Winks, Walker, Judith Fingard, Peter Burroughs, John Flint, and P.D. Pillay. I should also note that James Walker served as the outsider examiner 30 years later for my Dalhousie University PhD under the direction of David Sutherland and Judith Fingard.

desperately wanted change locally, nationally, and internationally.<sup>42</sup> Walker, unlike Winks, did not see separate black institutions as inherently problematic or troublesome, but rather as sensible alternatives designed to empower the black community. As a result, he did not have a knee-jerk reaction to independent and separate black institutions that were hallmarks of Black Loyalist communities. Walker's work highlighted the black experience in Nova Scotia from 1783 to the Black Refugee migration during the War of 1812, but he also meticulously highlighted the lives of the Black Loyalists in Sierra Leone. In order to accomplish this, Walker had to master the histories and archives in Canada, Sierra Leone, and Britain. Walker used his book to correct a set of misunderstandings about the Black Loyalists in Canadian, imperial, and African history. In the case of Canadian and imperial historiography, he noted that the Black Loyalists showed the "multi-racial and socially heterogeneous nature of the Loyalist establishment." Also, methodologically, Walker noted that only by understanding the Black Loyalists as a "distinct society" could their actions and initiatives in America, Canada, and Africa make sense. While Winks claimed that the Black Loyalists were disunited and "even divisive," Walker saw unity, family bonds, and strong (although poor) communities.<sup>43</sup> As a result, Walker wanted to demonstrate the forms of black unity that could be found in Black Loyalist churches and communities throughout Atlantic Canada and eventually Sierra Leone. Yet, as Walker showed, black unity should not be read as an absence of conflict among community members as there were many differences of opinion ranging from the Sierra Leone scheme to more mundane matters.

Although Walker strongly disagreed with Winks about the contours of African Canadian history, he freely admitted that Winks had encouraged the project and served as one of its "godfather[s]."<sup>44</sup> Winks wrote an extremely generous review of Walker's work. He noted that *The Black Loyalists* was "a book of major significance" and had "put an end to the 'victims' school of Canadian Black historiography." Winks admitted that Walker's work had corrected his view about Black Loyalist land issues and the leadership of Thomas Peters (Winks had understated their challenges and misunderstood the importance of Peters's role in the community). Winks usefully compared his and Walker's role in African Canadian historiography to the 1970s debate in American slavery between Stanley Elkins and Herbert Gutman: "Dr. Walker plays to my own work, *The Blacks in Canada* (1971), the role Gutman has played vis-à-vis Stanley Elkins."<sup>45</sup> In his book, Elkins argued that slave plantations had stripped black people of their dignity, culture, family structures, and community.<sup>46</sup> In his massive work, *The Black Family in Slavery and*

42 Walker, "The Black Loyalists"; Walker and Whitfield, private conversations, May 2016, Atlantic Canada Studies Conference, Mount Allison University, Sackville, New Brunswick.

43 Walker, *Black Loyalists*, x, xi.

44 Walker, *Black Loyalists*, viii.

45 Robin Winks, "Review of James Walker, *The Black Loyalists*," *Dalhousie Review* 57 (1977): 149-50, esp. 150.

46 Stanley M. Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (1959; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968); see also Ann J. Lane, ed., *The Debate Over Slavery: Stanley Elkins and His Critics* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1971).

*Freedom*, Gutman showed the depth, significance, and agency of black families during slavery.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, Walker consistently argued that black people were agents in the making of their own histories and destinies. Winks concluded that Walker's book "is rich in its insights into the ways in which that community shaped itself from out of its own dynamics (but not to the neglect of external influences)."<sup>48</sup>

One of the more disappointing realities of the historiography of the African Diaspora in Atlantic Canada has been the failure to follow up the major achievements of Winks, Walker, and others with further serious research. In comparison to the late 1960s and 1970s, the 1980s were remarkable for the decade's failure to produce meticulous scholarly monographs about the regional black history as compared to the achievements of the previous two decades. Yet there were still important works that ran the gamut from an overview of black Nova Scotian history to focused biographies of local black people like W.P. Oliver.<sup>49</sup> The most important academic article of the 1980s explored the legal context of slavery in Atlantic Canada. David Bell's excellent 1982 essay about slavery and Loyalist legal culture in New Brunswick offered a new way to look at the African Diaspora in Atlantic Canada. In this treatment, Bell illuminated how slavery existed in a society that did not have a slave code. His work also explored the conservative legal and political culture that allowed slavery to grow and flourish. Although black people were not the main subject of his inquiry, their experience as slaves who attempted to gain freedom through the court system opened up serious questions about the role of enslaved people in the region's political and legal history.<sup>50</sup> The 1980s also witnessed the publication of Bridglal Pachai's *Beneath the Clouds of the Promised Land*, which offered a general overview of African Nova Scotian history. Although this book did not present much new research, it represented an important contribution to public history as its prose made local black history in Nova Scotia accessible to people outside of the academy.<sup>51</sup>

