

Black Protest Tradition in Nova Scotia, 1783-1964

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Abstract

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"Black Protest Tradition in Nova Scotia" explores the black community's history of protest in Nova Scotia from the arrival of the Black Loyalists to the destruction of Africville. While the white community in Nova Scotia has economically, politically, and socially marginalized the black community, the black community has resisted this treatment. Although the black community's protest tradition has been limited by ideological constraints, a legacy of protest and resistance has endured in response to an ideology that has been fashioned and refashioned over two centuries to prevent blacks from receiving the rights of first class citizens. This history of resistance has been the dominant influence in any post-Second World War black protest movement in Nova Scotia. Despite an ongoing public perception that black protest activity has been largely derived from the American experience, particularly the civil rights movement, this thesis demonstrates that black protest is firmly rooted in the history of Nova Scotia.

Acknowledgements

I have had a great deal of support since I began this project, which makes it difficult to know who to thank first. I am deeply indebted to my advisor, Colin Howell, for his patience, persistence and guidance in helping me broaden my historical vision and sharpen my academic skills. I have also appreciated the support and advice of Dick Twomey, Jim Morrison and Mike Vance, who have all helped me to grow as a student of history. There are also many others at the University who deserve my gratitude: Ken Clare, Susan Cannon, Sally Wood, Doug Vaisey, and Jackie Logan. I also had some much appreciated technical support along the way, for which I owe Sandy and Tony a great deal.

As I tried to write my thesis in various places across the country, I was often asked what I was writing about. When I explained my thesis topic, people always were interested and encouraging, acknowledging the existence of racism in Canada. No matter where I was, people shared their stories of racism and encouraged the completion of the project. I found such occasions very inspiring. There were times when people shared racist anecdotes instead. Those occasions, although not inspiring, were at least motivating. To my friends who have given me constant support and my acquaintances who have given me encouragement, I thank you.

I cannot write acknowledgements without recognizing the inspiration and encouragement of my own family in this project. My mother's leadership by example and my family's faith and support have not gone unnoticed. Thank you for always being there.

I dedicate this thesis to Violet, who first showed me the foolishness of racism.

Sheridan Hay

Preface

Although I began this thesis a number of years ago, my desire to explore this topic started much earlier. My first experience with race occurred when I was only six years old. My family had recently arrived in South Africa - birthplace of my father and mother - and we were staying with my mother's parents in Pretoria. I was introduced to their servant, Violet, who was considered to be 'part of the family'. Unaware of the social ramifications of the apartheid regime, I wondered why one 'part of the family' stayed in a small shack in the back of the yard and performed the majority of the household chores. Everywhere I went, black people seemed to be performing similar tasks for white people. Although I felt uncomfortable, I did become accustomed to blacks being servants, and from my six year old point of view, I presumed they liked their position. With the exception of my immediate family, adults around me seemed to believe the same, perhaps because they had grown up in a society that encouraged and strictly enforced black servitude. If I could begin to accept blacks' servitude in a matter of months, it is not hard to imagine what the result would be if one were surrounded by such a regime for a lifetime.

None of my immediate family members were ever comfortable with the conditions Violet lived or worked under. I do not believe that either myself or my siblings had consciously

worked out a critique of apartheid, but I do know that, to us, Violet was 'family' first and black second. At that time, I was unaware that an ideology lay behind the apartheid regime; an ideology that constructed two houses. My house, the house of my family and the white community, provided many political, social and economic opportunities. It was a house that others could only enter if they were invited, and even then, they had to follow orders. The other house, Violet's house, was a small one, with few opportunities and little freedom. Violet could only leave that house when beckoned by the white community. It was an ideology that depended on the maintenance of two houses, which was accomplished by relentless repression of the non-white community rather than their cooperation.

By the time I was thirteen, we were living in Ottawa and my mother had become involved with the anti-apartheid movement. Throughout my teenage years and beyond, I was immersed in anti-apartheid literature, activists and discussion. Learning from literature and first-hand accounts about the horrors of the apartheid regime, I was confronted with an overt system of racism. Hearing the inspiring testimonies of dedicated activists and witnessing the commitment of my mother to the defeat of apartheid in her native country, I felt inspired and unsettled at the same time. I was inspired by my mother's commitment, and as much as I involved myself in anti-apartheid activities, I knew that

racism existed in Canada too, and that as a member of the white community, I had a responsibility to confront its existence here. The trouble was, I knew little about the nature of racism in this country, which encouraged me to inquire into its past.

This thesis explores the ideology that was constructed in Nova Scotia from the arrival of the Black Loyalists to the destruction of Africville. It was an ideology that managed to marginalize the black community socially, economically and politically without being as consistently overt as the Southern United States or South Africa. It was an ideology that divided the working class, separated black men and women from white men and women, and secured control by a dominant elite. The power of this ideology is demonstrated by examining the black community's resistance to their marginalization and the difficulty even the black community had of being able to resist the hegemonic power of the ideology. Drawing from both Canadian and some American historical scholarship, the intent of this thesis is to bring to light the ideological construction of race in Nova Scotia, the nature of the black community's resistance to it and how that tradition of protest was the most influential force in the civil rights movement which was to follow, rather than being a movement that was derived from the American movement. By defining race as a social construction rather than a biological reality, racism in Canadian history can be exposed

as a Canadian creation, rather than an imported phenomenon, and rooted in the actions of Canadians, rather than being the result of a timeless and foundationless prejudice of one group of people towards another.

The first chapter provides a survey of relevant historical scholarship. This chapter looks at how racism in Canada has been overlooked and what scholarship now exists that will help in understanding race, ideology and resistance. The central questions that this chapter explores are how race has and should be defined, the meaning of resistance in the context of a repressive ideology and how Canadian scholars have denied blacks recognition for agency. The second chapter examines the construction of a racist ideology in the social, economic and political life of Nova Scotia from the arrival of the Black Loyalists to the beginning of the Second World War. This chapter demonstrates how the black community initially provided a labour pool and were maintained in that subservient position by the constant and pervasive act of defining blacks as slavish, lazy, helpless and content. Such perceptions were reinforced in various contexts, such as education, entertainment, leisure and the media, and later, through popular notions of science.

The third chapter explores the resistance of the black community to this ideology of race in the same time period, at times challenging the white community through petitions and organizations such as the AUBA. At other times, the black

community accepted the difficulty of their position and encouraged more accommodationist strategies, such as setting up the Home for Colored Children, which taught children skills that would provide limited employment opportunities. This, in turn, instilled limited aspirations. In chapter four, black community resistance from the end of the Second World War to the destruction of Africville is examined, focusing on how the tradition of protest and the inability of the black community to escape the power of the ideology limited the success of their resistance efforts. By the time Africville's first house was bulldozed, the black community no longer subscribed to the hegemonic ideology that surrounded them and lost faith in the society they had once trusted.

The black community's tradition of resistance demonstrates not only the existence of racism in Canada, but of an ideology of race that has been able to resist challenges and capable of adapting itself to the social, political and economic life of Canada for two centuries. This thesis explores that tradition.

Chapter One

Racism is a problem in Canada. Such a simple statement might seem obvious to some people, while to others it represents a rash oversimplification of the social, cultural and economic challenges that the people of Canada face. There is no doubt that the term racism simplifies a complex problem. For the Black community in Nova Scotia, racism has been a very real problem for a few hundred years. This racism has not been an inevitable historical process, rooted in either innate prejudice between groups or the natural superiority of one group of people over another. Nor has the black community's marginal position in Nova Scotia come about naturally, with blacks seeking low wage employment, social segregation and limited educational opportunities.

However, racism is not an explanation for the black community's marginalization. Racism as a term only names the problem, it does not explain why or what it is:¹ an ideology that has been socially constructed to marginalize non-white communities and maintain an unequal balance of social, economic and political power in favour of a ruling white minority. It is an ideology that has been challenged by the blacks in Nova Scotia for centuries.

Unfortunately, while historical scholarship focusing on

¹Barbara Jeanne Fields, "Slavery, Race and Ideology in the United States of America," New Left Review No.181 May/June 1990: 100.

the African Nova Scotian community has demonstrated that the black community has been victimized economically and politically, it has not adequately explained the reason for their marginal status nor their response to it. Studies have only presented what has resulted from centuries of racism, failing to explore why the racism existed in Nova Scotia originally, what forms it has taken or how it continues to survive at the end of the twentieth century. By exploring the African Nova Scotian community's response to marginalization and discrimination, the racism being challenged can also be exposed. It is through those challenges to the ideology of race that the motivation behind the racism and the ideas that support it can be seen most clearly.² Kay Anderson has argued in Vancouver's Chinatown that the Chinese have faced "hostile receiving populations" and serve as good "commentaries on the attitudes and behaviour of the host societies."³ Black settlements in Nova Scotia should be examined for the same reasons.

One place to begin examining the response of the black

²Kay Anderson, Vancouver's Chinatown (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991): 9.

³Ibid, p.9. It is the commentary revealed by such an examination that is the subject of this study. While focusing on the black community in Nova Scotia, the intention of this thesis is not to provide a history of African Nova Scotians. Instead, the intent is to expose and understand the racism that shaped the last two centuries of Nova Scotian history, both for the black Nova Scotians who were faced with racism and the white community that maintained it.

community is in the years directly following the Second World War. It was a period of potential change that was taken advantage of by the black community in the United States, and it raises the question of what the black community in Canada was doing at the same time. If there was no movement in Canada, why not? The answer that would follow from much historical scholarship would suggest that Canada was the land of freedom, that slavery did not exist here and that racism did not exist here, or that the black community failed to react to their marginalization.⁴ If there was a movement, it was a movement that responded to a Canada that was a land of freedom for some, slavery for some and racism for all.

The question of whether or not there was a civil rights movement in Nova Scotia, or anywhere in Canada, is an important place to begin challenging the assumption that racism is only an American problem. Adrienne Shadd writes in "Institutionalized Racism and Canadian History: Notes of a Black Canadian" that "racism is, and always has been, one of the bedrock institutions of Canadian society."⁵ Canada's racism is Canadian, shaped by Canadian attitudes, acted upon

⁴For the experiences of blacks in other provinces see: Crawford Kilian, Go Do Some Great Thing: The Black Pioneers of British Columbia (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1978); Robin W. Winks Blacks in Canada (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1971); James W. St. G. Walker A History of Blacks in Canada (Hull: Minister of State, Multiculturalism, 1980).

⁵Adrienne Shadd, "Institutionalized Racism in Canadian History: Notes of a Black Canadian," Racism in Canada Ormond McKague, ed. Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers, 1991): 1.

by Canadian people, endured by Canadian people and perpetuated in different forms for centuries in Canadian regions. Consequently, the responses to this racism have been uniquely Canadian, and should be understood in this context.

So why has this topic not been explored earlier? There are two main reasons for this, both of which revolve around the unwillingness to recognize the agency of the black community in the shaping of history. For as long as there has been a black community in Canada, historical scholarship has consistently failed to recognize the African Canadian population's agency in history or consider their role important enough to be included in the historical record. What has been written has perpetuated a stereotype of docility. As Henry Giroux points out in Border Crossings: Cultural Workers and the Politics of Education, the black community "is not highlighted for its resiliency amidst the most degrading economic and social conditions but is condemned as a cause of its own misery."⁶ An example of such treatment is evident in Blacks in Canada, the first comprehensive African-Canadian history. The 1971 publication, written by Robin W. Winks, argued that blacks in Canada "were often responsible for their own plight, since they by no means made use of all the channels of opportunity or all the roads to

⁶Henry Giroux, Border Crossings: Cultural Workers and the Politics of Education (New York: Routledge, 1992): 112.

progress and all the sources open to them."⁷ There is another damaging portrayal of blacks in Forgotten Canadians: The Blacks of Nova Scotia, where Frances Henry wrote that blacks "come out of a conservative, subservient tradition" and "accept[ed] their under-educated status as inevitable."⁸ Even as late as 1985, a Canadian sociology reader contains an article stating that "there is no parallel in the Canadian historical record for the experience of American blacks...[that] there has been no history of slavery" and that Canada is "lacking the black experience."⁹

The black community has also been denied historical agency by the Canadian sociologist Donald Clairmont. Clairmont has written a large number of articles and books about the marginal position of the black community in Nova Scotian society, particularly focusing on Africville¹⁰ and the destruction of that settlement in the 1960s.¹¹ Clairmont

⁷Robin W. Winks, Blacks in Canada: A History (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1971): 480.

⁸Frances Henry, Forgotten Canadians: The Blacks of Nova Scotia (Don Mills: Longman Canada Limited, 1973): xii,3.

⁹Neil Nevitte and Roger Gibbins, "Minorities as an Attitudinal Phenomenon: A Comparative Analysis of Youth Elites," Minorities and the Canadian State (Oakville: Mosaic Press, 1985) Neil Nevitte and Allan Kornberg, eds.: 257, 271.

¹⁰Africville was a black settlement just outside of Halifax, that existed for over 120 years until a redevelopment program initiated by the City of Halifax forced the residents to relocate, with the last resident leaving in 1968. The houses on the settlement were bulldozed and cleared.

¹¹Some of Clairmont's more notable books and articles are: Africville: The Life and Death of a Canadian Black Community

acknowledges that the black community, from at least the arrival of the black Loyalists, has been "petitioning the Imperial Government to fulfil its promises concerning land and provisions" but still maintains that the black community suffers from a "belated realization of a distinctive subculture" and reacted to racism with a "migrate or accommodate response"¹² or at best only "gently prodded the White power structure in an attempt to negate the...discrimination against them."¹³ Despite his revealing analyses of the economic conditions blacks have faced and continue to face, Clairmont fails to acknowledge the vitality

(Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974) co-written with Dennis Magill; "Africville: An Historical Overview," in The Spirit of Africville edited by Africville Genealogy Society (Halifax: Formac Publishing Company, 1992); Nova Scotia Blacks: An Historical and Structural Overview (Halifax: Dalhousie Institute of Public Affairs, 1970) co-written with Dennis Magill; "Blacks and Whites: The Nova Scotia Race Relations Experience" co-written with Fred Wien in Banked Fires: The Ethnics of Nova Scotia (Port Credit: Scribblers' Press, 1978); and "Nova Scotia Blacks: Marginal People in a Depressed Region" co-written with Dennis Magill in Social Process and Institution: The Canadian Case, James E. Gallagher, ed. (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971).

¹²Donald H. Clairmont and Dennis William Magill, Africville: The Life and Death of a Canadian Black Community (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 1974): 41, 44.

¹³Donald H. Clairmont and Dennis W. Magill, "Nova Scotia Blacks: Marginal People in a Depressed Region," Social Process and Institution: The Canadian Case James E. Gallagher, ed. (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada, 1971): 487.

of the black community's struggle for recognition.¹⁴

A second reason why the agency of blacks in Canada has been ignored is that it has been judged by American standards. Any action taken that is not equivalent in scale and breadth is ignored.¹⁵ As a result, despite centuries of overt action, a movement for civil rights in Nova Scotia has been seen as starting only in the 1960s, heavily influenced and driven by the leaders and ideas which steered the civil rights movement in the United States.¹⁶ Although encouraged by the American civil rights movement, the inspiration for change came from a

¹⁴This failure to recognize the contribution and achievements of the black community has been evident in American historical scholarship as well. Until quite recently, American historians based their view of blacks on inaccurate stereotypes which allowed the black community to be marginalized and their actions negated. As Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman point out in Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery (Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1974), "whatever the cause, the innate inferiority of the Negro race was said to manifest itself in laziness, limited intellectual capacity, a childlike simplicity, docility, sensuousness, and tempestuousness" (p.216). For too long the "racist depiction of black history" remained, employing either "a discredited biological justification for the inferiority of blacks" or "a respectable and acceptable sociological justification" for the political and social position of the black community (p.259).

¹⁵Paula Denice McClain points out in Alienation and Resistance: The Political Behavior of Afro-Canadians (Palo Alto: R & E Research Associates, Inc., 1979), any "explanation for the 'lesser degree' of racism is found in the size of the black population and not in the racial values of white Canadians" (p.1).

¹⁶Examples of such scholarship include: Africville: The Life and Death of a Black Community by Donald H. Clairmont and Dennis Magill (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd, 1974) and The Blacks in Canada: A History by Robin W. Winks (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1971).

long history of struggle by the black community for political and social recognition and access to the opportunities and benefits that they considered to be their right. For African Nova Scotians, the fight for civil rights did not begin with the 1964 March on Selma¹⁷ or Stokely Carmichael's visit to Halifax in 1968,¹⁸ but as early as 1783, with the arrival of the first Black Loyalist.¹⁹ Nor did it end with the exodus of many prominent blacks in 1792 to Sierra Leone or the return of many black Americans to the United States after the Civil War.

¹⁷Winks called the 1964 March on Selma "a rallying cry for Canadians." Robin W. Winks, "The Canadian Negro: A Historical Assessment" Journal of Negro History Vol.53 No.4 1968: 300. Adrienne Shadd would disagree with such a late start. In her article "Institutionalized Racism and Canadian History: Notes of a Black Canadian", she refers to the achievements of Ontario-based civil rights organizations who challenged "segregation in housing accommodations...and employment as well as racist immigration laws" throughout the 1940s and 1950s (p.3).

¹⁸Stokely Carmichael, a leader of the American Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in the United States and a member of the Black Panther Party visited Halifax in October and November, 1968. His visit caused tension between the black and white communities and was considered by some to be "the most significant event ever to take place among Black people in this province." A detailed account of the discussion surrounding the visit can be found in Jennifer B. Smith's "Halifax, Nova Scotia and the Black Panther Party."

¹⁹In response to the American Revolution and the anti-British sentiment that it grew out of, Americans who remained loyal to the Crown were offered land and protection in the British colonies of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Although the majority of these United Empire Loyalists, or Loyalists as they came to be called, were white, both free blacks and those in bondage were also offered land and freedom as a reward for their loyalty. For a detailed study of the Black Loyalists, see James W. St. G. Walker's The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone 1783-1870 (Halifax: Dalhousie University Press, 1976).

American scholarship reveals the consequences of ignoring the earlier period. In the American experience, there is not one answer to the question of the movement's beginning. As recent scholarship has pointed out, "the movement's history has been written as if events before the mid-1950s constituted a kind of prehistory, important only insofar as they laid the legal and political foundation for the spectacular advances that came later."²⁰ This stems from a common belief that the civil rights movement in the United States began in 1954, following the Supreme Court's decision on the *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* case, which outlawed segregation in the United States.²¹ But such a view ignores a much longer history of protest, neglecting to recognize "a tradition of core values... [such as] freedom, self-determination, and education, which formed during slavery and upon which the movement of the

²⁰Robert Korstad and Nelson Lichtenstein, "Opportunities Found and Lost: Labor, Radicals, and the Early Civil Rights Movement" Journal of American History Vol.75 No.3 December 1988: 786.

²¹One example of this is Juan William's Eyes on the Prize: The History of America's Civil Rights Years, 1954-1965 (New York: Viking, 1987). This date is seen as significant in Canada as well, considered to be the first time either the black or white community realized "the far-reaching role played by the school in the more generalized problems of race relations." Winks argues that blacks in Canada accepted "the separate but equal formula into the 1950s, long after Negroes in the United States...had discarded the idea." Robin W. Winks, Blacks in Canada: A History (Montreal:McGill-Queen's University Press, 1971): 362.

1950s and 1960s drew for intellectual sustenance."²² As Doug McAdam points out in Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency 1930-1970, with few exceptions, most

treatments of the black movement date its beginnings with either the Montgomery bus boycott of 1955-56 or the 1954 Supreme Court decision in the Brown case. Nonetheless, to single them out serves...to obscure the less dramatic but ultimately more significant trends that shaped the prospects for later insurgency.... Later events such as the 1954 decision and the Montgomery bus boycott merely served as dramatic capstones to these processes.²³

Michael J. Klarman points out in "How Brown Changed Race Relations: The Backlash Thesis," that the Supreme Court decision was not

needed to legitimize civil rights demands in the eyes of blacks...The democratic ideology of World War II and the greater opportunities for political and economic advance that the War afforded had already fostered a civil rights consciousness in

²²Richard H. King, Civil Rights and the Idea of Freedom (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992): 3. The *Brown v. Board of Education* decision itself was the end result of a long series of cases that had been brought to the U.S. Supreme Court which had challenged the "separate but equal" doctrine that had been established with the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision of 1896. According to Juan Williams in Eyes on the Prize: The History of America's Civil Rights Years, 1954-1965, the case that began the process of desegregation was *Murray v. University of Maryland*, decided in 1936, forcing the University of Maryland to integrate its graduate program. Despite the recognition that Williams gives this case, the periodization of the movement still begins in 1954 with the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

²³Doug McAdam, Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982): 3.

most American blacks.²⁴

Aldon Morris also questions when the American Civil Rights Movement began. In The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing For Change, he argues that "organized protest against white domination has always been one of the cornerstones of the black experience [and]...the modern civil rights movement fits solidly into this rich tradition of protest."²⁵ Morris links the movement to "the activism of the 1940s via civil rights organizations and activists who played important roles in both periods."²⁶ Robert Korstad and Nelson Lichtenstein have argued persuasively that the civil rights movement has its beginnings in labor politics of the 1940s, and that to consider the movement beginning in the 1950s "profoundly underestimates the tempo and misjudges the social dynamic of the freedom struggle."²⁷ Jack Bloom argues that, by the middle of the

²⁴Michael J. Klarman, "How Brown Changed Race Relations: The Backlash Thesis," Journal of American History Vol.81 No.1 June 1994: 88.

²⁵Aldon Morris, Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change (New York: The Free Press, 1984): x.

²⁶Ibid, p.x.

²⁷Korstad and Lichtenstein, "Opportunities Found and Lost," p.786. Judith Stein noted in The World of Marcus Garvey: Race and Class in Modern Society (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986) that after World War Two, black activists "incorporated working-class modes of politics: the boycott, sit-in, strike and demonstration replaced the petition, lawsuit, [and] parade" (p.6).

1940s "a new mood was...sweeping the black communities...fuelled by an increasing sense of power that blacks had and an increased indignation concerning [their] treatment" by the white community.²⁸ A good example of such power was the New Deal labor legislation that "offered working class blacks an economic and political standard by which they could legitimate their demands and stimulate popular struggle."²⁹ As Klarman points out, "the existence of a vibrant civil rights movement during and after the war confirms that *Brown* was not necessary as an impetus to challenge the racial status quo."³⁰

With so much evidence to prove the existence of a vibrant civil rights movement before 1954 in the United States, the need to look further back in Canadian history for answers about a Canadian civil rights movement becomes apparent. As long as Canadian historical scholarship does not recognize the active resistance of the black community prior to the 1960s, and continues to accept Winks' assertion that the black community had been in political hibernation until that time, the longer the historical agency of the black community will

²⁸Jack Bloom, Class, Race and the Civil Rights Movement (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987): 77.

²⁹Korstad and Lichtenstein, "Opportunities Found and Lost," p.787. The Fair Employment Practices Committee in particular exposed "racist conditions and [helped] spur on black activism" (p.787).

³⁰Klarman, p.89.

remain obscure.

That may all soon change. Recent historical scholarship from both Canada and the United States has begun to ask probing questions about the concept of race, the hegemony that maintains it and the ideology that supports it. Such scholarship supports a reexamination of the accepted understanding of the black community's role in Nova Scotian history.³¹

³¹African-American history has been revised to reveal the involvement of the black community in shaping America's history and the choices they have made which have, at different times, both improved and weakened their position in society. One of the earliest examples of such scholarship is Herbert Aptheker's ground-breaker, American Negro Slave Revolts (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), which challenged the attempts of earlier scholarship "to affirm the inherent, indelible and significant inferiority" of blacks (p.2). The previously cited Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery presents a particularly enlightening account of the conscious role blacks played in challenging their position and making the best of their enslavement. The book records "black achievement under adversity," (p.264) and challenges the perception that "slavery had encouraged blacks to be slovenly and to prefer indolence to industry, to be evasive, to lie, and to steal" as well as the promotion of the idea of the "innate inferiority of the Negro race" (p.217, 216). Another work worthy of mention is Kenneth M. Stamp's article "Rebels and Sambos," which challenges the argument made in Elkin's book A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life (Chicago: University of Chicago press, 1976) that blacks were submissive, arguing instead that blacks "developed a semiautonomous Afro-American subculture" and practised "the art of conscious accommodation" in order to cope with their situation (Stamp, p.386-7).

Another significant contribution is Eugene D. Genovese's Roll Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974). Genovese's detailed study provides some much needed insight, demonstrating how "the slaves' fatalism and apathy became weapons of resistance embodying the opposite of that loss of will which so many have read into it" and how the community's survival "required an active accommodationism which...had to combine a spirit of defiance with all the tactics of getting along" (p.641, 629). George

Canadian historical scholarship has moved toward greater recognition of the black community's contribution in shaping the history of Nova Scotia and other regions of Canada. The influential work of James W. St. G. Walker challenges the thesis that "black Nova Scotians have been submissive...[and] have accepted their position of social and economic inferiority and have relied upon others...to fight their battles."³² Instead, he points out that

what appears in a narrow slice of time as submissiveness or surrender, can be understood from the historical perspective as a tactic of non-confrontation and self-sufficiency to prepare the black community for full participation in Nova Scotian society; it was a means, not an end...[and] was a realistic assessment of the restrictions imposed upon them by white society.³³

Others have brought to light the active role of the black

P. Rawick in From Sundown to Sunup: The Making of the Black Community (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Company, 1972) argues that "black history...must be viewed as an integral part of the history of the American people" and that the black slave community managed to prevent themselves "from becoming the absolute victim" (p.xiii, xix). Genovese's study also illustrated the unique culture created by the slaves and the ways they challenged their white oppressors. What makes such work significant is that the black community is not portrayed as so deeply and indelibly affected by slavery as to be forever impeded from learning and leading. As Alexander Saxton points out in The Rise and Fall of the White Republic, too much historical scholarship has argued that the legacy of slavery has "inflicted psychocultural damage on African Americans that extend[s] far beyond those generations actually exposed to slavery," thus leaving those African-Americans and African-Canadians who are descendants of enslaved blacks under slavery as a permanently deficient group (p.10-13).

³²James W. St. G. Walker, Black Identity in Nova Scotia: Community and Institutions in Historical Perspective (Dartmouth: Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia, 1983): 1.

³³Ibid, p.19 and 15.

community in challenging their marginal social and economic position in society. Sylvia Hamilton points out that, within the black community, there has been a long "struggle forward in the activist tradition that provides the framework necessary for social and institutional change" as black women have sought "to build a place of equality not only for themselves but for their children."³⁴ Judith Fingard demonstrates that there was an "assertion of black rights" in the late nineteenth century, with the black community challenging the segregation of schools in 1883 as well as taking the initiative in other areas.³⁵ Bridglal Pachai, too, recognizes that the black community's "concerns and commitment remained strong as they persisted in sending petitions to government for financial help so that their children could be educated,"³⁶ yet he, like Clairmont and Winks, seems unwilling to concede that the black community's response to racism has overwhelmingly been one of action and challenge.

One of the obstacles that has faced historians in interpreting resistance by any marginalized community has been

³⁴Sylvia Hamilton, "The Women at the Well: African Baptist Women Organize," And Still We Rise: Feminist Political Mobilizing in Contemporary Canada Linda Carty, ed. (Toronto: Women's Press, 1993): 189-203.

³⁵Judith Fingard, "Race and Respectability in Victorian Halifax," The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History Vol.20 No.2 May 1992: 169.

