

The Black Family

United States, Canada

The Issue

- **Black families** have been in Canada for over three hundred years.
- However, the study of the **Black family**, their most basic institution, has been largely ignored.

Blacks (not a monolithic) **community**

- Today we are going to look at the Black family:
- 1. American Blacks,
- 2. The Blacks of Nova Scotia,
- 3. Blacks in Toronto (Caribbean)

Structural Inequality

- **Blacks** have always occupied a subordinate position in the **political, economic, and ideological relations**...the reason for this is quite simple...prejudice and **discrimination, racism and history.**

Blacks: A reserve army of labour

- They have provided to capitalism a **reserve army of labour** beginning with slavery.
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- If any one thinks that the position of Blacks is the result of **biological superiority** like Philip Ruston the Socio-biologist, I suggest you read an article by R.C. Lewontin, “**Biology as Ideology**” in Robert Brym, Society in Question

Two Perspectives

- 1. **Culture of Poverty**-structural view of Oscar Lewis (1965) and John Porter (1965)
- 2. **Conflict View**-Marxists see G. Darrock-systemic or structural inequality produced by capitalism and scarcity.

Reserve Army:Marx's Concept

- . It refers basically to **the unemployed** in capitalist society.
- It is synonymous with "**industrial reserve army**" or "relative surplus population",
- The **relative surplus population** also includes people unable to work.

Polite racists

- Hughes and Kallen (1974) contend that Canadians " appear to be **polite racists**

- “**They politely** move slightly away from a black co-passenger on a subway; they politely refuse to rent to or hire a black.(Kallen, 1974)

(1974:214)

- They refer to blacks as Negros rather than `niggers' and in general they continue to discriminate against and segregate themselves from all but the most **impersonal, formal contacts** with their fellow (or potential fellow) Canadian citizens. (Hughes and Kallen, 1974:214)

American Blacks

- THREE STAGES:
- 1. Slavery (pre- 1865) TOTAL OPPRESSION
- 2. Reconstruction (1865-1964) LEGAL OPPRESSION_JIM CROW LAWS
- 3. Post ERA (1964 &Beyond)–Moral Oppression

American Blacks

- Throughout their history in the United States their **oppression and subordination** has three qualities.

- **Throughout slavery**, (Pre 1860) their oppression was **Total**, following the Reconstruction of the Old South it was **Legal**, and following Equal Rights Amendment of 1964, it is **Moral**.

I. Slavery-Total Oppression-

- According to WE Dubois-During slavery the Black person was viewed as subhuman and subjected to all sorts of atrocities.
- **Families** were split apart, **reproduction** was controlled, **religion** was underground, and social life was overseen **by white owners**.

WE Dubois

- Dubois noted that it came from their religiosity and music.
- **Religiously**, the enslaved Black relied upon the straightforward language and expressive behaviour of the **Baptist or Methodist preacher** who served as a link to their African past. The preacher was “a leader, an orator, and an idealist.”
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II. Reconstruction-Legal Oppression

- This period began in 1860 and lasted until 1964, over one hundred years.
- It was characterized by legal oppression in which Blacks were denied access to mainstream American institutions and were forced to live as a nation within a nation.

Reconstruction

- In the **Reconstruction period**, following slavery, one institution was at the heart of the Black community-**The Church**
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- **The Black church** was a base for sociability, bingo, dances, drop-in centers young people's clubs, health and education.

Black church

- The importance of the **Black church** for political expression: two phase the **counter productive period** up until the 1940s when minister were involved in “passifying the people.”.

Black Reconstruction: **Music**

- A key component uniting Blacks after the Civil war was music....
- Dubois (1991) states that, “sprung from the African forests, where its counterpart can still be heard, music was adopted, changed and intensified by the **tragic soul life** of the slave.”

Music 20th c

- **Soul Music and the Blues**
- Was a unites Black into what Durkheim calles a “moral community”
- Despite their oppression, Black were freed by the deep penetrating sounds of music emanating both from Churches and from bars and speak easys.

Legal oppression

- Under legal oppression Blacks were **denied:**
- **the right to vote,**
- to right attend white schools,
- to right shop in white stores,
- eat in restaurants
- and to engage in equal interaction with whites.....ie. Billie Holiday travelling across the States to perform-forced to urinate outside.

