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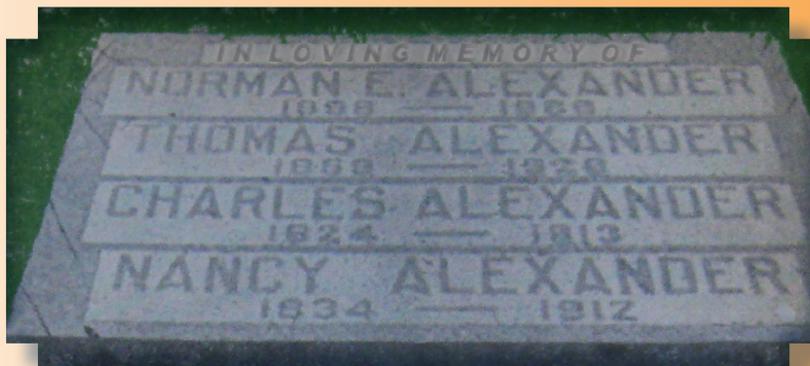
Two-Day Conference

**BLACK BRITISH COLUMBIANS:
Race, Space and the Historical Politics
of Difference at the US/Canada Border**

Wednesday-Thursday
APRIL 11-12, 2012

St. John's College Lecture Hall
2111 Lower Mall

PROGRAM



Plaque in Shady Creek Churchyard in memory of the Alexander Family. Charles and Nancy Alexander were among the first settlers of what was to become Shady Creek.



a place of mind

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Faculty of Education

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WELCOME



I wish to welcome you to this two-day Black British Columbians Conference organized by the Centre for Culture, Identity and Education and co-sponsored by the Promised Land Community-University Research Project.

On April 18th, 1858 in response to an invitation from the Governor of the Colony of Vancouver Island, Sir James Douglas, thirty-five Black women and men left San Francisco aboard the ship *Commodore* bound for Victoria. When they arrived at Victoria Harbour on April 25th, they became the first Black people in the new colony, soon to be joined by six hundred additional Blacks, all looking to escape the overt racism, lack of opportunity and in some cases informal servitude of California for the promise of freedom, economic opportunity and citizenship in the Colony of British Columbia. There was soon a substantial Black presence in the Colony from Victoria to New Westminster, Kamloops to Salt Spring Islands, indeed enough to facilitate the establishment of the all Black Victoria Pioneers Rifle Corps (aka the African Rifles) in 1860. Prominent figures included the businessman and deputy Mayor of Victoria Mifflin Gibbs; Louis and Sylvia Stark who were the first non-Aboriginal homesteaders on Salt Spring Island and their daughter, Emily Stark who was one of the first teachers in BC; Kamloops councillor John Freemont Smith; activists for women's rights, Clarisa Fortune and Annie Norton; and dentist Allen Jones.

The presence of Blacks complicated the politics of difference in the Colony as working and romantic relationships and everyday interactions were negotiated between aboriginals, whites and Blacks in the Colony. Unfortunately much of that history and especially the historical and indeed contemporary presence and participation is largely marginalized in accounts about BC. Vancouver takes considerable pride in its current multiculturalism – its ethnoracial diversity, the common place nature of interracial and interethnic relationships and increasing mixed raced population. Strangely, the historicity of the politics of difference is eschewed in this presentist conception of BC diversity, including the substantial contribution of Blacks. Indeed, to return to the origin, it most accounts do not acknowledge that Governor James Douglas, whose invitation resulted in the first wave of Black settlers in BC was himself multiracial: his mother was Creole and his father a Scotsman and furthermore, Douglas' wife, Amelia was multiracial – aboriginal and white.