³⁶Bridglal Pachai, Beneath the Clouds of the Promised Land: The Survival of Nova Scotia's Blacks Volume II: 1800-1989 (Halifax: Black Educators' Association of Nova Scotia, 1990): 62.

understanding what forms resistance has taken. Recent American social history has questioned the traditional emphasis on politics. As James C. Scott argues in Domination and the Arts of Resistance,

so long as we confine our conception of the political to activity that is openly declared we are driven to conclude that subordinate groups essentially lack a political life or that what political life they do have is restricted to those exceptional moments of popular explosion.³⁷

Scott argues that any "popular explosion" that occurs must have "a "prehistory" that explains its capacity to produce political breakthroughs,"³⁸ breakthroughs such as the civil rights movement in the United States. This prehistory includes the black community's "daily conflicts and the social and cultural spaces where ordinary people felt free to articulate their opposition."³⁹ In historical scholarship such as Scott's, the acts of resistance are seen in the context of what means the community had to respond to their position, such as in the area of employment, where, as Robin D.G. Kelley points out, African-Americans

devised a whole array of creative strategies, including slowdowns, theft, ...leaving work early, or quitting, in order to control the pace of work,

³⁷James C. Scott, Domination and the Arts of Resistance (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990): 199.

³⁸Ibid, p.227.

³⁹Robin D. G. Kelley, "'We Are Not What We Seem': Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South," Journal of American History Vol.80 No.1 June 1993: 76.

increase wages, compensate for underpayment, reduce hours, and seize more personal autonomy.⁴⁰

The fresh insight of such scholarship on the role African-Americans played in American history is crucial for understanding modern America and the forces that have shaped it. Scott argues that such action "is the building block for the more elaborate institutionalized political action that could not exist without it."⁴¹ This has also been important in understanding the civil rights movement. Steven Lawson points out that:

by aiming their sights at the grassroots level, where detailed examination of the culture of black communities is possible, scholars can address not only the legacy of black radicalism but also the larger and equally critical issue of whether the freedom movement of the 1950s and 1960s continued a previous protest tradition or started a new one.⁴²

It is such a perspective that is necessary for illuminating the form the black community's response to racism took in Canada prior to and following the Second World War.

⁴⁰Ibid, p.89. Kelley also points out that "the safety and ideological security of the South required that pilfering, slowdowns, absenteeism, tool breaking, and other acts of black working class resistance be turned into ineptitude, laziness, shiftlessness and immorality" (p.93). Herbert Aptheker suggests in American Negro Slave Revolts (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943) that slaves' protest took many forms, such as "theivishness, irresponsibility, flight, assassination, arson,...self-injury, infanticide...group flights,...conspiracy and uprising" and questions what political action could stem from it (p.3).

⁴¹Scott, p.201.

⁴²Steven Lawson, "Freedom Then, Freedom Now: The Historiography of the Civil Rights Movement," American Historical Review Vol.96 No.2 April 1991: 464.

Although this new understanding of resistance helps in understanding the subtleties of the African Nova Scotians challenges to marginalization, it does not begin to explain the process that marginalized the black community or sought to maintain them in the social, political or economic periphery. It is first necessary to put to rest some assumptions about racism, assumptions that have limited the question of why communities of people are discriminated against instead of questioning the very concept of race.

One assumption is that racism has always existed, having no beginning or end. As Barbara Jeanne Fields points out in her article "Slavery, Race and Ideology in the United States," race is "an ideology...[that] came into existence at a discernable moment for rationally understandable, historical reasons."⁴³ Henry Giroux describes the ideology of race as "a historical and social construction that seeps into social practices, needs, the unconscious, and rationality itself."⁴⁴ Kay Anderson in Vancouver's Chinatown argues that the creation of racial categories and the justification for discrimination that came with it was not an inevitable process, but arose out of the interests of the dominant white community.⁴⁵ The question that surfaces is why and how did it arise in Nova Scotia: what was the benefit of marginalizing the black

⁴³Fields, p.101.

⁴⁴Giroux, p.112.

⁴⁵Anderson, p.18, 63.

community?

At this point it will be helpful to look at the second assumption about racism, which is that it is caused by prejudice, which simply "implies that white fears...followed somehow unproblematically from the encounter of two groups."⁴⁶ Anderson dismisses prejudice as an explanation for racism by stating that

unless the argument is advanced that anti-Chinese feeling (and the policies it informed) were natural, inevitable responses, the question is begged: why were (and are) white people prejudiced? The white racism thesis stops short of this question, fixing (implicitly) in some mythical human nature the historically and culturally shifting process of ascribing, with markers of skin colour and cultural practices, the "difference" of "race" itself.⁴⁷

Anderson also rejects any explanation of race that is rooted in "biology or nature," arguing instead that race and the prejudice that has surrounded any racial categorization is created and perpetuated by "history and society."⁴⁸ To understand how racism has manifested itself, Anderson argues that it is not the prejudices of the white community that need to be explored, but "the ideology of racial difference that

⁴⁶Ibid, p.19.

⁴⁷Ibid, p.19.

⁴⁸Ibid, p.6. Fields also believes that the concept of race is historically rooted, arguing that "if race is defined as innate and natural prejudice of colour...an insurmountable problem arises: since race is not genetically programmed, racial prejudice cannot be genetically programmed...[but] must arise historically" (p.101).

informs it."⁴⁹ The status of Chinese immigrants as cheap labourers was shaped and perpetuated by "the force of ideological conceptions of the Chinese as a category and the effectiveness of official representations of them as alien."⁵⁰ The question that arises, then, is not how they were treated as cheap labour, but what the motivation and justification was for their subjugation. It is a question that has a great deal of relevance for the black community in Nova Scotia. Black Loyalists and Black Refugees suffered a similar fate upon their arrival in Nova Scotia, when they were expected to work for land that had been promised them unconditionally or were denied the land grants entirely and expected to work as labourers for low wages.⁵¹

To understand what would be the motivation or benefit of marginalizing the black community in Nova Scotia, it will help to turn to the work of David Roediger and his definition of "whiteness." In The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class, Roediger describes how working class whiteness was a tragic accompaniment to class formation in a slaveholding republic. White workers distanced themselves from blacks who were in slavery in order to convince themselves that they were much freer than slaves because they were wage earners, even if they were virtually

⁴⁹Anderson, p.19.

⁵⁰Ibid, p.22.

⁵¹See Walker, Black Loyalists.

slaves to the industrial factory owners who dictated their working hours and incomes. With the large mixture of cultures in the working class, a colour line seemed the most acceptable boundary to separate the free from the enslaved, also convenient due to the existence of slavery - by that time limited to blacks - in the Southern United States. Thus whiteness is based on the oppression of blacks, a cultural fabrication that is defined by not being black and so is "precisely the absence of culture...the empty and terrifying attempt to build an identity based on what one isn't and on whom one can hold back."⁵²

Whiteness can also be found in Canadian history and culture. Roediger argues that "to ignore white ethnicity is to redouble its hegemony by naturalizing it."⁵³ Fields' arguments shed some important light, as she demonstrates the "implicit" belief of "most Americans...that there is really only one race, the Negro race."⁵⁴ It is an argument that could be extended to communities in Canada, such as the Chinese in British Columbia or the blacks in Nova Scotia. For Nova Scotia, those who benefited most from constructing the ideology of race were the white groups who governed the

⁵²David R. Roediger, The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class (New York: Verso, 1991): 13.

⁵³David R. Roediger, Towards the Abolition of Whiteness (New York: Verso, 1994): 12.

⁵⁴Fields, p.97.

province and had "the power of definition in cultural and ideological terms."⁵⁵ The largest benefit of having different races was to enable those in power to justify denying rights and privileges to certain groups of people,⁵⁶ people of a different cultural origin, colour or language.

The history of the black community in Nova Scotia has demonstrated that there has been nothing neutral about racial classification and definition. For example, names for areas like "Africville" in Halifax or "Nigger Hill" in Truro are hardly neutral, especially when "no corresponding term - 'Anglotown' - existed in local parlance, nor were residents...known as 'whites'."⁵⁷ This affected the residents of these communities as well, since however the "residents defined themselves and each other...the settlements were perceived by Europeans through lenses of their own tinting."⁵⁸ As Anderson points out,

the modern race idea inherited and derived its strength from a European cognitive package that since precapitalist times distinguished West and East, civilized and uncivilized, Christian and heathen, and master and slave.⁵⁹

The persuasiveness of such an ideology, particularly to the group that benefits from it, is one of its great dangers.

⁵⁵Anderson, p.25.

⁵⁶Fields, p.114.

⁵⁷Anderson, p.30, 29.

⁵⁸Ibid, p.30.

⁵⁹Ibid, p.22.

Fields points out that ideologies "do their job when they help insiders make sense of the things they do and see...on a daily basis," convincing themselves of the logic and rationality of the dominant attitudes and beliefs "that they live and create from day to day."⁶⁰ The hegemonic culture built upon and continually recreating and reinforcing this ideology, entrenches the "ideas, practices, and social relations that reflect the interests of...[the] dominant sector...which come to permeate society's private and institutional domains."⁶¹

The negative repercussions of this ideology's ongoing reenforcement and construction are evident in Nova Scotia. For the black community in Nova Scotia, where slavery thrived into the early nineteenth century, the association of blacks with slavery had devastating effects, as "people are more readily perceived as inferior by nature when they are already seen as oppressed."⁶² For a group that was distinct by their colour, and eventually by their association with slavery, black Nova Scotians were continually marginalized as white Nova Scotians sought ways to justify and maintain their dominant position.

This is something that was aided by the black community's response to their marginality - by retreating to all-black settlements. Living in settlements, the black community found

⁶⁰Fields, p.110.

⁶¹Anderson, p.23.

⁶²Fields, p.106.

for themselves a place of security and strength, but their segregation brought some negative side effects. Black settlements, such as 'Africville', suffered a similar fate as Chinatowns did in British Columbia, where

"Chinatown" accrued a field of meaning that became the context and justification for recurring rounds of government practice in the ongoing construction of both the place and the racial category.⁶³

The racial ideology also helped discrimination against the Chinese and other groups to become embedded "in structures that over time reciprocally reproduced it."⁶⁴

From the arrival of the Black Loyalists to the return of soldiers from the Second World War, the black community in Nova Scotia witnessed and challenged the ongoing construction of an ideology of race. To appreciate the challenges made by the black community, the next chapter will explore how this ideology manifested itself and how the white community established a culture of whiteness by attempting to exclude blacks from the political, social and cultural life of Nova Scotia.

⁶³Anderson, p.31.

⁶⁴Anderson, p.24.

Chapter Two

Before any movement for black civil rights in Nova Scotia can be explored, what the black community was responding to needs to be understood. For Nova Scotia, from as early as the arrival of the Black Loyalists, an ideology of race has marginalized the black community politically, socially and economically. This ideology, upon examination, should provide an answer to a question that Alexander Saxton raises in The Rise and Fall of the White Republic:

how has racism reproduced patterns of racially differential behavior for more than three centuries through shifts of ruling class power and across a spectrum of labor systems from slavery to wage labor?⁶⁵

Saxton points out that an ideological approach to racism requires determining what "socioeconomic nutriments" provided the "sustenance" for racism. He argues that an ideological approach is the most effective since "it promises to meet a pressing need by providing a historical explanation for the differential treatment of racial minorities."⁶⁶

Such an approach is desperately needed in African-Canadian historical scholarship. One leading scholar, James W. St. G. Walker, despite his insightful and groundbreaking work, believes that "Canada developed no ideology of racism" and that "our multicultural ideal is inherently incompatible

⁶⁵Saxton, p.16.

⁶⁶Ibid, p.16, 17.

with racism."⁶⁷ However, Walker does believe that racism exists. Walker argues that whites

have set for blacks a service role, a low position on the economic and social status pyramid, and have regarded blacks as suitable and happy in an economic position characterized by labour on behalf of others.⁶⁸

His explanation for this is that Canadians "have unconsciously put into practice the impressions we received from other societies," such as Britain and the United States, where "Canadians received an impression of what blacks were like, what their alleged capacities were, how they should behave and what place they should occupy in society."⁶⁹ Not only does this explanation pass the blame for institutional racism in Canada onto other countries and cultures, but it suggests that blacks have accepted the marginal position given to them by whites.

This explanation is unsatisfactory, especially since Walker argues that

white Canadians have had an image of blacks which has generally been translated into a 'place' for blacks in Canadian society. With few exceptions that image, and the resulting place, have regarded blacks as an exploitable reservoir of cheap labour.⁷⁰

⁶⁷Walker, A History of Blacks in Canada: A Study Guide for Teachers and Students (Hull, Minister of State, Multiculturalism, 1980): 79.

⁶⁸Ibid, p.79.

⁶⁹Ibid, p.78.

⁷⁰Ibid, p.77.

He also states that, in the minds of many white Canadians, there has existed "the impression that blacks were inferior."⁷¹ Such arguments lend themselves to an ideological approach, since an ideology is constructed "because it serves the needs of an exploiting class or group," in this case, white Nova Scotians.⁷² Even Donald Clairmont and Fred Wien in "Blacks and Whites: The Nova Scotia Race Relations Experience," admit that "institutional racism set a tone enabling most whites to feel superior." Consequently, "black aspirations, actions and organizations at any given period have to be seen in the context of cultural and structural factors shaping the Nova Scotia experience."⁷³ For the black aspirations and actions to be explored in the next two chapters, it will first be necessary to understand the context of these aspirations and actions; namely the ideology that was "continually constructed and reconstructed out of particular historical circumstances" for the benefit of the white community in Nova Scotia.⁷⁴

The necessity for presenting an ideological explanation for the racism that exists in Nova Scotia seems particularly pressing when one is constantly faced with the great misperception about Nova Scotia's history; the widespread

⁷¹Ibid, p.80.

⁷²Saxton, p.5.

⁷³Ibid, p.159, 144.

⁷⁴Saxton, p.391.

belief that Canada has no history of explicitly discriminatory policies, such as the "black codes" and "Jim Crow" laws formulated in the Southern United States. Cecil Foster writes in A Place Called Heaven: The Meaning of Being Black in Canada that

in Canada, the prevailing view suggests, nobody has doors slammed in their faces because of the colour of their skin...And as that prevailing view holds, Canada has never practised the blatant racism so obvious in the United States...Canada is viewed as a kinder and gentler place for minorities...not in confrontation with water cannons, snarling police dogs, armed guardsmen and security forces...Unfortunately, the prevailing view provides no real answers to the questions associated with what it is really like to be black in Canada.⁷⁵

Nova Scotia may not have legislated discriminatory practices to the extent that the Southern United States did, but comparable laws did exist. Lacking the large black populations that could be found in Southern states, Nova Scotia did not have any area where the black population was in the majority; an influential factor in the Southern states for passing laws that denied blacks avenues to power, such as the right to vote. Without the threat of a large black population in Nova Scotia, explicit laws were not always necessary to maintain power in the hands of the white community.

White Nova Scotians were the benefactors of the ideology of race. As long as they were the policy makers, they could exclude the black community from decision making by limiting

⁷⁵Cecil Foster, A Place Called Heaven: What It Means to Be Black in Canada (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1996): 31-32.

their opportunities for educational and social advancement, which would marginalize the community economically and culturally. This had already begun with the acceptance of slavery in Nova Scotia, where, although slavery was not legislated, the owning and trading of slaves was still common when the black Loyalists arrived. As Clairmont and Wien argue, with a public sanction of slavery, "the groundwork was laid for the dominance-subordinance style of race relations which in one form or another would characterize Nova Scotia."⁷⁶ They point out that slavery was an extensive practice, with "perhaps as many as 500 slaves in Nova Scotia" before the arrival of "between 1000 and 1500 slaves [who] accompanied Loyalists."⁷⁷

In T. Watson Smith's comprehensive study of slavery in Canada, "The Slave in Canada," a great deal of information is provided about the nature of slavery in Nova Scotia which supports Clairmont and Wien's claims. Numerous examples of slave ownership and advertisements for the trading of slaves demonstrate that slavery was an accepted practice in Nova Scotia.⁷⁸ Smith estimates the number of slaves that had arrived with the Loyalists, by the summer of 1784, was close to twelve hundred and thirty-two, and indicates that slaves

⁷⁶Clairmont and Wien, "Blacks and Whites," p.146.

⁷⁷Ibid, p.145, 147.

⁷⁸T. Watson Smith, "The Slave in Canada," Nova Scotia Historical Society Vol.10 1896-98. Some examples can be found on p.40, 54, 119.

were taken to all parts of the province.⁷⁹

The treatment of these slaves is very revealing. Despite the common practice of referring to slaves as "servants," the conditions which slaves lived under were no different from slaves elsewhere.⁸⁰ Smith provides accounts of horrendous punishments for runaway slaves, such as the punishment of one slave in Truro, who

on one occasion his master, having caught him, cut a hole through the lower lobe of his ear, through which he passed the end of a whiplash, and knotting it he mounted his horse and rode off.⁸¹

Smith also provides accounts of benevolent slave owners, but as Walker points out, "slavery represents the absolute exploitation of labour," and no matter how it is presented, "it still treats the enslaved group as if it existed economically for the benefit of another group."⁸²

The fact that slavery declined in Nova Scotia because of economic rather than moral reasons, leaves a disturbing legacy to consider. Smith argues that slavery faded in Nova Scotia because of the expense:

the shortness of the season favorable to the products of the earth, and the length of the winter, with its expense of food, clothing and shelter, rendered slavery to any great extent an

⁷⁹Ibid, p.32.

⁸⁰Ibid, p.23.

⁸¹Ibid, p.77.

⁸²Walker, History of Blacks in Canada, p.78.

unprofitable thing in a northern climate.⁸³

He also thought that having slaves along the coast was a financial risk to owners since "at any moment the press-gang might patrol the streets to hurry on board the king's ships any stragglers unable to escape their clutches."⁸⁴ For Smith, the primary cause was the law, even though slavery in Nova Scotia did not disappear entirely until the abolition of slavery by the British Parliament in 1834. Each of these reasons is practical, not moral; would slavery have remained had the climate been more suitable? It is a question that will forever remain unanswerable, although the attitudes that lingered on after the demise of slavery suggest one possible answer.

Without turning to any psychocultural approach to the origins of white prejudice against blacks as Winthrop Jordan did in White over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro⁸⁵ or to delve into the Handlin-Degler debate over whether slavery or racism came first,⁸⁶ the role of slavery in helping

⁸³Smith, p.92.

⁸⁴Ibid, p.94.

⁸⁵Winthrop Jordan, White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968).

⁸⁶See: Oscar and Mary F. Handlin, "Origins of the Southern Labor System," William and Mary Quarterly, Ser.3 No.7 1950: 199-222 and Carl D. Negler, "Slavery and the Genesis of American Race Prejudice," Comparative Studies in Society and History No.2 1959: 49-66. Theodore W. Allen summarizes the debate in The Invention of the White Race, Volume I: Racial Oppression and Social Control (New York: Verso, 1994): 3-14.

to shape an ideology of race can be seen in the attitudes and actions of the white community. Saxton argues that one of the most damaging lingering effects of slavery is that

racist beliefs were seemingly verified in everyday experience. African Americans did fall below whites in social and economic status, in health, [and] in life expectancy.⁸⁷

What adds to the damage is that "whites perceived these stigmata not as wounds of imposed poverty, but as proofs of biological inferiority."⁸⁸ With the word "slave" being used interchangeably with "Negro" while free blacks lived in Nova Scotia,⁸⁹ Walker is correct to comment that "the prior existence of slavery here had done its work."⁹⁰

It was in the midst of slavery that the Black Loyalists migrated to Nova Scotia. Clairmont and Wien remark that the blacks

confronted a truly formidable challenge to their quest for freedom and dignity and even to survival. Those who were not household 'servants' faced the full rigor of the slave trade.⁹¹

Arriving in Nova Scotia, Black Loyalists sought "to achieve security in their freedom...[and to be] self-sufficient upon land of [their own]...and secured by British justice

⁸⁷Saxton, p.4.

⁸⁸Ibid, p.4.

⁸⁹Smith, p.108.

⁹⁰Walker, History of Blacks in Canada, p.78.

⁹¹Clairmont and Wien, "Blacks and Whites," p.147.

in...[their] rights as...[subjects] of the crown."⁹² But the treatment of the black community by the government over this period demonstrates that the black population was seen as no more than cheap labour and an undesirable community in the makeup of Nova Scotia's culture, not as loyal defenders of the Crown. Walker points out that "in a society conditioned to thinking of blacks as slaves, the claims of the free black loyalists for equality were not always to be taken seriously."⁹³ He argues that "the free blacks were regarded more as the slaves whose race they shared than as the loyalists whose status they had earned."⁹⁴ As Clairmont and Magill point out in Africville: The Life and Death of a Canadian Black Community,

the major undermining influence [of slavery] was not so much a public outcry against slavery; rather it was the obsolescence of slave labour following the arrival of many hundreds of free Loyalist blacks and whites whose services could be had for little more than it had cost earlier to house and feed slaves.⁹⁵

At the time of the initial settlement of the Black Loyalists, the black citizens were immediately put at a

⁹²James W. St.G. Walker, "The Establishment of a Free Black Community in Nova Scotia, 1783-1840," The African Diaspora: Interpretive Essays Martin L. Kilson and Robert I. Rotberg, eds. (London: Harvard University Press, 1976): 208.

⁹³Ibid, p.209.

⁹⁴Ibid, p.210.

⁹⁵Clairmont and Magill, Africville: The Life and Death of a Canadian Black Community (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1974): 40-41.

disadvantage in the land granting process when Governor Parr ordered that the expense of resettling the Loyalists be kept low and that those who had lost the most during the Revolutionary War be compensated first.⁹⁶ Many of the Black Loyalists were escaping from slavery, leaving no valuable material possessions behind and thus were the last to be allotted land. The attitude of the government towards Black Loyalists also added to their predicament, since the legislature felt it was not in its "power to afford the Blacks the assistance which their pressing Necessities loudly called for."⁹⁷ This was because "black labour was an essential component in local activities such as land-clearing and construction."⁹⁸ Free blacks "constituted the bulk of the free labour reserve that cleared the lands, laid the roads and erected the public buildings of loyalist Nova Scotia."⁹⁹ Providing for the blacks' needs and meeting their demands would have meant that a valuable labour supply would have been lost.

Only one third of the Black Loyalists received the land that was promised to them.¹⁰⁰ Loyalists in Digby "were never put in possession of their farms" and in Saint John their land

⁹⁶Walker, Black Loyalists, p.19.

⁹⁷Ibid, p.54.

⁹⁸Ibid, p.6.

⁹⁹Ibid, p.212.

¹⁰⁰Walker, Black Identity, p.6.

"was so far distant from their Town lots as to be entirely useless to them and indeed worthless."¹⁰¹ And for those blacks who did go to the isolated lots, like those in Guysborough County, the problems of cultivating and settling on the land were in an "intensified form" since "they could not depend on ready assistance from either the government or...white neighbours to the extent that" others could.¹⁰² For those who were in reach of government support there were other obstacles, such as the discriminatory practices in Digby, where rations were given only to those blacks "who performed work on the township roads," which "was not a condition placed on White Loyalists in order to receive government support."¹⁰³ Blacks were deprived not only of land, but basic provisions as well.

The land that was allotted to the blacks was seldom satisfactory since the size and quality of the land grants were inadequate "and outside the main centres of economic growth."¹⁰⁴ For many Black Loyalists, farms were "one-quarter the size of those granted to their closest white

¹⁰¹Walker, Black Loyalists, p.27 and 31.

¹⁰²George A. Rawlyk, "The Guysborough Negroes: A Study in Isolation," Dalhousie Review Vol.48 Spring 1968: 25.

¹⁰³Walker, Black Loyalists, p.44.

¹⁰⁴Clairmont and Magill, "Nova Scotia Blacks: Marginal People in a Depressed Region," Social Process and Institution: The Canadian Case James E. Gallagher, ed. (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada, 1971): 481.

neighbours."¹⁰⁵ This situation forced many of the Black Loyalists to opt "for a kind of share-cropping arrangement with a white landowner"¹⁰⁶ and become wage-labourers, despite "the intention of the British Government...that no loyalist should be required to become a wage-labourer in order to survive."¹⁰⁷ Even as wage labourers, black workers were at a disadvantage, earning only a quarter as much as white workers doing the same work.¹⁰⁸ The Black Loyalists were not alone in being let down by the government and its promises, but they "fared worst in a generally bad situation."¹⁰⁹

The government's treatment of the Black Refugees twenty-five years later was no better, with the black settlers granted only licenses of occupation rather than full land grants "to protect the refugees against unscrupulous white landgrabbers."¹¹⁰ Land grants were promised within three years "to those who developed their holdings," but many were made to

¹⁰⁵Walker, "Establishment of a Free Black Community," p.210. See PANS, Land Papers; PANS vol.371, List of Grantees of Land; PANS vol.394A, Abstracts of Surveys; PANS vol.459, Docket of Land Grants.

¹⁰⁶Walker, Black Identity, p.7.

¹⁰⁷Walker, Black Loyalists, p.43.

¹⁰⁸Walker, "Establishment of a Free Black Community," p.212.

¹⁰⁹Walker, Black Loyalists, p.45.

¹¹⁰Donald H. Clairmont and Dennis Magill, Nova Scotia Blacks: An Historical and Structural Overview (Halifax: Dalhousie Institute of Public Affairs, 1970): 14.

wait for as long as twenty-five years.¹¹¹ Out of necessity, the blacks occupied the land granted to them, since "we cannot sell to advantage, we are tied to the land without being able to live upon it, or even vote upon it, without being at every Election questioned, browbeaten and sworn."¹¹²

Not surprising treatment from a government who wanted "to prohibit the bringing of any more of these people into this Colony"¹¹³ since "the introduction of a larger body [of Blacks] will have an obvious tendency to discourage the coming of useful and decent white labourers and servants."¹¹⁴ In 1815, the Nova Scotia House of Assembly presented the Governor with a resolution "to prevent the further introduction of black settlers" because "negroes and mulattoes were improper to be mixed in general society with the white inhabitants." Denied the first time, another resolution appeared in 1834, which was also refused by the Imperial Government.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹Ibid, p.14,15.

¹¹²C. B. Fergusson, A Documentary Study of the Establishment of the Negroes in Nova Scotia (Halifax: Public Archives of Nova Scotia, 1948): 115.

¹¹³John N. Grant, The Immigration and Settlement of the Black Refugees of the War of 1812 in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick (Hantsport: Lancelot Press Limited, 1990): 54.

¹¹⁴Clairmont and Wien, "Blacks and Whites," p.29.

¹¹⁵Ibid, p.153. See PANS vol.305 doc.3. In A History of Blacks in Canada, Walker provides a similar example in Ontario. In the town of Chatham, the white community sought ways of keeping blacks out, even petitioning the Ontario Legislature. They were fearful that property values would drop while crime increased, that there would be intermarriage, that blacks would be "sitting in legislature" and that "white

The severity of the black community's deprivation in the nineteenth century is well illustrated in a passage from a letter of a British traveller, Captain William Moorsom, who wrote in 1830 that:

scarcely does a winter pass without the distressed situation of the negroes coming under the consideration and relief of the Legislature. Their potato crop fails; their soil is said to be incapable of supporting them, and disease makes fearful ravages...the negro settlements continue with numbers gradually diminishing, in summer miserable, and in winter starving. Their origin, their story and their condition, these contribute to shed an almost romantic halo around them; and the first question put to anyone who has returned from their neighbourhood is sure to be - "How are the poor Blacks?"¹¹⁶

The government's response to the Black Refugees' arrival and settlement was consistent with the Black Loyalists' experience. Lieutenant-Governor Sherbrooke of Nova Scotia recognized in the Chesapeake Refugees

instances of decrepit age, helpless infancy and unavoidable sickness, which require relief, [and] considering the manner in which they left their native Country, ... [were] to be expected.¹¹⁷

Although such words suggest sympathy, Sherbrooke felt the blacks had themselves to blame, since "the generality of them are so unwilling to work that several of them are absolutely

Canadians would suffer from the black odour" (p.80).

