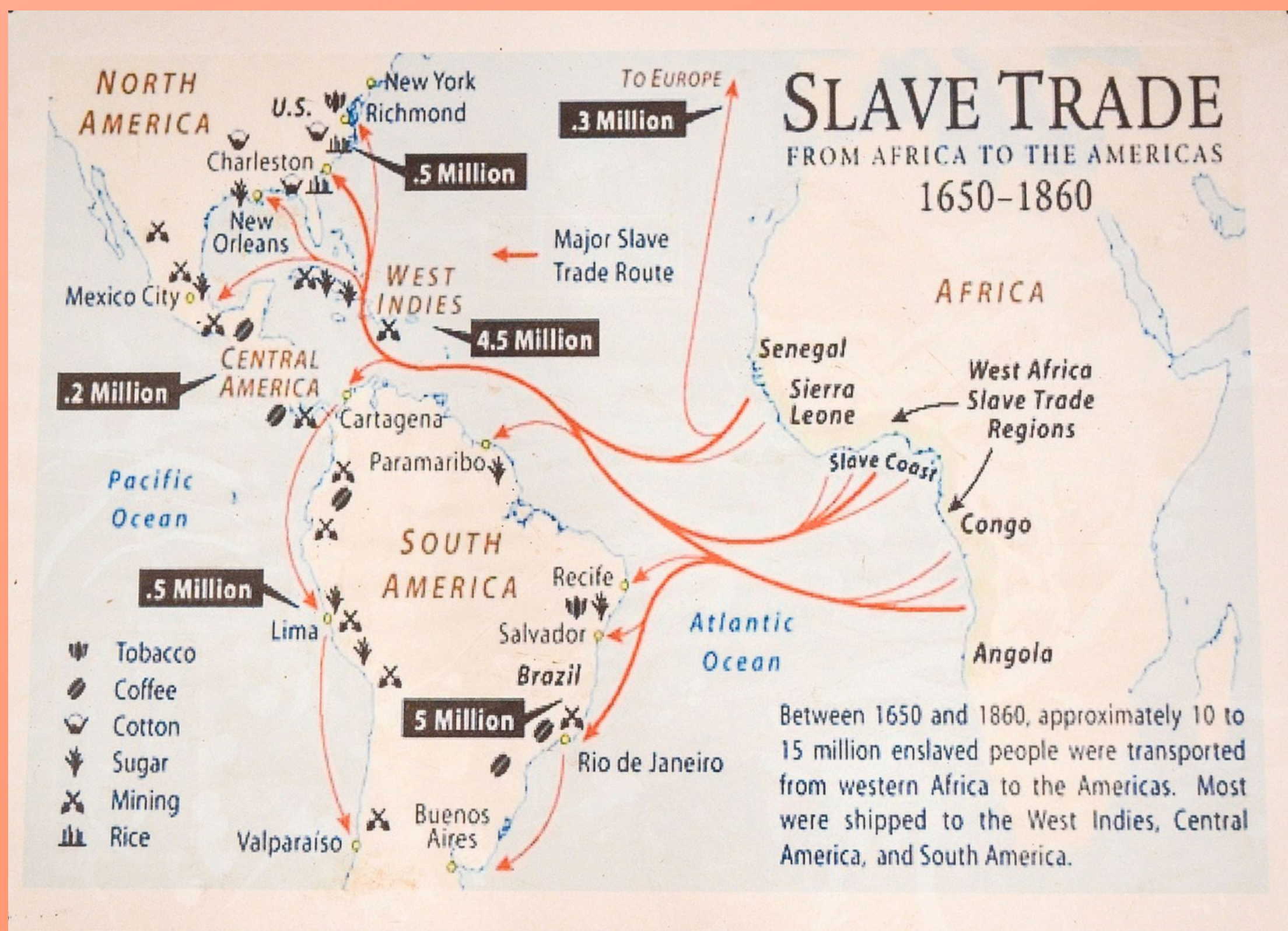


# International Conference

## Transatlantic Memories, Blackness, and African Diasporic Identity: Now and in the Future



Organized by:

The Harriet Tubman institute for Research on  
Africa and its Diasporas

Wednesday and Thursday, 11–12 May 2022 via Zoom

Register at: <https://bit.ly/3Lr3SVK>





**Wednesday, 11 May 2022**

*08:45 to 09:00 EDT*

**Welcomes and Land Acknowledgement**

Dr. Gertrude Mianda, Director, Harriet Tubman Institute for Research on Africa and its Diasporas, York University

Dr. Sheila Cote-Meek, Vice-President, Equity, People and Culture, York University

*09:00 to 09:30 EDT*

**Africa Tomorrow: Building Modernity, Economic Wealth, and Human Freedom and Dignity Through Knowledge**

Keynote Lecture by Dr. Hanétha Vété-Congolo

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures, Bowdoin College; President, Caribbean Philosophical Association

*09:30 to 11:00 EDT*

**Panel 1: Diasporic Identity Formations and the Continent**

Chair: Dr. Tamari Kitossa, Brock University

***East African Diasporas and the Difference Question in Black Studies***

Dr. Sam Teclé, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Toronto Metropolitan University

In this paper, I present findings from my study on the experiences and perspectives relating to Blackness and Black identification of East African Diasporas across the UK, Canada and the US. In particular, I centre Eritrean and Ethiopian diasporic perspectives on Blackness and their experiences being Black where they have settled. The paper then moves to my interrogation of the academic literature centred on East African diasporas centring, in particular, how Blackness figures in these works. In my analysis, I tease out the role that Transatlantic Slavery and the Middle Passage play in these diasporas' sense of Blackness and their place in the Black Diaspora. After laying out these sets of academic studies, their gaps and shortcomings, I then engage with Black Studies and centre how difference is engaged, offering my concept of Black Grammars as an analytic that might attend to the sets of concern laid out throughout the paper.