This conference on Black British Columbians is a collaboration between the University of British Columbia's Centre for Culture, Identity and Education and the Promised Land Community-University Research Project. With highlights that include keynote addresses by Jean Barman, Afua Cooper, Cynthia Dillard and Crawford Kilian, it brings together prominent community historians, youth activists and academics to address issues such as Black trajectories including the links between movements within Canada and historical and contemporary US/Canada border crossings; the lives and works of prominent male and female Black Pioneers; the significance of the African Rifles; interracial relationships, multiracial identities and the politics of difference in historical BC and the curious marginalization of the historical and contemporary presence of blackness in present day conceptualizations of British Columbia. This conference is intended to highlight the historical and contemporary presence of blacks in British Columbians, a presence that tends to be relegated to being an "absent presence."

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Handel Kashope Wright'.

Handel Kashope Wright
Director of the Centre for Culture, Identity and Education

PROGRAM AT-A-GLANCE

DAY ONE – WEDNESDAY, APRIL 11

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| 8:00 am - 8:30 am | Registration, coffee |
| 8:30 am – 9:00 am | Welcome to UBC and Opening Comments – Dean Blye Frank |
| | Introduction of Promised Land Project and Black British Columbians Conference – Handel Wright |
| 9:00 am - 10:25 am | Keynote Address <i>The Polluting Power of Blackness: African Canadians as Historical Outsiders</i> – Afua Cooper |
| 10:30 am – 12:00 noon | Plenary Session 1: Rethinking the Underground Railroad: Substance and Method <i>Adam’s Journey to the Promised Land</i> – Ron Nicholson |
| | <i>What Manner of History is This? Beyond Naïve Realism in the Promised Land Project’s (Re)telling of the Underground Railroad</i> – Handel Kashope Wright |
| 12:00 noon – 12:55 pm | Lunch |
| 1:00 pm – 2:30 pm | Session 2: Black Lives and Social and Cultural Relations in Early BC <i>Narrative of Interraciality: Social, Cultural and ‘Racial’ Encounters Between Blacks, Whites, and Aboriginals in 19th Century British Columbia</i> – Dilek Kayaalp |
| | <i>Stories from the Grave: Pioneer Black Women Settlers in Canada’s British Northwest”</i> – Patrick Radebe |
| | <i>Prince Hall Pioneers of British Columbia</i> – Lloyd C. Davis, Jr. |
| 4:00 pm – 5:30 pm | Keynote Address <i>The Story in Black History: Methodology and the Underground Railway</i> – Crawford Kilian |

DAY TWO – THURSDAY, APRIL 12

- 8:30 am – 9:00 am Registration, coffee, re-introduction of Promised Land Project and Black British Columbians Conference
– Handel Wright
- 9:00 am - 10:25 am Keynote Address and Q&A
Hopeful Crossings in Deep Waters: Navigating Memory, Spirituality, and the Meanings of Diaspora in a Black Woman's Life
– Cynthia Dillard
- 10:30 am – 12:00 PM Plenary Session 2: Black Lives: Gender, Class and Method
'There Ain't Nobody Going to Do It for You': The Work and Life Struggles of Black Working Class Women in British Columbia, 1910s to 1930s
– Sherry Edmunds-Flett

An Exercise in Interdisciplinarity: The 'Promised Land Project,' Modes of Historical Investigation in a Community-University Research Alliance
– Claudine Bonner
- 12:00 noon – 12:55 pm Lunch
- 1:00 pm – 2:30 pm Session 4: From Early Black Settlers to Contemporary Black and African British Columbians

The Black Pioneers: A Brief History of Early Black Settlers in British Columbia
– Maryam Nabavi

To Be or Not Be African or Black or Not to Be Both: The Dialectics of the Politics of Identity, Group Solidarity and Factionalism Among African Canadians
– Charles Quist-Adade

The Construction of Self Identity: Struggles of the African Youth in the Diaspora
– Thato Magkolane and Osaze Omokaro
- 4:00 pm – 5:30 pm Keynote Address and Questions and Answers
What a Difference a Border Makes: Putting Perspective on Blacks' Experiences in Early British Columbia and Western Canada
– Jean Barman

PRESENTER'S INFORMATION

Jean Barman

What a Difference a Border Makes: Putting Perspective on Blacks' Experiences in Early British Columbia and Western Canada