¹¹⁶William Moorsom, Letters From Nova Scotia (London: Henry Colborn and Richard Bentley, 1830): 127. Moorsom believed that the economic deprivation the blacks experienced was due to their lack of "industry" (p.128).

¹¹⁷Grant, p.53.

starving owing to their own idleness."¹¹⁸ Such views were held by many government officials, such as Lord Dalhousie, who commented that blacks worked "with an industry which astonished me" while also believing that their "constitutional laziness will continue and those miserable creatures will be for years a burden on Government."¹¹⁹

Such attitudes help explain educational policies as well, where the education of the black community was seen as a low priority. A good representation of prevailing attitudes can be seen in the debates of the Legislative Assembly in 1884, when the segregation of schools was discussed. Segregated schools already existed in Nova Scotia by 1884, but what had brought the debate to the House of Assembly were two petitions which requested that segregation be legally disallowed in the municipalities. Halifax was an area where segregated schools had recently been established, and also where a petition had been circulated. The petition complained that "a minute of public instruction [had been] passed in December, 1876, ... [which] excluded [blacks] from the Common Schools" and placed them instead in separate schools "which are of an inferior grade, and in which they do not receive equal advantages with children attending the common schools."¹²⁰

The petitions sparked a heated debate, in both the House

¹¹⁸Ibid, p.49.

¹¹⁹Ibid, p.117.

¹²⁰Clairmont and Magill, Nova Scotia Blacks, p.22.

and the Legislative Council. The debate surrounded the presentation from a delegation made up of both black and white members in favour of the amendment to desegregate the schools. One of the delegation's members, Rev. Henry H. Johnson remarked that he

was not there seeking equality socially of the colored people with the white, but seeking their rights as citizens to equal educational advantages with the white children on the grounds that the colored people were British subjects and had equal rights.

He concluded by saying that the colour line was "a relic of slavery, and asked for justice to the colored people."¹²¹

William Johnson stated that "in colored schools the children were all together and consequently the teacher could not teach them all from the infant to the highest class." In an effort to convince the House that the black children would not cause any trouble, the delegation read a letter from a school principal, which presented a positive example of why segregation should be discarded:

I was asked to allow some of the coloured boys to attend [the National School]...They all behaved well and no disagreeable results have followed their attending the school. Before they came I told the boys that they wanted an education, and as their parents paid taxes like other people they had the same right there as white children.¹²²

The Rev. Dr. Burns hoped that they would "consider the matter

¹²¹Acadian Recorder, April 2 1884. Johnson's remarks will be explored more fully in Chapter Three.

¹²²Pachai, Beneath the Clouds of the Promised Land, p.85.

and blot out the color line stain."¹²³

The delegation had some supporters. Robert Hockin, from Pictou argued that the segregation of schools was a "barbarous law" and that an amendment should be added to allow blacks into the schools. In response, other members felt that "it would perhaps be better if the colored children were educated by themselves...[but] in such case the teacher should have qualifications equal to those appointed to teach white children."¹²⁴ Power, from Halifax, felt that they had already done "as much for the colored children...as they could possibly do," and rejected the claims made in the petition about the poor quality of the school and the education being received. Power went so far as to point out that

seventy odd coloured children were in attendance at these schools, at a cost to the citizens of over \$1100, while in one department of one of the schools of Halifax there were nearly eighty white children educated at a cost of only \$400.¹²⁵

Such a statement raises the question of why the schools were segregated, if not because an ideology of race prevailed, even if the figure is correct. An ideology that sees blacks as labourers and not fellow citizens begins to explain the assertion that "it was questionable whether any honourable gentleman would like to have his children occupy a position at

¹²³Acadian Recorder, April 2 1884.

¹²⁴Halifax Morning Chronicle, April 1 1884.

¹²⁵Ibid, April 1 1884.

a school desk with colored children."¹²⁶

The responses to this statement did not help put the black community in any more favourable light. Hockins said that "he would as soon have his children among some colored children as among some whites," adding that "there ought not to be a color line unless there was another as well." Another gentleman, Mack, commented that "if perfect discipline was maintained in the schools, he failed to see what harm the admission of the children of colored parents would do."¹²⁷

Both gentlemen's remarks are very revealing. Hockins demonstrates the arbitrary nature of the 'color line' by suggesting that the line could as easily be drawn between classes. Mack's suggestion that the black children would be naturally unruly demonstrates an uninformed view that is perpetuated, not by substantial evidence, but by unquestioned perceptions. Further on in the debate, Mack pointed out that "the present law was too indefinite...[since] it was difficult to tell from the law what degrees or shades of color would be included," which, along with Hockins' desire for segregation by class, reveals one of the major flaws in any argument that sees prejudice as the fundamental cause of racism.

Theodore W. Allen demonstrates in The Invention of the White Race the relationship between skin colour and race, particularly how "'racial dissimilarities' have not only been

¹²⁶Ibid, April 1 1884.

¹²⁷Ibid, April 1 1884.

artificially used, [but]...are themselves artificial."¹²⁸ He uses the example of a Portuguese emigrant moving in 1890, who would be 'non white' if moving to Guyana but would be 'white' if moving to the United States.¹²⁹ In Vancouver's Chinatown, Anderson also provides an excellent illustration of how arbitrary colour lines are by citing a 1985 Toronto Globe and Mail article reporting on racial reclassification in South Africa, where "14 whites became coloureds...89 blacks...became coloured and five coloureds...became black."¹³⁰

A colour line provided white Nova Scotians with a number of benefits. It allowed for the legal and social segregation of blacks in schools, churches, and other public facilities, which helped perpetuate misconceptions about the absent black community and the biological, social and intellectual reasons for their separation. At the time of the debates, a number of ideas were circulating about racial differences which would justify such a colour line. By the end of the nineteenth century, Anderson argues, "few white people...questioned the belief that the mental, moral and physical differences between the races were profound."¹³¹ Anderson reviews the history of

¹²⁸Theodore W.Allen, The Invention of the White Race, Volume I: Racial Oppression and Social Control (New York: Verso, 1994): 27.

¹²⁹Ibid, p.27.

¹³⁰Anderson, p.8. See Toronto Globe and Mail 9 February 1985.

¹³¹Ibid, p.61.

'the race idea' in Vancouver's Chinatown, demonstrating how research in phrenology and comparative anatomy, beginning at the middle of the eighteenth century, successfully convinced people that there was a biological human hierarchy. This hierarchy found Europeans, particularly Saxons, at the top, and Africans at the bottom. This hierarchy was fixed in nature, and so "although primitive peoples were intrinsically capable of evolving to civilization, in practice they would require an infinite time to do so," effectively sealing the role of blacks as inferior and subordinate.¹³²

Nova Scotia, like many other societies in the Western world, embraced popular notions of scientific racism. These notions refashioned the belief that blacks were inferior and reinforced their social and economic marginalization. Racist policies and attitudes, having found legitimacy from scientific explanation created an immense challenge for the black community. To question scientific racism was to question the legitimacy of science, which was seen as a source for solutions to many social problems of the period.¹³³

The colour line also erased the need for a visible class line. Edmund S. Morgan argued in American Slavery, American

¹³²Ibid, p.38-44.

¹³³For further discussion on the expectations of science in Nova Scotia in the late 19th century, see Colin D. Howell's "Medical Science and Social Criticism: Alexander Peter Reid and the Ideological Origins of the Welfare State in Canada," Canadian Health Care and the State C. David Naylor, ed. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992): 16-37.

Freedom that by having only blacks in slavery, Americans could draw a colour line which prevented "the freemen with disappointed hopes...[from joining in] common cause with slaves of desperate hope...[by] a screen of racial contempt."¹³⁴ Roediger calls the white side of this colour line 'whiteness' and points out how the privileges of whiteness for whites of all classes disguise the disadvantages of the line for working class whites. Roediger points out that "neither whiteness nor Blackness is a scientific (or natural) racial category" and given all the cultural groups under the 'whiteness' umbrella, "whiteness is...a particularly brittle and fragile form of social identity" based on not being black.¹³⁵ This 'social identity' depends on a white definition of 'blackness', a definition which shapes and is shaped by the treatment of the black community.

One advantage of whiteness in Nova Scotia has been to make a distinction between 'ethnic' and 'racial' minorities. with 'ethnic' cultures welcomed into the Canadian mosaic while 'racial' cultures have been excluded or marginalized. This distinction, Saxton suggests, is vital in understanding the treatment of the black community, since the failure of the black community to succeed compared to immigrants from 'ethnic' backgrounds could be blamed on "psychic and cultural

¹³⁴Edmund S. Morgan, American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia (New York: Norton, 1975): 328.

¹³⁵Roediger, Towards the Abolition of Whiteness, p.12.

deficiencies of racial minorities" rather than on the ideology that has marginalized them.¹³⁶

Satya P. Mohanty in "Drawing the Color Line: Kipling and the Culture of Colonial Rule", writes that the colour line

does not merely divide and separate...it also involves a dynamic process through which social groups can be bound, defined, and shaped...[which] creates stereotypes of the colonized...as inferior.¹³⁷

As the debate rolled on, the black community and their opportunities for educational and economic advancement continued to be 'bound, defined and shaped' by a room of white politicians. An adamant supporter of segregated schools, W.S. Fielding, the editor of the Halifax Morning Chronicle and later premier of Nova Scotia, remarked that "the arguments of the coloured people were to a large extent convincing in theory, but in theory only." He argued that "although all men were equal in the eye of the law, they were not equal in matters of social life." He believed that it was the government's role to "make laws for the greatest good of the greatest people," and so was in favour of maintaining segregation. In case anyone was unconvinced by his other arguments, he also stated that "prejudice was so deep that it

¹³⁶Saxton, p.8-10.

¹³⁷Satya P. Mohanty, "Drawing the Color Line: Kipling and the Culture of Colonial Rule," The Bounds of Race: Perspectives on Hegemony and Resistance Dominick Lacapra, ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991): 314.

could not be suddenly uprooted."¹³⁸

Fielding also argued that

the schools of Halifax would be destroyed if integration were forced upon the white community. Parents would send their children to private schools rather than permit racial mixing. And [t]here were rowdy children who could not be trusted to treat the simple Negroes kindly.¹³⁹

Power agreed that, if blacks were allowed in white schools, that "other children would leave the schools," adding that "there was no discrimination against colored children."¹⁴⁰ MacCoy was also of the opinion that "there was a certain amount of prejudice or sentiment which would not permit the admission of these [black] children into the schools provided for children of white persons."

In response, Hockin argued that

it was a fundamental principle of all law, that there was no other bound to the liberty of a subject, excepting where it trespassed on the liberty of another...It must be admitted that we are trespassing on the liberty of the colored people of Nova Scotia.¹⁴¹

Dr. Daniel Parker, a Conservative from Yarmouth, also addressed the issue of legal rights, pointing out that "coloured people were citizens performing the duties of

¹³⁸Halifax Morning Chronicle, April 1 1884.

¹³⁹Mohamed Abucar, Struggle for Development: The Black Communities of North and East Preston and Cherrybrook, Nova Scotia 1784-1987 (Dartmouth: Black Cultural Centre, 1988): 47.

¹⁴⁰Halifax Morning Chronicle, April 1 1884.

¹⁴¹Ibid, April 1 1884.

citizenship. When the tax collector came to their doors he did not pass by them without first collecting the taxes due by them as taxpayers."¹⁴² Parker also argued that segregation was "a principle that was in violation of the constitution of the country we lived in" and asked the members of the House:

were they here as independent men to yield to popular prejudice; or were they here to legislate in view of the constitution of the country from which they came and to which they owed their allegiance, that every man should have equal rights and privileges in the eye of the law.¹⁴³

Despite the delegations' efforts, Fielding and the others managed to persuade the House of Assembly to support segregation.

Winks has argued that the whole debate was affected by a political motive: the House of Assembly wanted to challenge and abolish the Legislative Council.¹⁴⁴ This argument, if extended, could lead one to conclude that not only did the two sides not believe what they were arguing, but that segregation managed to be legislated provincially because of the timing of the debate.

There are two reasons why this idea can be questioned. The first is that most legislators recognized the seriousness of the segregation question. That segregation meant that "blacks were obliged to attend schools if these existed even

¹⁴²Pachai, Beneath the Clouds of the Promised Land, p.84. See Halifax Morning Chronicle, April 1 1884.

¹⁴³Halifax Morning Chronicle, April 12 1884.

¹⁴⁴Winks, Blacks in Canada, p.378.

if these separate schools were miles away from the nearest common school," was already the experience of a number of black settlements.¹⁴⁵ More importantly, if segregation was not such a serious issue, then how was it that two months after Fielding and his supporters won the initial debate that an amendment was added, stating that "coloured people shall not be excluded from instruction in the public school in the section or ward in which they reside."¹⁴⁶

Furthermore, if segregation was simply a by-product of a struggle between the Assembly and Council, it would hardly have lasted until 1964. The Education Act of 1918 would by no means have maintained the ruling of the 1884 Act. The 1918 Act continued to allow school inspectors to establish "separate apartments or buildings in any section for the

¹⁴⁵Bridglal Pachai, Dr. William Pearly Oliver and the Search for Black Self-Identity in Nova Scotia (Halifax: International Education Centre, 1979): 11.

¹⁴⁶Pachai, Beneath the Clouds of the Promised Land, p.87. There is further evidence that the decision was not the result of an unrelated political battle. As Winks points out on pages 368 to 370 in Blacks in Canada, in Ontario, the Separate School Act of 1850 enabled black families to petition for the establishment of separate schools. Created to permit individual freedom in the type of schooling children were to be given, the Act in fact allowed the white community to force blacks out of the common schools. What made this Act even more damaging to the quality of education black children were to receive was the ability of school trustees to make requests for separate schools and the stipulation that if "a separate school had been established for them, all Negroes could be compelled to attend that school, including those who were not party to the petition." If no separate school existed, then, as in Nova Scotia, the black children were allowed to attend the common school. Segregation thus was not unique to Nova Scotia, nor was the manner in which blacks were forced from the common schools and a decent education.

different sexes or...races of pupils"¹⁴⁷ although "black children would not be excluded from the section in which they lived."¹⁴⁸ It was thus not just a single act of the Assembly that inhibited black communities from enjoying the rights they had and the opportunities they needed.

Earlier legislative acts which impeded the educational opportunities of the black community were no less severe. The Nova Scotia School Act of 1811 required that each settlement had to build a school house, hire a teacher¹⁴⁹ and raise 50 pounds before the province would provide any support.¹⁵⁰ These qualifications were beyond the means of all the black settlements, and placed a serious obstacle in the way of education and social or political advancement.¹⁵¹ The 1826 "Act Concerning Schools" levied a compulsory tax which the black settlements refused to pay, feeling that "if they were capable of contributing they would not benefit because of

¹⁴⁷Robin W. Winks, "Negro School Segregation in Ontario and Nova Scotia," Canadian Historical Review Vol.50 June 1969: 186.

¹⁴⁸Pachai, Beneath the Clouds of the Promised Land, p.87.

¹⁴⁹Pachai, Dr. William Pearly Oliver and the Search for Black Self-Identity, p.10.

¹⁵⁰Colin A. Thomson, Born With a Call: A Biography of Dr. William Pearly Oliver, C.M. (Dartmouth: Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia, 1986): 5.

¹⁵¹Ronald Pate, "The Shackled Ascent: Life and Education of Blacks in Nova Scotia from 1766 to 1865," (Unpublished masters thesis, Saint Mary's University, 1976): 62.

scepticism about the relevance of schooling."¹⁵²

The effects of segregation and discrimination can be seen in the conditions of the black community schools. Three striking features of the black schools were visible throughout the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. The first was a severe lack of commitment on the part of the government to keep the schools open. Throughout the province there were extended periods of time when no school was open in a district. In the large black settlement of Preston, for example, there was no school for over fifteen years, from 1877 to 1892,¹⁵³ while the only school in Lincolnville, Guysborough County, remained closed for over 40 years, from 1890 to 1930, and then closed again during the Great Depression.¹⁵⁴ Schools usually were closed because either no teacher could be found¹⁵⁵ or the school house had burned down.¹⁵⁶ In Joggins, there was only one building, so the black and white children shared the building, with the blacks only able to use the facility one-third of the time.¹⁵⁷

The schools that did exist were poorly kept. The school

¹⁵²Ibid, p.59.

¹⁵³Pachai, Beneath the Clouds of the Promised Land, p.89.

¹⁵⁴Clairmont and Magill, Nova Scotia Blacks, p.25.

¹⁵⁵Pachai, Dr. William Pearly Oliver and the Search for Black Self-Identity, p.11.

¹⁵⁶Rawlyk, p.34.

¹⁵⁷Winks, Blacks in Canada, p.380.

buildings were often "overcrowded and ramshackle, creating an environment that was not inclined to encourage blacks to attend."¹⁵⁸ In Guysborough County, the Superintendent of Education found in 1865 "no school house near to the recommendation of the Council as respects size, site or accommodation."¹⁵⁹ In addition, in some schools "the children had to go out around the mills and gather wood to help keep the school warm;"¹⁶⁰ a chore that took away from the few hours of education that most of the children would receive.

There was also a lack of state support for the teachers who were hired to educate the black children. Despite the fact that black teachers were usually barred from teaching in white schools, there was a "constant difficulty in hiring teachers to teach in black communities,...[so] well qualified instructors were never attracted."¹⁶¹ The teachers who were hired tended to be young women who were either still finishing school or had just graduated from high school.¹⁶² The

¹⁵⁸Pachai, Beneath the Clouds of the Promised Land, p.82.

¹⁵⁹Annual Report of the Common, Superior Academic, and Normal and Model Schools in Nova Scotia by the Superintendent of Education 1865, PANS Micro 3503, p.78.

¹⁶⁰Belle Barnes et al, Traditional Lifetime Stories Volume 2 (Dartmouth: Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia, 1990): 7.

¹⁶¹Pate, p.69.

¹⁶²Belle Barnes et al, Traditional Lifetime Stories Volume 1 (Dartmouth: Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia, 1987):91. As Suzanne Morton points out in "Separate Spheres in a Separate World: African-Nova Scotian Women in late-19th-Century Halifax," Acadiensis Vol.22 No.2 (Spring, 1993) there was a great need for teachers in the settlements, but racial

Inspector of Schools in 1892 admitted in his report that "the teachers were not necessarily incompetent but they lacked training and experience."¹⁶³

An incident in Preston reveals the lack of concern some members of the white community had regarding the education of black children. What has come to be known as the "Preston Affair" took place in a black school house in June, 1911. A group of white men, carrying a case of liquor, entered the school, where they proceeded to drink and talk among themselves. This whole incident took place during the day when a teacher was trying to teach a class of forty children. This incident did not go unnoticed by the government, but it nevertheless exemplified a "white arrogance" which existed in many areas of Nova Scotia.¹⁶⁴

Such arrogance could be found in the schoolyard as well. For one black woman who had to attend a white school, the experience was demeaning. One woman recalls being "the only coloured person from Birchtown...[and how]] they use[d] to put chalk on my face and say we's going to make her white."¹⁶⁵ In the North End of Halifax in the middle of the twentieth century, equally haunting words could be heard chanted in the

discrimination barred black women from being trained at the Provincial Normal School. However, by 1874, local black women could teach with a special permissive license.

¹⁶³Pachai, Beneath the Clouds of the Promised Land, p.88.

¹⁶⁴Thomson, p.21.

¹⁶⁵Barnes et al, Traditional Lifetime Stories Volume 2, p.56.

school yard:

God made the little niggers
 He made them in the night
 He made them in a hurry
 And forgot to paint them white.¹⁶⁶

Such verses undoubtedly alienated the black children hearing them.

The black settlements were done a further disservice by the curriculum which was used. In the first half of the nineteenth century, when most black schools were being sponsored by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, the teachers showed "a greater concern with the "souls" of the Blacks than with the provision of skills which might have led to socio-economic betterment."¹⁶⁷ Blacks were also to be taught "obedience and fidelity to their masters and humility and contentedness in their condition."¹⁶⁸

Even when the government took over responsibility for the schools, the blacks were neglected. What was not neglected was the perpetuation of negative stereotypes for blacks. They were not mentioned in textbooks, and the existence of slavery was completely ignored.¹⁶⁹ Instruction in history focused on the British Empire, as well as the former empires of Rome and

¹⁶⁶Interview with Lyn Milward, March 1993.

¹⁶⁷Clairmont and Magill, Nova Scotia Blacks, p.21.

¹⁶⁸Pachai, Beneath the Clouds of the Promised Land, p.49.

¹⁶⁹Winks, "Negro School Segregation in Ontario and Nova Scotia," Canadian Historical Review Vol.50 June 1969: 166.

Greece.¹⁷⁰ Furthermore, as Thomson points out in his biography of W.P. Oliver, what was taught about blacks to other Canadians "through literature, science, and history...[was] of the Blacks inability to adapt to cold climate, their laziness, their sambo-like characteristics, their odor, and their love of pleasure."¹⁷¹

The black schools were substantially different from the white schools. Before segregation became a legislated policy, however, the difference in education between the public white and black schools was minimal. But Winks points out that while many whites fared poorly, "on many occasions the blacks fared not at all."¹⁷² Winks describes blacks' education as being "based on an increasingly outworn curriculum...taught by ill-prepared teachers in unattractive buildings."¹⁷³ The Nova Scotia Superintendent of Education wrote in his report for 1852 that "while one class of poor children are altogether deprived of the benefits of all education by parental pride or indifference, the other class of them are educated as paupers or ragged scholars."¹⁷⁴ The census of 1861 reflects the poor

¹⁷⁰Report on the Schools of Nova Scotia by the Superintendent of Education 1852, PANS RG 1 Vol.263 Doc.1, p.57.

¹⁷¹Thomson, p.21.

¹⁷²Winks, "Negro School Segregation in Ontario and Nova Scotia," p.167.

¹⁷³Ibid, p.167.

¹⁷⁴Report on the Schools of Nova Scotia by the Superintendent of Education 1852, p.57.

education of the entire population of Nova Scotia, 65 500 adults could not write and 45 000 could not read, while 37 000 children could not read and 50 000 could not write. The census also revealed that out of 85 000 children, only 33 400 attended school.¹⁷⁵ After segregation, the gap between white and black education widened considerably. The white district schools were superior in many ways, having "larger budgets for salaries, books and equipment."¹⁷⁶ This meant that while black schools "didn't have a teacher every year,...the white kids went to school every day."¹⁷⁷ One man recalls how

the black kids didn't have what the white kids had. The white kids had a slate, wood on the outside with beads on the edges, with a long pencil and a cloth to wipe it off. The black kids, all we had was a piece of paper.¹⁷⁸

As a child, Pearleen Oliver recalled other disadvantages that were distinct to the black student's experience. Oliver remembered how she "would take the first seat... [because] I wanted to learn everything," but then would "be moved back" to the back of the room to the one section where the "teacher would put us all." Oliver felt that black children were ignored and discouraged, so that an education was received

¹⁷⁵Pate, p.66.

¹⁷⁶Pachai, Beneath the Clouds of the Promised Land, p.82.

¹⁷⁷Barnes et al, Traditional Lifetime Stories Volume 2, p.49.

¹⁷⁸Ibid, p.49.

only "if you got it yourself."¹⁷⁹ Oliver's experience was similar to that of black students in the Southern United States, where one famous black figure recalled being told by his teacher

to be realistic. Don't misunderstand me now. We all like you, you know that. But you've got to be realistic about being a nigger. A lawyer - that's not a realistic goal for a nigger. You need to think about something you can be. You're good with your hands - making things. Everybody admires your carpentry shop work. why don't you plan on carpentry? People like you as a person - you'd get all kinds of work.¹⁸⁰

Such a speech was likely given to blacks in schools across Nova Scotia since, as Dr. William Oliver pointed out, "one of the most injurious factors for children of minorities...is the conviction of their principals and teachers that there is a limit to which they can be educated;" an experience that Oliver himself had endured.¹⁸¹ Local governments also overlooked black rights in order to serve their own ends. For example, the people of Africville were continually subject to infringements of their rights. The city placed numerous unwanted facilities beside the settlement. In 1858, the sewage disposal pit was dug outside Africville, which was followed in 1870 by the building of the Infectious Diseases

¹⁷⁹Interview between Jim Morrison and Pearleen Oliver, taped Nov 24, 1992.

¹⁸⁰Alex Haley and Malcolm X, The Autobiography of Malcolm X (New York: Ballantine Books, 1973): 36.

¹⁸¹Thomson, p.104, 22.

Hospital, and in 1903 by the Trachoma Hospital.¹⁸² Since the City maintained that Africville was an industrial district, the government overlooked the "blight and decay spreading over large areas" and allowed a bone-meal manufacturing plant to be constructed "just a few hundred metres from the settlement," as well as "a cotton factory, rolling mill and nail factory, slaughterhouse and [a] port facility for handling coal" which was followed soon after by railroad tracks.¹⁸³

The residents of Africville were not only infringed upon; they were ignored as well. As Clairmont observes, "there is no record of any concern for the health and safety of the Africville residents" because the "emphasis was on eliminating that community rather than helping it."¹⁸⁴ Even with all the industrial development surrounding Africville, the residents did not benefit economically. Concerns expressed by the community were also often ignored, such as in 1919 when the community petitioned for police protection since "a police officer seldom or never visits the district." The City Police Department recommended deputizing a resident since they "had no spare men to send such a distance;" hardly the treatment which would have been given to first class citizens.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸²Donald H. Clairmont, "Africville: An Historical Overview," The Spirit of Africville Africville Genealogy Society, ed. (Halifax: Formac Publishing Company, 1992): 42.

¹⁸³Ibid, p.42.

¹⁸⁴Ibid, p.43, 46.

¹⁸⁵Pachai, Beneath the Clouds of the Promised Land, p.15,16.

It is important to note that the residents of Africville continually opposed any attempts to force them out of their settlement. For the first century at least, when "the city people talked about moving us out of Africville, they went to city hall and fought it."¹⁸⁶ As Clairmont points out, "numerous Africville delegations had visited City Hall...requesting facilities available elsewhere in the city."¹⁸⁷ In March, 1860, William Brown, a resident, "petitioned to seek compensation for the land taken from him by the Railway Commission in 1854."¹⁸⁸ Residents made some gains in the 1930s when they "petitioned for their own postal suboffice (prior to this they had to walk ten kilometres to mail letters), for a few street lights and for street numbers."¹⁸⁹ Unfortunately, as the fate of Africville illustrates, the residents made few other gains despite their constant effort.

The black community faced large economic challenges as well. Throughout the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century the people of Nova Scotia were exposed to a periodically "sluggish, depressed economy," where there was

¹⁸⁶Barnes et al, Traditional Lifetime Stories Volume 1, p.58.