***Black British and Ghanaian-British Identity Formations: Entanglement and Disentanglements of Identity?***

Dr. Jamilla Hamidu, Research Associate, Les Afriques dans le monde, Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Bordeaux, Sciences Po Bordeaux

The historical account of the Atlantic slave trade between Africa and the New World set the precedence for the presence of Black people in Britain through the commerce of slaves. Olusoga highlights in *Black and British: A Forgotten History* (2016) that the presence of Black people in Britain can be traced from the third century and that there have been Black 'communities' of sorts since the 1500s. According to Olusoga (2016), the Black history of

Britain is by its nature a global history. Yet too often it is seen as being only the history of migration, settlement and community formation in Britain when Black British history is as global as the empire. It is as global as Britain's triangular history, firmly planted in Britain, Africa and America. The arrival of empire Windrush in 1948 marked the beginning of mass labour migration of Commonwealth Caribbeans to the UK. Both African and Caribbean students came to the UK to study in the 1940s. These waves of migration from 1948 to present day, i.e., labour migrants and students, saw the beginning of community formation. It led to the construction of a melting pot of identities based on Black African and Black Caribbean, which can be viewed as essentialist and multiculturalist forms of identity rooting. This presentation aims to shed light on how the Black British identity was and is formed. How is the Ghanaian British Identity formed with or without ties to the Black British identity? Are there characteristics that differentiate each community and how is that articulated? Black British and Ghanaian British aesthetics and social representation. What are the challenges of integration within the fabric of British society? The notion of returning to the motherland and to the homeland for both Black British and Ghanaian British.

***Multiple Consciousness and the Discourse of Identity, Shifting Categories and Existence in Blackness***

Sam Adese, Doctoral Student and SSHRC Canada Graduate Scholar, Graduate Programme in Environmental Studies, York University

Through an autoethnographic reflection of my personal transitions from imposed and adopted categories of identity from Isoko to Nigerian, African and to Black, this paper interrogates the shifting categories of these encounters as I traverse these categories by drawing on the work of Du Bois and Fanon's discourse on double consciousness in this presentation. In doing so, the presentation uses Du Bois and Fanon's discourse of double consciousness to interrogate these shifting categories of identity existence in order to highlight the importance of both the differences and complexities of these fixed/unfixed categories and the assumptions of these given homogeneous categories and seamless spatiotemporal identifiers. I argue that these identity categories are quite complex, either imposed, adopted or assimilated, and should not be taken as perfectly homogeneous but spatiotemporal in their specific place of ascription, subscription and subjectivization. By taking this approach and expanding the theoretical framework of a diasporic consciousness, the presentation makes visible the power structures that contribute to changing categories of identity and improving our understanding of blackness as a category in Canada.

***11:10 to 12:40 EDT***

**Panel 2: Histories and Geographies of Blackness**

Chair: Dr. Paul Lawrie, York University

***Beyond and Behind the Biblical Narrative of Exodus within the African American Community***

Sydney Tye and Dr. Leslie Ribovich, Transylvania University

The ideological understanding of how history has been traditionally comprehended both as a discipline and as a conceptual reality is something that must be placed into a realm of nuanced argumentation. In other words, I seek to state that history, something commonly understood as a progression from point A to point B, cannot be understood in this manner

within the African American community. And I draw this conclusion due to similar forms of oppression that have persisted within America for generations. (I am even seeking to argue that the oppression isn't just similar, it is updated to adapt and work within the modern consciousness of America). By limiting our comprehension to a rather Anglo Saxon understanding of time, we as academics, scholars and students alike run the risk of losing the realities of African American lives that develop along the fringes of time itself. Even the current affairs enlivened by the Black populace further disproves the very nature of the following definition of our basic understanding of what is to be noted as history—'the past considered as a whole—former, no longer relevant to the present context.' How is this to be correct when the very chains of oppression that once graced the wrists and ankles of my enslaved ancestors now take form in the lack of affordable housing, racist malpractice and voter suppression to name a few elements.

***Narratives of Race and Opportunity in California: The Contested Afterlife of William Alexander Leidesdorff***

Dr. Dana Elizabeth Weiner, Associate Professor, Department of History, Wilfrid Laurier University

The enterprising man who reinvented himself in the nineteenth-century US West looms large among its mythical historical figures. In reality, race affected such chances there. When that man belonged to the African diaspora, how did others depict him and his successes? How did authors' contexts, preoccupations and conceptions about gender, race and wealth shape their narratives? This case study of William Alexander Leidesdorff, a St. Croix-born biracial ship captain, entrepreneur, landowner and politician in 1840s California explains how his life captivated authors' attention for decades. Narratives about Leidesdorff reveal what people said about him, when and why. Leidesdorff's contemporaries and later writers represented him divergently, and shifts in narratives about Leidesdorff were deeply infused with racial ideologies. Leidesdorff died suddenly in 1848, and his biography became contested over the decades. The captain left no evidence of his self-identity, and chroniclers who knew him largely ignored it. Early published depictions omit Leidesdorff's partial African ancestry, while authors later fixated on it. Leidesdorff's biographers are unreliable narrators; as discussions of his race spread, ideologically-loaded stories of his life burgeoned. Particularly notable is the fabricated romantic tale of Leidesdorff's engagement to "Hortense L."—a New Orleans blonde woman—that fractured on the colour line. Author William White invented the engagement in 1881; his altered Leidesdorff biography and its dissemination demonstrate solidifying racial boundaries. By the early twentieth century, another depiction arose of Leidesdorff as a successful Black trailblazer. These dueling visions of Leidesdorff's significance unmask authors' conceptions about interracial relationships and Black wealth.

***Chloe and Phoebe: Unearthing the Temperate Slavery Archive of Upper Canada and Britain***

Christopher Gismondi, Doctoral Student, University of New Brunswick

Scholars of transatlantic slavery piece together lives of enslaved subjects from biased, derogatory and incomplete fragments in the archive. For understudied temperate sites like Upper Canada, what is currently Ontario, and Britain, the archive comes with additional challenges from a minority enslaved population. My inquiry of the archive is rooted around the Black female experience, gradual abolition and family preservation in Upper Canada and

the American north. Canada and Britain, until recently, have both evaded scrutiny for their practices of transatlantic slavery but fugitive slave advertisements have become a sought after and useful source on both sides of the Atlantic. They record enslaved or bound labour in places where it had been suppressed, but also document the resistance to slavery in moments like gradual abolition through the strategy of flight. Gradual abolition is noteworthy since families, and women's reproduction, were implicated in the process of phasing out slavery with generational clauses and was legislated first in Pennsylvania, then Upper Canada, and lastly in New York. This paper presents some of the theory and unearthed documents guiding my doctoral research and the archival encounters informed from theorists like Jacques Derrida, Marissa J. Fuentes and Saidiya Hartman. I re-read and expand fragments to consider Sophie White, Trevor Burnard and Afua Cooper's concept of slave testimony, the pursuit to reclaim biography informed by Jenny Shaw, and the fugitive slave advertisement as narrative and portrait theorized from Maureen Elgersman and Charmaine A. Nelson respectively.