Abstract

Similar attitudes toward race across much of the Western world at the time British Columbia and Western Canada were being settled between the mid-19th and early 20th centuries make it attractive to argue that Blacks would, almost inevitably, have been treated much the same on both sides of the international boundary. Such could hardly be further from the historical reality of what occurred between the present day American states of Oregon, Washington, and Montana and the Canadian provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan. Rather than looking for similarities, it is the very different policies and practices south of the border that help to explain the much more moderate, commonsensical approaches that took hold to the north. Four cross border comparisons make the larger point. The first relates to indigenous Hawaiians arriving in the Pacific Northwest with the fur economy, the second to Blacks turning up on their own resources on Vancouver Island prior to slavery's end in the United States, the third to early 20th century Black immigration onto the Canadian prairies, the fourth to Blacks in Vancouver. Once rooted, these two very different approaches long remained in place.

Biography

Jean Barman is a prize-winning author who has published extensively on Canadian, British Columbian, and indigenous history. Her best-selling *The West beyond the West: A History of British Columbia*, (University of Toronto Press) is in a third edition. Her current project turns attention to the role played by French Canadians in the making of the Pacific Northwest. She is Professor Emeritus at the University of British Columbia and a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada.

Claudine Bonner

An exercise in Interdisciplinarity: The "Promised Land Project," Modes of Historical Investigation in a Community-University Research Alliance

Abstract

With project collaborators coming together across a myriad of disciplines, three continents and diverse generations (for both professionally and in terms of chronology) and from multiple cultures and races, the *Promised Land Project* has been an interesting intersecting exercise for historical-research production based on two critical principles: (1) Interdisciplinarity in the formulation of new models of historical investigation, and (2) a rigorous process of inductive methodology that helped bridge both community and university researchers in the process of producing an original and reliable knowledge of black experience first in Chatham-Kent and subsequently in other locations of African Canadian identity. This team has managed to step outside of the frame of the traditional by embracing the multi, trans, and interdisciplinarity for this project. Through this intersecting practice, we have been able to build bridges, and create spaces in which to come to a fuller understanding of the outcomes each of us would like to see from the project. The resulting research has included a meld of traditional historical methods and analyses, with explorations into issues of identity politics; cultural, economic and historical geography; performing Diaspora; explorations of religious and political (abolitionist) history, as well as forays into the relationships between history and memory in ethnographic studies of contemporary Promised Land communities. The overarching goal has

been the creation of multiple locations from which to explore and to uncover the history of what appears to be a very important crossroad in the history of slavery and abolition on the North American continent. Our hope has been to move beyond the reconstruction of singular events and experiences, and to come to an understanding of the value of this community within the abolitionist enterprise both in Canada and beyond.

Biography

Claudine Bonner's primary research interests are Black Canadian history and the histories of the African Diaspora in the Americas and Caribbean. She received her doctorate from the University of Western Ontario where she explored the absence of African Canadian narratives in the history curriculum. Dr. Bonner is the current Promised Land Project Postdoctoral Fellow, and has spent the past year conducting oral history interviews with elders from three African Nova Scotian communities. She is also currently a sessional lecturer at Dalhousie University.