¹⁸⁷Clairmont and Magill, Nova Scotia Blacks, p.85.

¹⁸⁸Petition of William Brown MS100 Vol 1. #44 C/B. There is no evidence that he was successful, although according to the petition, other residents who had land taken were paid for it. Nothing is said about the amount either.

¹⁸⁹Clairmont, "Africville: An Historical Overview," p.47.

"underemployment and fierce competition from other peoples who controlled the...job paths."¹⁹⁰ As one black elder whose father used to collect money for schools recalls:

[there] wasn't much money coming in and [other blacks would] be pretty rough but my father had to give it and some people didn't want to give anything. They had fights to get money to pay the teacher and there wasn't any government funds coming in.¹⁹¹

But there were good reasons for the blacks' reluctance. For the majority of the black settlements "the limits for expansion...were already defined in the early decades of the nineteenth century by the size and quality of land grants as well as by the absence of freehold land titles."¹⁹²

Because of the economic conditions facing black settlers, challenging the white power structure and educational improvement could not be the first priority of the black settlements. Most blacks needed to work, and children were recruited by parents who needed extra help around the house or farm, or needed an additional income. In the two volumes of Traditional Lifetime Stories: A Collection of Black Memories, of 26 people interviewed who grew up between 1890 and 1930 and had left school at a young age, 23 of the people had left school because either their parents wanted them to work inside

¹⁹⁰Clairmont and Wien, "Blacks and Whites," p.155.

¹⁹¹Barnes et al, Traditional Lifetime Stories Volume 2, p.22.

¹⁹²Pachai, Beneath the Clouds of the Promised Land, p.39.

or outside the home.¹⁹³ As one of the men commented: "you went to school and if someone wanted you to do something, you left school and went to work...that day."¹⁹⁴ Women were expected to work:

[I] used to scrub floors for food to help mother feed the younger ones.... We walked to work...two to three kilometres. We didn't make money except when we had special jobs to clean recreation halls. We got four or five dollars then. But usually we got potatoes, turnips, carrots and what was cooked for dinner.¹⁹⁵

Others sold goods at the market or collected and sold firewood, which for a hundred pieces would earn the seller one dollar.¹⁹⁶

Even while in school, some young children were expected to work late into the night.¹⁹⁷ Some, like Pearleen Oliver, scrubbed floors in order to earn enough money to stay in school and pay for books.¹⁹⁸

There were numerous difficulties which arose from deprivation. As Clairmont points out,

the Blacks placed a very high value on education, but...it was difficult to study in overcrowded homes among elders who did not relate to their educational experiences, and because the reward

¹⁹³Barnes et al, Traditional Lifetime Stories Volume 1 and 2.

¹⁹⁴Barnes et al, Traditional Lifetime Stories Volume 2, p.49.

¹⁹⁵Barnes et al, Traditional Lifetime Stories Volume 1, p.56.

¹⁹⁶Ibid, p.31.

¹⁹⁷Barnes et al, Traditional Lifetime Stories Volume 2, p.39.

¹⁹⁸Interview between Jim Morrison and Pearleen Oliver, taped Nov 24, 1992.

system of the schools left them discouraged and disadvantaged.¹⁹⁹

It is remarkable that the black settlements managed to survive at all. Work in forestry, fishing and farming were "not open to black participation."²⁰⁰ In Halifax, a major centre for employment, wage labour for blacks was "scarce in summer and nonexistent in winter."²⁰¹ Despite the fact that the black settlements "remained in a peripheral economy" for over a century and a half, however, they managed to survive through subsistence farming, domestic industry, farm labour, and the sale of domestic produce.²⁰² In Preston, the community also grew potatoes and trapped animals to make a living.²⁰³

But trying to survive in Nova Scotia in spite of such conditions had its costs. The lack of education that most blacks shared left them "deprived of economic opportunities." Many blacks were forced to seek employment in unskilled and semiskilled occupations, where "prejudice and discrimination appear[ed] to be the most operative."²⁰⁴ As Dr. William Oliver pointed out in his biography:

the white youth in my day had a far easier time than the black youth. It did not really matter if

¹⁹⁹Clairmont and Magill, Nova Scotia Blacks, p.61.

²⁰⁰Pachai, Beneath the Clouds of the Promised Land, p.151.

²⁰¹Clairmont and Magill, Nova Scotia Blacks, p.14.

²⁰²Pachai, Beneath the Clouds of the Promised Land, p.135.

²⁰³Abucar, p.25.

²⁰⁴Clairmont and Magill, Nova Scotia Blacks, p.25.

he was lazy or not...or shirk[ed] his job. I gave ten hours of work for ten hours pay -- that is the white man's value. But the system did not work for me. I never got promoted. I was Black.²⁰⁵

As one black worker pointed out, however, there was little that could be done in response to such difficulties:

You were poor...you had to work for the white man...you just had to watch yourself...a lot put up with it because if you didn't your bread and butter would be gone.²⁰⁶

On the job, black labourers were confronted with "closed-shop unions, prejudiced workers, and owner-managers reluctant to jeopardize their business or their organizational harmony" by accepting blacks.²⁰⁷ The experience of one black man illustrates the difficulty of having work while being barred from the union. The man managed to find employment with Imperial Oil because "he wasn't afraid to ask for a job" but found himself in a difficult situation "when his white colleagues threatened to go on strike" since "a job was precious to him [and] he wanted to hold on to it."²⁰⁸ Because of their economic weakness, employers "took advantage of them and paid them about one-quarter the rate paid to white workers." By working at such low wages, however, blacks "diminished their status in the eyes of white Nova

²⁰⁵Thomson, p.39.

²⁰⁶Barnes et al, Traditional Lifetime Stories Volume 2, p.71.

²⁰⁷Clairmont and Magill, Nova Scotia Blacks, p.33.

²⁰⁸Barnes et al, Traditional Lifetime Stories Volume 1, p.72.

Scotians."²⁰⁹

In the case of Nova Scotia, the black community that the white working class compared itself to may not have still been under slavery after 1834, but the belief still lingered that blacks were an inferior race, who "derived their class from their colour and its associations with slavery."²¹⁰ The 'ethnic' minorities were quick to demonstrate their whiteness. Feeling threatened by having similar occupations to blacks, "women of European descent were careful to distance and differentiate themselves from black women with racist characterizations and descriptions of their unladylike behaviour." White women emphasized black "otherness," stressing such behaviour as "laughing loudly or swearing, and even alleged masculine characteristics such as smoking pipes."²¹¹ Black women in Nova Scotia, particularly young women and widows, "competed for positions in domestic service with urban and rural women of Euro-American descent" since black women were not welcome to seek wages from areas other than domestic service, with the exception of education.²¹²

²⁰⁹Walker, Black Identity, p.7.

²¹⁰Walker, Black Loyalists, p.48.

²¹¹Suzanne Morton, "Separate Spheres in a Separate World: African-Nova Scotian Women in late 19th-Century Halifax County," Acadiensis Vol.22 No.2 Spring 1993: 74-75.

²¹²Ibid, p. 65, 67. Morton argues that "separate spheres...offered self-respect and protection to a group of women particularly vulnerable to economic exploitation." One interesting result of the female sphere of occupations was the effect it had on women during the Great Depression, which

Black men also experienced rejection from working class whites. A Secretary-treasurer with the Home for Colored Children in Dartmouth is reported to have written in a letter to the Information Branch of the Department of Natural Resources that

many who came from the United States were tradesmen: carpenters, blacksmiths, stone-masons, coopers, etc. and even to this day some of these trades are carried on, but they were looked upon as scab labour, a position which could not be bettered as the Trade Unions would not admit them to membership.²¹³

On the docks, blacks were used as "a surplus labour supply" but were barred from the unions.²¹⁴ In the later part of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century, a large number of black males in the Halifax area worked in the shipping industry as cooks or stewards. When the shipping industry was doing well, "more black were enumerated in the censuses as seafarers than any other single category of worker save labourers."²¹⁵ The wages were also good, at least

Susan Ware discusses in Holding Their Own: American Women in the 1930s (Boston: Twayne, 1982): 35 Ware points out that "women escaped expulsion from jobs during the 1930s in part because the economy had become so strictly segregated...that men rarely took over jobs previously held by women." Although there is not enough scholarship on black women's experience in Nova Scotia to accurately test such an argument, the experience was likely similar, since the roles and tasks given to black women in both regions were certainly alike.

²¹³Quoted in Ida C. Greaves, The Negro in Canada (Orillia: Packet-Times Press, 1931): 55. No date was provided.

²¹⁴Clairmont and Wien, "Blacks and Whites," p.155.

²¹⁵Judith Fingard, "From Sea to Rail: Black Transportation Workers and Their Families in Halifax, c.1870-1916,"

compared to "the average wages of other African Nova Scotians of the day."²¹⁶ Such work was resorted to because segregation and discrimination barred them from other opportunities, and if the workers had the choice, "a career in business or the trades rather than transportation seems to have been preferred if it could be sustained."²¹⁷

One of the only other occupations available to black males on a consistent basis was as porters on railways. In "Sleeping Car Porters in Canada," Agnes Calliste provides three reasons why portering was "defined as an appropriate occupation for blacks." Fitting with the image perpetuated by the ideology of race, blacks "had traditionally been assigned service roles, and...it was a sign of status among whites to be waited on by them" and

the assumed social distance that existed between whites and blacks meant that the presence of black porters on sleeping cars was considered as impersonal and did not serve as a complicating factor in the intimacies which travel by sleeping car necessitated.²¹⁸

Such beliefs would be cemented as black porters provided service to the liking and expectation of the passenger in order to receive tips to supplement their wages, since the

Acadiensis Vol.24 No.2 Spring 1995: 49.

²¹⁶Ibid, p.52.

²¹⁷Ibid, p.54.

²¹⁸Agnes Calliste, "Sleeping Car Porters in Canada: An Ethnically Submerged Split Labour Market," Canadian Ethnic Studies Vol.19 No.1 1987: 2.

other advantage of black porters was that they were "cheaper...in terms of wage rates and degree of unionization."²¹⁹ Like those working in the shipping industry, the wages were better there for blacks than most other occupations. However, compared to other railway positions, it was "the heaviest, most menial job...with the lowest rates of pay."²²⁰ Porters had "extremely long hours of work with inadequate rest," working an average of 240 hours a month, mostly standing up.²²¹

Black porters also had no opportunity for promotion in their employment. The Intercolonial Railway (ICR), in 1913, was the earliest to set a policy that excluded black porters from being conductors, but the Canadian National Railway (CNR) followed in 1926. The CNR limited porters' advancement by reclassifying work categories, placing all positions held by white employees in Group 1 and placing positions held by black employees in Group 2, with the stipulation that "a person may be advanced only within the group category in which he would be hired."²²² As Roediger suggested, white workers distanced themselves from black workers in an attempt to make better gains for themselves. Possibly because they felt "threatened

²¹⁹Ibid, p.2.

²²⁰Agnes Calliste, "Blacks on Canadian Railways," Canadian Ethnic Studies Vol.20 No.2 1988: 37.

²²¹Ibid, p.37.

²²²Calliste, "Sleeping Car Porters," p.3.

by blacks during the post World War I contraction in the railway industry," the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Engineers collaborated with the company "to exclude blacks from higher paying jobs."²²³

The Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) found another way to discriminate against black porters and to keep the white and black workers in constant competition. As was the case for so many occupations, "blacks were excluded from all the unions on the railways."²²⁴ Not only did the CPR pay porters wages that were lower than the CNR paid, which were "below the minimum health and decency standard of living," but they, like white workers, were "either intimidated or dismissed" if they "attempted to organize themselves or tried to negotiate."²²⁵ When the Order of Sleeping Car Porters (OSCP) attempted to expand the union to the CPR, thirty-six porters "were dismissed...without any specific reason upon joining" the

²²³Ibid, p.5. The white railway workers were likely intimidated by the employees' and the unions' previous experiences with the railway companies. See Hugh Tuck's articles on the railways: "The United Brotherhood of Railway Employees in Western Canada, 1898-1905," J. Hugh Tuck Labour/Le Travailleur No.11 Spring 1983: 63-88 and "W.C. Van Horne and the 'Foreign Emissaries;' The CPR Trainmen's and Conductors' Strike of 1892," Labour/Le Travailleur No.6 Autumn 1980: 73-87.

²²⁴Agnes Calliste, "Blacks on Canadian Railways," p.37. Calliste points out that "the Order of Sleeping Car Porters and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters emerged in 1917 and 1925 respectively because none of the railway unions in North America accepted blacks as members" (p.37).

²²⁵Ibid, p.38.

union.²²⁶

The CPR also played white and black workers off of each other, hiring black crews in 1918 to replace white crews in the dining cars and then later laying off the black workers at the conclusion of the First World War.²²⁷ As well, the CPR "recruited porters predominantly from the United States.. to displace black Canadian and West Indian porters who attempted to organize themselves," which they did during times of high unemployment as well.²²⁸ The CPR "saw in this 'industrial reserve' a population which could be used to keep out unions and displace troublesome and potentially expensive labour."²²⁹ The CPR ignored unions such as the OSCP, refusing "to recognize the bargaining rights of the porters' grievance committee," and forced porters to negotiate through the company-run Porters Mutual Benefit Association.²³⁰

Working class whites, female and male, whose wages were being "undercut by black competition did not blame the unscrupulous employers."²³¹ Instead, they blamed the blacks. The white workers did this for a number of reasons. As Saxton points out, an ideology has no value within a class-based

²²⁶Greaves, p.55.

²²⁷Calliste, "Sleeping Car Porters in Canada," p.4.

²²⁸Ibid, p.6.

²²⁹Ibid, p.4.

²³⁰Ibid, p.9.

²³¹Walker, Black Identity, p.8.

society if racism cannot "be made to work for the perceived interests of lower classes or segments of lower classes as well as for the ruling class."²³² Roediger suggests in The Wages of Whiteness that the role of race is to help in "defining how white workers look not only at Blacks but at themselves."²³³ For the white working class in Nova Scotia, the advantage of whiteness went much deeper than employment, rooted instead in a desire to be in control of themselves.

By embracing their 'whiteness', the white working class distanced themselves from blacks in two ways. Roediger argues that "white workers, even when they received a low wage...[were] compensated in part by a...public and psychological wage."²³⁴ When white workers measured themselves alongside of blacks, they could "articulate a self-image that...emphasized...independence."²³⁵ That was one part of the public wage.

The other part involved clinging to the belief that Europeans were a superior race, and that they, as whites, were part of that race. It was tempting "to follow middle class leaders who emphasized the differences between positions of the self-reliant "free" white mechanic and the Black slave" as

²³²Saxton, p.389.

²³³Roediger, Wages of Whiteness, p.5.

²³⁴Catherine Hall, "White Identities," New Left Review No.193 (May-June 1992): 114.

²³⁵Roediger, Wages of Whiteness, p.22.

"a way to distance oneself from slaves."²³⁶ The temptation stemmed from the working classes' strong "desire to be rid of the age old inequalities of Europe and of any hint of slavery;" particularly of "not being mistaken for slaves."²³⁷

The psychological compensation came from defining "whiteness" as superior to "blackness." Of course, from the very beginning whiteness was simply the opposite of blackness, and not ever defined in anything but an arbitrary way, although whiteness was certainly a reality for those who were excluded from the category. With the legacy of slavery enduring in Nova Scotia well into the nineteenth century, the most detrimental assertion made against the blacks was that their oppression was a "result of slavishness rather than slavery."²³⁸ The white community saw the blacks' plight "as proof of biological inferiority."²³⁹

For any ideology to be effective, it must be constructed and reconstructed by all classes. Roediger stresses that race and class "have to be understood dialectically rather than privileging race over class or class over race"²⁴⁰ and warns against drawing "precise lines separating race and class" and

²³⁶Ibid, p.86.

²³⁷Ibid, p.47.

²³⁸Ibid, p.35.

²³⁹Saxton, p.4.

²⁴⁰Hall, p.115.

instead to draw lines connecting race and class."²⁴¹ This is particularly important for recognizing "working class 'whiteness' and white supremacy as creations, in part, of the white working class itself," dispelling theories that suggest "racism simply trickles down the class structure from the commanding heights at which it is created."²⁴² The white working class in Nova Scotia were active beneficiaries of whiteness, excluding blacks from unions and shutting them out of more favourable occupations.

While the white working class had a role in creating and perpetuating racism, they were compelled to do so because of their comparably poor economic situation, particularly when Nova Scotia began to suffer economically. If white workers did not distinguish themselves from blacks, politically and culturally, they would have gained little, which is why "blackness came to symbolize that which the accumulating capitalist had given up."²⁴³ As Roediger points out, slavery acted as a "touchstone against which to measure their fears of unfreedom and a friendly reminder that they were by comparison

²⁴¹Roediger, Wages of Whiteness, p.11.

²⁴²Ibid, p.9.

²⁴³Ibid, p.95. In his book, Roediger is actually discussing the longing for the past that white workers had, but the comment is equally appropriate to summarize another important point he makes, which is that white workers, and particularly those who were recent immigrants, had a strong desire to distance themselves from their past and the oppressed position they once held as either peasant farmers or as labourers.

not so badly off."²⁴⁴ But, as Roediger also indicates, such a dilemma required some action on the part of the white workers in a situation where "it was difficult not to compare themselves to slaves, almost unbearable to make such a comparison, and impossible to sustain the metaphor."²⁴⁵

The cost of such economic discrimination was that many leaders of the black community left Nova Scotia, moving either to Africa, the United States, or other parts of Canada. Clairmont indicates that those who were "better educated and the actual and potential leaders in the black community...were especially likely to migrate."²⁴⁶ The number of leaders who left is difficult to determine, but it does not seem unlikely that the blacks would react "to their wretched deprivation by migrating from Nova Scotia when the opportunity arose."²⁴⁷ A large number of blacks, particularly from Preston, returned to

²⁴⁴Ibid, p.49.

²⁴⁵Ibid, p.55.

²⁴⁶Clairmont and Wien, "Blacks and Whites," p.160. Elizabeth Beaton describes the experience of a group of black skilled furnacemen who moved up from Alabama to Sydney, Cape Breton in 1900 in "An African-American Community in Cape Breton, 1901-1904." As the workers discovered, "race superceded skill in determining the status accorded" to them (p.81). The group left after only a few years due to "substandard housing and inadequate wages" as well as an unfavourable social climate (p.93). Acadiensis Vol.24 No.2 Spring 1995: 65-97.

²⁴⁷Clairmont and Magill, Nova Scotia Blacks, p.11. Clairmont and Magill also point out that in 1792, "many more blacks would have emigrated had the agent visited every Black community;" an argument made by Walker as well in Black Loyalists. The agent's efforts were also frustrated by employers of blacks, who prevented blacks from leaving "by physical means and by spreading false rumours."

the United States at the end of the American Civil War in the hopes of improving their condition.²⁴⁸

It was not just economic discrimination and hardship that drove blacks away. Social discrimination demoralized many black Nova Scotians. One history book described the black population of Nova Scotia as being "on the whole...a dirty, good-humoured, retrograde feature of the population."²⁴⁹ Blacks were seen as "too good natured and indifferent to everything to be considered a valuable citizen in Nova Scotia."²⁵⁰ Another historian writing in 1842 said that blacks "are perpetually begging and receiving charity yet in general they are neither prosperous nor useful."²⁵¹ The ideology of race had a deep affect on the social life of Nova Scotia, and such attitudes were not confined to textbooks.

A legislated policy in education, segregation of whites and blacks socially was also encouraged. As one black woman in Cherry Brook remembered, the only time she "ever associated with white people was when she entered the work force."²⁵² This is not surprising considering the pressure from within

²⁴⁸Abucar, p.12.

²⁴⁹Beckles Willson, Nova Scotia: The Province That Has Been Passed By (London: Constable and Co. Ltd., 1911):53.

²⁵⁰Nancy M. Sheehan, "Social Change and Educational Innovation in Nova Scotia 1892-1914," Journal of Education Series 6 Vol.1 No.1 Fall 1973: 17.

²⁵¹C.D. Owen, An Epitome of the History, Statistics, Etc. of Nova Scotia (Halifax: English and Blackadar,1842): 70.

²⁵²Barnes et al, Traditional Lifetime Stories Volume 2, p.32.

the white community to distance themselves from the blacks. When the white Baptist preacher John Burton arrived in Nova Scotia in 1811, he was warned by some of his colleagues "not to fraternize freely with blacks, not to sleep in their homes, eat with them or allow "unqualified" elders to preach." They felt "such practices changed the natural order of society" and would encourage the blacks "to think of themselves as social equals to the whites" and would result in them demanding "the rights and privileges of the white man."²⁵³

To keep the black community out, many public facilities were segregated, both by law and by 'understanding'. As Walker points out in The Black Experience in Canada, "the colour line has consistently been applied in hotels, taverns, and restaurants."²⁵⁴ In Blacks in Canada, Winks cites numerous examples of segregation. For example, in Halifax, blacks were unable to be buried in Anglican churchyards, attend Presbyterian church services, and were "told not to run for [political] office." Blacks were barred, by an understanding, not to live in Stellarton, Westville, Trenton, or Pictou, while a bylaw remains restricting blacks from Bridgewater. In Truro, and a number of other towns, curfews were in place that prevented blacks from being on the street after a certain

²⁵³Pachai, Beneath the Clouds of the Promised Land, p.54.

²⁵⁴Walker, History of Blacks in Canada, p.89.

time.²⁵⁵ The segregation of the black community was granted legal sanction in 1919, when a Supreme Court ruling allowed theatre owners "to impose restrictions on seating as they saw fit."²⁵⁶ Theatre owners in Nova Scotia reacted quickly, relegating blacks to balconies and maintaining restrictive policies in restaurants and hotels across the province.²⁵⁷

The only times that it was acceptable for the black community to come into contact with the white community was when blacks were working, selling produce, or performing some other service for the benefit of the white community. The exception to this was during parades or public celebrations. Bonnie Huskins, in her PhD thesis Public Celebrations in Victorian Saint John and Halifax, provides some useful insights into the attitudes towards blacks in the Victorian era.

In parades, the black community often joined in the procession, although they were usually relegated to the back. Such organizations as the "African Friendly Society" marched in the Halifax coronation parade in 1838, the "Slavery Abolition Society" and the "Colored Truckmen of Halifax" in the 1849 centenary parade, and the "African Society" and the "Anglo-African Society" in the 1860 Prince of Wales parade and

²⁵⁵Winks, Blacks in Canada, p.335.

²⁵⁶Ibid, p.467.

²⁵⁷Ibid, p.467.

the Lord Lorne parade of 1878, all participated in the celebrations.²⁵⁸ Militia and volunteer companies were also represented, although they were segregated by race.

Huskins demonstrates that the blacks' presence was largely for the amusement of the white community, and served to entrench the ideas and perceptions that perpetuated the ideology of race in nineteenth century Nova Scotia. Such groups as

the firemen and organizations like the militia also defined the boundaries of respectability even more narrowly by mocking lower status racial groups such as blacks, and depicting them in positions of subordination.²⁵⁹

For example, in 1853, in Saint John, "one of the companies in the firemen's railway celebration procession...used colored boys to lead the engine."²⁶⁰ Halifax's Victoria Rifles, a black company, "frequently experienced ridicule from the other parade participants and spectators." They "reportedly met with jeers and impolite remarks," and were considered to be, in the words of the August 1, 1860 Boston Post as recorded in the Morning Journal, "like a laughable farce to the excellent performance of a drama."²⁶¹

²⁵⁸Bonnie Huskins, "Public Celebrations in Victorian Saint John and Halifax," (Diss., Dalhousie University, 1991): 79.

²⁵⁹Ibid, p.196.

²⁶⁰Ibid, p.196. Huskins provides a number of examples of such treatment. See New Brunswick Courier Sept 17 1853, Daily Sun May 17 1883 and Daily Telegraph May 19 1883.

²⁶¹Ibid, p.196.

The black community put themselves through more ridicule and discrimination for a reason. Otherwise, members of the black community would not have been so offended when the "colored portion of the city" had been overlooked in one celebration, complaining that they should be included in the parade since the blacks paid their taxes "as well as the white folks." It was felt that "a great injustice has been done" and appealed "to city council to see that justice is done."²⁶² Perhaps it was to seek respectability or to demonstrate their loyalty to the crown and enjoy their right to parade as citizens. Susan G. Davis in Parades and Power: Street Theatre in Nineteenth Century Philadelphia, suggests that being in the parades was a means for blacks to "communicate group presence, conviction, and solidarity."²⁶³

Recognizing this, the white community felt threatened by the participation of the black community, and so responded to the blacks' participation with derision.²⁶⁴ The use of

²⁶²Letter to the Editor, Citizen, May 31 1887. Huskins, "Public Celebrations," p.286.

²⁶³Susan G. Davis, Parades and Power: Street Theatre in Nineteenth Century Philadelphia (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986): 156.

²⁶⁴Ibid, p.156. David N. Lyon in "The Minstrel Show as Ritual: Surrogate Black Culture," describes how "whites seemed to swing from seeing blacks as childlike, innocuous, loyal pleasure-seeking plantation darkies... [to seeing them as] sexually aggressive, vicious and prone to rape and violent revolt." There are "two personalities, the child and the beast... [that] predominate in the white mind." See Rituals and Popular Culture Ray B. Browne, ed. (Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1980): 150. The white

blackface was quite common, focusing mockery on "outsiders and others," which reflected "the hardening of racial attitudes after mid-century."²⁶⁵ Huskins points out that

economic and social dislocation, and the racial and ethnic prejudice of the 1880's and 90's undoubtedly led working and lower middle-class white males to adopt deviant people as targets of their frustration.²⁶⁶

Floats such as the "Irish Jaunting Car", the "Baird's Mammoth Minstrel Band", and "Goin' to de Ball" found in an 1881 procession demonstrate this fact. It would also account for the 1882 "Coloured Voters" tableau on the "Loch Lomond Maskers" float, which had the inscription "an expression of concern over the extension of the franchise to blacks."²⁶⁷

Davis points out that "impersonating an outsider was not a far step from attacking him physically."²⁶⁸ This seemed to be the case during one celebration, when a foot-race was organized. Only blacks were allowed to compete, but when it came time for the race, not surprisingly, no blacks showed up. Determined to have a race,

the committee created 'considerable merriment' by dragging out black spectators, from forty year old men to twelve year old boys, to form two teams of

community's mixed impression of blacks accounts for the belief that blacks are, at the same time, both helpless and a threat.

²⁶⁵Huskins, p.224.

²⁶⁶Ibid, p.235.

²⁶⁷Huskins, p.236.

²⁶⁸Davis, Parades and Power, p.158.

five each, to run a relay race.²⁶⁹

Wearing costumes consisting of black tights, black faces and fuzzy black wigs, and calling themselves "zulus" in an 1897 procession, the white community's treatment of the elder members of the black community does not seem surprising; a further demonstration of the pervasiveness of the ideology of race in both Saint John and Halifax in the late nineteenth century.²⁷⁰

Demonstrations of the white community ridiculing blacks did not always take place before the black community's eyes. In addition to the popularity of blackface performers at parades and celebrations, black minstrel shows were also very popular throughout Nova Scotia.²⁷¹ The performances of Callender's Colored Minstrels in Nova Scotia in 1884 demonstrate the popularity of such shows and by implication, how black minstrelsy reflects the attitudes towards blacks that were prevalent in the province.

