

Ushering children away from a “light grey world” Dr. Daniel Hill III and his pursuit of a respectable Black Canadian community

Daniel McNeil

Volume 99, Number 1, Spring 2007

Forging Freedom: In Honour of the Bicentenary of the British
Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1065799ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1065799ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

The Ontario Historical Society

ISSN

0030-2953 (print)

2371-4654 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

McNeil, D. (2007). Ushering children away from a “light grey world”: Dr. Daniel Hill III and his pursuit of a respectable Black Canadian community. *Ontario History*, 99(1), 96–106. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1065799ar>

Article abstract

This paper is about Dr. Daniel Hill III, the first director of the Ontario Human Rights Agency. Paying particular attention to Dr Hill’s work with the Committee for the Adoption of Coloured Youngsters and the Ontario Black History Society, I argue that he fashioned himself as “Negro race man”, a masculinist term assigned to people who sought to lead a Black community in North America and lay to rest the infantilised and feminized image of the “tragic mulatto” trapped in a “light grey world”.

Unshering children away from a “light grey world”

Dr. Daniel Hill III and his pursuit of a
respectable Black Canadian community

by Daniel McNeil

My interest in sociology has always been in the community. The social organization & development of group life...the Toronto Negro community, group dynamics, social psychology.

[Daniel Hill III, letter to parents (1957). Emphasis original.]

For months, considerable effort was expended trying to locate a “Negro community” and to analyse its social organisation ... Increasingly, the most important finding was that Toronto Negroes existed outside the orbit of formal race organizations and were somehow or other related to the general society without a Negro sub-culture affecting their major activities – work, social life, religion ... Those individuals supporting Negro organisations spoke of a community, but were at a loss when questioned regarding the community’s leaders.

[Daniel Hill III, *Negroes in Toronto: A Sociological study of a minority group* (1960)]

I don’t see any collective anger in the Negro community in Toronto.

[Daniel Hill III, quoted in *The Toronto Star* (1968). Emphasis added.]

I begin this essay with a trinity of quotes that convey a desire to understand, label and manage a Black community. As such, they effectively introduce the reader to Daniel Hill III, a social worker, bureaucrat and historian, who is probably best known for becoming the first full-time director of the Ontario Human Rights Commission and a trusted source of information about Blackness for Toronto-based media outlets.

Born in 1923 in Independence, Missouri, Daniel Hill III had impressive role

models. His father not only followed his grandfather’s work as a prominent theologian and a minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church; he also became the Dean of the School of Religion at Howard University and one of the few Blacks to hold a commission in the US army during World War I.¹ Yet despite his religious heritage, Daniel never considered joining the clergy. By the time he was drafted into the American army for service during World War II, he was already well on his way to becoming an atheist.

¹ Archives of Ontario F2130-1-0-2 (hereafter cited as AO), “To you dad, I thank you for such a rich family heritage and the greatest Dad in the world. You have given to me by your life, a goal to strive for. That is why someday you’ll be proud of me.” Daniel Hill III to Daniel Hill II, 6 July, 1943.

Nor did he have any intention of making a career for himself in the military. His stint in the army from 1942 to 1945 only heightened his disillusionment with American society and, as an impressionable 19-year-old soldier, he wrote of his experience in a segregated army, describing “white trash,” “crackers,” and “selfish...negroes who were a detriment to their race, as well as to [American] society.”² Instead of staying in the United States, Hill went on to pursue his graduate studies in Toronto during the 1950s where, along with Donna Hill, his White American wife, he believed that racial discrimination could be fought with greater facility.³ Donna was a grass-roots activist with the Congress of Racial Equality (1952-53) and with the Toronto Labour Committee for Human Right (1953-54), and her experiences as a White woman committed to anti-racist work in North America is worthy of more attention than this brief paper can provide. Moreover, the ways in which the Hill children – Dan Hill IV, Lawrence Hill and Karen Hill – have all fashioned creative work that can appeal to a mainstream audience deserves greater critical analysis.