Afua Cooper

The Polluting Power of Blackness: African Canadians as Historical Outsiders

Abstract

On 18 November 2008 the *Vancouver Sun* published a 35-page 'legacy' edition of its paper commemorating and celebrating the 150th anniversary of the founding of British Columbia as a settler colony. There was little if any information on BC's historic Black community. Articles and opinion pieces were complemented with photographs from the historical and contemporary periods, but apart from a photograph of a Black male actor dressed in 'period costume' not a single image of Black people graced the pages of this legacy edition. This was curious given that as significant, in 1858, the same year BC officially became a colony of Britain, 800 African Americans arrived from California and settled in the colony. Their large presence and loyalty to the British Crown secured the colony for Britain against (White) American incursions. Whether consciously or not, the editors of the *Vancouver Sun* in their legacy edition effectively denied, ignored, and erased the history of Black British Columbians. By not including African British Columbians in the commemorative narratives, the editors of the *Sun* summarily dismissed and cast Black people out of the province's imaginary. I was shocked and angry at the blatant omission of the Black presence by the *Vancouver Sun*. Did the *Vancouver Sun* fear that the power of Blackness would pollute the pristine narrative of the BC or Canadian story? What is at stake if Black people and their history are given a central role and place in the history and history making of the colony or country? The letter written to the *Sun* will form the basis of my keynote. Using the letter, I would like to address the status of Black Canadians as historical outsiders. This keynote will seek to interrogate what scholar Rinaldo Walcott calls the 'ghostly presence' of Black history in Canadian history and life, and will argue that nothing less than a dramatic paradigm shift will enable hegemonic groups (media professionals, academicians, historians, intellectuals, politicians) to recognize, acknowledge, and value all the diverse and intertwining strands of this country's origins.

Biography

Afua Cooper is the current James Robinson Johnston Chair at Dalhousie University. She holds a PhD in Black Canadian Studies from the University of Toronto. Her expertise includes African Canadian culture, the African Diaspora, gender, slavery, abolition, and freedom, community formation, education, Black Literatures and Dub Poetry, and Black agency and political consciousness. She has conducted research

on Canadian Black life and culture in the provinces of Nova Scotia, Ontario, British Columbia, and Québec. Her co-authored publication *We're Rooted Here and they Can't Pull Us Up: Essays in African Canadian Women's History* won the Joseph Brant prize for the best history book. Her ground-breaking book on Canadian slavery, *The Hanging of Angélique: The Untold Story of Slavery in Canada and the Burning of Old Montréal* was nominated for the Governor General's award. Dr. Cooper has curated exhibits on African Canadian history and culture, and the transatlantic slave trade for all three levels of governments. An accomplished poet and novelist, Afua has published five books of poetry, including the critically acclaimed *Copper Woman and Other Poems*, and two historical novels. Her work in the creative arts has been recognized with the Premier of Ontario Award for Excellence in the Arts, the Red Maple Fiction Award, and the Beacon of Freedom Award.

Lloyd C. Davis, Jr.

Prince Hall Black Pioneers of British Columbia

Abstract

In our past, there were two Black Lodges in British Columbia: one in Vancouver and the other in Victoria. How did Masonry come to British Columbia? Black Free Masonry began when Prince Hall (an immigrant from the West Indies whose father was an Englishman and mother a free coloured woman) and fourteen other free Black men were initiated into Lodge No.441, Irish Constitution attached to the 36th Regiment of Foot Garrisoned at Castle Williams (now Fort Independence) Boston Harbour Massachusetts in March 1784. For the next 135 years Black Free Masonry instituted by Prince Hall, expanded west and north across this North American continent. The Grand Lodge of Washington and Oregon, A.F. and A.M. formed in 1903/04, in the city of Seattle. Sixteen years later a group of men led by R. R. Lawrence contacted this Grand Lodge for a dispensation to form a lodge in Vancouver, BC. This was granted September 28, 1919. The name of the Lodge became True Resolution No.16. It is the oldest foreign Prince Hall Lodge in Washington and its Jurisdiction and it is the oldest Black organization in BC.

Biography

Lloyd Davis was Born in Toronto, Ontario, and settled in North Delta BC, in 1985. He is Past Master of True Resolution Lodge No.16; District Deputy Grand Master, District 5 (Canada) of the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge F. & A.M. of Washington and Jurisdiction. He is a fifth generation Canadian whose family members arrived in Canada in 1854, making their trek on the historic Underground Railroad and is proud of his heritage and of the contributions Black Canadians have made to Canadian society. Unfortunately, our educational system has failed to recognize the many contributions Black Canadians have made to this great nation. This is why Lloyd started researching Black History and presenting lectures to schools and organizations. Through involvement in Masonry and research of black history, Mr. Davis became interested in the Prince Hall Masonry history and has made presentations on this topic.