*13:00 to 14:45 EDT*

### **Panel 3: Migration (African and Caribbean) and Blackness in Canada**

Chair: Dr. Sylvia Bawa, York University

#### ***Complex Implication: Privilege, Positionality and Racialized Immigration in Canada.***

Dr. Sakiru Adebayo, Assistant Professor, Department of English, University of British Columbia, Okanagan Campus

This paper examines what it means for Black African immigrant subjects to be discriminated against—yet implicated—in Canada's settler-colonial project. It investigates the intricacies of what Mahmood Mamdani (2020) describes as being "neither native nor settler." It studies the 'complex implication' (Rothberg, 2019) of racialized immigrant subjects in Canada's original sin. It asks: what does it mean to be a privileged stranger? When does the immigrant dream of a 'better life' become entangled with the dehumanization of indigenous lives? And when does the implicated immigrant subject become an object of exploitation in the perpetuation of the settler colonial ambition? What does it mean to be an empowered yet disposable postcolonial subject? This paper employs an autoethnographic method of writing and analysis; it uses personal diary, observations, meditations and conversations with others to theorize questions of allegiance and alliance. It employs an ethnography of the everyday (JL Caughey, 1982) to explore the thin line between witnessing and spectatorship in the ongoing settler-colonial violence in Canada. It is also an attempt at auto-theorizing privilege, its fluidity and what Blackness has got to do with it. It addresses the question of the global African elite and its accomplices with the capitalist exploitation of people of African descent. Above all, this paper seeks to reinforce the necessity—while being cognizant of the precarity—of solidarity in the experience of racialization and classed immigration in Canada. It seeks to establish the need for—while recognizing the incalculability of—responsibility in the collective quest for justice and repair in Canada. It concludes that the work of implication is a work of uncomfortable self-reflexivity; it involves having a demanding relationship with history.

***“Upon these Conditions I will Purchase Myself”: Black Labour, Law and Elite Loyalist Families in Late Eighteenth-century British North America***

Anna Jarvis, Doctoral Candidate, York University

In 1797 Zimri Armstrong, a Black Loyalist, petitioned the government of the British North American colony of New Brunswick, claiming that Samuel Jarvis, a Connecticut Loyalist to whom he had been indentured, had not fulfilled his part of the contract to teach Armstrong his trade and had left Armstrong “destitute of both Cloaths and provisions.” Moreover, Jarvis, reneging on his contract with Armstrong, had returned to the US and sold Armstrong’s family back into slavery. Samuel’s brother William, who had ended up in York, Upper Canada, following the Revolutionary War, was a slaveowner. Henry Lewis, a Black man enslaved by William, escaped to New York and wrote to William asking to “buy himself back.” This paper will look at the Jarvis family’s relationship to black labour before and after the war in both Connecticut and the British North American colonies. This relationship is significant for many reasons: it highlights the varying degrees of freedom Black people experienced in North America at the end of the eighteenth century as well as the constantly changing nature of that freedom. It demonstrates the transnational aspect of Black history during the period. It shows how the lives of Black people and white Loyalist families intertwined, creating practical and emotional ties usually absent from the official record. Finally, it shows that Black labour in British North America, whether free, indentured or enslaved labour, had status within colonial law, which was used by both Armstrong and Lewis to challenge the injustices that they faced.

*15:00 to 16:30 EDT*

**Panel 4: Blackness and the Performing Arts (Music, Film, Theatre and Visual Arts)**

Chair: Dr. Desirée de Jesús, York University

***Hair Discrimination and Transnational Expressions of Anti-Blackness***

Dr. Adele Norris, Senior Lecturer, Sociology/Social Policy Program, University of Waikato

The perverse reading of Black identity has been historically marked through hair. At a transnational level, hair remains inextricably linked to dehumanizing myths of Blackness and is presented as a ‘defect’ or ‘problem’ that requires targeted surveillance. As conversations of anti-Black violence and racism have advanced over the past decade, cases of hair discrimination have reached national attention in Canada, South Africa and the United States, among many other countries. Black hair regulation and punishment have given rise to new forms of resistance that have been part of a resurgent Black consciousness, one that resists Blackness as subordination. I argue that policing hair textures has enabled racism in a so-called ‘color-blind’ era for which Black people, especially youth, bear the psychological burden. Under alleged color-blindness, hair is viewed independently of race and ethnicity. For Black people, hair is intrinsic to their Blackness, just as hair texture is a marker for white identity. Unlike white hair textures, Black hair textures are not normalized, expressed through the creation of arbitrary lines of professional ‘expertise.’ Employing W.E.B Dubois’ concept of the color-line and Lewis Gordon’s conceptualization of Black aesthetics, this discussion situates widespread policing of Black hair textures/styles as a continuation of the Euroimperialist project of creating normal and abnormal identities, where Black identities fall in the latter. For these reasons, the extensive implications of hair appearance remain an

important site for examinations of global expressions of anti-blackness and systemic racism.

***Slavery, Brazil and West Africa: The Case of Collective and Public Memory***

George Xorse Kumasenu, Department of History, University of Cape Coast, Ghana

This paper argues that the trade in enslaved persons on the coast of West Africa across the Atlantic birthed the Brazil-West Africa relations that have spanned centuries. The trade attracted numerous Brazilian traders in enslaved persons and as well as led to the emergence of African slave merchants on the coast of West Africa. Some prominent individuals that emerged from Brazil-West African relations are Felix de Souza, Domingo Martinez and Ferman Gomez, who were slave merchants, and Zumbi, a one-time leader of the Black liberation movement in Brazil. This paper further argues that the West Africa-Brazil relation has left tangible and intangible imprints on collective and public memory in Brazil and West Africa. These imprints range from the presence of West African arts, cuisine and elements of indigenous West African religious practices in Brazil. As well, Brazilian names, architecture such as forts/slave factories and private residences dot West Africa. Another is the creation of Afro-Luso diasporic communities across West Africa and the presence of a large Black population in Brazil, especially people of West African origins. All of these tell a dimension of Afro-Lusophone interactions and history across West Africa.