With that said, my focus here is largely limited to Dr. Daniel Hill who, despite co-founding the Ontario Black Historical Society (with his wife and some friends) and completing several books and articles that serve as study guides for students in Ontario high schools, has also been ignored by academics. To be

Abstract

This paper is about Dr. Daniel Hill III, the first director of the Ontario Human Rights Agency. Paying particular attention to Dr Hill's work with the Committee for the Adoption of Coloured Youngsters and the Ontario Black History Society, I argue that he fashioned himself as “Negro race man”, a masculinist term assigned to people who sought to lead a Black community in North America and lay to rest the infantilised and feminized image of the “tragic mulatto” trapped in a “light grey world”.

Résumé: Cet article s'intéresse au Dr Daniel Hill III, premier directeur de l'Agence ontarienne pour les Droits de la Personne. M'attachant plus particulièrement au travail de Dr Hill au sein du Comité pour l'adoption d'enfants de couleur et auprès de « Ontario Black History Society », j'avance que Dr Hill se définit comme étant « l'homme de la race noire », un terme masculiniste attribué à ceux qui cherchaient à diriger une communauté noire en Amérique du Nord et à effacer l'image infantilisée et féminisée du « mulâtre tragique », prisonnier dans un « monde gris pâle ».

more specific, I use the Children's Aid Society papers at the City of Toronto Archives, as well as the Daniel Hill papers at the Archives of Ontario, to explore Dr. Hill's work with the Committee for the Adoption of Coloured Children after he completed his doctoral dissertation in social work at the University of Toronto in 1960. As I show, Dr. Hill sought to educate middle-class members of Canadian society about race and racism so that his children and other young people of African descent could assert a “respectable”

² AO F2130-1-0-2. Daniel Hill III to parents, 18 February 1943; 21 June 1943; 9 May 1943.

³ AO F2130-1-0-3. Daniel Hill III to parents, 2 July 1951.



The Canadian Hills. From left to right, Daniel III, Dan IV, Karen, Larry, Donna. Archives of Ontario, F2130-9-2-11

Black identity rather than just try to fit into a predominantly White nation as “light grey” subjects. Put more bluntly, he wanted to obtain a degree of justice for children of African descent when it was clear that his adoptive nation valued White babies above Black babies.⁴ And, as most readers are no doubt aware, the ways in which children are treated as commodities remains a significant area

of research because of news reports in the twenty-first century that announce,

The wait for a white baby can be years, if ever, and the cost can approach \$40,000 (U.S.). The wait for a mixed-race baby is shorter, and the price about \$20,000. The wait for a black baby is even shorter and costs about \$10,000.⁵

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, social planners in Canada echoed the fears

⁴ Evidence of racism and romantic racism is evident in the following extract from *Our Children: the Journal of the Children's Aid Society of Toronto*: “Steven was not the easily placed blond blue eyed son of a professor. He is of mixed race, black and white ... He is a man of extremes ... He is as capable of hard cold angry: ‘I hate you,’ as he is of warm gentle hugs and ‘I love you, you’re MY mom!’ ... We’ve met the odd person who has objected to Steve on the grounds of colour but many more who share our delight in him ... If some day Steve should decide to join Black Power, I’ll remind him that I always thought he was beautiful even when he was brown.” Sue Ann Leather, “Letter from an adopting mother,” *Our Children* (1973).

⁵ Jane Armstrong, “A Canadian haven for black U.S. babies,” *The Globe and Mail*, January 10 2005.