Cynthia B. Dillard (Nana Mansa II of Mpeasem, Ghana)

Hopeful Crossings in Deep Waters: Navigating Memory, Spirituality, and the Meanings of Diaspora in a Black Woman's Life

Abstract

We know ourselves through acts of (re)membering. As such, this keynote, has two inspirations. First, from Stuart Hall (1999): "[We] produced 'Africa' again – in the diaspora... [and]...ourselves anew, as new kinds of subjects (p. 15-16). Hall implicitly points to the notion of memory and acts of (re)membering as African people as a

means of becoming fully *conscious*. Such explorations are beyond simple nostalgia or engaging a static place of “return,” but instead dynamic spaces of cultural and spiritual production that create new kinds of African responses – and response-abilities – to unequal power relations, dominating hegemony, and inequities based in/on identity and difference. A second inspiration is as a Black woman born and raised in Washington State on the southern border of British Columbia. Through life notes of Black life in the Pacific Northwest and beyond, this keynote talk explores several larger points relevant to this conference. First, what are salient questions of memory for Blacks in diaspora generally and Black women particularly? Secondly, what might spaces, locations, and “movements” of Africa mean when we engage research as *dynamic* cultural and spiritual production? Finally, what might these (re)memberings teach us about the possibilities/limitations of race, culture and Black diasporic identity?

Biography

Dr. Cynthia B. Dillard (Nana Mansa II of Mpeasem, Ghana, West Africa) is the Mary Frances Early Professor in the Department of Elementary and Social Studies Education at The University of Georgia. Her research interests include critical multicultural teacher education, spirituality in education, and African/African American feminist studies. Beyond numerous published book chapters and articles, her first book, *On spiritual strivings: Transforming an African American woman's academic life* (SUNY Press, 2006) was selected as the 2008 Critics' Choice Book Award by the American Educational Studies Association (AESAs). Her second book, *Learning to (Re)member the Things We've Learned to Forget: Endarkened Feminisms, Spirituality and the Sacred Nature of Teaching and Research* will be released March, 2012 (Peter Lang). She is also the 2012 recipient of the American Educational Research Association Distinguished Contributions to Gender Equity in Education Research Award, given for her distinguished research and practices that advance public understanding of gender in education.

Sherry Edmunds-Flett

'There Ain't Nobody Going to Do It for You': The Work and Life Struggles of Black Working Class Women in British Columbia, 1910s to 1940s

Abstract

British Columbia's women of African descent entered the paid labour force in increasing numbers during the three decades between 1910 and the beginning of the Second World War. Some middle class women were able to take advantage of education opportunities to better themselves by completing high school and going to college or university. However, for most working class Black women in British Columbia, the day to day struggle to keep food on the table and a roof over their heads took priority. Living in close proximity to each other, often in the same neighbourhoods, working class women interacted with sex trade workers and others involved in the underground economy. Racial uplift became more of a focus as the province's Black women volunteered with the National Association of Coloured Women's Clubs and the Universal Negro Improvement Association, supported the events of the Prince Hall Free Masons as well as fundraised and established the province's first Black church. This expanded meaning of respectability was defined and negotiated by individual self respect, economic self reliance and efforts on behalf of the wider Black community.

Biography

Sherry Edmunds Flett was born and raised in the “prison capital of Canada” Kingston, Ontario. Her degrees include a BA Honours in Sociology and a BEd in English and Music, both from Queen's University; an MA in African Studies from

UCLA and a PhD in History from Simon Fraser University. Her publications include a chapter in *Telling Tales: Women in Western Canadian History* (UBC Press, 2000) and two entries in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (University of Toronto Press, 2005). Sherry taught adult basic education in provincial prisons in BC for seven years before becoming the executive director of the non-profit L.I.N.C. Society which she co-founded with her husband, Glen Flett, whom she met and married while he was in prison. She is a founding member of the Black Canadian Studies Association and a lifetime member of the Association of Black Women Historians.