The Callender's week long production in Halifax in April of 1884 was much anticipated, with the Morning Herald printing a review of an earlier performance in Washington, D.C. a week prior to the troupe's arrival:

²⁶⁹Citizen, June 22 1887. Huskins, p.286.

²⁷⁰Huskins, p.244.

²⁷¹Winks describes minstrel shows as a "romantic reminder of slavery," and points out that acts such as the 'Smokey Mokes Minstrels', were "still playing to good houses" in Nova Scotia until 1965. See Blacks in Canada, p.294.

Callender's famous minstrels presented a very attractive program at Ford's last night...The attractions of the bill are so capitally done that it is difficult to pick out any one thing for special mention...Billy Kersands and Tom McIntosh, the end men, deserve the blackest honors in the sable field...Mr. Burrill Hawkins as the negro Irishman made an excellent hit. The most artistic part of the performance...was 'The Black Zouaris', whose brilliant evolutions and clog tournament surpass anything of similar kind on the minstrel stage.²⁷²

According to the Morning Herald, this was "one of the strongest organizations of the kind that has visited Halifax," suggesting that it is not the only one that had visited Nova Scotia. The Acadian Recorder also commented that the "many of the features were new", suggesting that minstrel shows, and particularly the Callender's act, was not new to Nova Scotia either.²⁷³

Judging from the number of people in attendance, it is no wonder minstrel companies from the United States toured as far north as Nova Scotia. All week the turnouts were high, with the April 15th performance "greeted with another large house" of 1500 people.²⁷⁴ The April 16th also performance drew "a magnificent audience", as did the April 17th show, which "played to a large audience."²⁷⁵ The production was so popular

²⁷²Morning Herald, April 5 1884. Vol.10 No.82.

²⁷³Acadian Recorder, April 16 1884.

²⁷⁴Morning Herald, April 16 1884.

²⁷⁵Acadian Recorder, April 16 1884 and April 18 1884.

that matinee shows were also offered.²⁷⁶

The performances also drew in 'respectable' people, such as on April 17, when "the General and party" attended.²⁷⁷ Roediger points out that those who attended minstrel shows "wished to be respectable,"²⁷⁸ which is why the Morning Herald described the Callender's Minstrels as "a 'high-toned' minstrel company, which commands the patronage of the very best class of people wherever it holds forth."²⁷⁹ Age did not seem to be a barrier for these shows either, with tickets sold to children under twelve for half price.²⁸⁰

There are few details about the shows' contents. A drum solo was mentioned, as was "Jimmy Johnson with his chicken solo and trained bird", "Charles Hunn's [musical performance of] 'Did you see me?'" , "Billy Kersands'...'pickinninnies'", "high kicking", and the "Zonares...clog."²⁸¹ An 1887 performance of the Barlow Brothers and Frost's Minstrels contained "shadowpeople" and had a show where "most of the jokes were fresh and a good number of local hits were made." The show was successful enough to keep the audience "in a

²⁷⁶Morning Herald, April 15 1884.

²⁷⁷Acadian Recorder, April 16 1884. The report stated that "the General and party will be present this evening."

²⁷⁸Roediger, Wages of Whiteness, p.122.

²⁷⁹Morning Herald, April 15 1884.

²⁸⁰Ibid, April 15 1884.

²⁸¹Acadian Recorder, April 16 1884 and April 18 1884.

continual roar."²⁸²

Titles such as 'shadowpeople' and 'pickinninnies' suggest that the show's contents ridiculed the black community, possibly locally with the performers' 'local hits.' Regardless of what the specific acts of each performance were, by its very nature, minstrelsy was "a form of leisure that...conveniently rationalized racial oppression."²⁸³ The myth perpetuated in minstrel shows fixed "the black slave as an everlasting part of nature rather than as a figure in history,"²⁸⁴ while it helped whites "maintain their self-image of superiority."²⁸⁵

In The Wages of Whiteness, Roediger takes a close look at the motives and content behind black minstrelsy, which Saxton believes "epitomized and concentrated the thrust of white

²⁸²The Citizen and Evening Chronicle, June 1 1887, p.2. Jim Hornby in Black Islanders (Charlottetown: Institute of Island Studies, 1991) discusses the popularity of minstrel shows in Prince Edward Island and the shows' "distinct racial overtones" (p.83). Blackface minstrelsy and its encouragement of stereotypes was so popular that blackface characters such as "Negro Girl, Nigger Lassie, Negro Dude, Negro Admiral, Negro Flirt, and Coloured Lady" appeared at the 1888 Carnival Ball in Charlottetown (p.85).

²⁸³Eric Lott, "'The Seeming Counterfeit': Racial Politics and Early Blackface Minstrelsy," American Quarterly Vol.43 No.2 June 1991: 223.

²⁸⁴Saxton, p.173.

²⁸⁵Kevin Gaines, "Assimilationist Minstrelsy as Racial Uplift Ideology: James D. Corrothers's Literary Quest for Black Leadership," American Quarterly Vol.45 No.3 September 1993: 345.

racism."²⁸⁶ A primary motive for black minstrelsy was to define blackness, enabling the white community to define whiteness.²⁸⁷ That is why a lot of what constituted the minstrel acts "imputed to the...[blacks] acts which they themselves feared they might commit if they let loose the rigid controls they imposed on themselves," not to mention the larger controls which were imposed on them.²⁸⁸ Roediger suggests that "blackfaced males derived their consciousness by measuring themselves against a group they defined as largely worthless and ineffectual,"²⁸⁹ returning to - and reinforcing - the myth of black docility.

What also characterized minstrelsy was that it had the "dual task of exploiting and suppressing African elements," which allowed blackfaced minstrels to "escape into the bohemianism of the entertainment world" while at the same time misrepresenting an entire group of people.²⁹⁰ Black minstrelsy was so popular because it "provided an underground theatre in which the blackface convention rendered permissible topics that were difficult to handle explicitly on the Victorian stage" or, likely, off the stage and in the workplace.²⁹¹

²⁸⁶Saxton, p.165.

²⁸⁷Roediger, Wages of Whiteness, p.115.

²⁸⁸Rawick, p.133.

²⁸⁹Roediger, Wages of Whiteness, p.118.

²⁹⁰Saxton, p.168, 167.

²⁹¹Ibid, p.166.

Roediger acknowledges that "blackface was not merely about race relations but also about social relations among whites," but he is quick to point out that one cannot separate "the racial content and the class content of minstrelsy," which he feels other historians have done.²⁹²

And to take the racial content out of minstrelsy would be to take out the fear of the white workers, which was too big a part of the appeal of minstrelsy. As Davis has argued, the white community was intimidated by black culture, feeling that "African-American style, music and dance would have dominated mixed celebrations."²⁹³ With such a fear, separation and suppression of blacks was necessary, as was the ridicule and mockery evident in the parades and public celebrations as well as the minstrelsy shows.

While audiences heard minstrel songs, they must have been conscious that they were watching shows which "negated non-white humanity,"²⁹⁴ and that were performed by blackface performers who "tended to support proslavery and white supremacist policies."²⁹⁵ With such popular shows travelling around Nova Scotia dictating and defining blackness, racism

²⁹²Roediger, Wages of Whiteness, p.123.

²⁹³Ibid, p.107.

²⁹⁴Saxton, p.180. Songs heard in Canadian minstrel shows also included songs which degraded and mocked the black community. Some of the songs that were featured in PEI's minstrel shows were "Hush My Little Coon," "There's A New Coon in Town," and "Ten Little Niggers." Hornby, p.85.

²⁹⁵Roediger, Wages of Whiteness, p.124.

could not help but be perpetuated and deepened, as blacks were mocked and their culture ridiculed, myths circulated and lies affirmed.

Racism towards blacks could also take more physical, violent forms as well. Race riots were not uncommon throughout Nova Scotia from the arrival of the Black Loyalists until well into the twentieth century. In Shelburne, as early as 1784, "mobs of working class whites drove the blacks out of town and tore down their homes and their Baptist Church"²⁹⁶ and in New Glasgow as late as 1919, a race riot erupted "as a result of an altercation between a black and a white youth."²⁹⁷ Another riot in 1919, in Liverpool, England, was the result of impatient Canadian soldiers waiting to return home, starting when white soldiers interfered with the black batallion while they were on parade.²⁹⁸ The black batallion was the target of a riot in Nova Scotia later that year as well, this time in Truro, when the white community became impatient with the extended stay of the black batallion's camp there. A group of whites "fell upon a number of soldiers and beat them badly... [with blacks] blocked from seeking revenge only by the

²⁹⁶Walker, Black Identity, p.8.

²⁹⁷Carrie Best. That Lonesome Road: The Autobiography of Carrie M. Best (New Glasgow: Clarion Publishing Company Ltd., 1977): 43.

²⁹⁸Pachai, Beneath the Clouds of the Promised Land, p.125.

intervention of their white officers."²⁹⁹ The black batallion was demobilized soon after.

Race riots were very common in 1919, occuring in over 25 cities in the United States between April and October of that year. The riots in 1919 were possibly caused by "the 'impudence' of returned Negro veterans demanding their rights as citizens."³⁰⁰ William Tuttle notes in Race Riot: Chicago in the Summer of 1919, that the summer of 1919 "marked the beginning of the xenophobic and hysterically antiracial 'Red Scare'", which, combined with "white determination to reaffirm the black people's status on the bottom rung of the nation's racial and economic ladder," left the blacks vulnerable to physical attack.³⁰¹ In Chicago, Illinois, riots were seen to be fuelled by "housing, war psychology, politics and organization of labor and jobs," although the riots started from small incidents, such as the case of the black boy who "swam past an invisible line of segregation" at the beach, that quickly evolved into a full-scale riot.³⁰²

A riot in Truro at the end of September, 1919, also seemed to erupt out of a similarly minor incident, raising the question of what tensions lay just beneath the surface.

²⁹⁹Winks, Blacks in Canada, p.319.

³⁰⁰Carl Sandburg, The Chicago Race Riots, July, 1919 (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Howe Inc., 1919): xiv.

³⁰¹William M. Tuttle, Jr., Race Riot: Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919 (New York: H. Wolff, 1970): 14,21.

³⁰²Sandburg, p.xiv, x.

On the evening of September 28, at the Canadian National Railway Station, CNR Officer Ogden attempted to arrest a black man by the name of Samuel Reese. According to the Eastern Chronicle, Leonard Paris, another black man,

interfered and almost immediately the quarrel was on...whites chased the colored element through the town and down to the 'Island', a colored settlement.³⁰³

The Halifax Herald thought that more than one person interfered, reporting that "a number of negroes interfered and it is said one of them struck the policeman over the head with a stick." In a short time, "a good sized row had developed [with] whites coming to the rescue of the policeman."³⁰⁴ The Truro Daily News provided more details of the incident and the riot that ensued, describing how

the man resisted arrest, but Ogden promptly put him in. Others took a hand and one colored fellow struck a white fellow across the face with a cane. A few whites then started a drive for some colored fellows at the so-called 'Acre'. In a short time the crowd gathered until probably one hundred arrived...and smashed some windows. From there they started for Smith's Island. By the time the Island was reached the crowd swelled to several hundred.³⁰⁵

By that point, the police had been called. However, their arrival at the 'Island' was too late to prevent damage since the crowd had "smashed the windows in the first half dozen

³⁰³Eastern Chronicle, October 3 1919, p.1.

³⁰⁴Halifax Herald, September 30 1919.

³⁰⁵Truro Daily News, September 29 1919, p.4.

houses they came to on the Island."³⁰⁶ The Halifax Herald and the Truro Daily News also both mentioned shots being fired, although only the Truro Daily News reported that "some parties in the white faction carried guns and some half dozen shot were fired."³⁰⁷ The riot ended when the Chief of Police "got between the two opposing factions and quieted them sufficiently to address them, and he finally persuaded the whites to retire and dispersed the crowd."³⁰⁸

There are some important facts missing from these reports, such as what Reese was being arrested for in the first place. The Truro Daily News reported that he was being arrested for "creating a disturbance", but gives no more detail than that. The only arrests made after the riot were of Reese and Paris, with Reese charged with "unlawfully wounding Amos Ogden, police officer, Canadian National Railways" and Paris charged with "obstructing a peace officer in the execution of his duty."³⁰⁹ Strangely, no charge of "creating a disturbance was made" against Reese. There is also no mention of what might have caused this episode to escalate as much as it did, suggesting that either such riots were commonplace or that the reason for it was obvious. The

³⁰⁶Ibid, p.4.

³⁰⁷Ibid, p.4.

³⁰⁸Ibid, p.4.

³⁰⁹Yarmouth Herald, September 30 1919, p.3.

Truro Daily News made their own judgement of the event, commenting that

the unfortunate situation is that there are three or four very bad colored young men in the settlement and about as many bad girls, and because of them some of the most respectable colored citizens of the town have suffered loss and damage to their property. The white element contained a number of equally bad whites and the actions of these have cast a bad name over the town.³¹⁰

No whites were charged after the riot. The blame lay squarely on the laps of the black community, for somehow encouraging the white community to vandalize a black settlement.³¹¹ Such an unfavourable view of the black community in issues of justice is not surprising in light of others articles that the Truro Daily News printed in the same period, like the following article from the United States entitled "Swift Justice":

a negro was convicted of an assault on a white woman on September 29. Within 48 hours the contemptible brute was arrested...During his trial the cowardly, craven criminal was constantly imploring the Judge to 'please protect me'...New Jersey is too decent a State to let even this

³¹⁰Truro Daily News, September 29 1919, p.4.

³¹¹A similar result occurred following an October, 1937 riot which broke out in Trenton, Nova Scotia after a black man purchased a home there. A "mob of a hundred whites stoned the owner and broke his home." Broken up by the RCMP the night before, a mob of over four hundred returned the next night, "and destroyed the house and its contents." This time, the RCMP "would not act unless requested to do so by the mayor, who refused, and the mob moved on to attack two other Negro homes." The only arrests made were of one black man. The black property owner "abandoned efforts to occupy his property." Winks, Blacks in Canada, p.419-420. Halifax Chronicle, October 27-30, 1937.

detestable criminal be lynched.³¹²

Winks asserts that "decades of intentional and unintentional insults have led many Negroes into the familiar early stages of paranoia...where persecution and delusion of persecution will naturally occur."³¹³ The reality of the black community's situation throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was exclusion from political and economic opportunities, public ridicule and the constant threat of violence. An ideology of race had been constructed and reconstructed to maintain the black community on the margin. The power of this ideological construction has been tested by the Nova Scotian black community from the very beginning. Their lack of success is a testimony to the power of the ideology and the limits of the community's effort. This struggle will be explored in the following chapter.

³¹²Truro Daily News, October 10 1919, p.2.

³¹³Winks, "The Canadian Negro," p.286.

Chapter Three

Facing a society that embraced a racist ideology, the black community had a great obstacle in the way of attaining political, social, and economic equality. From the arrival of the Black Loyalists to the end of the Second World War, the black community achieved a mixture of success and failure in their efforts, employing strategies similar in nature to black activists in the United States. Strategies such as Booker T. Washington's accommodationism, where the black community tried to earn the respect of the white community, 'preparing' themselves for eventual integration and social equality. Strategies not unlike W.E.B. DuBois' ongoing resistance to the colour line, challenging the white community through whatever legal means possible. Strategies that reflected the views of Marcus Garvey, who believed that blacks should support each other through black capitalist ventures and voluntary segregation. Combining these different approaches, the black community coped, and where possible, overcame difficult circumstances in Nova Scotia.

In this period of just over one hundred and fifty years, the black community responded and adapted to an ideology of race. The approach they used in this period paved the way and shaped the movement in Nova Scotia following the Second World War. Despite this history, Winks argues that racism in Nova

Scotia was a "recent Canadian discovery."³¹⁴ Such an argument dismisses the fact "that black assertiveness had a 200-year long history."³¹⁵

McAdam points out in Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, that to leave out an entire period of history is to "obscure the less dramatic but ultimately more significant trends that shaped the prospects for later insurgency."³¹⁶ Although the actions taken by the black community up to the post-Second World War era may not seem significant at first glance, it was "the building block for the more elaborate institutionalized political action that could not take place without it."³¹⁷ As James C. Scott points out in Domination and the Arts of Resistance, "infrapolitics", which are the "low-profile forms of resistance that dare not speak in their own name", are the cornerstone to any social movement.³¹⁸

Scott argues that it is difficult to "successfully read and understand the often fugitive political conduct of subordinate groups...when the powerless are often obliged to

³¹⁴Ibid, p.297.

³¹⁵James W. St.G. Walker, "Historical Study of Blacks in Canada: The State of the Discipline", Black Presence in Multi-Ethnic Canada Vincent D'Oyley, ed. (Vancouver: UBC and OISE, 1976): 52.

³¹⁶Doug McAdam, p.3.

³¹⁷Scott, p.201.

³¹⁸Ibid, p.19.

adopt a strategic pose in the presence of the powerful."³¹⁹ It is through infrapolitics that "the limits of the possible are encountered...in an empirical process of search and probing...continually pressing against the limit of what is permitted."³²⁰ Robin D. G. Kelley points out in "We Are Not What We Seem: Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South," that "infrapolitics and organized resistance are not two distinct realms of opposition to be studied separately and then compared; they are two sides of the same coin."³²¹

Kelley believes that such an approach helps "bridge the gulf between the social and cultural world of the 'everyday' and political struggles."³²² Kelley points out that, for blacks in the Southern United States,

politics was not separate from lived experience or the imagined world of what is possible. It was the many battles to roll back constraints, to exercise power over, or create space within, the institutions and social relationships that dominated their lives.³²³

For the black community in Nova Scotia, the ideology of race was so pervasive in the economic, social and political life of the province that to have control of even a few institutions,

³¹⁹Ibid, p.xii.

³²⁰Ibid, p.192, 196.

³²¹Kelley, p.111.

³²²Ibid, p.76.

³²³Ibid, p.78.

such as the Church, was a feat in itself.

Before looking at examples of the approaches the black community took in their quest for equality, it will be helpful to define who the "black community" was in Nova Scotia. For minority groups both in the United States and in Canada, the term "black community" has been defined by the white community who have sought spokespersons, "community leaders", to speak for these large groups of people, as if this group could speak with one voice, having one thought. In the case of the black community in Nova Scotia, as well as the First Nations and other 'ethnic' and 'racial' groups, this strategy largely benefitted the white community and denied these communities the opportunity to voice a diversity of opinions and attitudes.

The black community in Nova Scotia, although seen largely as a monolithic entity by the white community, was made up of people from many different places and backgrounds. The earliest blacks to be in Nova Scotia were brought under slavery, later joined by the Black Loyalists and the slaves that came with the white Loyalists. For a brief time Maroons from Jamaica settled in Nova Scotia, with opinion divided over the number of Maroon descendants that remained in Nova Scotia.

The next large migration was from the United States after the War of 1812, with the arrival of the Black Refugees. Around 1900, a number of Americans from Alabama briefly lived in Sydney, who were joined by a large number from the West

Indies, who moved to industrial Cape Breton.³²⁴

How can this group be called a community? Describing any large number of people as a community suggests that they have a great deal in common; common interests, attitudes, and beliefs. In defining 'community', Raymond Plant in Community and Ideology argues that there must be the "possibility of participation in community life" and the community's existence should "be based upon some sense of identity of specific interest."³²⁵ In "The Concept of Community: A Re-examination", David Clark states that a community can exist "because of shared beliefs, values and concerns rather than because of proximity of residence."³²⁶ Rene Konig argues in The Community that a community is not all "unity and harmony within...[which is where] many commentators err...by insisting that absence of conflict be a part of definition of community."³²⁷ Koenig also points out that the term community

³²⁴Although a social history of the black settlements would be a very valuable contribution to historical scholarship, the focus of this study is the response of the black community to an ideology of race, emphasizing the variety of approaches and their outcomes. A study which brings to life the dynamics of these various settlements and the relationship between indigenous blacks and those who have immigrated to Nova Scotia more recently would also be very useful, but is beyond the scope of this study.

³²⁵Raymond Plant, Community and Ideology, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974): 58,40.

³²⁶David B. Clark, "The Concept of Community: A Re-examination," Sociological Review Vol.21 August 1973: 404.

³²⁷Rene Konig, The Community, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968): 8.

originally meant "the totality of those who own something in common." ³²⁸

What each black settlement in Nova Scotia had in common was their treatment by the white community. Whether a black man came from the Caribbean or Guysborough, the man was still 'black,' still segregated and still mocked and discriminated against. The degree of discrimination may have varied from place to place, but that choice lay in the hands of the white community members. ³²⁹ In exploring the response of the black community to Nova Scotia's racial ideology, what will become clear is that, while the black community was a community that was not 'absent of conflict,' it did share many 'beliefs, values and concerns.' The black settlements also may not have worked together in their struggles, but their efforts do reflect some common goals, such as having a good education, equal rights, and opportunities for economic and social improvement.

For the blacks who arrived in Nova Scotia following the American Revolution and the War of 1812, their location was largely dictated by where their land grants were located. In most cases, civilians or soldiers who had been in the same regiment or moved from the same location were settled together

³²⁸Ibid, p.15.

³²⁹In "An African-American Community in Cape Breton, 1901-1904", Elizabeth Beaton recounts the migration of a number of black furnaceman and their brief stay in Cape Breton. Despite the fact that they were skilled labour, "race superceded skill in determining the status accorded to workers" (p.81).

on a tract of land. From this policy there emerged all-black settlements such as Tracadie, Birchtown and Brindley Town.³³⁰ Reflecting their segregated location, the black settlements were the focus of attention for the new arrivals, looking to the settlements for physical, spiritual and mental sustenance.

As Herbert Aptheker states in American Negro Slave Revolts, "survival is a form of struggle."³³¹ Faced with challenging ideological and physical obstacles, the approach of many of the black settlers was one of "looking inwardly first and only then from a position of inward strength to move forward to greater participation in the wider society."³³² Living in the segregated settlements, the blacks looked to their small communities for their educational, social and religious needs.³³³ It was also a place where blacks "sought employment, mutual support and freedom from racial discrimination," at the same time fostering "a new community awareness."³³⁴

The approach while not aggressive was assertive. It was realistic in the face of an exclusionary ideology and effective in maintaining the survival of the black community.

³³⁰Walker, "Establishment of a Free Black Community," p.210-211.

³³¹Aptheker, p.3.

³³²Pachai, Beneath the Clouds of the Promised Land, p.157.

³³³Walker, "Establishment of a Free Black Community," p.233.

³³⁴Ibid, p.231.

Walker believes that the biggest benefit of living in the all-black settlements was "the protection they afforded to an evolving black identity that has always been necessary to withstand the pressures of white racism."³³⁵ He also points out that the settlement structure "prevented the complete degradation and demoralization of its members."³³⁶ Within the settlements, a network of organizations helped to encourage, educate and lead blacks in fighting for equality.

An offer by the government to relocate some members of the black settlements in 1839 illustrates the success of the settlement strategy and the need for it. The blacks "had no desire to expose themselves individually to racial attack on holdings scattered around the province." Walker argues that the black community recognized that the settlements provided a system of "support and protection" and relocation would have resulted in "the destruction of the black community, the disappearance of the church, the severing of ties welded in shared poverty and mutual assistance for an entire generation."³³⁷ Faced with a hostile economic and social environment, the black community recognized that the best way of challenging the white community was by doing it with the interests of the settlement community in mind and the benefits the organizations rooted in settlements provided.

³³⁵Ibid, p.206.

³³⁶Ibid, p.207.

³³⁷Ibid, p.235.

One of the most active and supportive organizations in each settlement was the Church. As Walker points out, the Church "provided a source of pride and a sense of worth" to the settlements³³⁸ as well as a spiritual "source of meaning for their lives in the midst of their suffering and oppression."³³⁹ He also argues that

there developed in the black churches a sense of distinction, a confidence that they were a chosen people who must be kept apart from and uncontaminated by the evidently lapsed Christians of the white churches.³⁴⁰

The Rev. Dr. William P. Oliver believed that the Church's role has been so great that "its history is in reality the history of our [black] people."³⁴¹ Pachai notes that the

consolidation of the black church [into the African United Baptist Association] was no less than a major black initiative which has maintained a remarkable momentum right up to the present... [And] was a training ground for generations of black leaders and followers, preachers and teachers, politicians and professionals.³⁴²

Clairmont suggests that the Church also "provided a vehicle for inter-community black contact, maintaining the black institutional structure and being the repository of black

³³⁸Walker, History of Blacks in Canada, p.136.

³³⁹Peter J. Paris, The Moral, Political and Religious Significance of the Black Churches in Nova Scotia (Dartmouth: Black Cultural Centre, 1989): 4.

³⁴⁰Walker, "Establishment of a Free Black Community," p.217.

³⁴¹Thomson, p.47.

³⁴²Pachai, Beneath the Clouds of the Promised Land, p.63.

tradition."³⁴³ In 1911, it is estimated that 90 percent of blacks in Nova Scotia were Baptists, which makes the large role the Church played in the life of the black community understandable,³⁴⁴ especially since "everyone in the community identified with the church whether they were members or not."³⁴⁵

But the value of the Church's role has not always been seen as favourably. Winks charges that the churches "lacked intellectual conviction while possessing an abundance of emotion and faith...[and failed] to beseech the white world that it might be mistaken."³⁴⁶ He also claims that the churches were "ineffective in meeting the major problems...partially because they did not see those problems in terms of future goals so much as in terms of immediate needs."³⁴⁷ Oliver admits that "a warm religious fervour...gave them a sense of security...which suppressed the aggressiveness found in most immigrants,"³⁴⁸ but this does not mean that the black community lacked vision or did not take action to change their situation.

From the beginning of the 19th century, the Church took

³⁴³Clairmont and Wien, "Blacks and Whites," p.163.

³⁴⁴Winks, Blacks in Canada, p.346.

³⁴⁵Paris, p.16.

³⁴⁶Winks, Blacks in Canada, p.337, 338.

³⁴⁷Ibid, p.360.

³⁴⁸Thomson, p.48.

an active role in many social issues. Education was a priority, especially in Preston, where "for over three generations education...was conducted under the leadership of the church."³⁴⁹ In fact, the Church responded to the educational needs of the settlements as early as 1785, ensuring that each major settlement had its own school.³⁵⁰ In the middle of the 19th century, under the leadership of Richard Preston, the Anglo-African Mutual Improvement and Aid Association was established in 1842 at Cornwallis Street African Baptist Church, followed by the Negro Abolition Society in 1846.³⁵¹

In "From Sea to Rail", Judith Fingard describes an interesting example of the Church's political role. In March, 1898, following the wrongful dismissal of a number of black railway porters, "the black community reacted to the discrimination with an 'indignation' meeting at which they drew up a letter of protest." Preaching at Cornwallis Street Baptist Church, Rev. J. Francis Robinson encouraged "both civil rights and trade unionism as protest strategies" while condemning capitalism and racism.³⁵² Such efforts demonstrate

³⁴⁹Abucar, p.11.

³⁵⁰Walker, "Establishment of a Free Black Community," p.219.

³⁵¹Savanah E. Williams, The Role of the African United Baptist Association in the Development of Indigenous Afro-Canadians in Nova Scotia (Armdale: Lancelot Press, 1988): 6.

³⁵²Judith Fingard, "From Sea to Rail," p.58. See Halifax Herald, April 6 1898 for sermon.

an awareness by the black community of their own situation and a consciousness of the plight of other black communities.