of British and American opinion leaders about delinquent “black bastards,” a coarse term applied to illegitimate children who were racialized as Black. Guided by a belief that the nuclear family was the normal and “proper” form of family, sociologists in the UK opined, “a boy who lacks the guidance of a father has greater chance of becoming a delinquent than a boy in a normal family.”⁶ Similarly, government reports in the US declared, “Negro children without fathers flounder – and fail.”⁷ Yet it is also important to note the creole nature of Blackness in the West and the ways in which “bastard” and “hybrid” are viewed as synonyms in many English dictionaries. This is because prominent monographs about the 1950s and 1960s continue to argue that mixed-race individuals should have been shepherded into responsible roles as national citizens rather than be allowed to adopt radical ideas about Black politics. For example, Joel Williamson’s tale about “mulattoes and miscegenation,” which was highly praised by *The Historical Journal*,⁸ wondered why people of mixed-race joined a Black revolution in the 1960s rather than settling into a middle-class American identity dominated by Whites.⁹ Moreover, film-

makers snap up the rights to biographies about prominent members of the Black Panther party in the 1960s, such as Johnny Spain, so long as they rely on clichés about the duelling nature of Black and White “blood,” and ask their subjects to reject a Black identity (which can be supra-national as much as sub-national) in favour of a national identity that continues to privilege whiteness.¹⁰

Rather than challenge the problematic desires of Western opinion leaders to talk about static, pseudo-scientific notions of race, official policy in Ontario in the 1960s tried to incorporate mixed-race individuals into predominantly White communities. Revealingly, White foster homes were only considered for “older children who are of mixed racial origin and light in colour ... for older children who are of Negroid appearance, such homes have been found to be unsuitable as children need parent figures of their own race with whom to identify.”¹¹ White adoptive parents also tended to shy away from “pure Negro” children – dismissing any notion of a one-drop law, one couple adopted a “half-Caucasian, half-Japanese” child in order to find a suitably *mixed-race* sibling

⁶ M. Wynn, *Fatherless families* (London: Michael Joseph), 1964, 150.

⁷ D.P. Moynihan, *The Negro Family in the United States*, Office of Policy Planning and Research, United States Department of Labor, 1965.

⁸ Timothy J. Lockley, “The Changing South?: From Slavery to Sunbelt,” *The Historical Journal* 39 (December, 1996). 1109-1116.

⁹ Joel Williamson, *New people: Miscegenation and Mulattoes in the United States* (New York, 1980), 190-2.

¹⁰ See Lori B. Andrews, *Black Power, White Blood: the Life and Times of Johnny Spain*, 1st ed. (New York, 1996), 265.

¹¹ M. Schwalbe, “Negro and partly-Negro wards of the Children’s Aid Society of Metropolitan Toronto” (Thesis (M.S.W.), University of Toronto, 1958), 24.

for their “part-Negro” child. Moreover, when White applicants for “Negro” babies thought that “the community would be more comfortable with an Indian child to ‘break the ice,’” they would only consider taking a *part*-Negro child at a later date.¹² In other words, anti-black attitudes in “the community” meant that White adoptive parents tended to prefer “light brown babies” to “pure” Negro children. The Toronto Social Planning Council’s “Project for the Adoption of Negro Children” (PANC) even considered changing its name to the “Project on the Adoption of Minority Children.” Yet when PANC’s committee members did eventually change their name to the Committee for the Adoption of Coloured Youngsters (CACY), they decided to stick to their original mission to make the “wider community” care about more than 150 “part Negro” and (“full”) Negro children in the custody of the state.¹³

Although the predominantly White members of CACY relied on terms such as “part Negro,” rejecting more active, dynamic and fluid notions of a Black cultural identity, they were still wary about offending adults labelled “Negro”

or “part-Negro.” Indeed, after listening to Hill’s input at meetings, or carrying out a close reading of his PhD thesis,¹⁴ members of CACY hoped that his words would legitimize their work. Just as Hill tried to write his thesis for the Department of Social Work at the University of Toronto in an accessible style, CACY avoided “dry statistics and social work jargon” in order to tell their story in ways that would inspire adoptive parents who were respected in “the community.”¹⁵ In addition, Hill’s influence is clear in the slide show CACY developed to advertise the availability of “Negro and part-Negro children” to religious organizations. Drawing on his description of young Negroes in Toronto such as “Ace,” who lived in a “light grey world ... where it was only when he heard [the word “nigger”] ... that he got the feeling he did not really belong in this world, but in some other,”¹⁶ the members of CACY used an image of “a teen age boy leaning dejectedly on a wall beside an unemployment office” while a narrator described how,

the life of a foster child means living in a world of dreams that never seem to come true ... A world of polite rejection, that stifles

¹² *Look magazine* (June 1957); AO, RG 76-3-0-263. Project on the Adoption of Negro Children, Minutes, November 22, 1964, 17.