Dilek Kayaalp

**Narrative of Interraciality:
Social, Cultural and “Racial” Encounters between Blacks, Whites,
and Aboriginals in the 19th Century in British Columbia**

Abstract

This study examines “physical,” social and cultural interracial encounters between Blacks, Whites and Aboriginals in BC in the 19th century pertaining to their racialized, classed and gendered identities. Also, racism and discrimination against Blacks are examined with regard to their life experiences (e.g., settlement patterns) and interracial encounters with Whites. This critical analysis of studies on Black pioneers, their identities and their interracial relationships with Whites and other minority groups indicates that there was and there is a problem of representation of Black identity in academic and official sources. In this regard, to uncover the injustice of the hegemonic, White supremacist discourse about Black people and to illustrate their life experiences (diametrically opposed to the historical absence of their existence) and their interracial relationships with other groups are the aims of this study. This study suggests that the accurate re/reading and re/writing of Black history today demands deconstruction of meta-narratives of white supremacist, colonialist, racist ideologies (i.e., founding fathers of Canada and double-standards of multiculturalism) in relation to historical realities, challenges and experiences of Black people who settled in British Columbia during the 19th century.

Biography

Dilek Kayaalp recently completed her PhD in Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia. Her areas of interests are social/educational inequality, sociology of education, sociology of immigration, and cultural identity. Her book, titled *Work and School Experiences and Cultural Practices of Male Working-Class Youth in Turkey*, was published in April 2009.

Crawford Kilian

The Story in Black History

Abstract

The process of writing *Go Do Some Great Thing* may offer guidelines to present and future historians. The first edition was based on routine print-based research and personal interviews, synthesized into a narrative focused on individual pioneers and their successes and failures. A slow process, research was limited largely to BC archival resources. Thirty years later, the second edition relied almost entirely on the internet, offering instant online access to BC archives as well as to distant resources and individuals. Online research, however, could not entirely replace direct access to print resources and individuals. As online communities of interest and practice emerge in black history, we can serve them best by drawing upon both direct and online research, informed by our best judgment.

Biography

Born in New York City in 1941, Crawford Kilian grew up in Los Angeles, California and Mexico City. He and his wife Alice moved to Vancouver, BC in 1967, where he began a 41-year career teaching in community colleges. During that time Crawford also wrote and published over 20 books: novels, nonfiction, children's stories, and textbooks. *Go Do Some Great Thing: The Black Pioneers of British Columbia* was his first nonfiction book, published in 1978. The second edition appeared in 2008, to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the pioneers' arrival in British Columbia. Since his retirement from teaching in 2008, Crawford has written extensively for *The Tyee*, a Vancouver online magazine, including articles on the Black pioneers of both BC and the Yukon.

Thato Magkolane and Osaze Omokaro
Co-presenters

The Construction of Self Identity: Struggles of the African Youth in the Diaspora

Abstract

This talk will focus on the struggles of the African youth in the diaspora to construct an identity true to their African heritage. This is especially pertinent given that most of the African youth, although here temporarily, eventually end up being a permanent part of the black community in British Columbia. We explore the link between this construction of self-identity and its effect on the experiences of the African youth while in British Columbia. We will also look at the effect of this construction of self-identity on the ability of youth to effect change in Africa while in the diaspora. We will use our experiences as well as those of other African youth on the UBC campus to serve as exemplary case studies. We believe that this construction of self-identity makes for a richer experience while in British Columbia. We also believe that this construction of self-identity leads to passion for Africa, the like of which could lead to proactive action that spurs change.

Biographies

Thato Magkolane is an alumnus of UBC and past president of Africa Awareness Initiative (2009-2010). He founded the ARC initiative, a UBC Sauder organization aiming to foster relationships between University of British Columbia students, Sauder School of Business alumni and faculty and communities in South Africa and Ethiopia. He is from South Africa and has always tried to find ways to give back to his South African community of Phalaborwa.