Black Churches become political

- It was only after the 1940s when the Black church under **Martin Luther King** that the **church** became important institutions for political expression.

1964 Civil Rights Act.

- Congress overrode President Johnson's veto on April 9 and passed the **Civil Rights Act**, conferring citizenship upon black Americans and guaranteeing equal rights with whites.

III. Desegregation=Moral Oppression

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- The final phase in the history of the American Black was **moral oppression**.
- This period began developing in the mid 1950's with Rosa Park Alabama, Montgomery Affair and fully developed following the E.R.A. instituted in 1964.

Bruce Hornsby and the Range

- Well they passed **a law in 64**
To give those who aint got a little more
But it only goes so far
Because the law don't change anothers
mind
When all it sees at the hiring time
Is the **line on the color bar**

Following 1964

- Even though Blacks have gained legal acceptance, they must deal with racism in attitudes, behavior, norms that flow from earlier periods but remain entrenched in socialization practices of white.

In Canada

- Also see Mandel and Duffy, The Canadian Family: Diversity, Conflict and Change Chapter 4.

In 1783-4

- **In 1783-4**, 3500 free Black loyalists arrived in Nova Scotia, 1200 slaves owned by white loyalists
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- Some noted the **oppression** right away, visions of a bleak future cause 1200 to migrate to Sierra Leone with the help of the British government.

Nova Scotia Blacks

- Blacks also came to Canada via the **Underground railroad** after 1800. Some settled in Nova Scotia, Ontario and Quebec.
- **Mandel** notes that their reproduction was controlled by whites, at first reproduction was limited then it was encouraged to ensure a stable labour force.

- For those who did stay, they were subjected to the hostility of 40,000 **Scots Orangemen** who drove blacks out of the labouring and semi-skilled jobs.

- The most (in)famous Black slum in Canada is **Afrikville**.
- Burned by The Orange Lodge

- The majority of indigenous African-Nova Scotian families are **descendants of black Loyalists** and refugees of the War of 1812.
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- Unlike white Loyalists, **few received land** and if they did, they **received small tracks** not good enough to sustain family in the most infertile areas such as Preston, Sunnyville and Lincolnville.

, **Black workers**

- Initially, Blacks were welcomed as a source of cheap labour, however, with the post war depression after 1812,
- **Black workers** became dependent on the State. (they are a **reserve army of labour**)

Black Family

- Black families go far beyond **British definition of family** to include god children, orphans, widows, neighbours, people from the same church, or simply people in the **black community**

- a. Black women work outside the home to maintain survival of families
- b. Many families practiced gender independence and reversals of traditional gender roles

- c. Many families take on child care responsibilities of other children
- d. Many took relatives and “fictive kin” (often older people who were treated as uncles and aunts, or grandparents)

- The above demonstrates **the resilience** and strength of the black family against extreme oppression.

Discrimination

- Discrimination is the exclusion of individuals or groups from full participation in society
- Prejudice (an attitude) and discrimination (behaviour) are usually linked, but they are distinct phenomena.

Forms of Discrimination

- **BLATENT OR OVERT**
- **Covert and Polite**
- Structural or systemic
- Legislative
- Cultural

Systemic Racism

- Canada is not excluded from colonization, racism and discrimination.
- These cultural patterns were embedded in Canadian history
- Less overt in comparison to nations like the United States.

Systemic Racism in Canada

- . Before 1960 immigrant porter were let into the country as singles...Canada's **immigration policy** reinforced and regulated the reunification of Black families.

- **Before 1943**, Canadian Immigration Official barred porter's wives and their families from visiting them to “discourage any increase in the black population.” (403)

1911 in a letter to an MP:

- . The **Deputy Minister of Citizenship** in Quebec for example, used this quote from C. Godsall 1911 in a letter to an MP:
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- “Are there many Negro women who are desirable immigrants, they will certainly be mothers some day! We may not be able to forbid negros from entering Canada, though we do stop **Chinese, Japs and East Indian**, but importing them wholesale, paying their passages, finding places for them is another matter.”

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- According to the Castile article, up until 1964, Black women were viewed as promiscuous, undesirable immigrant and less deserving of parenthood.