¹³ “The children are the responsibility of the total community and in no sense should be seen as the sole concern of the Negro section of the community.” Committee for the Adoption of Coloured Youngsters, *The Adoption of Negro Children* (1966), 7-8.

¹⁴ Since individuals had to sign a form to check Hill’s dissertation out from Robarts library at the University of Toronto we know that many committee members had access to his work.

¹⁵ CACY tried to “tell its story in ways that would make the public listen”, but was “determined to avoid the type of sentimental appeal which is offensive to any thinking person, and might only result in attracting unsuitable applicant.” AO, RG 76-3-0-360. CACY, Draft Report, March, 1965, 22.

¹⁶ Daniel Hill, “Negroes in Toronto: A Sociological Study of a Minority Group” (Thesis (Ph.D.), University of Toronto, 1960). 221.

A Child is a Child is a Child. Committee for the Adoption of Coloured Youngsters. Archives of Ontario, F2130-9-2-11

his potential, shatters his ego, and fills him with bewildered hostility toward the indifferent society that produced him.¹⁷

Last but not least, CACY combatted charges that they were “stealing” Black children by arguing that the “ordinary Negro child in Toronto grows up in a largely white community,” just as Hill’s doctoral work claimed, “only some Negroes, West Indians primarily, maintain the notion of community ... a sentimental illusion, a form of wish fulfillment.”¹⁸

Even after CACY disbanded in 1965, Hill continued to highlight reports from the Jamaican Canadian Association that seemed to confirm his thesis about the absence of a Negro community in Toronto.

The most glaring weakness in the Association appears to be the lack of cohesion in the group. That oneness, that unity, that motivating factor which would knit the group into an effective force seems to be unobtainable ...

The Story of Children

of Anne
whose childhood years are passing swiftly with no parents of her own to share them.

Children without Parents

of Stephen
self-reliant beyond his years — already withdrawing into a protective shell.

Without Permanent Homes

of Teddy
who is beginning to wonder where home really is.

Children Waiting for Adoption

of Susie
will just a baby, with one basic need — a family who can love her as their own.

WHAT IS CACY?
The Committee for the Adoption of Coloured Youngsters is an interracial, inter-faith committee, under the auspices of the Social Planning Council, cooperative with the Catholic Children's Aid Society and the Children's Aid Society of Metropolitan Toronto.

WHAT IS ITS PURPOSE?
Its purpose is to encourage the adoption of coloured children by both Negro and white parents, and also to build community support for these adoptive families.

WHY ARE ADOPTION HOMES NEEDED?
The Children's Aid Societies still do not have enough applicants for the Negro and part-Negro children in their care. Adoption is the best way for a child whose parents are unable to care for him to grow up happily and normally, with a father and mother of his own. The child for whom there is no adoption home must be placed with foster parents, most of whom can give only temporary care. Often the child then faces a bewildering series of moves—and eventually the feeling of not really being wanted anywhere, by anyone.

HOW ARE THE CHILDREN ADOPTED BY WHITE FAMILIES GETTING ALONG?
Difference in race has posed no barrier in the parents' ability to love the children as their own. Local communities have accepted them as part of their adoptive families. As for the future, it is for as numbers of a minority group they may face problems. But certainly these children, having grown up surrounded by love and security, will be better able to cope with them.

WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS TO ADOPT A COLOURED CHILD?
As in all adoptions, there are no specific requirements as to age, income, size of house, etc. Any married couple with or without children, irrespective of race or religious belief, who are in good health and have a happy, stable home would be eligible. The only basic qualifications for adoptive parents is the ability to love as their own a child not born to them.