47 Herbert G. Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (New York: Pantheon, 1976).

48 Winks, "Review of James Walker," 151.

49 Some of the literature from the 1980s focused on the period after Confederation and did not exclusively explore Atlantic Canada. See Calvin W. Ruck, *The Black Battalion: No. 2 Construction, 1916-1920* (Halifax: Society for the Protection and Preservation of Black Culture in Nova Scotia, 1986); Bridglal Pachai, *Beneath the Clouds of the Promised Land: The Survival of Nova Scotia's Blacks* (Halifax: Black Educators Association, 1987); Colin Thomson, *Born with a Call: A Biography of Dr. William Pearly Oliver, CM* (Dartmouth: Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia, 1986); James W. St. G. Walker, "'Race' and Recruitment in World War I: Enlistment of Visible Minorities in the Canadian Expeditionary Force," *Canadian Historical Review* 70 (1989): 1-26; Elizabeth Beaton, "Religious Affiliation and Ethnic Identity of West Indians in Whitney Pier," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 20 (1988): 112-31; and Adrienne Shadd, "Dual Labor Markets in Core and Periphery Regions of Canada: The Position of Black Males," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 19 (1987): 91-109.

50 D.G. Bell, "Slavery and the Judges of Loyalist New Brunswick," *University of New Brunswick Law Journal* 31 (1982): 9-42.

51 Pachai, *Beneath the Clouds*; see also Bridglal Pachai, *Beneath the Clouds of the Promised Land: The Survival of Nova Scotia's Blacks, Volume II, 1800-1989* (Halifax: Nova Scotia Department of Education and Culture, 1990); and, on his interesting life, see <http://www.smu.ca/academics/archives/bridglal-pachai.html>.



The historiography of the African Diaspora in Atlantic Canada grew tremendously in the 1990s. During this period, American historians produced a number of truly outstanding monographs about slavery. In 1998 alone, Ira Berlin, Philip Morgan, Joanne Pope Melish, and Michael Gomez published books that changed the face of slavery studies and elicited a further outpouring of scholarship from graduate students and historians alike.<sup>52</sup> Although scholars of the African Diaspora in Atlantic Canada did not have a watershed year like 1998, several sophisticated articles about free blacks, black women, slavery, and Black Loyalist identity set the stage for increasingly rigorous and transnational approaches to regional history. Judith Fingard, Sue Morton, and David Sutherland published important pieces about the black community in Halifax. In her 1992 article "Race and Respectability in Victorian Halifax," Fingard explored how black ideas of respectability played against the larger dynamics of racial discrimination in the late 19th century.<sup>53</sup> Sutherland's work highlighted black community activism and the significance of the 1847 black/Irish race riot in Halifax, while Morton examined African Nova Scotia women in the late 19th century.<sup>54</sup> The strength of these articles was their ability to provide nuanced portraits of the black community in Halifax. Despite these advances, the regional historiography of the African Diaspora was perhaps too Halifax-centric. While we only had a partial picture of black life in Halifax, we had an even more fragmented and unsatisfactory understanding of black people outside of the Halifax region. Although scholars knew about the Black Loyalist saga in Shelburne, there was much less work done on black people in that region or other rural areas after 1792.