***Another Minstrelsy: Performances of Jamaicanness in Affluent Kingston***

Janelle Levy, Doctoral Candidate, Department of Anthropology, University of California, Irvine

"The white caricature of the minstrel tradition expressed the bourgeois- eye-view of all popular culture" (Wynter, 1979). In this paper, I assert the performance of Jamaicanness amongst affluent Jamaicans to be akin to a form of minstrelsy. I posit that the language and aesthetics of Jamaica's majority population, which is largely poor and Black, is routinely employed in the form of a caricature to embody bourgeois notions of Jamaican masculinity. Masculinity, in this sense, is positioned as the interpolation of Blackness as ungendered (Spillers, 1987). If, as Carolyn Cooper (2004) argues, Dancehall is "'Jamaican culture at large," then we can rightly assume that the racially diverse Jamaican bourgeois falls completely out of the global imaginary of Jamaica. This marked failure in the goals of post-colonial assertions of creole indigeneity and nationalism (Jackson, 2012; Thomas, 2004) is compounded with the co-optation of Blackness in Jamaican electoral politics (King, Bays & Foster, 2002), which has created conditions under which Jamaicans that fall on or beyond the boundaries of Jamaican Blackness feel that they must perform a caricature of poor Black personhood as a way of asserting their Jamaicanness.



**Thursday, 12 May 2022**

*09:30 to 11:00 EDT*

**Panel 5: Space and Black Bodies (Historical, Contemporary Occupation)**

Chair: Dr. Célia Romulus, Glendon College, York University

***Under the Conditions of Removal: Green Dispossession, White Gentrification and Black Elimination***

Beatrice Anane-Bediakoh, Doctoral Candidate, Graduate Programme in Sociology, York University

Mechanisms of removal have always been employed to extract or sever Black people from geographical landscapes. Geographical removal, a form of violence, not only ruptures connections between people and place but is a process of racial violence that is situated in histories of racial exclusion and colonial domination. This paper pays particular attention to cases of green dispossession, white gentrification and Black elimination as key contemporary sites through which racialized techniques of removal are practiced, enacted and narrated to structure geographic domination. These violent acts of dispossession operate under the auspicious language of urban renewal/revitalization projects that underwrites and neatly erases the racialized management of Black bodies. Drawing on Ananya Roy's concept of racial banishment, this paper sheds light on racial-colonial-state-instituted structures that function to propel processes of removal, while bringing attention to the ways that mechanisms of removal operate differently on Black geographies. I contend that the material and discursive work of (re)presenting Canadian landscapes through revitalization projects, and varying processes of legally imposed spatial exclusion, is not merely a practice of capital accumulation or burial, but also that of racial banishment, which brings into focus the legal disappearance of African/Black Canadians in geography.

***The African Descended Woman with Two Citizenships and No Home***

Dr. Marsha Hinds, Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Guelph

This paper uses a migration study framework to enable reflection on my return to Canada in March 2021. The paper examines the dual historical connection that I have with Canada and the Caribbean as a metaphor for a wider Caribbean experience and reality. The paper examines the similarities and differences of the climate that early period Caribbean migrants experienced in Canada versus the dynamics of the current situation. The paper contends that Canada has a race problem that has not been adequately addressed and which affects black people at multiple levels of existence. The problem manifests in several areas including access to housing, educational settings and general societal acceptance. The paper explores how I have gone about managing the Canadian space and calls for further research on the topic. I argue in line with Basch et al. (1994) that immigrants preserve the cultures and ways that they bring to Canada as a critical survival technique in the hostile settler hegemony that is Canada. Those ways have resulted in considerable gains economically for Canada and they help immigrants to face the harshness of the society. The paper highlights the agency of Caribbean people living in Canada and also points to the potential usefulness of the underutilized resource 'back home.'



***From Liminal Diaspora to Flexible Diaspora: Creolized Socio-Cultural Practices as Forms of Cognitive Resistance and Decolonial Healing for the Siddis in Karnataka***

Dr. Sayan Dey, Postdoctoral Fellow, Wits Centre for Diversity Studies, University of Witwatersrand

The term 'Siddi' is used to refer to the African Diaspora in India who has arrived in India from different parts of eastern and southern Africa at different points in time. Historical records reveal that they traveled across the Indian Ocean to India widely over two phases—with the arrival of Islamic invaders in the fourteenth century and with the arrival of the Portuguese colonizers in the fifteenth century. The Siddis came to India as slaves, traders, artists, performers and mercenaries. Under the Islamic civilization, the African slaves were treated respectfully, and on the basis of their performance at the imperial courts, they were rewarded by being promoted to army chiefs, harem keepers, office assistants, etc. The Portuguese centrally recruited the Africans as slaves in India and treated them in an inhuman and demonic manner. With the emergence of the postcolonial era, the racialization, marginalization and dehumanization of the Siddis continues through a lack of education, jobs, health facilities and housing facilities. Besides these challenges, the Siddis are habitually subjected to physical and psychological abuses by other communities in India for their African anatomical features and dark skin colour. The creolized socio-cultural practices of the Siddis in India enable them to resist their habitual dehumanization and generate collaborative, co-creative and archipelagic cultural spaces of cognitive resistance and decolonial healing. The presentation will reflect on the various creolized culinary and musical practices of the Siddis with a specific focus on the community located in the southern Indian state of Karnataka.

*11:10 to 12:40 EDT*

**Panel 6: Memory/Memories: Blackness and the Performing Arts**

Chair: Dr. Moussa Djigo, York University

***Windrush as British Visual Transatlantic Memory***

Ilesha Denize Ledeatte, Peach Mango Maverick

British Windrush is the tail end of the British transatlantic enslavement trajectory and a narrative of memory, migration and displacement. My Artistic practice Peach Mango Maverick is concerned with the chronicling of journeying through the eyes of a first generation Windrush child. When my father died, I desperately needed a language to communicate that loss and respond to my mother's grief. 'A Postman's Legacy,' my first Visual Narrative ArtBook, was the response as a gift to my mother and it tried to grasp the essence of my father as a memory reflecting the essence of heritage and legacy. 'A Postman's Legacy' as His-story grew into a Grande Visual Narrative once I began to explore identity, history and geography through understanding that it was impossible to do so without the larger social context and that took me a decade. The use of ArtBooks as canvas in my work unlocks a different freedom of expression with text and image. As a visual artist, I explore the impact and legacy of contemporary Caribbean human geography from the perspective of a first generation Windrush lived experience. My artistic practice of 'Visual Narrative' is 'fine art as storytelling through 'Windrush Motif.'" I define the concept of 'Windrush' as a people who are a blueprint of human creative capacity, adaptation,

endurance, resilience and survival against capitalism and the most visible element of that legacy, which created the foundation for modern society.