Caribbean Blacks

- Most of the immigrants in the Caribbean community, came to Canada because of its connection to Britain.
- Some for example, came to **Canada via England.**
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The Black family

- Agnes Castile “Black Families in Canada: Exploring the Interconnections of Race, Class and Gender” in Family Patterns and Gender Relations Bonnie Fox.
- Quite distinct from Parsons ideal typical nuclear family. Some characteristic changes include:
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Systemic Racism

- In the case of the domestics, between 1910 and 1966, policy actually stipulated that Caribbean domestics were to be single and without children. Some domestics who were found to have children were actually deported.

Domestic Workers Scheme

1955

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- A large number also came as a result of the Domestic Scheme 1955, under the scheme young, single female worker from the Caribbean came to Canada as live in domestics.

Canadian citizens-family reunification

- After one year, they could get new jobs, become **Canadian citizens** and bring family.
- This is said to account for the numbers of Caribbean Blacks in Toronto.

Black Families

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- 1. Black women in both cases have needed to be strong-they **work outside the home** and are relatively independent
- 2. Blacks in both case are less likely to give up children for adoption-children of unplanned pregnancies are not referred to as unwanted

- 3. Both retain **traditional gender roles** and notions of masculinity and femininity-men are resistant to change, but some women prefer it that way:

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- In the Caribbean, men do not participate in childcare and domestic labour.
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- 4. Both teach children to be strong and stand up for their rights...this is supported by Black church
- 5. Both have issue with domestic violence but in both cases, there is a reluctance to come forward.

Quote in Henry and Tator **(2001)**

- ie. My wife was in nursing school. So I decided to by her and support her. I took care of the children, made her breakfast and lunch. I took the children to daycare before I went job hunting. She told me I was acting like a women and her mother said that I looked like the type of man who would stay home and let the women work.

Family Violence

- They **fear disclosure** will reinforce stereotypes and increase criminalization of the Black community.
- In addition, it is clear that the **police do not help...**

“Countless cases”

- Castille claims that there are “**countless cases** of Black women being battered and the **police treat** them with mocking disrespect.”

Institutional Completeness

- The **Black community** has been forced to live as a nation within a nation.
- Institutional completeness is evident in the community as a result of this fact.

Three Generational Hypothesis

- The **first generation** have invested a great deal to leave their homeland and conflicts surface between generations because the first generation refuses to accept the **racism facing the first**.

The Black community

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- The **Black community** has grown increasingly more powerful...The new post-modern age that encourages diversity and appreciates difference has helped..

- The **Black community** has fought against corrupt policing for example using Dudley Laws.
- They also draw strength from social celebration such as Carabbana

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- The **second generation**, mainly from the Caribbean have been streamed into technical and vocational jobs.

Power

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- **Third generation young blacks feel abandoned** by their parents who do not wish to rock the boat.
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- One important fact to remember is that the black **community is not a monolith.** There are tremendous sources of conflict based on place of origin and social class.
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- Caribbean **Black Toronto** compared to Nova Scotia (A nation within a nation)

Biology as Ideology”

- R.C. Lewontin, “Biology as Ideology” in Robert Brym, Society in Question
- Star Survey 1992
- -Goldfarb
- 73 percent of those in Toronto feel discriminated at work.
- 62 percent feel they are portrayed negatively in the media.
- 49 percent feel discriminated against in the court system.
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- -25 percent feel discriminated against by police. 1986 census shows that discrimination is built into the ways the dominant institutions operate.
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- 35 percent of blacks receive technical training compared to 25 percent of the larger population.
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- Only 11 percent have university compared to 23 percent of the larger population.
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- Only 5.4 percent of blacks in Canada hold managerial positions compared to 12.3 percent of the total population.
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- An interesting study on the topic of racism was conducted by **Donald Dutton** (1972). Dutton performed an experiment using Blacks and white in more expensive restaurants in Toronto and Vancouver.
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- The men in the survey would purposefully enter the restaurant not wearing a tie. Dutton found that the owners were more lenient of the Black clientele in an attempt to not appear racist.

Polite Racism

- Although Canadians pride themselves on not being **racist** the fact is that we have never been put to the test.
- Canada has always had **immigration laws** that have protected it from having a 'race problem'.
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