DOES CACY PLACE CHILDREN FOR ADOPTION?
No. Our job is to tell people about the need for adoptive homes for coloured children. We are happy to answer your questions, and to arrange for a Children's Aid Society to contact couples interested in adopting.

The Canadian Save the Children Fund contributes to the financing of this project.

**“A child ...
is a child ...
is a child ...”**



It is very obvious that the whole concept of planned entertainment on a large scale for members and their friends in the community must be completely reconsidered and possibly abandoned. It may be necessary to swing the emphasis from social activities to social welfare activities in 1966.¹⁹

As is evident in the preceding passage, and the epigrams used to open this paper, Hill assumed that a “Negro community” needed religions or social institutions that could maintain a coloured community in the manner of “the well-defined American bi-racial system.”²⁰ Like many Americans, Hill did not expect that he would have to explain to Canadians what a bi-racial system involved — he simply drew on his own

¹⁷ AO, RG 76-3-0-263. CACY, Script for the slide show, ‘A child is a child is a child’ (March 2, 1964), 17.

¹⁸ Hill, “Negroes in Toronto, 357; Youngsters, *The Adoption of Negro Children*, 21.

¹⁹ AO, RG 76-3-0-333. Roy G. Williams, President’s Annual Report for the Jamaican Canadian Association (JCA). Dr. Hill impressed Williams and was an honoured guest at the JCA’s annual dinner.

²⁰ Hill, “Negroes in Toronto, 1-2.

experiences of segregation between Black and White in rural communities, the army and Washington D.C, where Negro “race men” like his father led formal organizations tied to the church. And, without finding many formal organizations exclusively devoted to Negroes in Toronto, his Ph.D. thesis concluded that there was no Negro community in Toronto, an opinion he was willing to share in various venues between 1960 and 1966. Yet by 1968, when he had spent six years as director of the Ontario Human Rights Commission and had more extensive dealings with Caribbean immigrants, Dr. Hill told journalists that there *was* a Negro community in Toronto ... so long as he could claim to guide fledgling secular groups into struggles for civil rights rather than militant nationalism.²¹ Consequently, it should come as no surprise that Robin Winks, a White academic who thought that he could covey the history of Blacks in Canada from 1628 to the 1960s in a single monograph, hoped that Hill might fit the mould of a progressive Black representative who would lead “his people” between the Scylla of Black Power and the Charybdis of complete as-

similation into the “Great White North.”

Winks corresponded with Daniel Hill when he set out to “examine the history of Negro life in Canada from 1628 to the 1960s, and ... reveal the nature of prejudice in Canada.”²² In addition, Winks hoped Hill could help him “show the Negro as an actor in the context of an emerging national history, as a person who acts and reacts as well as one acted upon.”²³ Yet while Winks’s text is regularly invoked by people who don’t have the time or inclination to carry out primary research on Blackness in Canada, it is filled with problematic assumptions.²⁴ Most notably, Winks’s personal beliefs about the correct way to fight prejudice meant that he derided a conservative “aristocracy of the [Christian] faith” that waged “small battles to get boxed dates labelled ‘nigger brand’ removed from a Montreal dept store and ... ignor[ed] the larger war,”²⁵ and Black papers that moved “politically toward the left and socially toward a narrow black radicalism ... [because they] lost rather than gained readers among the generally conservative Canadian Negroes.”²⁶ He actually ended

²¹ “I don’t see any collective anger in the *Negro community* in Toronto”. Dr. Hill, quoted in the *Toronto Star*, March 2 1968. Emphasis added.

²² Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: a History*, 2nd ed. (Montreal; Kingston, 1997), ix.

²³ *Ibid.* The correspondence between Winks and Hill is contained in Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada Collection, 1956-1972* (New York, 1990), microform. There are also copies of their letters stored in the Daniel Hill Collection at the Archives of Ontario.

²⁴ See George Elliott Clarke, *Odysseys Home: Mapping African-Canadian Literature* (Toronto, 2002), 18n2.