***Straddling the Line: Womanist Epistemologies from North and South***

Dr. CL Nash, University of Edinburgh

From Nat Turner's Slave Revolt (U.S.) to the "Mau" Revolt of Kenya, Black radical religious movements have been used to facilitate social justice, sometimes leveraging physical violence to achieve ultimate victory. At the heart of this work is the religious knowledge production (epistemology) of African descended people, both in terms of original concepts of God but also the epistemological response to the colonial rule exacted by Europeans. When the Christian God is a colonizer, then movements for equality and dignity will appear antithetical to Christian mores. This work identifies Black radical religious movements as a means toward a more inclusive religious epistemology.

***Meaning, Memory & Middle Passage by Sir Frank Bowling (1970): Mapping Black Non/being on the Canvas***

Betel Tesfamariam, Master's Student, Graduate Programme in Gender, Feminist and Women's Studies, York University

The colours, techniques and form of the artwork *Middle Passage* by Sir Frank Bowling (1970) create fertile ground from which to theorize how visual art can problematize, disrupt and refuse hegemonic constructions of ontological Blackness or the potentialities of its multiplicity. This paper draws on Stuart Hall (1992) to present the discursive practice of art as a medium through which we, as Black people, encounter history and situate ourselves in the present. A critical engagement with the Black feminist and literary analyses offered by Christina Sharpe (2016) in the *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, Dionne Brand (2001) in *A Map to the Door of No Return: Notes to Belonging*, and Derek Walcott (1992) in 'The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory Nobel Lecture,' demonstrate how water, mapping and texture can be understood as legitimate sites from which to theorize memory, loss and fugitivity. The art work, *Middle Passage* by Sir Frank Bowling (1970) offers the visual language with which interventions can be made in making meaning of misdirection; not only through interrogating the futility of cartography in mapping memory but by deploying the artistic technique of abstraction to generate an array of possibilities for making meaning of Black non/being from the changing locations of fugitivity—on and off the canvas.

***The Shared Legacy of the Black Womxn: Resistance Writing in Black Womxn's 20th Century Literature***

J. Norma Watson, Graduate Student, Penn State University

Archives are controlled and manipulated by dominant voices of the past and thus impact on the ways in which history is told. Historians like Michel-Rolph Trouillot, Saidiya Hartman, Marisa J. Fuentes and many more have acknowledged the violence and erasure that takes place in the archives. Scholars have utilized "reading against the grain," speculative fabulation and other methods to uncover more narratives. This article argues that more historical gaps about Black Womxn can be filled by analyzing their poetry as primary sources. With the use of Black Feminist theory this article acknowledges the historical richness in Black Womxn's literature to uncover their silenced historical perspectives. The literature analysis will juxtapose Black Womxn's literary works across the Black/African

Diaspora and highlight the commonalities in their experiences and understandings of self in society. This article will further demonstrate Black Womxn's interconnectedness, through cross generational memories, writing and redefinitions, although residing in different nations. I analyze three literary texts as primary sources that highlight Black Womxn's embodied experiences. The common themes that emerge in their works reveal the core elements of resistance writing. These issues seem worth pondering here, with the attention that Black Womxn's voices, literature and other expressive art forms are receiving in Latinx History, Gender Studies and Black Studies. How can historians combat archival erasure? What are Black Womxn doing to retell this history and combat negative controlling images? And what kind of archives can be developed by acknowledging novels, poetry, music, art, etc. by Black Womxn as primary sources?

*13:00 to 14:50 EDT*

### **Panel 7: Histories and Geographies of Blackness**

Chair: Dr. Damilola Adebayo, York University

#### ***Using Digital Technology to Track Changing Meanings of Identity in Global Africa***

Dr. Paul E. Lovejoy, Distinguished Research Professor, Department of History, York University

The historical impact of slavery has a persistent contemporary legacy of racism. Through the use of cutting-edge digital technologies the paper examines how identity narratives have shaped "Global Africa," that is, continental Africa and its diasporas. By focusing on archival documentation on African identity as a fundamental tool to address economic, social, cultural, civil and political human rights issues, the paper investigates usage of computational methodologies to better understand connections between enslaved people and their homelands. The Decade for People of African Descent approaches its milestone in 2024 and now principles of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) have become a priority of public discourse. The persistence of racialized discrimination flies in the face of the transformative contributions of people of African descent in shaping the modern world in the arts, popular culture, sports, scholarly achievement and indeed every sphere of culture and society. The paper discusses innovative methods that expose the elusive conceptions of identity that have underpinned persistent forms of racialized perceptions. Digital technologies focus on big data management and visualization, powered by machine learning models to analyze historical documentation that combats systemic racism by orchestrating African voices in a chorus of affirmation. In accordance with legal frameworks being implemented to combat racism, there remains considerable research, education and public enlightenment on matters arising from the legacy of slavery and the persistence of racialized stereotyping. The intention is to assert the dignity and humanity of people subjected to slavery, which the United Nations has declared a crime against humanity.

#### ***Information Interaction: African Studies & Technology***

Kartikay Chadha, Doctoral Candidate, School of Information Studies, McGill University; CEO, Walk With Web Inc

Approximately 12.5 million African people were transported during the trans-Atlantic slave trade to work in the slave societies of Americas. The identities of these individuals were targeted by taking them from their homes and forcing them into slavery. African studies



scholars have been working for two past decades to collect historical manuscripts, digitize, analyze and interpret them, to inform meaningful knowledge to the descended of the enslaved on their ancestry. This research work respect the provenance of important historical and personal data in these manuscripts and use data gathering and computational analytics supporting creation of public websites to join with ongoing efforts to restore and recover African identities that the slave trade sought to erase. By understanding the interaction of scholars with such digitized historical documents as a source of information, new data visualisation tools can be developed that may provide an interactive environment for data analyses and information sharing. This paper attempts to answer questions such as, how might data visualisation and human-information interaction improve meaningful information retrieval from large volume historical meta-data generated from digitized historical documents? How visual data browsing improve information retrieval compared to analog methods for analyses? How the digital information created as part of research output can be deiminated, preserved and shared to gain insight into enslaved individual lives and share new discoveries with other researchers and/or the public at large

### ***Body Scarification and Other Physical Representations of Identity***

Dr. Katrina Keefer, Adjunct Professor, Trent University

Spanning centuries, the trans-Atlantic slave trade forcibly exported 12.5 million Africans who were loaded aboard vessels bound for the Americas and for Europe. These men, women and children were renamed, separated from one another, and dispersed through a variety of plantation societies. A symbol of African origins that lingered upon faces and bodies was permanent body marking; never imported as a tradition into the Americas, the patterns that were applied by communities upon individuals held complex and nuanced meanings. Identities, origins, kin groups and personal achievements were all represented by varying patterns among various peoples. By using these marks, which were often described in the Americas as ‘country marks’ upon African-born slaves, modern scholars can begin to trace regional origins inscribed upon those who survived the Middle Passage. This paper describes and considers an approach to identity that relies upon the identification of scarification and tattoos upon faces and bodies. Identities etched into the skin may prove the most precise record of men, women and children whose historical record was often obscured.