Black consciousness was emphasized particularly in the African Orthodox Church and most notably at St. Phillip's African Orthodox Church in Sydney. The African Orthodox Church was founded in 1921 by George Alexander McGuire, who was "inspired and strengthened by the pedagogy of Marcus Garvey's Back to Africa Movement."³⁵³ McGuire promoted "the idea of a black Christ God and a black Madonna" in order "to counter the white Christ imposed upon people of African descent."³⁵⁴ McGuire was also the chaplain of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), which was the organization under which Garvey spread his message of the need for black capital, "racial purity and a back-to-Africa campaign."³⁵⁵

The African Orthodox Church in Sydney started in 1921, under the leadership of Rev. Robertson. Established in Whitney Pier, St. Philip's Parish was the only African Orthodox Church in Canada. Soon after the church was established, the UNIA set up a hall in Sydney, which, throughout the 1920s and 1930s "provided a chance for all

³⁵³Joyce Ruck, ed., Three Nova Scotian Black Churches (Sydney: Black Cultural Centre, 1990): ii.

³⁵⁴Elizabeth Beaton, "Religious Affiliation and Ethnic Identity of West Indians in Whitney Pier," Canadian Ethnic Studies Vol.20 No.3 1988: 120.

³⁵⁵Ibid, p.119.

Blacks in Sydney to acknowledge historical events such as the emancipation of all slaves in the U.S." The UNIA also provided entertainment with their band and by hosting sports and cultural events in the hall.³⁵⁶

Although it has been argued that the politics of Garvey and the UNIA was not part of the Sydney Church's message, the preachers did "frequently remind their congregations of their African roots" and encouraged an assertive form of black consciousness. As Beaton points out in "Religious Affiliation and Ethnic Identity of West Indians in Whitney Pier", "the very fact of the establishment of the Church in Sydney led to racial realization within the community."³⁵⁷ Garvey himself also came to Sydney and spoke at Menelik Hall in the early 1930s.³⁵⁸

Even if the role of the UNIA and the African Orthodox Church was "much the same as benefit societies" and if "the racial consciousness of the community was inclined to lean toward West Indian Black identity," these organizations demonstrated and nurtured black leadership.³⁵⁹ They also provided important social outlets, offering community members

³⁵⁶Ibid, p.123.

³⁵⁷Ibid, p.123.

³⁵⁸Ruck, Three Nova Scotian Black Churches, p.i. There were a large number of blacks from America and the West Indies working in the Blast Furnace of the Dominion Steel Company who likely made up the majority of the Garveyites.

³⁵⁹Beaton, "Religious Affiliation," p.123-124.

the opportunity to build skills and find support.

The black Church thus played a very different role for its members than the white Church. Winks argues that the Church was separate because blacks "knew they could not compete with whites at the collection plate or in the millenary shop" and criticized the black community for forming a separate church.³⁶⁰ Walker points out that maintaining "a distinct style of life and worship [may]...have hindered the cultural assimilation of blacks into mainstream society," but, as Walker also notes, that falsely assumes that if blacks "had shown an inclination to assimilate, they would have been welcomed into white society."³⁶¹ That is why the theology of the black churches combined "a survival theology with an ethic of freedom through self-determination;"³⁶² a philosophy that resembles the black community's strategy in general for this period.

Of course, the Church did have its limitations. As much as the Church nurtured leadership and fostered confidence, by its very nature it tended to be conservative and so did not "always welcome social change...[and] may have stubbornly resisted...it."³⁶³ Possibly this was because the Church strove "for limited objectives of reform within the political

³⁶⁰Winks, Blacks in Canada, p.339, 349.

³⁶¹Walker, History of Blacks in Canada, p.135.

³⁶²Paris, p.27.

³⁶³Ibid, p.24.

system,"³⁶⁴ but possibly because, like the black community itself, the Church still had faith in the government that improvements were forthcoming. During World War One, the AUBA was "in hearty sympathy with the Empire's struggle" and promised "to do all in its power to encourage coloured men to uphold the traditions of their country, and of the empire to which they belonged."³⁶⁵

One area where the Church in general has consistently failed is in its recognition of the women's leadership role. In the black community as a whole, Oliver wrote that "the leadership vacuum, in part, was filled by the women,"³⁶⁶ with lay leadership "frequently female."³⁶⁷ But it was not until 1917 that a Ladies' Auxiliary was established, and soon became the "strength and backbone of the Association."³⁶⁸ Women's participation must have been more notable than that if Peter McKerrow felt in 1883 that women's "labours are generally more successful than the males"³⁶⁹ and "placed the responsibility of

³⁶⁴Ibid, p.24.

³⁶⁵Williams, p.11.

³⁶⁶Thomson, p.13.

³⁶⁷Morton, p.80. In 1903, women in the church were not only lay leaders. Morton points out that a newly arrived American minister, Johnson, had an ordained wife, by the name of M.E. Johnson. She took on quite a few leadership roles, but accidentally broke the law when she performed a wedding ceremony in 1904. She did not set any precedent for the ordainment of Nova Scotian women however.

³⁶⁸Williams, p.11.

³⁶⁹Ibid, p.11.

education and race improvement on women."³⁷⁰ The role of the women must also have been substantial before 1917 if the First Congress of Coloured Women in Canada could be held in Halifax in 1920, followed in 1921 by the Congress of Nova Scotia Colored Women.³⁷¹ Both events were sponsored by the AUBA's Ladies Auxiliary, which had arisen from an East Preston meeting four years earlier of AUBA women entitled "Meeting at the Well."³⁷²

Other AUBA committees assigned to initiate change were not always as effective, such as the AUBA's Committee on Social Service and Child Welfare and the Committee on Rural and Urban Life, both of which served "to keep community issues before the Association rather than act as instruments of social change."³⁷³ But the achievements of the Church outweigh the drawbacks, especially since the Church helped establish "an Afro-Canadian identity [and]...demonstrated the physical

³⁷⁰Morton, p.70.

³⁷¹If they were not, they would be exceptional. Evelyn Higginbotham argues in "Beyond the Sound of Silence: Afro-American Women in History," (Gender & History Vol.1 No.1 Spring 1989: 57) that black women contributed a great deal to the women's right movement and that "black churchwomen organized independently of men and implemented programs for the social and economic uplift of the black masses." Morton in "Separate Spheres in a Separate World" argues that women were highly active in church politics but excluded from "formal structures of church government and religious leadership" (p.78).

³⁷²Charles R. Saunders, Share and Care: The Story of the Nova Scotia Home for Colored Children (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing Ltd., 1994): 39.

³⁷³Williams, p.14.

presence of black communities in Nova Scotia."³⁷⁴

The African United Baptist Association also supported and encouraged the creation of the Nova Scotia Home for Coloured Children; another success for the black community in the area of education, incorporated in 1915. The Home was funded with the public support of black and white citizens, and was expected to help children to "pursue higher educational branches, and lay a foundation for leadership of the Race."³⁷⁵

The initiative for the Home had come from within the black community, as had most of the effort in its actual establishment, even if some of the money had been raised through donations from the white community.³⁷⁶ James Robinson Johnston, a lawyer, and the Rev. Moses B. Puryear, pastor of Cornwallis Street Baptist Church, both were dedicated to seeing the dream of a Home become a reality. Both Johnston and Puryear believed in "the Booker T. Washington doctrine of practical, industrial education as the best vehicle for black progress."³⁷⁷ Impressed by Booker T. Washington's Hampton Institute in the United States, Johnston and Puryear modelled the Home after the American school.

This was reflected in the curriculum used by the Home. In the 1920s and 1930s, apart from school lessons, the Home

³⁷⁴Abucar, p.12.

³⁷⁵Pachai, Beneath the Clouds of the Promised Land, p.177.

³⁷⁶Pachai, Beneath the Clouds of the Promised Land, p.72.

³⁷⁷Saunders, Share and Care, p.24.

taught different skills to the males and the females. The Home "hoped that training in practical manual skills would eventually become available," but in the interim, the males 'practical' education "consisted of outdoor and farm labour - cutting wood, keeping up the crops and looking after the livestock." Some trades were offered too, with the males sometimes helping with "carpentry and maintenance." The females were responsible "for upkeep of the entire Home," which provided them with practical "on-the-job training for a career in domestic work."³⁷⁸

While such 'practical' training could be useful in a society which supported a colour line and maintained an ideology of race, it did not provide opportunities that could offer the Home's children economic, social or political advancement. Washington's objectives were limited, and so the Home's were also. However, it was the initiative of the black community and a source of pride and inspiration for blacks throughout the Maritimes. If the Home did not provide a radical pedagogy, it did demonstrate a significant achievement on the part of the black community.

Encouraged by the creation of the Home, the African United Baptists' Association "called for unity and resolution in the black community" at their annual convention of 1918.³⁷⁹ The Halifax Coloured Citizens' Improvement League answered the

³⁷⁸Ibid, p.54.

³⁷⁹Pachai, Beneath the Clouds of the Promised Land, p.142.

call with notable effectiveness. Founded during the Great Depression, the League took the lead in its efforts to promote unity and to bring about changes in a number of areas, including education. The founder of the League was Beresford Augustus Husbands, a successful real estate owner and businessman, who took an active role keeping "a watchful eye on school curricula," which included successfully putting pressure on the Premier of Nova Scotia to remove Black Sambo from school reading lists.³⁸⁰ Also during the Great Depression, the Rev. William A. White of Cornwallis Street Baptist Church, launched a "Five Year Programme to raise \$2500 annually to establish vocational schools in the Churches" in order to combat the fact that black workers were being laid off at a faster rate than white workers.³⁸¹

Another significant achievement in the same era was the creation of the Coloured Education Centre in Halifax in 1938. The initiative of the black community, the Coloured Education Centre aimed at doing "everything possible for the benefit of the growing generations;"³⁸² a notable and necessary service in such a dark economic period. There were also notable achievements in other areas of the province. In Guysborough, located in the poorest county in Nova Scotia, the black community managed to raise funds for and build a school in

³⁸⁰Ibid, p.160.

³⁸¹Winks, Blacks in Canada, p.350.

³⁸²Pachai, Beneath the Clouds of the Promised Land, p.165.

1932. This achievement would have been extraordinary for the black settlements even if Nova Scotia was not suffering a depression which left the province "poverty-stricken, and [where] common schools suffered with separate schools for want of teachers, equipment and transportation."³⁸³

The black community met with a number of successes and failures in their quest for justice and social, political and economic equality. Seeking justice was not a new pursuit for the black community. The community had sought to secure their rights through legal petitions since the end of the eighteenth century, especially in the area of education. From the Black Loyalists first arrival, settlements all across Nova Scotia petitioned to have schools established in their region. For example, in 1820, the citizens of Preston "petitioned the government to establish a school and place of worship,"³⁸⁴ which was followed eight years later by a petition from Hammonds Plains for "a school house and a school master."³⁸⁵ Both petitions were successful, as was the petition from Africville, which just took longer. Africville, established in 1848, petitioned for many years before a school was built in 1883; a sign of the neglect which was common in the relationship between the City Council and the residents of Africville. The school, once it was built, lasted until 1953,

³⁸³Winks, Blacks in Canada, p.360.

³⁸⁴Abucar, p.10.

³⁸⁵Pachai, Beneath the Clouds of the Promised Land, p.44.

at which time the children were transferred to integrated schools.³⁸⁶

Petitions were also filed in an effort to improve the physical quality of life in the settlements. On August 15, 1886, a petition came from Preston, demanding improvements on the main road into Halifax and Dartmouth. The petitioners stated that:

as this is the only road we have to come to market we would respectfully request a small sum of money to enable us to put the Road and Bridges in a passable state.³⁸⁷

In the case of Africville, there had been petitions signed for numerous other reasons, including "police services, building permits,...[and] garbage pickups." Refusing to take responsibility, city officials blamed the residents for Africville's "substandard services."³⁸⁸

Petitions were also filed for other issues, such as criminal justice. One petition was for the release of eighteen year old Benjamin Turnbull from the Penitentiary, due to ill health. Written on March 18, 1848, the petition "acknowledges the justice of his sentence...but since his confinement, his health has suffered so severely that for the preservation of his life he is compelled...to obtain his

³⁸⁶Clairmont, "Africville: An Historical Overview," p.37.

³⁸⁷PANS vol. 103 #4684.

³⁸⁸Clairmont, "Africville: An Historical Overview," p.44,49.

release."³⁸⁹ One mother also filed two petitions from Preston, hoping to have her son released early from prison. The first, written on July 20, 1847, described the old age of her husband and the good behaviour of her son in prison, and how he was much needed at home.³⁹⁰ Presumably since the first petition was unsuccessful, she sent a second petition on April 12, 1848, where she asked the government to

grant him a release from confinement to assist her and his family at this important and critical season, when planting is necessary to procure by the Blessing of Providence the means of subsistence after the severe privation of the past years.³⁹¹

Accompanying the petition was a note from the penitentiary, verifying the good behaviour of the prisoner. Although it was not entirely clear from the writing beside the petition, there did seem to be a note saying that he was allowed to return to his home.

Whether or not petitions were successful, it was not for a lack of trying. A petition from the area around Lawrencetown on February 27, 1864 is a good illustration of the community's persistence in seeking equality before the law. The petition arose from an incident that had occurred a year earlier:

sometime in the early part of last year one John Robinson of the district of Lawrencetown applied for and obtained a grant of thirty five acres of

³⁸⁹PANS RG 5 vol.1 #162.

³⁹⁰PANS RG 5 vol.1 #156.

³⁹¹PANS RG 5 vol.1 #160.

land and water...[H]is grant included land running into the Harbor which has been used...by the inhabitants of Lawrencetown ever since the settlement of that place.

This was not the first petition either. As the petition explains:

when petitioners first heard that the said John Robinson had made application of said land they caused a protest to be filed in the Surveyor General's Office protesting against the passage of the same fully setting forth their reasons therein.

Thus the frustration of the petitioners was not just that the land was given to this man, but that there had been an earlier petition, which "was not entertained by the Committee appointed to consider the application." The petitioners were also upset because they thought themselves to be "the most influential inhabitants of the district." They expressed their frustration once again at the end of the petition, remarking that

if the right of Petitioners had been duly considered in the first instance no such grant could have been passed...Petitioners have been greatly injured thereby and wholly excluded from a right which they have exercised without interruption for over a lifetime.

As a final request, the petitioners sought to "restore the rights...improperly taken from them."³⁹² Fully exerting their rights under the law, the black community tried to receive equal status.

The black community also petitioned the government in an effort to receive proper representation in the House of

³⁹²PANS RG 5 Series P vol.18 #164.

Assembly. A February 11, 1834 petition from a number of areas north of Halifax, including Dartmouth, Preston, Eastern Passage, Chezzetcook and others, informed the government that:

your Petitioners are aware that as the representation for the County now stands, they, together with several other populous districts in the quarter have in a manner no voice in the election of a representative.

The petitioners declared that it was

the right that every freeholder should have to some share in the choice of a Legislature by whose deliberations almost every privilege they enjoy and every law they are to obey must be determined and made.

In light of this, the petitioners hoped "that their claim be considered and that their immediate interests may not be left any longer unrepresented."³⁹³

One of the less successful petitions was in the early part of the twentieth century, when black settlements "petitioned to have several separate schools abolished."³⁹⁴ It is not surprising considering that twenty years before that, two petitions had been presented to the House of Assembly; petitions which had helped spark the debates over legislating segregation in the schools. The petitions seemed straightforward in their rejection of segregation, letting it be known to the House that

it is utterly false for any man to say that the colored people of this city ever concurred in such

³⁹³PANS RG 5 Series P vol.5 1835 #19.

³⁹⁴Robin W. Winks, "Negroes in the Maritimes: An Introductory Survey," Dalhousie Review Vol.48 Winter 1968-69: 466.

an arrangement, especially when the said minute of Council assumes an inferiority which we deny.³⁹⁵

The debate surrounding the petitions was discussed in the last chapter, but what was not discussed were some of the other motivations behind the delegation's desire to have schools desegregated. Judith Fingard, in "Race and Respectability in Victorian Halifax", reveals how class interests within the black community at the end of the nineteenth century were partially behind the petition. As Fingard points out, with education for blacks in Halifax only offered for the primary level, the black elite's children "faced a bleak prospect if they could not even finish their schooling."³⁹⁶

Opposing the segregated schools, the delegation presented a number of compelling reasons for desegregation. The delegation complained that the schools were in poor areas of the city, were poorly equipped and staffed inadequately. Such conditions made them feel like second-class citizens, despite the fact that they paid the same taxes as the white community.³⁹⁷ In 1884, their worries were partially responded to by an amendment allowing black children to attend schools

³⁹⁵PANS RG series P vol.78, p.2-3 Assembly Petitions, Education, 1883.

³⁹⁶Judith Fingard, "Race and Respectability in Victorian Halifax," Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History Vol.20 No.2 May 1992: 182.

³⁹⁷Ibid, p.183.

in the wards where they lived, which largely applied to secondary schools since there were primary schools in the black areas which the black students would be expected to attend. Fingard raises the possibility that

members of the black elite had initially tried to strike a deal with the school authorities by which they would ensure that in return for the acknowledgement of their right to attend the public schools unimpeded, the right would never be exercised by more than 25 per cent of the black school children.³⁹⁸

Perhaps that is why the Rev. H.H. Johnson was careful not to offend the Committee Legislative Council when he and the rest of the delegation presented their petition. He began his speech by letting the politicians know that he "was not there seeking equality socially of the colored people with the white, but seeking their rights as citizens to equal educational advantages with the white children."³⁹⁹ But, ultimately, the delegation was successful in its goal of high school integration. Although the later amendment did not benefit the entire black community, the black elites' efforts demonstrated that the black community was not willing to be treated as inferior by the white community, even if "their devotion to respectability" could be at the expense of other blacks.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁸Ibid, p.184.

³⁹⁹Acadian Recorder, April 2 1884.

⁴⁰⁰Fingard, "Race and Respectability," p.172.

Regardless of the class interests that provided a motivation for the filing of some of the petitions, the fact that the black community continued to file petitions is very revealing. The petition is significant as much for what it said as for what it tried to do, since it denied the inferiority of blacks and challenged an institution that helped to maintain the blacks marginal position in Nova Scotia society. It is an example, as Scott describes it, of testing "the limits of the possible."⁴⁰¹

These attempts to achieve political equality, although limited in their success, illustrate that the black community was unwilling to be ignored by the more powerful white community, and were willing to work as a community to bring about change. As Francis L. Broderick and August Meier point out in Negro Protest Thought in the Twentieth Century,

the central thrust of Negro protest has always struck at discrimination and segregation; the central demand has always been for equal treatment with other citizens. Early in the [twentieth] century active propaganda, legal action, and lobbying for legislation were considered radical techniques.⁴⁰²

These community challenges to the obstacles created by discrimination help to dispel Winks' belief that it took men like W.P. Oliver to persuade the larger black community that

⁴⁰¹Scott, p.192.

⁴⁰²Francis L. Broderick and August Meier, eds. Negro Protest Thought in the Twentieth Century (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1965): xvi.

education was the solution to their problems.⁴⁰³

It was with the same dignity and sense of purpose that black Nova Scotian men volunteered to join the Army after the outbreak of the First World War. As Walker points out, the young men "volunteered in order to gain group recognition and to further the rights" of their community, hoping that by making a contribution they "could help to overcome the disadvantages faced by their communities."⁴⁰⁴ Spurred on by a faith in the government and a belief that the war was justly waged, black men throughout Nova Scotia attempted to join the army. Although no official discriminatory recruitment policy existed, commanding officers "were free to accept or reject any volunteer for any reason."⁴⁰⁵ In the earlier part of the nineteenth century, such reasons were that soldiers "did not want to lose social prestige by association with people late from slavery,"⁴⁰⁶ or as one commander remarked: "neither my men nor myself would care to sleep alongside [Blacks], or to

⁴⁰³Winks, Blacks in Canada, p.381.

⁴⁰⁴James W. St.G. Walker, "Race and Recruitment in World War I," Canadian Historical Review Vol.70 No.1 1989: 3, 5.

⁴⁰⁵Walker, "Race and Recruitment in World War I," p.7. According to Crawford Killian in Go Do Some Great Thing, although local commanders in British Columbia were given the same discretionary powers as those in Ontario and Nova Scotia, one unit did accept a black man. But as was the case elsewhere in the country, "the great majority of Blacks who volunteered for service were assigned to construction and forestry units" (p.159).

⁴⁰⁶Grant, p.104.

sit with them, especially in warm weather."⁴⁰⁷

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the reason for blacks being kept out of the army was the fear of having blacks trained to kill whites.⁴⁰⁸ The Annapolis Royal Spectator printed a discussion about France using black soldiers in 1914, which expressed one concern over having blacks trained to fight:

if they were taught that they could defeat one race of white men, they might become seized with the idea that they could also defeat any other race.

Another opinion included religion in the racial argument, with the worry being that

nearly all the black and yellow troops that could be put in the field by France and Britain are Mohammedans, and that to permit them to slaughter Christians of one race would be a mere incitement for them to slaughter those of another nation.⁴⁰⁹

Despite such attitudes, the black community was eager to join the white troops in combat.

After much lobbying and persistence by the black community, the No.2 Construction Battalion was formed on July 5, 1916. The Battalion was the direct result of the black community's efforts, since "they were not prepared to accept meekly a policy, official or unofficial, that rejected them on

⁴⁰⁷Pachai, Beneath the Clouds of the Promised Land, p.121.

⁴⁰⁸Walker, "Race and Recruitment in World War I," p.1.

⁴⁰⁹Annapolis Royal Spectator, Sept 17 1914 p.1.

racial grounds."⁴¹⁰ What is even more remarkable is that "despite previous rejections and the segregated status of the Battalion, Black men and boys throughout the country immediately volunteered for duty." Furthermore, approximately 500 volunteers came from Nova Scotia, which was more than from any other part of Canada.⁴¹¹ On the surface, such enthusiasm, particularly from Nova Scotia, seems peculiar, unless one recognizes that this eagerness represents

a confidence in themselves...while recognizing the restrictions imposed on themselves..., they were convinced that by their own efforts and the good will of white Canada they could remove those restrictions.⁴¹²

And as Walker points out, such a confidence could only come from people "convinced that they were equal and could achieve recognition of their equality."⁴¹³

But the reality of the situation was that the blacks returned to a country that was not eager for change.⁴¹⁴

Veterans

came back to a society no better than they had left

⁴¹⁰Calvin W. Ruck, The Black Battalion 1916-1920: Canada's Best Kept Military Secret (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing Ltd, 1987): 7.

⁴¹¹Ibid, p.15.

⁴¹²Walker, "Race and Recruitment in World War I," p.26.

⁴¹³Ibid, p.26.

⁴¹⁴Crawford Killian points out in Go Do Some Great Thing that in British Columbia, black veterans were welcomed home with the establishment of the Ku Klux Klan in the province. Due to the low numbers of blacks, the KKK "fell back on anti-Oriental agitation" (p.161).

it. Most blacks picked up their lives as barbers and construction workers and...became inducted in the new labour force as sleeping car porters.⁴¹⁵

Nonetheless, the black community had participated in the War and shown their courage and loyalty, challenging and defeating racist and discriminatory policies that had attempted to prevent their participation.

The black community's efforts to challenge discrimination did not begin or end with the First World War. The black community had found a number of ways to adapt and excel in a situation where they were "a self-sufficient community in all but economic terms."⁴¹⁶

With many settlements able to grow enough food to subsist, the black community survived through the nineteenth century and slowly managed to "make the transition from a subsistence to a cash economy."⁴¹⁷

When they did, to reduce the control of the white community, small businesses provided an alternative to white businesses. Business people within the settlements also helped to ease some of the difficulty of discrimination by organizing themselves to financially support community projects. The Wilberforce Oddfellows Lodge was committed to the advancement of their black community in Halifax as were the Pioneer and Progressive Clubs of Weymouth Falls. In

⁴¹⁵Pachai, Beneath the Clouds of the Promised Land, p.192.

⁴¹⁶Walker, Black Identity, p.18.

⁴¹⁷Abucar, p.13.

Weymouth Falls, in the final quarter of 1929, the "black people were owning homes and property...[and enjoying] secular and cultural activities."⁴¹⁸ And in Glace Bay, a community hall was built due to the efforts of both the black and white communities.⁴¹⁹

With few jobs available to black workers that did not involve menial or casual labour, black males turned to better paying jobs in transportation when they arose. As Fingard argues in "From Sea to Rail," "the work provided a certain degree of protection for a marginalized population, but resulted in job specialization which was as ghettoizing as it was sustaining." Fingard also points out that

employment at sea or on rail helped to protect resident blacks from upheavals in the local economy and from the lack of opportunity in occupations which depended on the small black clientele of Halifax City, the town of Dartmouth and Halifax County.⁴²⁰

Equipped with newly-acquired skills, some blacks would return to their home to set up a private business. Fingard cites the example of George Roache, who had started as cook-steward and upon returning to Halifax, began a catering company which evolved into a small restaurant chain.⁴²¹

On the railways, black porters did as much as they could

⁴¹⁸Pachai, Beneath the Clouds of the Promised Land, p.156.

⁴¹⁹Ibid, p.156.

⁴²⁰Fingard, "From Sea and Rail," p.64, 60.

⁴²¹Ibid, p.53.

to protect the black community's interests and to bring about improvements in working conditions. Despite the CPR's intimidation of its workers, some porters participated in the General Strike in Winnipeg, while others attempted to join the Order of Sleeping Car Porters (OSCP) in 1919. For their efforts, 36 porters were fired.⁴²² For other railways, like the CNR, black unions came into being in 1917, starting with the OSCP and followed in 1925 by the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP). As Calliste points out, "they were the beginnings of organized black labour on the railways and a challenge to the existence of 'white only' unions."⁴²³ It was not just transportation jobs that required blacks to relocate. Careers in sport, particularly boxing, drew a number of black men away from Nova Scotia. Charles Saunders, in Sweat and Soul, provides an account of some of the famous boxers that originated from Nova Scotia. These boxers, in their own field, made some significant challenges and changes to the colour line. When George Dixon won the bantamweight championship against Nunc Wallace in 1890, "a black was champion of a world in which those who questioned white supremacy were either silenced or ignored."⁴²⁴ As Saunders

⁴²²Calliste, "Sleeping Car Porters in Canada," p.8.

⁴²³Calliste, "Blacks on Canadian Railways," p.37.

⁴²⁴Charles R. Saunders, Sweat and Soul: The Saga of Black Boxers from the Halifax Forum to Caesars Palace (Dartmouth: Lancelot Press and the Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia, 1990): 27.

points out, boxing "was seen as the only arena in which blacks could compete with whites on something approaching an equal basis."⁴²⁵ Unfortunately, whether it was John Perry, "the Black Sailor", George Dixon, "Little Chocolate", or Sam Langford, they all had to leave the province to be successful boxers.

Other sports, within Nova Scotia, provided the black community with opportunities to exploit and, when possible, dispute the colour line. From 1880 until after the First World War, hockey was a popular sport in the black community. Black hockey was "primarily witnessed among local black communities" but nonetheless "offered black people a means of obtaining a degree of dignity which was usually denied to them by the dominant culture."⁴²⁶ When the game gained some popularity among the white community, the black hockey enthusiasts took the opportunity to "enhance their reputation among whites," trying to bring 'respectability' to the game by "pursuing common interests with white reformers" such as taking up progressive causes like temperance and by bringing 'organization' to the sport.⁴²⁷ They also took the opportunity to profess their allegiance to the Crown, naming teams in Truro and Dartmouth the 'Jubilee-Victoria,' in an effort to assert their equality, much like they did during public

⁴²⁵Ibid, p.29.