52 Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and "Race" in New England, 1780-1860* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998); Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Michael Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

53 Judith Fingard, "Race and Respectability in Victorian Halifax," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 20 (1992): 169-95. See also Judith Fingard, "From Sea to Rail: Black Transportation Workers and Their Families in Halifax, c. 1870-1916," *Acadiensis* XXIV, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 49-64, and Judith Fingard, "Rescue and Reward: Corporal George Liston's Heroism on the Halifax Waterfront," *Journal of the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society* (1999): 145-54. Other examples of outstanding scholarship from the 1990s include George Elliot Clarke, "White Niggers, Black Slaves: Slavery, Race, and Class in T.C. Haliburton's *The Clockmaker*," *Nova Scotia Historical Review* 14 (1994): 13-40; Constance Backhouse, "Racial Segregation in Canadian Legal History: Viola Desmond's Challenge, Nova Scotia, 1946," *Dalhousie Law Journal* 17 (1994): 299-362; David W. States, "William Hall, V.C. of Horton Bluff, Nova Scotia, Nineteenth Century Naval Hero," *Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society* 44 (1996): 71-81; Barry Cahill, "The 'Coloured Barrister': The Short Life and Tragic Death of James Robinson Johnston, 1876-1915," *Dalhousie Law Journal* 15 (1992): 336-79; and Elizabeth Beaton, "An African American Community in Cape Breton, 1901-1904," *Acadiensis* XXIV, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 65-97.

54 David Sutherland, "Race Relations in Mid-Victorian Halifax, Nova Scotia, During the Mid-Victorian Quest for Reform," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 7 (1996): 35-54; Suzanne Morton, "Separate Spheres in a Separate World: African-Nova Scotian Women in Late-19th Century Halifax County," *Acadiensis* XXII, no. 2 (Spring 1993): 61-83.



During the 1990s, Barry Cahill and Ken Donovan produced meaningful work about regional slavery.<sup>55</sup> For the most part, Cahill's articles examined the way judges slowly chipped away at slavery in Nova Scotia by making it difficult for slave-owners to legally prove that they were entitled to their enslaved property. Building on David Bell's article about New Brunswick slavery, Cahill endeavored to "present a new and broader reconstruction of the legal debate on slavery . . . and suggest why, when they might have chosen abolition, the Nova Scotia judges instead undermined gradually the established socio-economic order of which slavery was a recognized part." The brilliance of Cahill's work was his ability to show how justices attempted to end an institution that had no black letter statute law (such as a slave code) but was widely practiced throughout the region, as slavery was recognized as a form of private property. In his 1994 article, Cahill explored several Nova Scotian court cases related to slavery that had been either ignored or only touched upon in the work of other scholars.<sup>56</sup> One year later, his second piece explored the legal cases of Loyalist Frederick William Hecht. Cahill demonstrated how habeas corpus could be employed to free black people from slavery while also highlighting the deeply entrenched nature of slavery in Annapolis, Nova Scotia.<sup>57</sup> While Cahill tackled slavery and the law, Donovan took a more holistic approach to exploring the contours of slavery on Île Royale between 1713 and 1758. He discovered a bustling society with slaves that consisted of black people from all points of the Atlantic World, including Africa. The majority of enslaved people had close and intimate relationships with their owners in that they worked, lived, and in some cases socialized with their masters and mistresses. Most laboured as domestics, but could also be called on to perform other duties. Before Donovan's work, scholars knew almost nothing about the presence and lives of black slaves on Île Royale; but now the long-lasting connections between northern Nova Scotia and the French Atlantic world are clear.<sup>58</sup> The population of slaves on Île Royale underscores the important point that the region had extensive contacts with black people and slavery well before the Loyalist influx. Indeed, Atlantic Canada developed deep connections with Atlantic world trade patterns that funneled products and slaves between the West Indies, North America, Europe, and Africa.

This work by Donovan and Cahill set the stage for one of the most important debates about black people, slavery, the Loyalists, and the question of loyalism. One of the driving themes of Loyalist studies has been the question of precisely who were the Loyalists? How do we define Loyalists? Must one be a high Tory like William Franklin to be included in their ranks? What do we make of an individual who switched sides five times, but ended up in Nova Scotia because he heard about

55 Barry Cahill, "Habeas Corpus and Slavery in Nova Scotia: *R v. Hecht, ex parte Rachel*, 1798," *University of New Brunswick Law Journal* 44 (1995): 179-209; Barry Cahill, "Slavery and the Judges of Loyalist Nova Scotia," *University of New Brunswick Law Journal* 43 (1994): 73-135; Donovan, "Slaves and Their Owners in Île Royale," 3-32; Donovan, "A Nominal List of Slaves and Their Owners in Île Royale," 151-62. See also Donovan's subsequent article entitled "Slaves in Île Royale," 25-42.