²⁵ Robin W. Winks, “The Canadian Negro: A Historical Assessment Part II: The Problem of Identity,” *Journal of Negro History* 54 (1969), 3. “War” becomes “campaign” thanks to the editors of *The Blacks in Canada* at McGill-Queens, Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 474. Still, Winks managed to sneak through his belief that a Black movement that attacked “negative images” in civil society, “negatively dissipated its energies,” Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 407.

²⁶ Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 346, 410, 406-7.

up emphasising the “petty” or “depressing” nature of Canadian Negroes with no “real” national heritage or “positive” means of self-identification,²⁷ and asked professional people to shepherd Black Canadians into an alliance with White liberals. Obviously this approach was not guided by an engagement with Black theorists – it reflected Winks’s desire to write himself into the future of Black politics and his reading of White liberals such as Gunnar Myrdal, a Swedish academic committed to solving “the American dilemma,” and John Porter, a well-known Canadian sociologist who sought to liberate “post-industrial” citizens from the chains of ethnic allegiance.²⁸ Thus, while apologists for *The Blacks in Canada* ask us to remember the limits of Winks’s “time,” we may also note his self-conscious attempts to marginalize native intellectuals

influenced by Frantz Fanon, (probably the best-known Black theorist of the twentieth century²⁹) and organic intellectuals influenced by Antonio Gramsci (an Italian neo-Marxist who proposed a “war of position” in which subordinate groups engage in a long struggle in the cultural and ideological spheres.³⁰ More to the point, the picture that adorns the second edition of *The Blacks in Canada* – a panoramic view of King Street School children in Amherstburg from The North American Black Historical Museum & Cultural Centre – expertly exposes the Yale historian’s inability to learn from Black liberals like Dr. Hill. For while Hill read Myrdal’s work as a student,³¹ and engaged with John Porter’s work on the Canadian mosaic, he did not expect modern men to give up the idea of race. As I show in my concluding paragraphs,

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 479; Winks, “The Canadian Negro,” 14. Also see his attack on a Negro “persecution complex” or “paranoia.” Re: Miss Henderson Winks, Blacks in Canada collection, 1956-1972. Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 470.

²⁸ In his preface to the second edition of *The Blacks in Canada*, Winks reflected on his original text and thought, “two books used in some measure as models account for some of its strengths as well as some of its weaknesses. These were Gunnar Myrdal’s classic 1944 work, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, on the nature of Black-White relations in the United States, and John Porter’s 1965 book, *The Vertical Mosaic: an Account of Social Class and Power in Canada*. Winks acknowledged that he might have “too readily accepted the idea of Canada as a mosaic of ethnic identities.” Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, xiv-xv. He didn’t reflect on whether a biracial view of the US derived from a Swedish sociologist might also have had its limitations. Thus, while Winks is correct to claim Myrdal’s work as a classic piece of sociology, he fails to point out that Myrdal’s desire to placate his patrons at the Ford Foundation meant that he compared the perceptions of black Americans to a “frog-perspective.” Rather than appreciating the “dreadful objectivity” of such an outlook, Myrdal claimed that is was, “not a true perspective; and should not be used for wider conclusions concerning the United States,” G Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York, 1944), lix.

²⁹ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: modernity and double consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass., 1993), xi.

³⁰ Gramsci’s writings in *The Modern Prince and other essays* were translated into English in 1957, well before the first publication of *The Blacks in Canada* in 1969. Although Fanon’s *Wretched of the Earth* was only translated into English in 1965, I have already noted how Winks was willing to use Porter’s *Vertical Mosaic*, which was first published in the same year.

³¹ He even spent some time studying social theory in Myrdal’s native land of Sweden.

Hill used his own upbringing and pride in a Negro past to work with “conservative” and “radical” Black nationalists so that they could lead young people away from a supposedly “light grey world.”