⁴²⁶Sheldon Gillis, "Putting It On Ice: A Social History of Hockey in the Maritimes, 1880-1914," (Unpublished masters thesis, Saint Mary's University, 1994): 75, 96.

⁴²⁷Ibid, p.87.

celebrations and parades.

Baseball was another sport that offered the black community some opportunities, although it too had its costs. Black players had to walk a fine line for their audiences, since managers and fans "encouraged clowning and buffoonery" but also looked forward to good playing, as "their abilities were respected by both the opponents and the fans."⁴²⁸ Colin Howell in Northern Sandlots, points out that baseball "helped to promote racial solidarity and black self-esteem, but testified to the continuing exclusion of blacks from mainstream society."⁴²⁹ At the same time, for players of baseball and hockey, sports

served as a resource for minorities, promoting a sense of self-respect and accomplishment to those who took part, and now and then helped them on the economic margin to pick up a few extra dollars to supplement their income.⁴³⁰

Baseball provided even more than economic and moral benefits for the individual players. Howell also argues that the baseball clubs "provided a sense of camaraderie and social interdependence similar to that found in other fraternal institutions" and encouraged "racial pride and neighbourhood identity." More significantly, they "promoted the community's

⁴²⁸Colin D. Howell, Northern Sandlots (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995): 173.

⁴²⁹Ibid, p.179.

⁴³⁰Ibid, p.179.

potential for creativity and self-improvement."⁴³¹ It is not surprising that many of the clubs were supported by local churches, such as the Seasides, from Africville, who "had a close association with the local African Baptist Church,"⁴³² in their effort to take an active role in one aspect of the social life of white society.

The black community, determined to assert their equality, sought justice through any means possible. Supported in their settlements and neighbourhoods and encouraged by the Church, the black community challenged the government to provide them with opportunities, and looked to the social sphere for recognition and for opportunities that would provide economic and social advancement. This history of struggle, limited though it was in its outward gains, laid the foundation for future struggles. As Second World War provided the impetus for a civil rights movement south of the border, what possibilities lay ahead for Nova Scotia's black community and their struggle for equality depended on their past experience of protest and on how the ideology of race would adapt itself in post-war Nova Scotia.

⁴³¹Ibid, p.180.

⁴³²Ibid, p.180.

Chapter Four

The Second World War is believed to have ushered in great political, economic and social changes that were felt all over the world. The overt racism of the Nazi regime had helped to illuminate the inequality and discrimination that existed in many democratic countries, where many people began "to attack the notion of inherent racial inequality."⁴³³ In North America, the War offered opportunities for a new relationship between the white and black communities.

American historical scholarship reflects the belief that the Second World War brought significant changes with it. A primary catalyst for the American civil rights movement suggested by scholars is the impact of the Second World War on American society. In Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency 1930-1970, Doug McAdam argues that the War had a large impact on the political and social structure of the United States and provided an opportunity for a change in the status of African Americans.⁴³⁴ As Jack Bloom points out in Class, Race and the Civil Rights Movement, the War "opened up jobs for blacks, took them off farms, and set them in cities, it put guns in their hands and trained them to use them...[and] exposed blacks to education and to the world and

⁴³³Abucar, p.48.

⁴³⁴McAdam, p.41.

made them cosmopolitan."⁴³⁵

As the War progressed, a new optimism could be felt throughout the American black community "fuelled by an increasing sense of power that blacks now had and an increased indignation concerning treatment they felt they no longer had to endure."⁴³⁶ Thus "the war for black soldiers crystallized into a "double V" campaign...a campaign to stop the spread of totalitarianism in Europe and to destroy the vestiges of racism in America."⁴³⁷ In The Afro-American and the Second World War, Neil Wynn argues that "the 'Negro revolt' of the 1960s cannot be understood unless seen from the perspective of wartime change."⁴³⁸

Such a transformation could be felt in the black Nova Scotian community as well. Bridglal Pachai points out in Beneath the Clouds of the Promised Land, that the ideological challenge fighting such a war brought to those who were involved helped to bring about such achievements as the

⁴³⁵Bloom, p.128.

⁴³⁶Ibid, p.77. The black community also pointed out the contradictions that surrounded the ideology of the War, comparing "the white supremacy doctrine in America to the Nazi plan for the Negroes." Such comparisons were made by groups that covered both ends of the political spectrum, such as the NAACP and the Urban League. See Richard M. Dalfiume, "The 'Forgotten Years' of the Negro Revolution," Journal of American History Vol.55 No.1 June 1968: 96.

⁴³⁷Phillip McGuire, Taps for a Jim Crow Army: Letters from Black Soldiers in World War II (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, Inc., 1983): 80.

⁴³⁸Neil A. Wynn, The Afro-American and the Second World War (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1976): vii.

Atlantic Charter, the United Nations, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.⁴³⁹ White soldiers "tended to 'forget' differences in race, creed and color simply because of [a] mutual need" to survive.⁴⁴⁰ Black soldiers "gained new insights and had cultivated new aspirations... [including a] renewed struggle for political independence...by the Second World War."⁴⁴¹

For the black community as a whole, new job opportunities and the exposure to other countries and cultures broadened and deepened their vision of the future and their role in it. Out of necessity, employment opportunities were opening up for the black community, with women given work as stenographers and in the steel plants⁴⁴² while men were starting to work as office clerks, pharmacists and postal workers.⁴⁴³ The War "opened new prospects and new horizons" for soldiers; soldiers who re-entered civilian life with a fresh determination to succeed...encouraged by the lessons learned as a result of meeting people from different parts of the world."⁴⁴⁴

⁴³⁹Pachai, Beneath the Clouds of the Promised Land, p.193.

⁴⁴⁰Thomson, p.68.

⁴⁴¹Pachai, Dr. William Pearly Oliver and the Search for Black Self-Identity, p.36.

⁴⁴²Barnes et al, Traditional Lifetime Stories Volume 2, p.26.

⁴⁴³William Pearly Oliver, "Cultural Progress of the Negro in Nova Scotia," Dalhousie Review Vol.29 1949-50: 297.

⁴⁴⁴Pachai, Beneath the Clouds of the Promised Land, p.199.

But whether the changes brought by the Second World War were significant enough to shake the foundation of the ideology that had been continually constructed since the arrival of blacks in Nova Scotia is another question. Based on the limited success of the black community's quest for political, social and economic equality before the Second World War, the community could not successfully launch a significant movement without changing their strategy unless the ideology of race that had marginalized the black community prior to the War had not been refashioned to suit the post-war era. Therefore, what needs to be explored is the black community's post-war struggle and what remained of the ideology of race that had resisted the community's efforts for over one hundred and fifty years.

The largest difficulty in exploring the existence of a civil rights movement arising out of the War has been the temptation to compare any Canadian movement with civil rights movements in the United States. This has been an obstacle for understanding and evaluating the period between 1945 and 1960, since a movement in Canada is believed to have started only after that period. At the very least, ignoring this period is ignoring the transition of black protest in Nova Scotia and the adaptability of the pre-War ideology of race in post-War Nova Scotia.

Any direct comparison with the United States has overlooked the unique difficulties that the black community in

Nova Scotia endured. In the United States, for the civil rights movement to be considered a legitimate movement, it needed to be "attributed to great or charismatic leadership, and the leaders of the movement...drafted into a sanitized pantheon of Great Men."⁴⁴⁵ Such a requirement could not be met by the Nova Scotian black community for a number of reasons. It has had few designated leaders over its long history, with the possible exception of Dr. William Oliver in his work for the African United Baptist Association and the Nova Scotia Department of Education in the mid-20th century. It is not surprising that provincial leaders did not emerge, given that the forty-three black settlements in Nova Scotia were sparsely populated and distant from one another. Nova Scotia also lacked the large population base the black community in the Southern United States had to draw from, and even if the community had worked collectively, would not have made up as significant a proportion of the population to concern politicians or draw national media attention as the blacks in the United States were able to in the 1950s.⁴⁴⁶

The media played a large role in the American movement's

⁴⁴⁵Kim Lacy Rogers, "Oral History and the History of the Civil Rights Movement," Journal of American History Vol.75 No.2 September 1988: 567.

⁴⁴⁶In Alienation and Resistance: The Political Behavior of Afro-Canadians (Palo Alto: R & E Research Associates, Inc., 1979), Paula Denice McClain points out that the black population in 1979 made up approximately one per cent of the population in Canada, while in the United States, blacks made up over eleven per cent and were the majority in some regions of the Southern United States (p.1).

historical and public legitimacy. The media needed a "striking image and sensational event [like] a fiery speech [or] police brutality... [and had] a preference for mass meetings and demonstrations or for action of any sort."⁴⁴⁷ With the attention of the United States' media, the movement's goals and strategies were "obscured by dramatic events and charismatic leaders [who]...fit the media's emphasis on conflict and celebrity and the public's demand for mythical leaders and heroic sacrifice."⁴⁴⁸ The African Nova Scotian community only seemed to receive negative media attention, highlighting what had been done to the community rather than what the community had done in an effort to overcome its marginal position.

The best example of this would be the coverage of Africville and some other black settlements in the 1950s and early 1960s, which focused on the unsanitary conditions of the settlement rather than the lack of assistance the city government had provided. Sylvia Fraser's Star Weekly article, "The Slow and Welcome Death of Africville", described the community as being "like a patient that has shivered for weeks in the corridor of a hospital." Fraser also called Africville

⁴⁴⁷King, p.210.

⁴⁴⁸Carol Mueller, "Ella Baker and the Origins of 'Participatory Democracy'," Women in the Civil Rights Movement: Trailblazers and Torchbearers, 1941-1965 Vicki L. Crawford, Jacqueline Anne Rouse and Barbara Woods, eds. (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing Inc, 1990): 51.

the story of a community whose founders broke from the cruel fetters of physical slavery only to have their children fall into the equally cruel fetters of economic slavery.⁴⁴⁹

A Maclean's article by Susan Dexter, "The Ghetto That Fears Integration", despite the peculiar title, described how the City of Halifax built a sewer "which drained to the surface plunk in the middle of Africville...the sewage came from the communicable-disease ward in the hospital."⁴⁵⁰ Neither article examined what the black community did in response to their conditions, except to suggest that the black community might over react, with Dexter quoting Rev. Charles Coleman from the Nova Scotia Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAASCP) saying that he was not "anti-white...but pro-Negro...I want to create a climate of freedom."⁴⁵¹

Other black communities received similar treatment by the media. Edna Staebler wrote an article on New Road Settlement for Maclean's entitled "Would You Change the Lives of These People?" in 1956. Staebler's first comment about New Road Settlement was that it was "almost as obscure and sinister as a village in an African jungle" with "jungle-like paths."⁴⁵² Staebler provided equally disturbing descriptions of the

⁴⁴⁹Sylvia Fraser, "The Slow and Welcome Death of Africville," Star Weekly January 1 1966: 2-7.

⁴⁵⁰Susan Dexter, "The Ghetto That Fears Integration," Maclean's Vol.78 No.14 July 24 1965: 16.

⁴⁵¹Ibid, p.36.

⁴⁵²Edna Staebler "Would You Change the Lives of These People?" Maclean's May 12 1956: 30, 60.

people, describing one resident as "a big black man with a broad friendly grin, wide rolling eyes and a straw hat set jauntily on the side of his head" and the children as having "woolly hair."⁴⁵³ When Staebler quoted the man, she wrote it 'as she heard it':

I took a few jobs deah, now an' then...but they always fiahed me foah doin' nothin'.⁴⁵⁴

Staebler also commented on the conditions the black community faced. Since "the people have no skills", the community "lived on what they could find on the barrens to eat or to sell."⁴⁵⁵ Her explanation for the black community being "wretchedly poor and untaught" was that they were "accustomed to warm southern sunshine, the plantation system and the lash, [so] they were helpless in their new situation."⁴⁵⁶

Staebler's article was one of the first to bring national attention to the blacks of Nova Scotia, providing Canada with an intentional glimpse of the effects of an ideology of race on a community and an unintentional demonstration of the ideology of race in her report. The condescending tone of Staebler's report is not to be unexpected considering the dominance of the ideology of race. What should also not be surprising is the focus of Staebler's, Fraser's or Dexter's

⁴⁵³Ibid, p.57, 60.

⁴⁵⁴Ibid, p.57.

⁴⁵⁵Ibid, p.54.

⁴⁵⁶Ibid, p.58.

article. Paul Hartmann and Charles Husband point out in Racism and the Mass Media that, when it comes to the issue of 'race', the media ignores the successes of the black community and focuses instead on "crime, riots and trouble" or "discrimination against blacks."⁴⁵⁷

These articles also illustrate that the ideology of race that had thrived in Nova Scotia before the War was alive and well. As Dr. Oliver commented in 1954,

racial discrimination against Negroes in Nova Scotia is proving harder to beat than 'Jim Crowism' in the Southern United States...Discrimination by Whites in this province is harder to offset because it is so subtle. We have found that Whites are ducking the issue that both we and they know must be faced.⁴⁵⁸

Jules Oliver in his assessment of the NSAACP, believes that "as time passed, overt discrimination evolved into a more subtle discrimination, making it more difficult to fight" and "where there was no legislation forbidding such evils," discrimination could exist "without fear of legal repercussion."⁴⁵⁹

Economic discrimination remained a reality for the black community, regardless of any employment opportunities that were available to the black community during the War. As

⁴⁵⁷Paul Hartmann and Charles Husband, Racism and the Mass Media (London: Davis-Poynter Ltd., 1974): 141, 146.

⁴⁵⁸Jules R. Oliver, "The Nova Scotia Association for the Advancement of Colored People: An Historical Evaluation of the Organization and the Role It Has Played in the Area of Employment," (Unpublished masters thesis, MSSW, 1969): 27.

⁴⁵⁹Ibid, p.27.

Eugene Williams points out in "Nova Scotia Association for the Advancement of Colored People: An Historical Review of the Organization and Its Role in the Area of Education," after the War, blacks

were still not eligible for equal opportunities... [O]bvious reasons were that the Negro lacked not only academic training but also vocational training which left him unskilled. Some occupations were becoming obsolete because of automation. Further to this concrete evidence was the myth attributed to the Negro and many other oppressed people - that he was inferior.⁴⁶⁰

This was evident in what Jules Oliver calls the practice of 'hidden discrimination' found in Nova Scotia in this period. Employers would create such stipulations as "requiring that an employee of the firm vouch for an employee" or "label some jobs, usually the lowest as 'Negro-Jobs'...with menial status and little...security."⁴⁶¹

That was if employers were willing to hire blacks at all. Oliver provides some revealing opinions of store managers and their hiring policies in "The Nova Scotia Association for the Advancement of Colored People: An Historical Evaluation of the Organization and the Role It Has Played in the Area of Employment." Managers either had not "given any thought to hiring a Negro" or felt that since "we had a bad incident here twelve years ago, involving a Negro and a white...I haven't

⁴⁶⁰Eugene Williams, "Nova Scotia Association for the Advancement of Colored People: An Historical Review of the Organization and Its Role in the Area of Education Diploma Thesis," (Unpublished diploma thesis, MSSW, 1969): 4.

⁴⁶¹Oliver, "NSAACP," p.63.

wanted to hire Negroes." One comment revealed that the role of the black person in the post-War period had not really changed, with the manager preferring "a coloured chap to clean out the well, because coloured chaps are such good workers."⁴⁶²

The ideology of race showed its force in more violent ways as well. The shooting of a black man from Africville on January 10, 1946 in the north end of Halifax revealed the marginal position blacks held in the post-war period, as well as the contempt with which the black community was held by the white community. The man, James Izzard, had been pulled over by the police, apparently because he was driving "an ancient sedan." When Constable Arthur Wesley asked to see his driver's license, Wesley discovered that it had been revoked. Scared, Izzard ran. Wesley fired two shots in the air, warning him to stop. Two more officers came running to the scene, and the officers pursued Izzard. As they chased him, two more warning shots were fired, but Izzard continued to flee. A fifth shot hit Izzard in the back, and he fell. That evening, Izzard was in critical condition at the Victoria General Hospital.

The story not only demonstrates the police officers disregard for the black community, but the newspaper's disregard as well. The Halifax Mail reported the story as if the police officers were on a hunt, stalking a wild animal. The story begins describing Izzard as "the hunted in a wild

⁴⁶²Ibid, p.55-56.

chase...in which three policeman were the pursuers." As the chase progressed, after four shots were fired as warnings, "the fifth found its mark in the fleeing figure, inflicting wounds which are considered grave." This shot "halted Izzard's dodging dash through the Agricola-Almon-Maynard street district." The "slug from the constable's revolver struck Izzard in the right section of his back below the shoulder blade, ploughed through a lung and emerged through the front of his body." Shot, "Izzard crumpled behind a Maynard Street dwelling."⁶³ If the newspaper had not done enough to demean the black population, the title for the article as it appeared on the second page was simply "Africville", even though the incident did not take place there.⁶⁴

The police officers and the department they worked for treated the black community no better. Despite the fact that a citizen was shot for driving a car without a license, the Civic Safety Committee "supported the three constables involved, clearing them of any possible negligence." Even Mayor Allen Butler stood behind the police department, stating that

⁶³Halifax Mail, Friday January 11 1946, p.1,2.

⁶⁴The Nova Scotia media proved to be equally un insightful regarding the issue of racism in their account of a cross burning in New Glasgow on August 22, 1949. The Evening News described the cross burning as "a private matter concerning the South End resident", even though it was "a gang of hooded marauders" who were responsible for the incident. See The Evening News, August 23 1949.

in view of recent circumstances where it was known arms were used in violation of the law, I think the constable did his duty. He did not know whether this man was a hold up man or what. We've got to stamp out crime and we've got to stand behind our men in their doing so.⁴⁶⁵

Butler could have easily substituted the word 'crime' with 'blacks'. In an effort to disguise the blatant racism, Izzard was charged not only for driving without a license, but for "escaping after being a person in lawful custody of the police" and for "operating a vehicle with defective brakes."⁴⁶⁶

The ideology of race also affected those people in 'helping professions', such as sociology. C.R. Brookbank in his study, "The Afro-Canadian Communities in Halifax County: A Preliminary Sociological Survey," reveals the ideological limitations of his discipline in understanding the black community. Brookbank pointed out that

the fine points of responsibility and the ability to act logically and independently in a free situation, cannot be acquired legally and almost overnight as can freedom... [I]t is my feeling that the Negroes in Nova Scotia are even today in the latter stages of a long process towards responsibility and independence.⁴⁶⁷

Brookbank suggested that the children in the Home for Colored Children "must be orphans or illegitimates," consequently questioning the "morality on these [black] settlements, a

⁴⁶⁵Halifax Mail, January 11 1946, p.2.

⁴⁶⁶Ibid, p.2.

⁴⁶⁷C.R. Brookbank, "Afro-Canadian Communities in Halifax County, Nova Scotia: A Preliminary Sociological Survey," (Unpublished masters thesis, University of Toronto, 1949): 3.

question which is not easily answered."⁴⁶⁸ He also commented that the black community had "a standard of living and a consequent pattern of social behaviour which already leaves much to be desired."⁴⁶⁹ The federal and provincial governments could have played a part in alleviating the difficulties the blacks faced, but their role was limited by the ideology of race that dictated the social and economic place of the black community. Two Acts that would have appeared to be significant were not particularly effective. The Fair Employment Practices Act of 1955 would probably have been more effective if the educational opportunities of the black and white communities had been equal or if there had at least been some provision made for the difference in education. As Clairmont points out:

treating everyone equally after centuries of exploitation and domination is like asking those who have been systematically starved to compete in a race on equal terms with those who have been well fed and well trained; it will not lead to the elimination of racially defined stratification systems.⁴⁷⁰

The other Act, the Equal Pay Act of 1956, also had a limited effectiveness. When the Act was passed, Margaret Conrad points out, "no attempt seems to have been made to enforce the law," and "in any event, because men and women were segregated in the workplace, comparisons were difficult."

⁴⁶⁸Ibid, p.24.

⁴⁶⁹Ibid, p.46.

⁴⁷⁰Clairmont and Wien, "Blacks and Whites," p.180.

Conrad also points out that "women were barred by law and custom from the boardrooms, clubs and taverns where power was often mediated."⁴⁷¹ The same could be said for the black community, male and female, who were allotted particular roles in society and were denied their right to the access of power and control by a complex and subtle combination of discrimination, prejudice and class oppression.

One group that did take advantage of the Fair Employment Practices Act was the railway porters. When porters on the CPR were unionized and joined the BSCP, "a new phase of activism began", with membership jumping from 153 members in 1942 to 620 in 1943.⁴⁷² However, it was the Fair Employment Practices Act which "gave porter unions the leverage they needed to combat discrimination in railway employment."⁴⁷³ Facing such discriminatory practices as an irrelevant 'aptitude test', the black porters found themselves prevented from any other railway position by a company "that tried everything possible to avoid promoting the black porters while simultaneously avoiding more FEP [Fair Employment Practices] complaints." After a great deal of government pressure, a number of blacks were hired as conductors, and were eventually

⁴⁷¹Margaret Conrad, "The Decade of Development," The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation Ernest Forbes and D.A. Muise, eds. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993): 387.

⁴⁷²Calliste, "Sleeping Car Porters in Canada," p.9.

⁴⁷³Ibid, p.11.

able to join the conductors' union.⁴⁷⁴

Porters on the CNR also tried to benefit from the Fair Employment Practices Act. Their battle was longer than the CPR's porters, but they eventually "won the right to promotion with full seniority." Throughout the 1950s, the two categories, Group I and II, remained, with the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Transport and General Workers (CBRT) unwilling to "try to remove the discriminatory seniority groupings from the collective agreement." In fact, the CNR porters "accused the Brotherhood of discrimination because of inadequate representation of their grievances, for the caste system and for taking away their rights of representation."⁴⁷⁵ A large number of Halifax porters, sixty-two, joined the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in protest of the CBRT's poor results.⁴⁷⁶ It was not until a referendum in 1964 that the groups were amalgamated. Once combined, it "opened the way for porters' being promoted...as well as being eligible for employment in the dining car." As Calliste points out in "Sleeping Car Porters in Canada", "the Canadian Fair Employment Practices Act gave porters the leverage they needed

⁴⁷⁴Ibid, p.11-12.

⁴⁷⁵Ibid, p.39.

⁴⁷⁶Calliste, "Blacks on Canadian Railways," p.41. Calliste points out that porters on routes in the Atlantic region were antagonized by the public and other workers more than in other areas (p.40).

to combat the submerged split labour market."⁴⁷⁷

The black community tried to improve its economic and social position at home too, resisting marginalization. As was the case before the Second World War, the black community sought educational opportunities. The first black school teacher in Nova Scotia to graduate from a teaching college, Madeline Symonds, organized a community committee to raise funds for the building of a school in Upper Hammonds Plains in 1945.⁴⁷⁸ There were also a number self-help projects, such as the construction of the George Washington Carver Centre in East Preston through the fund-raising efforts of community members, and new schools built in Weymouth Falls and Cherrybrook.⁴⁷⁹

Through these projects, "community members gained experience in practising skills and confidence to contract construction projects both within and outside the community."⁴⁸⁰ While the black community's pursuit of educational opportunities remained one part of their struggle, they were "aware that upgrading in skills and education are not enough to obtain better jobs. There are human constraints that stand in the way of one's improving his or her socio-

⁴⁷⁷Calliste, "Sleeping Car Porters in Canada," p.14,15.

⁴⁷⁸Barnes et al, Traditional Lifetime Stories Volume 1, p.103.

⁴⁷⁹G.V. Shand, "Adult Education Among Negroes in Nova Scotia," Journal of Education Series 5 Vol.10 No.1 January 1961: 14.

⁴⁸⁰Abucar, p.63.

economic condition."⁴⁸¹

The Nova Scotia Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NSAACP) emerged in 1945 to respond to both of these needs. The NSAACP saw as its purpose "to promote greater unity within the Black race and to further the interests of Black people of the province." The philosophy behind this purpose was that blacks will find no solace "from the conflicts and tensions of racism," therefore

no thinking, sensitive Blackman could avoid involvement with the racial struggle, and an attempt to do so would be a flight into unreality.⁴⁸²

Their efforts were to focus in four areas: education, employment, housing and human relations. The NSAACP also promoted community study and action groups "which would lead to the improvement of the community...academically, economically and culturally."⁴⁸³ The NSAACP was the first organization of its kind, attempting to unite the black settlements of Nova Scotia and to bring about reforms within the established political and social system. The NSAACP's actions throughout this period reveal the black community's own ideological limitations as well as their attempts to test the racial ideology's limits.

This is partially reflected in the NSAACP's Act of Incorporation. Although the NSAACP was willing to "co-operate

⁴⁸¹Ibid, p.29.

⁴⁸²Oliver, "NSAACP," p.12.

⁴⁸³Thomson, p.86.

with governmental and private agencies" and welcome white members, the organization did not see their aim "to improve and further the interests of the colored people of the province" as being compromised by these alliances.⁴⁸⁴ Eugene Williams in his assessment of the NSAACP, pointed out that

even though the association has written letters on occasion or addressed other organizations, it has not been assertive enough in its attempts. Through these methods the association has tried to inform the white community about problems encountered or attributed to Negroes. The association has tried to define these problems to the white community to outline the problem areas...The goals here have been to awaken the white community from its complacency and to enlighten the liberal members of that community how they might best assist the Negroes.⁴⁸⁵

Jules Oliver argues that the NSAACP was "aggressive, but not in a manner which would appear to be an open confrontation on the white society."⁴⁸⁶ Faced with "structural limitations imposed by the size of the Black population, its scattered distribution and the isolation of the region," the NSAACP's approach could be seen as making the most of what they had at the time.⁴⁸⁷

Scott in Domination and the Arts of Resistance points out the importance of understanding resistance, particularly ideological resistance, in its context, appreciating

⁴⁸⁴Williams, "NSAACP," p.8.

⁴⁸⁵Ibid, p.43-44.

⁴⁸⁶Oliver, "NSAACP," p.16-17.

⁴⁸⁷Clairmont and Magill, "Nova Scotia Blacks," p.486.

resistance that is "disguised, veiled or muted for safety's sake." He also stresses that an argument suggesting that "veiled forms of aggression offer a harmless catharsis that helps preserve the status quo" ignores the magnitude of the struggle.⁴⁸⁸ Perhaps that is why the NSAACP's mandate was considered "radical in the commonly accepted meaning of the term...[and] sounded extremely radical to the white society."⁴⁸⁹ Despite its limited objectives, the NSAACP immediately set out on its task, challenging the colour line as early as 1945. Until 1945, nursing schools did not accept black students. In the autumn of 1945, some hospitals discarded their discriminatory policies, which allowed Gwennyth Barton and Ruth Bailey to enroll in the Children's Hospital's program. To finish their training, the two women needed to be trained in the Victoria General Hospital. Although it was a government institution, the Victoria General's discriminatory policy remained. Determined to open up the nursing profession to black women, the Colored Citizens' Improvement League and the Nova Scotia Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NSAACP) successfully applied pressure to the hospital, and the two students were allowed to complete their training in 1946.⁴⁹⁰

The NSAACP also supported other challenges to the colour

⁴⁸⁸Scott, p.137, 187.

⁴⁸⁹Oliver, "NSAACP," p.13.