56 Cahill, "Slavery and the Judges," 73-135, esp. 75.

57 Cahill, "Habeas Corpus," 179-209. This article also has several helpful transcriptions of important documents.

58 For more recent work, see Donovan, "Female Slaves as Sexual Victims."

free land? Can black people be Loyalists if their first goal was actually freedom rather than an abiding loyalty to the Crown? Further, how many so-called white Loyalists actually had deeply held beliefs about order, loyalty, and good government that would align with the Tory party back in England?<sup>59</sup> In a 1999 forum published in *Acadiensis*, Barry Cahill and James Walker argued about the meaning of loyalism and the term Loyalist. In his thoughtful and provocatively titled “The Black Loyalist Myth in Atlantic Canada,” Cahill argued

there were Blacks among the Loyalists, but the fugitive slaves of the Patriots, who were transported to Nova Scotia concurrently with the Loyalists and their slaves, did not by virtue of that fact become “Black Loyalists.” The fugitive slaves were a subcategory of “Blacks” not “Loyalists.”

The Black Loyalist myth, an invention of academic scholars, has become a potent force in the cultural heritage of the Black community.

Cahill believed that black people who were free born, like Stephen Blucke, or freed before the rebellion, could be Loyalists. Cahill viewed Blucke and others like him as “Real Loyalists” precisely because they were not slaves, unlike those who used the rebellion to free themselves from bondage. He argued that because they were slaves who were “freed” by a proclamation during a military conflict that these ex-slaves were not Black Loyalists or Loyalists. Instead, Cahill saw a “Black Loyalist myth based on White Loyalist tradition.” This myth was grounded in the mistaken notion that the former slaves were loyal to the British Crown. They were “freed, not free, and they were not Loyalists,” but rather fugitive slaves. This argument, albeit unintentionally, took away agency from the slaves, who risked their lives to free themselves with the help of the British armed forces. Certainly, the Black Loyalists used the British for their own ends (freedom) just as much as Lord Dunmore used black people to fight against his Patriot adversaries. The other important argument Cahill made, which anticipated the expansion of slave studies in the Maritimes ten years later, was that the focus on free blacks in the Maritimes had ignored the large number of slaves and slaveholders who were part of the Loyalist influx to New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Cahill believed that the “chief victims” of the Loyalists were black slaves, not the Black Loyalists. Moreover, “the unfortunate embryonic state of slave studies in Atlantic Canada has contributed to the persistence of the historical myth of the Black Loyalists.”<sup>60</sup> Cahill was correct that the sad state of slavery studies in Atlantic Canada at the turn of the last century could be compared to the rather rich work on free blacks, but Walker never intended his work to deny the importance of slavery in the region.

59 For the historiography of the Loyalists, see Whitfield, *North to Bondage*, 132-4.

60 Barry Cahill, “Black Loyalist Myth in Atlantic Canada,” 76-8, 80-3; Walker, “Myth, History, and Revisionism,” 88-105. See also Barry Cahill, “Stephen Blucke: The Perils of Being a White Negro in Loyalist Nova Scotia,” *Nova Scotia Historical Review* 11 (December 1991): 129-34.

In his response, Walker argued that Cahill had misread the documentary evidence and that Cahill's argument about the academic invention of the Black Loyalists was simply wrong. Walker cited several examples of Black Loyalists referring to themselves as "loyal," "loyalists," or "Black Pioneers and loyal Black Refugees." Walker also argued that fugitive slaves could absolutely be counted among Loyalists. In musters of Loyalists, the former slaves were actually counted among the Loyalists, which Walker pointed out showed that others also saw these black people as Loyalists (though not necessarily equal with white Loyalists). Walker also found fault with Cahill's wording, which referred to the Black Loyalists as being "freed" as opposed to having agency in their own liberty. He wrote: "As I have documented in *The Black Loyalists* and other publications, the African-American fugitives freed themselves, by running away from their enslavement." Walker fully rejected Cahill's contention that fugitive slaves could not be Loyalists, arguing that the slaves who sought out freedom during the American Revolution had only one qualification to become Loyalists: pledging allegiance to the British Crown. Moreover, the only black slaves who could not become Loyalists were those owned by Americans who remained loyal to the British. Walker also attacked Cahill's definition of Loyalist, noting that Loyalists were a mixed and highly diverse group of multiple ethnicities who supported the British Crown for many different reasons. As a result, Walker concluded that Cahill's "'myth' is a myth."<sup>61</sup> Walker's article clearly delineated the reasons why loyalism and liberty were intertwined not only in his book, but also in the minds of some of the Black Loyalists.