Osaze Omokaro is a current UBC student, studying Economics. She currently serves on the Africa Awareness initiative as co-Vice President External. A Nigerian Canadian, she has lived in over five countries and loves to learn through travelling and exploration of culture.

Maryam Nabavi

History of Early Black Pioneers to British Columbia 1850s-1890s

Abstract

British Columbia's rich history of migration and settlement of Black peoples started in the mid 1800s. Although a thorough history of the early Black settlers during the second half of the 19th century is yet to be written, there are a handful of seminal texts that profile the early pioneers, the circumstances of migration, and their experiences in the British colony. This presentation will highlight the circumstances under which Blacks migrated to the British Colony, which is now British Columbia (BC) and the social, political, and economic experiences of the early pioneers in the new British colony.

Biography

Maryam Nabavi recently completed her PhD in Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia. She has been actively involved with the Centre for Culture, Identity and Education during her studies. Her research explores the intersection of social citizenship, belonging, and the politics of identity for minority migrant youth in Canada.

Ron Nicholson

Adam's Journey to the Promised Land

Abstract

My talk describes the Underground Railroad and explains some of the terminology and secret codes used. It talks about the Vigilance Committee whose members helped the escaping fugitives. It provides an explanation of the Mason/Dixon Line, and the effects of the Fugitive Slave Law which caused a substantial increase in the number of Blacks, both free and slave flooding into Canada from the Northern States. It mentions the routes taken and some of the many termini, which travelers of the Underground Railroad selected as their final resting place. Also it talks of Harriet Tubman and other conductors, and takes you to Niagara, his great-grandfather Adam Nicholson's final stop in the Promise Land. Although discrimination continued to exist leading to segregated communities, churches, and schools, Adam's descendants expressed their gratitude and appreciation for the British in interesting ways. My talk ends with a short poem with a positive message.

Biography

Born and raised in St. Catharines, Ontario, Ron Nicholson, a fourth-generation Canadian, can trace his ancestry back to his great-grandfather, Adam Nicholson, who escaped from slavery in West Virginia and came to Canada around 1858 travelling on the "Underground Railroad." Ron has had a varied career, working mostly in Purchasing and Inventory Control, and more recently as Chief of Security at Government House. Now retired, he works part-time in Security at the Victoria Central Library. Ron has been a student and collector of Black History for more than a decade and has given numerous presentations on BC and Canadian Black History to various societies and groups in the Victoria area. He is also the Vice President of the BC Black History Awareness Society, and former Vice President and current member of the Victoria Genealogical Society. He endeavours to further the cause and awareness of Black History in Canada.

Charles Quist-Adade

**To Be or Not Be African or Black or Not to Be Both:
The Dialectics of the Politics of Identity, Group Solidarity and
Factionalism among African Canadians**

Abstract

In *The Souls of Black Folks*, W.B. Du Bois characterized African descended Americans as possessing a double consciousness, torn between a self-conception as American and as people of African descent. The continued portrayal of Africa in the media, popular literature and the "knowledge industry" as nothing more than a continent of suffocating sunshine, man-eating beasts and plagues of endless civil strife has led to two devastating consequences for peoples of African descent: self-hatred and mutual suspicion. Subsequently some people of African descent are embarrassed to be identified with Africa, preferring to deny everything from their African heritage to their skin colour. The tension between being a Canadian and an African at the same time is a burden too heavy for some African descended Canadians to bear. For others, however, this tension/ "two-ness" is a source of strength and political capital which can be tapped to the greater good. This paper will explore

the socio-economic praxis and political roots of identity-formation among African descended Canadians and consider the role of identity politics, intra-ethnic prejudice and stereotyping in forging group solidarity or factionalism among the African/Black communities in Canada.