⁴⁹⁰Ibid, p.27.

line. Following the shooting of James Izzard by police officers in Halifax, the NSAACP sent a letter to Mayor Butler, criticizing the police department and Butler for supporting the police officers' actions. The letter was published in the Halifax Mail, and described the incident as an "unwarranted act of negligence and inexperience and an abuse of their office as protectors of the public safety." The NSAACP provided some sharp responses to the incident, suggesting that the police officers could have radioed other police cruisers to find Izzard, and could have provided an excellent identification of Izzard since at least one officer had seen him up close and for an extended period of time before he had begun running. At the very least, the NSAACP suggested, they could have found him later since they had identification and his vehicle, which could help in tracing his address.⁴⁹¹ However, despite some perceptive observations, the NSAACP believed that bringing these issues to the attention of the white community, and the mayor, would be enough to bring about change. At the very least, the action demonstrated an awareness and an intolerance of racism, to the white community, as did another incident that had the support of the NSAACP.

The challenge that Viola Desmond, a black Halifax beautician, brought to the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia was particularly significant. In November 8, 1946, Desmond was

⁴⁹¹Halifax Mail, January 14 1946, p.3.

forced to spend a night in New Glasgow because her car broke down and needed to be repaired. That evening, she attended the Roseland Theatre, sitting in the downstairs section. Desmond was unaware that the seating was segregated. While sitting downstairs, Desmond was approached by the manager and asked to move to the balcony. She refused, but offered to pay the price of the ticket. The manager left and called the police. Soon after, a "policeman grasped her [Desmond] by the shoulders and the manager grabbed her by the legs, causing serious injuries to her knees and hip."⁴⁹² Desmond was immediately taken to the jail, where she stayed for twelve hours. The next morning, after a brief trial where "the theatre manager acted as prosecutor...Magistrate Roderick MacKay pronounced her guilty."⁴⁹³ The NAACP quickly took up Desmond's cause, establishing a "Viola Desmond Fund" to support her defense. Desmond and the NSAACP appealed the sentencing. Although the Nova Scotia Supreme Court originally upheld the decision, after a lengthy legal battle Desmond did not have to pay the fine and the theatre was no longer segregated.⁴⁹⁴ It was a victory for the NSAACP and the black

⁴⁹²Oliver, "NSAACP," p.17.

⁴⁹³Dean Jobb "Desmond Led Fight Against Racism," Chronicle-Herald March 3 1995: B1.

⁴⁹⁴Oliver, "NSAACP," p.17. The case is seen more as an abuse of the legal process than a condemnation of the colour line. J.B. Milner points out that the theatre manager "has apparently violated no law of human rights and fundamental freedom in this free country in refusing admission to part of his theatre to persons of negro extraction." What decided the

community. Not only had a discriminatory practice been directly challenged, but it had been made to look ridiculous in the eyes of both the black and white community. Despite the exposure, the white community continued to segregate and discriminate; a testimony to the presence and power of the ideology of race.

The NSAACP also tried to encourage improvement of the black community's housing condition. Beginning in 1949, following surveys taken of black homeowners, the NSAACP "petitioned the Mayor and city council to inform residents of major changes in housing or housing conditions." In the same year, land was bought and set aside for a "community business and recreation hall." The project was later abandoned. However, the NSAACP continued to condemn housing conditions and challenge re-location initiatives in the 1950s without offering substantial alternatives.⁴⁹⁵ As Eugene Williams points out in his assessment of the NSAACP and its role in the black community, "on occasion the association has been effective...[but] it has not been assertive enough in its

case was that it was felt the manager was part of "a surreptitious endeavour to enforce a Jim Crow rule by misuse of a public statute" rather than being "so zealous because of a bona fide belief that there had been an attempt to defraud the Province of Nova Scotia of the sum of one cent." "Civil Liberties - Theatre Refusing to Admit Negro Person to Orchestra Seat," Canadian Bar Review Vol.25 C.194: 915,920.

⁴⁹⁵Williams, "NSAACP," p.19.

attempts."⁴⁹⁶

While the NSAACP's housing efforts were limited, providing educational opportunities became one of the NSAACP's primary responsibilities, which they performed in conjunction with the Adult Education Division of the Department of Education. An interesting and important feature of the NSAACP's education programs was that they targeted adults rather than children, with the intent that adult education would help to raise adults' aspirations, "and in turn raise their children's aspirations."⁴⁹⁷ The Education Committee of the NSAACP had established a six point program by the mid-1950s which aimed toward improved health, better homes, better farms, improved schools and the better use of municipal and provincial agencies.⁴⁹⁸ Programs included "reading, writing and arithmetic...in conjunction with practical self-help projects" as well as "practical projects [such as] tree planting, high-bush blueberry farming, wood-working and logging."⁴⁹⁹

Despite the limited goals of the program, it was successful in many respects, and popular. Hammonds Plains was the first community to benefit from the adult classes, with lectures on nutrition, housing, gardening, health and

⁴⁹⁶Ibid, p.43.

⁴⁹⁷Thomson, p.105.

⁴⁹⁸Ibid, p.90.

⁴⁹⁹Williams, "NSAACP," p.25.

community recreation. By 1949, there were classes held in 15 counties, and by 1951, Digby and Guysborough also held classes. In 1953, there were 20 classes running throughout the province.⁵⁰⁰

Winks points out in Blacks in Canada, that "the 1950s were perhaps a bit too late...to make hewers of wood and drawers of water."⁵⁰¹ Although the program affected "75 percent of the 13 000 [black]...people in Nova Scotia," the program "embraced the assumptions and programs of Booker T. Washington."⁵⁰² Dr. Oliver described the goal of adult education as "generating self-help through education, counselling, encouraging group activities, and fostering pride in accomplishments."⁵⁰³ The accommodationist approach of the program was perhaps a result of the Adult Education Division's involvement as much as it was a result of the views of members of the black community, who saw their goal in the joint program with the NSAACP as being to "develop a realistic awareness among the [blacks]...of their own particular problems."⁵⁰⁴ As William Cooper wrote in his report for the Department of Education in 1954, it was the leadership from

⁵⁰⁰G.V. Shand, "Adult Education Among Negroes in Nova Scotia," Journal of Education Series 6 Vol.10 Spring 1968: 13.

⁵⁰¹Winks, Blacks in Canada, p.382.

⁵⁰²Thomson, p.112,89.

⁵⁰³Ibid, p.91.

⁵⁰⁴Ibid, p.16.

the Adult Education Division that was a "major factor in community and school improvement among these people."⁵⁰⁵

After all, the Department of Education was still overseeing segregated schools until as late as 1964, ten years after they were ruled to be inherently unequal by the United States Supreme Court. Thus educational opportunities were still limited for black students in Nova Scotia as long as some schools remained segregated. As Brookbank queried in his 1949 study, "Afro-Canadian Communities in Halifax County, Nova Scotia,"

one begins to wonder whether, in the long run, the increasing segregation of white and coloured children in schools will be advantageous or otherwise for the Negroes.⁵⁰⁶

Walter G. Stephan in his article "School Desegregation: Short-Term and Long-Term Effects" would respond with a resounding 'no' to Brookbank's question. Stephan argues that school segregation perpetuated a vicious circle, with white prejudice being further entrenched as blacks suffered from low self-esteem and achievement due to unequal facilities and educational opportunities.⁵⁰⁷ In the short-term, Stephan

⁵⁰⁵William M. Cooper, Report on Evaluation with Recommendations for the Program of Adult Education Among Negroes in Nova Scotia as of May 15, 1954. (Halifax: Adult Education Division, Department of Education, Province of Nova Scotia, 1954): 2.

⁵⁰⁶Brookbank, p.49.

⁵⁰⁷Walter G. Stephanson, "School Desegregation: Short-Term and Long-Term Effects," Opening Doors: Perspectives on Race Relations in Contemporary America Harry J. Knopke, Robert J. Norrell, Ronald W. Rogers, eds. (Tuscaloosa, University of

believes that desegregation improves black achievement but "rarely decreases it," while in the long-term, "desegregation increases black educational achievement and increases black willingness to interact with whites in educational settings."⁵⁰⁸

But it was not the black community that was unwilling to integrate the schools. Brookbank points out the difficulties in Maroon Hill, where "the attempt to have the coloured children accompany the whites brought some violent objections from the neighbouring white community."⁵⁰⁹ The Superintendent of Schools, B.C. Silver, pointed out that "the main fear of whites about mixed schools is that sexual relationships between the children might result."⁵¹⁰ Despite the unwillingness to desegregate schools, the Nova Scotian public and media could describe school segregation in the United States as "reprehensible."⁵¹¹

When the schools were desegregated, the white community extended only a half-opened hand to the black students. Mohamed Abucar in Struggle for Development points out how the

Alabama Press, 1991): 102.

⁵⁰⁸Ibid, p.106-110.

⁵⁰⁹Brookbank, p.49.

⁵¹⁰Ibid, p.49.

⁵¹¹David W. States, "The Struggle for Black Education in West Hants County, Nova Scotia, 1843-1963" (unpublished paper, Saint Mary's University, 1996):17. See Chronicle-Herald 19 May 1954: 2.

policy of "environmental integration of the school system...promoted primarily a one way process."⁵¹² The one way process being that black children were bused to white community schools, but white children were not bused to black schools. Abucar notes how

it was possible for the school board to ask the black communities to transfer their children into integrated schools outside their community but the board failed to solicit neighbouring white communities in order to send their children into the...[black] communities.⁵¹³

Apart from the discrimination this exhibited, Abucar also indicates that the school integration policy allowed for the Board of Education to neglect the existing black schools and "reduce the school population in existing black schools step by step."⁵¹⁴ The effects of such a policy were threefold. First, it perpetuated the blacks' minority status by integrating them in white schools throughout the region. Second, it reduced the community involvement in the education and raising of the children. Third, it demanded that the children accommodate and assimilate to the cultural and societal norms of the white community.

Challenges came from other parts of Nova Scotia as well. One such challenge was the newspaper The Clarion, edited and published by Carrie Best in New Glasgow. Begun in 1947, The

⁵¹²Abucar, p.52.

⁵¹³Ibid, p.55.

⁵¹⁴Ibid, p.55.

Clarion helped to spread the news of problems and successes within the black community, and to establish a forum for discussion and information until 1956.⁵¹⁵ Although The Clarion had its limitations, such as columns that were geared towards women's traditional roles and which left class and gender structure unchallenged, Best also publicized acts of discrimination, raising racial awareness in the black community and encouraging challenge.

During the Viola Desmond trial, Best declared that the case "only shows that discriminatory practices are cowardly attempts to persecute innocent people because of [an]...outmoded racial bias."⁵¹⁶ Best also published speeches of American black activist Paul Robeson, demonstrating a commitment to change, even if somewhat limited. Best included some other interesting stories, including the experience of 13 year old Eugene Williams, who was part of a 'City Council for a Day' promotion. Williams took his token position seriously, demanding not only that "transportation services be extended to Africville since 'the community was located on the main street of the city'," but a new school "of which students can be proud, and equal in facilities to any school elsewhere in the city." Williams also highlighted some other deficiencies of the school, "pointing out that water for the school for drinking purposes has to be transported to it by the School

⁵¹⁵Clairmont and Wien, "Blacks and Whites," p.165.

⁵¹⁶The Clarion, Vol.2 April 15, 1947.

Board" and that "outdoor lavatories for the school are also sorely lacking." He also made the observation that "outdoor lavatories, in the winter time especially, is something that just shouldn't be."⁵¹⁷ Without The Clarion, such observations by the black community would not likely have had a chance to be printed.

However, Best tended towards an accomodationist approach, commenting in the July, 1947 edition that

sooner or later we will pay dearly for our neglect and dodging our responsibility...Has our conduct as a group merited our inclusion in the overall social structure of this town? We must remember that we are a definite minority and as such our conduct is always open to the severest scrutiny.⁵¹⁸

Unable to see past the ideology that surrounded her, Best felt the black community naturally had to work twice as hard in any effort for social and economic equality.

Walker wrote that, historically, the black community in Nova Scotia had developed a "tactic of non-confrontation and self-sufficiency," which meant to prepare them "for full

⁵¹⁷The Clarion, Vol.2 No.2, p.3. In a City Council meeting in 1948, the issue of waterlines being extended to Africville was discussed when the issue of moving the community was raised. Alderman Sullivan "felt that \$20,000 directed to a move would be more wisely spent than on a waterline extension into the community." Alderman Burgess agreed, "but warned that, if nothing could be achieved, another summer should not pass without the water service extended to the community." There were no waterlines extended to the community the next year or any year after. "May Move Africville Community," Halifax Herald January 16 1948, p.18.

⁵¹⁸The Clarion, Vol.2 No.3, July 1947.

participation in Nova Scotian society."⁵¹⁹ Unfortunately, the ideology of race prevented blacks from receiving equal status as citizens. The actions of Best, Desmond, Oliver and numerous organizations such as the Coloured Citizens' Improvement League and the NSAACP aimed at pressuring the white community into letting the black community become a part of the society, and to enjoy the same rights and power, were unsuccessful. Despite their efforts, the ideology of race remained in Nova Scotia. Scott points out that an ideology "can tolerate a remarkably high level of practical nonconformity so long as it does not actually tear the public fabric of hegemony."⁵²⁰

It was an ideology that was so pervasive that it undermined the black community's own efforts, as the black community sought recognition within the existing ideology rather than providing leadership in the construction of a new one. Scott argues that

so long as a structure of domination is viewed as inevitable and irreversible, then all 'rational' opposition will take the form of infrapolitics: resistance that avoids any open declaration of its intentions.⁵²¹

Not the NSAACP, the Church or the black settlements were able to take the ideology head on, convinced of the ideological wall's impenetrability. Nor were they able to provide a

⁵¹⁹Walker, Black Identity, p.19.

⁵²⁰Scott, p.204.

⁵²¹Ibid, p.220.

counter-ideology, which is the only way to resist ideological domination.⁵²²

The inability of the black community to achieve significant changes in the social, economic and political life of Nova Scotia was partially the result of reduced aspirations on the part of the black community after achieving limited success in the pre-War years. It was also a result of the black community's faith in the white community and the Crown. Throughout the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century, the black community "emphatically retained a conviction of their own equality and they fully expected to be recognized as equals."⁵²³ This goal of recognition and equality remained in the black community, as they held on to their belief in their own worth and sought change through legal means.⁵²⁴ Maybe that is why the assistance of the white community was not discouraged until after 1960, which would explain Walker's assertion that the black community "demonstrated a confidence...in the good faith of white society...[and] in the ultimate fairness of the British system."⁵²⁵

In the early 1960s, frustration in the black community had reached a new level, and the time for ideological

⁵²²Ibid, p.118.

⁵²³Walker, Black Loyalists, p.xxii.

⁵²⁴Walker, Black Identity, p.6.

⁵²⁵Ibid, p.6.

leadership began. It was a point that the United States' civil rights movement reached by the mid-1960s, with the black community realizing that the movement did not sufficiently challenge the economic and social structure that marginalized the black community there. In Nova Scotia, the black community had made little progress economically, socially or politically. Black youth were frustrated at an older generation's faith in the white community, and the black community as a whole was frustrated at the inaction of the white community.

This can best be illustrated by the change in attitude of Dr. William Oliver. One of the strongest proponents of the initiatives taken during the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s, Dr. Oliver did a great deal to forward the economic development of the black settlements and to raise awareness of their conditions, as well as "encourage self-help, self-determination and self-confidence."⁵²⁶ He played a large role in the Adult Education programs, implementing and expanding them, attempting to improve the conditions of the black settlements. He had been a man of action, encouraged by the changes initiated in the War, and was not willing to return to the pre-War world.

In 1962, frustrated with the inaction of the NSAACP and its integrated membership policy, Oliver said that "in many instances projects intended to help our people were merely

⁵²⁶Thomson, p.108.

using us as guinea pigs."⁵²⁷ Oliver also said that "if I am concerned with advancement of Black people, I want to hear what Black people think, not what White people think. In an integrated organization, self-interests prohibit people from getting at the basic issues."⁵²⁸ He argued that

Blacks must be allowed to make their own decisions and their own mistakes, without the aid of the white liberal, who, he claims, is an individual who wants to help, who feels he has no prejudice, but who does not really know what the fundamental problems are.⁵²⁹

In the end, Oliver was right to be wary of the cooperation of the white community. It was white reform efforts that led to the demolition of Africville in 1964, an event which ended a long history of neglect and indifference by the white politicians and citizens towards the residents of Africville. The severity of the neglect can be seen in a letter sent to the United Church Observer in 1963, which gave an account of what the residents of Africville wanted from the city council:

[they] have always maintained that they do not want to move. The only thing they ask is that they should receive what is rightfully theirs, namely fresh water, a sewage system, paved streets and sidewalks, a school, to have the dumps removed, and all the other tax-resulting privileges that other Haligonians enjoy.⁵³⁰

⁵²⁷Ibid, p.94.

⁵²⁸Clairmont and Wien, "Blacks and Whites," p.50.

⁵²⁹Thomson, p.98.

⁵³⁰Letter by F. Ian Gilchrist, The United Church Observer, February 15, 1963:6.

But by the time the first house had been demolished in Africville, the black community had already lost their faith in the white community. The ideology of race had infiltrated the political, social and economic life of every black Nova Scotian since the arrival of the first black slave. Since the beginning of their struggle, the black community in Nova Scotia had sought support and refuge in the black settlements and neighbourhoods. With the destruction of Africville, the white community had physically invaded the last place of refuge the black community had, taking from the black community their last tie to a system that they once believed in. The settlement was a symbol of what the white community's Crown had given them for their loyalty; a symbol that the white community chose now to take away. From that point on, the black community sought a new ideology, an ideology that would usher in real change and that would be worthy of their faith.

Chapter Five

The failure of the black community to launch a successful challenge to the ideology of race that they faced from their arrival in Nova Scotia was not one of their own making, but had more to do with deeply held assumptions about black inferiority. The black community faced a social system that left few opportunities for social, economic or political advancement. Blacks were seen, at the very least, as slaves or former slaves, and, at most, cheap labour. As the scholarship of Walker, Smith, Winks, Pachai and others has revealed, Nova Scotian society was "conditioned to thinking of blacks as slaves."⁵³¹

This lingering attitude affected the economic opportunities of the black community, barring them from secure employment in many cases and forcing them to seek seasonal and menial labour. When opportunities arose for more steady work, such as in the transportation industry, blacks took them, even if it meant long periods away from home. Even then, black workers faced split labour markets on the railways as they competed for low-paying, low-status jobs with American blacks or with other white workers.

United by the ideology of race, white workers blamed blacks for their poor economic conditions rather than the elite that benefitted from pitting black and white workers

⁵³¹Walker, "Establishment of a Free Black Community," p.209.

against each other. Working-class whites embraced 'whiteness,' distancing themselves from blacks in an effort to make economic and social gains in a province with a "sluggish, depressed economy" where there was "underemployment and fierce competition" for work.⁵³² Accepting the assumptions of black inferiority and 'slavishness', the white working class helped not only in maintaining the class structure, but in constructing an ideological world that marginalized the black community.

The black community continued to face such obstacles over two centuries, as the 'slavish' black stereotype was fashioned and refashioned to suit the attitudes of the period. When slavery lost its legitimacy, and its public sanction, the belief that blacks were inferior was supported by popular notions of scientific racism. Although notions of racial superiority were discredited by the end of the 1930s, they were quickly refashioned in the post-Second World War period, substituting economic explanations for differences in social and political conditions in place of biological or scientific explanations.

These assumptions about the black community were reinforced and reconstructed in the social life of Nova Scotia. It was common practice to segregate the black community in the military, schools, churches, neighbourhoods, social organizations, public celebrations, sports clubs and

⁵³²Clairmont and Wien, "Blacks and Whites," p.155.

public facilities. In places where blacks and whites shared the same building, blacks were provided with their own seating area, such as in the New Glasgow theatre where Viola Desmond and other blacks were banished to the balcony. There were also times when the black community would not want to be integrated, such as during minstrel shows, when blacks were mocked and ridiculed, and where negative stereotypes were further entrenched.

It was a significant enough achievement that the black community was able to survive at all. The fact that the black community persistently protested their treatment and sought equality throughout this period is remarkable. What limited the effectiveness of their resistance was the black community's inability to liberate itself from the constraints of the racial ideology, its belief that the principles of justice that the white community had enshrined in its legal system would be extended to them, and its belief that accommodationism would be successful in helping the black community achieve economic advancement. While efforts such as the Home for Colored Children and the NSAACP were important black initiatives, the former was based on a pedagogy with limited ideological aspirations while the latter relied heavily on faith in the white community to bring about change on its own.

The black community of Nova Scotia was not alone in its inability to see beyond the ideology that surrounded it. Even

the high-profile civil rights movement in the United States failed to tear down the ideological wall that barred the black community from social and economic equality in America, despite the large population base and legislative gains made by that movement. After the passage of the Voting Rights Bill in 1965, the American civil rights movement shifted to the northern United States, which "heralded a new set of goals [and]...a focus on class and race" that sought "a redistribution of wealth and power."⁵³³ As Martin Luther King, Jr. admitted before his death,

for years I labored with the idea of reforming the existing institutions of the society, a little change here, a little change there...now I feel quite differently. I think you've got to have a reconstruction of the entire society, a revolution of values.⁵³⁴

Bloom believes that this new direction of the movement, which called for "social and economic alternatives not just in the South but throughout American society," caused

a move by whites away from support for black needs...[and] the tendency of the movement to make demands regarding racial issues that were no longer limited to the caste system in the South.⁵³⁵

Once the civil rights movement began to challenge not only the effects of the ideology but its underpinnings as well, the white community retreated. As McAdam points out, the white

⁵³³Bloom, p.217, 8.

⁵³⁴David J. Garrow, Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1986): 562.

⁵³⁵Bloom, p.8,12.

community's involvement in the civil rights movement throughout the 1950s and the first part of the 1960s meant that "only limited reforms" could be achieved, which would ultimately do little to "challenge the status quo."⁵³⁶ It was only in the second half of the 1960s that the movement began to search for a counter-ideology, beginning with the Black Power movement and such organizations as the Black Panther Party in California. This departure left behind the mainstream white community and the black community's faith that equality could be found within American society as it then existed. In this same period, in Nova Scotia, Oliver and others had rejected the integrationist approach to change, having lost faith in the white community. The Black Panther Party even visited Nova Scotia in 1968, guests at the largest exclusively black meeting in the history of the province.

This is where the historical record can begin to be corrected. Clairmont and Winks have both made the argument that a civil rights movement in Nova Scotia began only in the 1960s, influenced by the American experience. While the presence of the Black Panther Party in Halifax demonstrates the partial influence of the American black community, it demonstrates as well how historically inaccurate this argument is.

If such a movement really was the inspiration for black resistance in Nova Scotia as scholars have claimed, then the

⁵³⁶McAdam, p.24, 25.

black community must have lived in an historical vacuum, paralyzed victims of a racism that they refused either to recognize or fight against until the American black community awoke them from their deep slumber. But the history of the black community proves that they did not sit back and accept their marginalization. Instead, from their first arrival, the black community began a tradition of protest which used Canadian approaches to tackle Canadian racism, challenging their designation as cheap labour, demanding land, education and rights that were promised to the Black Loyalists, the Black Refugees and every other black citizen that arrived in Nova Scotia.

The Panthers' presence in Nova Scotia reveals a search by the black community in this province for a new approach to the racism they faced, a new way of demolishing the ideological wall that held them back. Their presence of the Panther members is an indictment of a system that marginalized the black community, and demonstrates the frustration of the black community in Nova Scotia after a nearly two hundred year-old struggle for equality. Despite the constant petitions for rights, land, justice and educational, political and social opportunities, regardless of the willingness to praise and defend the Crown in public celebrations and in battle in spite of ridicule and possible death, looking past the discrimination, the rioting and the constant mockery, the black community continued to have faith in the white community

and in the possibility of equality within the present society.

The failure of the black community to gain the respect it deserves, then, lies heavily on the shoulders of the white community. Not only has the white community in Canada maintained a society that keeps the black community and other minorities, on the periphery, but it has not even recognized the efforts of the black community to initiate and encourage change. Historical scholarship has largely denied the black community agency in the shaping of Nova Scotia's history, presenting them as victims of inevitable racism. Such scholarship has perpetuated the stereotype of 'slavishness' of the black community, reaffirming the belief that the black population has been historically docile and satisfied in the marginal position they have been offered in the Canadian mosaic.

This thesis has demonstrated instead that a tradition of protest by the black community has existed in Nova Scotia since the arrival of the Black Loyalists. The black community has also demonstrated their determination to be recognized as loyal citizens. Petitioning for schools and land was just the beginning, followed by demands for fair representation, equal education, compassionate justice, adequate housing and roads and political recognition. Churches and other organizations also helped to raise concerns of the black community and to provide for the spiritual, physical and mental strengthening of the population. Sports and public celebrations also

provided the black community with opportunities to demonstrate their abilities and their loyalty, and when possible, to defeat the white community.

Following the Second World War, the black community renewed its efforts. The NSAACP protested economic, social and political injustice, while at the same time providing educational programs for the black community. The New Glasgow newspaper, The Clarion, provided an opportunity for the black community to be heard and informed about regional and national events and incidents. Originally published in July 1946 with a regional focus, it became a national publication in 1949, retitled The Negro Citizen, and remained in print until 1956. Taking advantage of government legislation, the black porters fought for fair wages and against discriminatory practices that limited their career opportunities.

These years of protest laid a foundation for what was to come. The disillusionment that the black community in Nova Scotia felt by the time of Africville's destruction would not have been possible had the black community not made such an enormous effort to affect change. If there had not been a tradition of protest and a concomitant faith in the principles of Canadian justice, the black community would not have recognized the ideology that incarcerated them and the need to find a counter-ideology.

What this tradition of protest reveals is that the racism experienced in Nova Scotia for two hundred years did not come

from other places. Instead, the racism came out of a social framework that was constructed in Nova Scotia and which permeated black-white relations in this province for two centuries. Racism is a social construction, built over this historical period to maintain the black community in a marginal position. Such an understanding helps to answer Saxton's question of how racism has "reproduced patterns of racially differential behavior for more than three centuries." It also provides an opportunity for change.⁵³⁷

If an ideology such as this is constructed, then obviously it can be deconstructed or dismantled. Anderson argues that "exposing the susceptibility of racial beliefs to change [demonstrates]...the potential therein for their ultimate annulment."⁵³⁸ Roediger is also optimistic, pointing out that "seeing race as a category being struggled over and remade" reveals "the possibilities of political action in particular and human agency in general."⁵³⁹ For Nova Scotia, a tradition of protest provides the foundation for a new ideology, preparing the way for the construction of a social system that will hopefully liberate rather than limit the black community in the social, economic and political life of Nova Scotia in the future.

⁵³⁷Saxton, p.16.

⁵³⁸Anderson, p.7.

⁵³⁹Roediger, Towards the Abolition of Whiteness, p.2.

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Lyn Milward. The interview was held March 1993 at Saint Mary's University in the Graduate Lounge between Lyn Milward and Sheridan Hay. Lyn Milward grew up in a neighbourhood in the North End of Halifax nearby Africville, before the relocation of Africville residents. Transcript available from the History Department, Saint Mary's University.

Pearleen Oliver. The interview was held November 1992 at the Aldernay Branch Library in the Helen Creighton Room between Dr. James H. Morrison and Pearleen Oliver. Pearleen Oliver has been an educator and activist in the African Baptist Church community and the black community in general for many years. Videotape available from the History Department, Saint Mary's University.

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