The one area that Walker and Cahill agreed upon was the need for more studies of slavery in Atlantic Canada. And we have made progress toward that goal as, during the last 15 years, there has been an outpouring of scholarship about the black population in Atlantic Canada. Until recently, the majority of this work focused on familiar topics such as the Black Loyalists. Building on the outstanding work of Gary Nash and Graham Russell Hodges, internationally respected scholars, such as Cassandra Pybus and Simon Schama, wrote books that examined the experience of African-descended people in Atlantic Canada.<sup>62</sup> In her remarkable work, Pybus traced the many different routes to freedom that black people took after the American Revolution. For his part, Schama illuminated the role of Britain and slavery during the Anglo-American conflict.<sup>63</sup> Perhaps one of the main reasons for the uptick in interest about the Black Loyalists is that they fit rather neatly into one of the more dominant paradigms of the school of Atlantic history (and in some cases global history), which views black people as moving from slavery to freedom in this broad context.<sup>64</sup> The Black Loyalists have become so well known through the work

61 Walker, "Black Loyalists," 89, 92, 97-8, 104.

62 Nash, "Thomas Peters: Millwright and Deliverer"; Graham Russell Hodges, ed., *The Black Loyalist Directory: African Americans in Exile After the American Revolution* (New York: Garland, 1996).

63 Schama, *Rough Crossings*; Pybus, *Epic Journeys*.

64 On the Atlantic world, see H.V. Bowen, Elizabeth Mancke, and John G. Reid, eds., *Britain's Oceanic Empire: Atlantic and Indian Ocean Worlds, c. 1550-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Elizabeth Mancke and Carole Shammas, eds., *The Creation of the British Atlantic World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005); Mancke, *Fault Lines*; Jerry Bannister, "The Oriental Atlantic: Governance and Regulatory Frameworks in the British Atlantic

of authors such as Lawrence Hill that the CBC produced a television mini-series about them.<sup>65</sup> Several scholars in recent years have continued to publish accounts of the Black Loyalist experience, including Alan Gilbert and Ruth Holmes Whitehead.<sup>66</sup> In her work Whitehead illuminated the background of Black Loyalists from Carolina and Georgia, which gave scholars a fuller view of these transnational historical actors. With the publication of these quality books, we might benefit from moving on to other topics that incorporate the Black Loyalists but do not simply focus on them alone.

To some extent, this has already happened. In the last two decades years, for instance, there have been important scholarly advances in work about the War of 1812, the Black Refugees, and slavery. My work has been part of this wave, but I would like to mention other historians first before describing my development as a historian of the black population in the Atlantic region. In 2013 Alan Taylor published his Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Internal Enemy: Slavery and War in Virginia, 1772-1832*. This study highlighted the many ways in which black people fought for freedom during multiple Anglo-American conflicts. He also traced the pathways to freedom that the Black Refugees took to the Maritimes and how they engaged with their former owners through letters. Taylor's work is a sharp reminder that there is still much to do in terms of the background of black people who migrated to the Atlantic region between 1783 and 1815. In addition to Taylor, scholars such as Catherine Cottreau-Robins, Jennifer Harris, and Carole Troxler have greatly added to our understanding of slavery in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Cottreau-Robins's work examines the slave plantation of Loyalist General Timothy Ruggles, while Jennifer Harris's work explores the contours of

World," in *Britain's Oceanic Empire: Atlantic and Indian Ocean Worlds, c. 1550-1850*, ed. H.V. Bowen, Elizabeth Mancke, and John G. Reid (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 151-76; Bannister and Riordan, eds., *The Loyal Atlantic: Remaking the British Atlantic in the Revolutionary Era*; Hornsby, *British Atlantic, American Frontier*; John G. Reid, *Essays on Northeastern North America, Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008); and Stephen J. Hornsby and John G. Reid, eds., *New England and the Maritime Provinces: Connections and Comparisons* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005). On the Atlantic world more broadly, see David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick, eds., *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); Bernard Bailyn and Patricia L. Denault, eds., *Soundings in Atlantic History: Latent Structures and Intellectual Currents, 1500-1830* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan, eds., *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Nicholas Canny and Philip D. Morgan, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the Atlantic World, 1450-1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); J.H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492-1830* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); "Forum: Beyond Atlantic History," *William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd ser., 63 (2006): 675-742; "AHR Forum: Entangled Empires in the Atlantic World," *American Historical Review* 112 (June 2007), 710-99; and Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006). See also Jerry Bannister, "Atlantic Canada in an Atlantic World? Northeastern North America in the Long 18th Century," *Acadiensis* XLIII, no. 2 (Summer/Autumn 2014): 3-30.