Biography

Charles Quist-Adade is Professor and Co-Chair of the Sociology Department at Kwantlen Polytechnic University. His research and teaching interests are: social theory; social justice; globalization, racialization and ethnicity; Media and Society, and Third World issues and religion. Prior to Kwantlen, Dr. Quist-Adade taught at the University of Windsor, Wayne State University and Michigan State University. He is the author of two books: *In the Shadows of the Kremlin and the White House: Africa's Media Image from Communism to Post-Communism*, and *Social Justice in Local and Global Contexts, From Colonization to Globalization: The Intellectual and Political Legacies of Kwame Nkrumah* and co-editor of *Lost in Transmission: Media (Mis)Representation of Racialized Minorities* and numerous book chapters and journal articles. Professor Quist-Adade is also a community activist involved as President of the Ghanaian-Canadian Association of BC, editor of *Sankofa News* and *Afri-Can Magazine*.

Patrick Radebe

Stories from the Grave: Pioneer Black Women Settlers in Canada's British Northwest

Abstract

In this paper I examine the contributions made by Maria Ann Gibbs, Clarisa Richard, and Annie Norton to Canada's British Northwest with a view to setting the stage for a multiracial dialogue. I hope to invoke the memory of these early pioneers whose outstanding contributions to their families, to the black community, and to what is now British Columbia are inscribed in dusty volumes entombed in research archives. In disinterring their spirits and inviting them to be part of today's discussion, I seek to revive the debate on how multiculturalism might be reconceptualized. More importantly, I seek to reconnect the broader community with these forgotten black heroines whose achievements are an inspiration, especially for disaffected Black students, who continue to struggle in our schools due, in part, to the ways in which colonial narratives have misrepresented Black contributions to Canada. In addition, I shall argue that the Black community's ability to endure, adapt, and reinvent itself rests, as I believe history shows, on the fortitude, perseverance and resilience of Black women, particularly in the context of family life. That their contributions have been consigned to mere historical footnotes testifies, not to their historical significance, but to the power of dominant narratives.

Biography

Patrick Radebe is a doctoral student in the Society, Culture, and Politics in Education program in the Department of Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia. His research interest revolves around Toronto's Afrocentric School. A former instructor, his experience working with students to create a positive learning environment has proved invaluable. He has been able to relate to and inspire his students by creating a forum of open communication and interaction. Watching his students succeed and their confidence grow was one of his many joys in teaching.

Handel Kashope Wright

What Manner of History is This? Beyond Naïve Realism in the Promised Land Project's (Re)telling the Underground Railroad

Abstract

The Promised Land Project involves US and Canadian community and academic historians (re)telling the story of the Underground Railroad, taking up Southern Ontario not as endpoint but as node from which Blacks constructed material and intellectual trajectories to the rest of Canada and back to the US. Drawing principally on Adorno's reconceptualization of history and historiography, this essay undertakes a cultural studies insider/outsider critique that troubles the taken-for-grantedness of the Project's dual approach of naïve realism and black revisionism. It illustrates that working with disjointed bits of "chaff" data and a healthy skepticism about both grand narrative History and revisionist history and historiography is paradoxically generative – producing unexpected histories of racial identity and caveats about the politics of history/historicizing.

Biography

Handel Kashope Wright has been variously Canada Research Chair of Comparative Cultural Studies and David Lam Chair of Multicultural Education and is currently Professor and Director of the Centre for Culture, Identity and Education, University of British Columbia <http://www.ccie.educ.ubc.ca>. Professor Wright is co-editor of the book series *African and Diasporic Cultural Studies* (University of Ottawa Press), Associate Editor of *Critical Arts* and serves on the editorial board of several cultural studies and education journals including the *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, the *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, *Topia*, the *Canadian Journal of Education* and *Postcolonial Studies in Education*. He has published extensively on continental and diasporic African cultural studies, cultural studies of education, critical multiculturalism, anti-racist education, qualitative research and curriculum theorizing, including most recently, co-editing the books (with Keyan Tomaselli) *Africa, Cultural Studies and Difference* (Routledge, 2011) and (with Meaghan Morris) *Transnationalism and Cultural Studies* (Routledge, 2012) and (with Ali Abdi) *The Dialectics of African Education and Western Discourses* (Peter Lang, in press).

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