Hill’s support for transracial adoption at CACY had made him a target for Black nationalists who believed that it was “impossible for white people to ‘assimilate the Black experience’ and pass it on to Black children.”³² However, such critiques soon became moot when Hill left CACY and the Toronto and North York Social Planning agency due to denominational infighting, and adoption agencies began to seek Black homes for children with “noticeable” African ancestry. They rarely matched Canadian-born children of African descent with guardians who shared the same religious practices or national origins as their biological parents. This does not mean that one should ignore the fact that many Black nationalists in the 1970s and 1980s continued to oppose any interracial relationships, and followed Austin Clarke, the well-known conservative novelist from Barbados, in attacking men who “marry white women and seek to drown their fears and complexes in their wives’ environment ... only

creat[ing] another problem – the problem of producing mulatto children who belong neither to the white world nor the black.”³³ Indeed, after Clarke left his post as managing editor of *Contrast* in 1972 and the Toronto branch of the Universal Negro Improvement Agency held interracial dances, Clova Robinson used the pages of the *Black Canadian* magazine to ask, “How can we have unity on a universal level if our one-on-one relationships and families are falling apart?”³⁴ Furthermore, Barbara Jones questioned “the very soul” of Black men who choose to be with White women and longed for messianic leaders, “untainted by whiteness,” who could inspire Black unity.³⁵ Nonetheless, Dr. Hill never felt the need to respond to questions about his own marriage in public. Rather than spend time dealing with people obsessed with interracial relationships, he quietly, conscientiously and effectively worked with activists who were willing to compare a Black *cultural* group of 1,001 colours to other *ethnically* marked groups in Canada. For example, when he was faced with Blacks who claimed Italian Canadians always “stuck together,”³⁶ Hill didn’t turn to sociologists who deconstructed

³² “Black Heritage: White Home: Is there Hope,” *Contrast* (1 November 1971). Emphasis added. Editors at *Uburu* had earlier denounced the work of the Open Door society, a similar organization to CACY in Montreal, because they believed that Black children were happiest in Black homes. *Uburu*, 1 June 1970.

³³ A. Clarke, “A Black Man Talks About Race Prejudice in White Canada,” *Maclean’s* (20 April 1963).

³⁴ Clova Robinson, “Black men, white women, black women: Conflicting triad,” *Contrast*, 9 August 1979.

³⁵ Barbara Jones, *Contrast* (26 February 1982).

³⁶ “Blacks ... need to draw closer together as the Italians ... and other ethnic and national groups do.” “A lost and ludicrous people?” Willie James, *Spear* (February 1976).

such myths about an Italian Canadian community.³⁷ Instead, he worked with Robert Harney, a prominent historian of the Italian Diaspora at the Multicultural History Society of Ontario, in order to create study guides such as *The Freedom Seekers: Blacks in Early Canada*, as well as oral history records stored at the Ontario Black History Society, which promoted respectable “mulattoes” as role models for Black youth.

In using *The Freedom Seekers* to celebrate people such as William Hubbard, the first acting mayor of Toronto who was called a “mulatto,” and then sponsoring oral history projects for the Ontario Black Historical Society, Hill challenged White academics such as Robin Winks who sneered at attempts to celebrate the “first Negro milkman in Hamilton.”³⁸ Furthermore, he was able to force authoritarian Blacks to reconsider their opposition to “miscegenation,” a pseudo-scientific term coined to address “racial mixing” by White American racists in 1864.³⁹ To give one example, Harry Gairey venerated Marcus Garvey (the demagogic Jamaican-born leader of a United Negro Improvement Agency who warned

his members about the spectre of “racial dilution”⁴⁰) and excluded “mulattoes” like the Hubbards from “real” blackness in the 1930s.⁴¹ Yet when Donna Hill displayed her commitment to multiculturalism in the 1980s by recording Gairey’s life story



William Peyton Hubbard was the first Black alderman in Toronto and became acting mayor of the city. Library and Archives Canada PA 211250.

and supporting his nomination to the Order of Canada, Gairey was more than willing to consider her and Daniel the “greatest

³⁷ Representatives of “the Italian community” were “very individualistic, regionally orientated; there are close-knit groups that are proud of their paese [village of origin].” “We’re a group of communities with a common language.” Out of 55 respondents, 21 (37.2%) could not give the name of a leader. Clifford Jansen and J. Gottfried Paasche, “Unity and Disunity in two Ethnic Groups in Toronto,” 1969 Meeting of the Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association.