65 Lawrence Hill, *The Book of Negroes* (Toronto: Harper Collins, Canada, 2007); on the mini-series, see <http://www.cbc.ca/books/2015/01/the-book-of-negroes-comes-to-cbc-tv.html>.

66 Whitehead, *Black Loyalists*; Gilbert, *Black Patriots and Loyalists*.

black individuals in New Brunswick.<sup>67</sup> For her part, Troxler offers a deeply researched portrait of Mary Postell, a woman who was enslaved in Shelburne and had her children taken away from her. Although Postell attempted to press her claim in a local court, the judges rebuffed her pleas and she and her children were separated and re-enslaved.<sup>68</sup> The work of these scholars along with other historians mentioned in this paper were major influences on my development as a scholar.

I never intended to become a historian of the African Diaspora in Atlantic Canada. I began graduate school as a master's student at Dalhousie University in African and British imperial history. I switched to North American history after completing comprehensive examinations in African history. This change evoked shock among several professors and one berated me, saying I would "never get a job doing North American history." I became interested in learning more about the African Nova Scotia community because I had lived in Halifax for several years. I wanted to know where they came from, what their history in the United States had entailed, and how they had done in British North America. These questions and ideas became the foundation for my 2003 dissertation and 2006 scholarly monograph.<sup>69</sup> This book attempted to understand the Black Refugees as not only agents of their own destinies, but also as transnational historical actors who constructed a free black community in Halifax, between 1820 and 1860, that compared quite well with free black communities in New England. The Black Refugees were African Americans, Africadians (to borrow from George Elliot Clark), and British subjects. They did not discard their connections to the United States, but rather used their history and traditions to adjust to their new homes in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

Since 2006, I have continued to study the transnational African American experience in Canada. In a series of peer-reviewed articles, I began to explore slavery in the Maritimes.<sup>70</sup> This deep interest originated during the work on my earlier book on the Black Refugees. I knew there were slaves in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island because of the Loyalists. But I knew little about them. Who were these people? Where were they from? What types of work did they do in the Maritimes? What experiences and traditions did they bring to the Maritimes? And why had so much attention been lavished on the free Black Loyalists at the expense of these slaves?<sup>71</sup> These questions underpinned my second

67 Catherine Cottleau-Robins, "Searching for the Enslaved in Nova Scotia's Loyalist Landscape," *Acadiensis* XLIII, no. 1 (Winter/Spring, 2014): 125-36. See also Cottleau-Robins, "Loyalist Plantation," 32-56; Heather MacLeod-Leslie, "Archaeology and Atlantic Canada's African Diaspora," *Acadiensis* XLIII, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2014): 137-45; Donovan, "Female Slaves as Sexual Victims in Île Royale," 147-56; and Jennifer Harris, "Black Life in a Nineteenth Century New Brunswick Town," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 46, no. 1 (Winter 2012): 138-66.

68 Carole Watterson Troxler, "Re-enslavement of Black Loyalists: Mary Postell in South Carolina, East Florida, and Nova Scotia," *Acadiensis* XXXVII, no. 2 (Summer/Fall 2008): 70-85.

69 Whitfield, *Blacks on the Border*; Whitfield, *From American Slaves to Nova Scotian Subjects*.

70 Harvey Amani Whitfield, "The Struggle Over Slavery in the Maritime Colonies," *Acadiensis* XLI, no. 2 (Summer/Autumn 2012): 17-44; Harvey Amani Whitfield, "Slavery in English Nova Scotia," *Journal of the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society* 13 (2010): 23-40; Harvey Amani Whitfield and Barry Cahill, "Slave Life and Slave Law in Colonial Prince Edward Island, 1769-1825," *Acadiensis* XXXVIII, no. 2 (Summer/Autumn, 2009): 29-51; Harvey Amani Whitfield, "Black Loyalists and Black Slaves in Maritime Canada," *History Compass* 5 (2007): 1980-97.