### ***Freedom Narratives of Trans-Atlantic Slavery***

Dr. Érika Melek Delgado, Leverhulme Fellow, King’s College, London

The focus of the Freedom Narratives project is on individuals who were born in Africa during the era of trans-Atlantic slavery from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. The project is based on primary source materials that have been metatagged and entered into the [www.freedomnarratives.org](http://www.freedomnarratives.org) website in order to facilitate further research based on biographical information. A pilot project involving several thousand individuals has been codified according to four categories, details of each person’s identity; events that occurred in the course of the person’s life; locations of where events took place; and the primary sources on which the accounts are based. It is anticipated that the database and open source relational website will eventually document hundreds of thousands of individuals, which in combination of other web-based datasets, will allow reconstructions of patterns in African history, not only relating to enslavement but also relating to many other historical aspects of the lives of people. The life stories are referred to as “Freedom Narratives”

because in most cases that have survived, individuals began their lives as free born, and while they were enslaved, in many cases individuals actually regained their freedom.

*15:00 to 16:30 EDT*

### **Panel 8: Moving Forward: Africa and Diasporic-African Futures**

Chair: Dr. Amar Wahab, York University

#### ***Africanjuism in Edwidge Danticat's The Children of the Sea***

Dr. Hapsatou Wane, Assistant Professor of English and French, Georgia Southern University

In this paper, I will show how black narratives of migration such as Edwidge Danticat's *Children of the Sea* disrupt traditional notions of temporalities in Africanfuturism. Read as a gothic narrative of migration, this short story positions conceptions of black subjectivities beyond mere diasporic considerations. I will explore how these works encapsulate what Nnedi Okorafor coined as 'Africanjuism.' I will examine how *Children of the Sea* "respectfully acknowledges the seamless blend of true existing African spiritualities and cosmologies with the imaginative" (Okorafor, [blogspot.com](https://www.blogspot.com)). To a certain extent, I posit that a globalectic reading highlights the subversive markers of Africanjuism and participates in the decolonial project of Afrofuturism beyond dominant redefinitions of the Black migrant forms of embodiment. With central characters in constant transition between space and time, *Children of the Sea* engages with other/worldly black diasporic beings, thus retracing the multidimensional roots and multidirectional routes of Black migratory subjectivities.

#### ***Existential-izing Blackness***

Chanel Prince, Doctoral Student, Department of Sociology, University of Massachusetts Amherst

How can Black Existentialism aid in the way we understand the global African diasporic connection, and the ways that members of this diaspora coalesce for change? In today's globalized society, all those racialized as Black, African, Afro are, and have been subjected to, historically specific forms of antiblackness and white supremacy. A burgeoning literature (in Black Studies, and Sociology of Race and Racism) on the global African diaspora explores and debates what diaspora is, means and does, yet there is no consensus on what constitutes their connection. Black existential philosophy introduces a critique of domination that affirms the empowerment of Black people in the world. My research builds on this growing literature to construct a global African diasporic perspective that is generally applicable to studies on coalition building among global African diasporic subjects in translocal and transcultural contexts. Within this perspective, I argue that "existential-izing" (rather than essentializing) Blackness is useful for coalition building—especially in the development of political solidarity for racial justice.

***Where are we now? Addressing the Perspectives of Continental Crossing***

Philestena McLead, AGATA Resource Center Inc.

*"If you know all the language of the world, and you don't know your mother tongue or the language of our culture, that is enslavement. But if you know your mother tongue, or the language of your culture, and add all the other languages of the world to it that is empowerment . . . . Ngugi wa Thiong'o (Kenyan Writer)*

Where are we now? To answer this question, we must look back at our history to see how far our journey has come. Are we enduring kaleidoscopic effects that are putting us in state of cognitive amnesia based on circumstances? This talk will look at a few significant epoch-making periods.

***16:30 to 17:00 EDT***

***Within and Beyond the Faultlines of Black Atlanticism***

Closing Remarks by Dr. Pablo Idahosa, York University



## Conference Participants

**Dr. Damilola Adebayo** is a historian of Anglophone West Africa, particularly Nigeria. His research and teaching interests are at the intersection of three fields: social and economic history; science, technology and society; and the role of international organizations in the African past. He is currently working on his first book, provisionally entitled *Power to the People: Electricity and Urban Life in Twentieth-Century Nigeria*. The book analyzes the evolution and impact of electrification in Nigerian cities from its inception in 1898, through independence (1960), the Civil War (1967–1970), to the eve of the OPEC-led international oil boom in the early 1970s. Adebayo holds a PhD in History from the University of Cambridge, where he was a Cambridge-Africa Scholar (2016–2020). His research has been generously supported by many grants and fellowships, including the IEEE Life Members' Fellowship in the History of Electrical and Computing Technology and the Melvin Kranzberg Fellowship, awarded by the Society for the History of Technology.

**Dr. Sakiru Adebayo** is Assistant Professor in the Department of English, University of British Columbia, Okanagan Campus. His research interests include memory studies, African literature, melancholy studies and the new African diaspora literature.

**Sampson Adese** (he/him) is an Isoko, Nigerian-Canadian. He is currently a PhD student and SSHRC Canada Graduate Scholar in Environmental Studies in the Faculty of Environmental Studies and Urban Change at York University. Mr. Adese has a master's degree in Political Science from Carleton University. His research broadly focuses on Isoko experiences with resource extraction and its environmental impacts, environmental justice, critical development, postcolonial studies, decoloniality, Africa-China relations, and African politics. Mr. Adese is also a longstanding member of the Toronto chapter of the Isoko Cultural Association, a community-based organization working towards the protection and preservation of Isoko culture, language and empowerment of Isoko people both in the diaspora and in the Isoko homeland. He is also the father of a rambunctious, energetic six-year-old son who gives life new meaning every day and preserves his active youthfulness (albeit with the incredible fatigue that follows up in the evening).