³⁸ Winks, Blacks in Canada collection, 1956-1972, Roll 6.

³⁹ D. Croly, *Miscegenation: The theory of the blending of the races, applied to the American White Man and Negro* (New York: H. Dexter, Hamilton & Co., 1864).

⁴⁰ Marcus Garvey, Amy Jacques Garvey, and Essien Udosen Essien-Udom, *More Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey*, II vols. (London, 1977). 56. Also see newspapers inspired by Garvey that labelled “mulattoes” “saboteurs and fifth-columnists.” *Negro Youth* (April 1941).

⁴¹ Gairey disliked the Hubbards because he thought they wouldn’t accept dark-skinned blacks in their

people in Toronto.”⁴² Similarly, Canadian citizenship tempered Austin Clarke’s anti-mulatto sentiment when he found the children of his fellow Caribbean immigrants “belonging” in Canada with Blacks of various skin tones and facial features.⁴³ Leaders of Afro-Canadian groups even drew on Hill’s history books for schoolchildren to argue that just as Whites feel pride, “when the names J.A Macdonald and Winston Churchill are mentioned,” Black children should be proud of “Mary Shadd [the first female editor of a North American newspaper to acknowledge her African ancestry] and William Hubbard.”⁴⁴ It is understandable that individuals wish to claim artists formerly known as “mulattoes” as “Negro firsts,” especially when popular accounts of Canadian and British history prefer to minimise Macdonald’s introduction of the Chinese head tax and Churchill’s vicious attack on Gandhi as a “half-dressed fakir” in favour of their public pronouncements on liberty. Somehow, public intellectuals seeking to uncover the Greatest Britons and Greatest Canadian have tried to excuse

such examples of racism by arguing that Macdonald and Churchill simply reflected “their time.”⁴⁵ This is ironic given the constant attempts to praise such “great men” as revolutionary figures who led, rather than followed, the currents of their day. More pointedly, it erases Mary Shadd’s anti-racism from Macdonald’s “time”, and fails to engage with the fact that William Hubbard served as a Toronto city councillor and condemned racial prejudice during the same period that Churchill entered the House of Commons.

So, while other essays in this special edition have sought to address the gaps in our knowledge of early Canadian history, this paper has incorporated Dr. Daniel Hill III into the time of P.E. Trudeau and Harold Wilson. Lest we forget, Hill played an important role in shaping race relations in the West after serving with CACY. To paraphrase his second son’s first book, he managed to fashion a brand of Black history that inspired many people of African descent to do some great thing.

Home Services Organization. “I didn’t like the way they operated ... I don’t buy cliques ... Now dark me, I’m not going to force myself on you or anybody else. I know what I am, and if you don’t accept me as I am, black, then it’s too bad for you or anybody else ... I don’t think it was based so much on me being a West Indian. At that time the Home Service Association was based on colour. The fairer you are, the more acceptable you become ... I never forced myself into that situation, never. If *you* want to be what *you* are that’s your business, I’m going to stay how I am.” Multicultural History Society of Ontario. BLA-1446-GAI Tape 5/6, Harry Gairey, Interviewed by Donna Hill.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ A. Clarke, *Public Enemies, Police Violence and Black Youth* (Toronto: HarperCollins), 17.

⁴⁴ Thora Espinet, President of The Afro Canadian Congress, speech at the Scarborough civic centre, 17 September 1987.

⁴⁵ See, for example, Charlotte Grey’s defence of J.A. Macdonald on “The Greatest Canadian” (CBC, 2004). When Sook Yin-Lee reminded the audience that Macdonald described the Chinese as “a semi-barbaric, inferior race,” the historian remarked that the man she had earlier praised for his vision and leadership was a mere follower of “his time.” Mo Mowlam made similar points when she campaigned for Winston Churchill to become “The Greatest Briton” (BBC, 2002).