71 Whitfield, *North to Bondage*.



scholarly monograph, but they also speak to the documents at the beginning of this essay. Each document has regional, national, and imperial contexts. In understanding the African diaspora in Atlantic Canada, historians must always grapple with these complementary and sometimes competing backgrounds. Examining these different contexts, *North to Bondage: Loyalist Slavery in the Maritimes* focused on the transition and movement of black people in the Atlantic world from slavery in the United States to continued slavery in British North America's Maritime colonies. This is not the happier or more heroic story of from slavery to freedom, as illustrated by the Black Loyalists, but rather a narrative about forced migration, displacement, and the expansion of slavery in the British world. This movement required Loyalist slaves to readjust their work patterns and relationships with owners, and to reform and reconstitute their own families. The transition from slavery in the American colonies to slavery in the Maritimes required slaves to use their traditions of survival, resistance, and kinship networks to negotiate the new climate of the Maritime colonies. In the Maritimes these slaves challenged the system by running away and eventually playing a crucial role in helping rid the region of slavery, if only to be confronted by more insidious forms of racism and economic challenges. The end of slavery resulted in legal freedom without racial or economic equality, and continued black marginality. The experience of Loyalist slaves in the Maritimes transcends the borders of the United States and Canada. Their history is a transnational story that also played out in other areas throughout the British Atlantic, including Jamaica, East Florida, and the Bahamas, where slavery, re-enslavement, and freedom faced black people. This expansion of slavery in the Maritimes was also buttressed by the re-enslavement of Black Loyalists, who were often sent to the West Indies. So while the book was about slavery in the Maritimes, it also highlighted the much-wider phenomenon of slavery in the Loyalist world after the American Revolution.

Where does all of this leave us? The history of black people in Atlantic Canada must be situated within the processes of migration that defined the African Diaspora in the 18th and 19th centuries. The primary source documents that underpin this essay – the sale of Halifax slaves in Boston in 1751, Joshua Mauger's 1752 slave sale in Halifax, Hector and Peter's runaway notices, and the opposing letters about race and immigration from two Nova Scotian writers – highlight the larger global story of migration, displacement, forced labor, and slavery. The region's history is not simply an appendage of the United States. Rather, it is a region with a remarkable level of interaction with North America, the Caribbean, and the wider Atlantic world. In studying the African Diaspora in Atlantic Canada, we have to acknowledge at least three major forces at play and interplay – the local, national/continental, and international/global. Today we need to look at new and exciting areas of potential study, and many of these are transnational and Atlantic world/global in essence. First, we must explore the connections between Atlantic Canada and the Caribbean in terms of slavery and black migration. It goes beyond the Jamaican Maroons. For example, the 1828 Montserrat slave register includes the following notation about slaves in the Maritimes. According to the recorder, he had given an "accurate account and description of all the Slaves belonging to Catharine Ormsby and living within this Island (Save and Except the following Slaves of the Names as follows Charles Male Black Twenty Years, Mary Jane Female Black



Thirteen Years, Fanny Female Coloured Eleven Years, Edward Male Black Eight Years, residing with Mr. Ormsby at Prince Edward Island).”<sup>72</sup> There is also much transnational work awaiting serious scholarly investigation. We need to closely examine the origins of the several thousand people of African descent who migrated to the Maritimes between 1750 and 1820. Their stories and family histories would give us insight into their lives in Birchtown, Shelburne, Saint John, Halifax, and Preston. Although there has been great scholarship about the Black Loyalists, that scholarship has not fully taken into account those who stayed in Nova Scotia after 1792. We could certainly use a serious study of the Black Loyalists who remained and formed the basis of future black communities throughout the region. And I would make a strong plea to future researchers to take a much closer look at African diaspora history in Newfoundland. This is a serious enterprise that needs work. Black people made their way through Newfoundland as sailors and workers. We need to know more about them. The history of the African Diaspora in Atlantic Canada is by its very nature about migration, settlement, and re-migration.

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72 Montserrat Slave Register, 13 December 1828, p. 285, T 71 450, The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom. I must thank Mr. Neil How of the Montserrat National Trust, Montserrat, WI, for sharing this document with me.