**Beatrice Anane-Bediakoh** is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Sociology at York University. She holds a Master of Education in Humanities, Social Science and Social Justice Education from the University of Toronto (OISE), and earned her Hons. Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from Wilfrid Laurier University. Beatrice's academic work is motivated by an unwavering commitment to the collective struggle for Black freedom(s) and life forms. Her interests include race and racialization, Black geographies, and the spatialization of race. Grounded in her lived experiences, her dissertation explores how Black Greater Toronto Area (GTA) residents respond to violent forms of racialized spatial organization across racialized neighbourhoods that either render Black residents as objects to be feared or saved; or non-persons living beyond the colour line of personhood. She intends to carve out spaces for Black residents to make sense of their own experiences of geographic expulsion, serving as a catalyst in re-imagining and reconstructing landscapes that move beyond Euro-white geographies. Beyond her academic work, she is intimately invested in the Black community, where in

partnership with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Peel, she participates as Big Sister/ Mentor, offering affordable individualized tutoring services to low-income families in the GTA.

**Dr. Sylvia Bawa** is the director of the Resource Centre for Public Sociology and Associate Professor of Sociology at York University. She is a global sociologist with expertise in human rights, development and postcolonial feminisms. Her work attempts to unravel structural inequalities embedded in orthodox conceptions of empowerment and social justice. Some of her publications appear in journals such as *Third World Quarterly*, *African Identities*, *Qualitative Report*, *Development in Practice*, *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, and the *International Human Rights of Women* as well as the *Palgrave Handbook of African Women's Studies* (Springer Major Reference Works Series). She currently leads SSHRC and CIHR-funded international collaborative PDGs as Principal investigator and co-investigator, among others.

**Kartikay Chadha** is a PhD candidate in the School of Information Studies at McGill University and the CEO of Walk With Web Inc. He holds a Master of Science degree from the University of Toronto and a Bachelor of Technology from the VIT University in India. Chadha has expertise in computer programming and big data quantitative and qualitative analyses. He has developed multiple websites, databases and web applications for research projects based at institutions including OCAD University, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, University of Toronto and York University in Canada, the University of Colorado Boulder in the United States, and the University of Essex in the United Kingdom. He has extensive experience in developing and managing digital humanities projects. He has been awarded the prestigious Canada Graduate Scholarship by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada to support his ongoing doctoral research that leverages the application of Information Studies in the field of African Digital Humanities by investigating the interaction between academic scholars and digital information systems. Chadha is a collaborator and contributor to multiple national and international research grants. He is currently working with research groups based at various universities including the Digital Slavery Research Lab at the University of Colorado Boulder, SHADD Hub at York University and DRAGEN Lab at the University of Waterloo.

**Dr. Desirée de Jesús** is a video essayist and moving images curator whose digital projects concentrate on girls, women and folks of colour. Her previous curatorial work supported the Toronto International Film Festival and the Visual Collections Repository (Concordia University). She is also an Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication and Media Studies at York University. Her teaching and research interests include the intersections of race, gender and aesthetics in film and media through critical creative, community-based and curatorial methodologies. Her current research-creation projects use experimental animation to amplify Black girls' critical resistance strategies and participatory filmmaking to explore racialized girls' experiences of COVID-19 inequalities.

**Dr. Érika Melek Delgado** is a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow at King's College London, United Kingdom. Her research and publications focus on African history, with special attention to Liberated African children in Africa and the Americas, and African childhood. She is the main investigator of the project "Historical African Childhoods" (HAC Project), the Associate Director of the Freedom Narratives Project, both of which focus on historical biographies of African

people, and Director of the *Walk With Web*, an academic-oriented Canadian corporation with a mission to develop, support and preserve digital Social Sciences and Humanities research. For her Early Career Fellow position, Érika was approved for The Leverhulme Trust and The British Academy fellowships. Formerly she had a two-year post as Postdoctoral Fellow at The Harriet Tubman Institute for Research on Africa and its Diasporas at York University. As a postdoc fellow, she was awarded two major grants from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). She holds a PhD in History from the University of Worcester and was awarded a PhD Studentship for three years.

**Dr. Sayan Dey** grew up in Kolkata, West Bengal. He is currently working as a Postdoctoral Fellow at Wits Centre for Diversity Studies, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. As a contributor and editor, his publications appear in different edited books, journals, blogs and tabloids. His areas of research interests are history, archaeology, everyday decoloniality, sociology, critical diversity literacy, culinary epistemologies, and critical race studies. He can be reached at [www.sayandey.com](http://www.sayandey.com).

**Dr. Moussa Djigo** is an award-winning director, screenwriter and producer with a background in journalism and cinema studies. His research interests include Canadian Indigenous cinema, African American cinema, City symphony films, research-creation, and space in cinema. He is the author of *Spike Lee: Aesthetics of Subversion in Do the Right Thing* (Paris, Acoria, 2009), a book that examines how images can use very specific formal tools to convey a political message. He is currently working on another book entitled “Cinema and Otherness: A Perspectivist Anthropology of Wapikoni Mobile,” where he explores the notion of “otherness” in films made by young Indigenous filmmakers. He has written, directed and produced *Obamas* and *Rosalie*, two fiction features that have earned more than 20 awards, and have been screened in more than 60 venues around the world including Rome, Spokane, Palm Springs, Los Angeles, London, New York, Miami, San Francisco, Denver, Columbus and Montreal. Both films have aired on the TFO television channel in 2020 and 2021, and have been recently programmed as part of a retrospective at Cinematheque quebecoise. Djigo previously taught in France (Jean-Moulin University Lyon 3 and Sorbonne Nouvelle University Paris 3) and in four different CEGEPS in Quebec (André-Laurendeau, Outaouais, Bois-de-Boulogne and Rosemont).

**Christopher Gismondi** (he/they) is a queer, white, Qallunaak-zhaaganaash-Settler, first generation “Canadian” of Scottish and Italian descent, born and raised on Nanzuhzaugewazog, Dish with One Spoon, Head of the Lake Treaty no. 14 (1806), Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg territory. Chris is a PhD candidate at the University of New Brunswick completing his doctoral project under the guidance of Dr. Charmaine A. Nelson. His doctoral and master’s work have been sponsored by SSHRC and he also serves on the Advisory Board for the Institute for the Study of Canadian Slavery. His curatorial work has spanned institutions like La Guild, Leonard and Bina Ellen Art Gallery and Government of Ontario Art Collection. Along with Dr. Nelson and an undergraduate seminar, he contributed to the grassroots slavery Bicentenary report for McGill University and three other public facing projects. His writing has been published in *Canadian Art*, *Canadian Art Review*, *The English Historical Review*, *Esse: art + opinions*, *Peripheral Review*, and *Arcadia: Environment and Society*.



**Dr. Jamilla Hamidu** is a Political Scientist whose work focuses on race, culture, identity, politics and gender of Black and African diaspora in England, France and the US. She has been researching and teaching for the past 10 to 15 years at various universities in France (Sciences Po Bordeaux, Université de Poitiers, Université de Bordeaux Montaigne) as a lecturer of Anglophone Studies, specifically on Black Atlantic diaspora history in Commonwealth countries and the US. Her specialized research topics are in the field of political engagement and transnational political engagement of African diasporas towards homelands such as Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal and la Côte d'Ivoire. Dr. Hamidu is presently working on Black Atlantic diaspora ties with Ghana, specifically on historic linkages between Ghana and the French Antilles.

**Marsha Hinds** is a dual career professional in the areas of advocacy and education/research. She lived and worked in Barbados before returning to Canada in 2021. She lectured at the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill and St. Augustine and was also a researcher for the state-run trade agency in Barbados. She is the immediate past president of the National Organization of Women of Barbados. Hinds spent 19 years developing an advocacy model to address the issues of underprivileged groups of women in Barbados and the Commonwealth Caribbean that enabled them to get access to services and stronger lobby in policy spaces. She believes that equity is underpinned by first understanding the institutional structures that can cause discrimination and then developing policies and strategies to address inequality and injustice. The philosophical mooring for Marsha's interaction with equity work come partly out of her PhD research which focused on the ways in which political and cultural experiences shaped the development and creation of intellectual spaces and intellectual thought in Commonwealth Caribbean tertiary institutions. That work unearthed the ways in which systemic impressions of African descended Diaspora people originated and how they were institutionalized in spaces including government practice and academies. Marsha is committed to addressing those systemic impressions. Marsha wants to add to the significant work being done to champion for equality for Black stakeholders in Canada. She is excited about serving the Caribbean Diaspora in various areas in Canada, guided by the work and effort of many who have gone before while creating legacy for many to follow. Marsha remains an actor in the Commonwealth Caribbean equality space and a keen researcher on elements of Caribbean life including sporting excellence and cultural iconography such as the rum shop. She still sits in the National Steering Committee for the UNDP GEF's small grants fund for Barbados.

**Dr. Pablo Idahosa**, current Head of Founders College at York University, has been teaching African Studies and Development Studies for more than 25 years. He has written on the politics of AIDS and disease in Africa and has published on African modernities, African political thought and development, development ethics, development displacements and inequalities in Africa, national development and African diasporas.

**Anna Jarvis** is a sixth-year PhD student at York University. Her research centres on the legal history of the eastern British North American colonies during the first half of the nineteenth century, and includes Loyalist history, Indigenous history, Black history, family history and the history of the Atlantic world within empire.

**Katrina Keefer** is a scholar of African identity and slavery with particular interest in how individuals situate themselves within broader communities and groups. Her major research projects are in the digital humanities, and she has developed a method of discerning the origins of enslaved individuals by ‘reading’ the body and facial marks they were given in the continent. Keefer presently leads an international team in reconstructing a visual catalogue of known slave brands to understand the complex economic relationships which drove the slave trade. Keefer also works on game studies—she is fascinated by how Africa and its past are represented within virtual worlds, and she has worked as a game consultant to assist developers in better representing African cultures and peoples. She is presently developing virtual simulations harnessing game engines such as Unreal to reconstruct a high-fidelity digital past that is carefully researched and represented through both scholarly collaboration and community co-authorship with the peoples whose history it concerns. The pilot project for this work is entitled *Bunce Island: Through the Mirror* and consists of a narrative-driven digital reconstruction of the eighteenth century Sierra Leone estuary and the people who lived and traded within it. It is driven by intersectoral and interdisciplinary collaboration with creatives in Sierra Leone, Kenya and a network of scholars lending their expertise to the project. These immersive digital experiences are intended as an engaging pedagogical tool suitable for both a global and an African audience interested in exploring a reconstructed precolonial past.

**Dr. Tamari Kitossa** is Associate Professor of Sociology at Brock University. He earned his BA (Hon) and Magisteriate degrees at York University and his PhD at OISE/University of Toronto. Research and instruction interests include Blackness, anti-Blackness, Black masculinities, African Canadian leadership, anti-criminology and counter-colonial criminology, and interracial unions. He is contributing editor to three major book projects: *The first African Canadian Leadership: Continuity, Transition, and Transformation* (University of Toronto Press) with Erica Lawson and Philip S.S. Howard; the forthcoming book, “Nuances of Blackness in the Canadian Academy: Teaching, Learning and Researching while Black” (University of Toronto Press), edited with Awad Ibrahim, Malinda Smith and Handel K. Wright; and *Appealing Because He Is Appalling: Black Masculinities, Colonialism and Erotic Racism* (University of Alberta Press 2021).

**George Xorse Kumasenu** is a graduate student of History at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana. He is broadly interested in the history of Africa, the African Diaspora, and gender and sexuality studies. His research activities examine migration, settlement patterns, identity formation and inter-group relations in West Africa, sites of historical memory within the sub-region, and the varied impact of the Second World War on Africa and Africans.

**Iesha Denize Ledeatte** has returned to Art after a long absence. Her former background includes economic development (urban regeneration) and recruitment across the private, public profit sector. She is currently a fellow of the RSA and an alumni of the Global Women Inventors and Innovators Network. She contributed the closing chapter of the *Routledge Handbook of Postcolonial Politics* and is a regular contributor to *Pen to Print Write On Magazine*. Her signature style Visual Narrative combines poetic and painted abstraction using ArtBooks as canvas to translate a Windrush child lived experience through fine art as storytelling. What began as a personal memoir grew into an exploration of British Caribbean history, painted with text. Triggered by the death of her Windrush father, she responded to her

mother's grief artistically in a Postman's Legacy. The "Purple Chapters," a Triptych-Trilogy due to be published in July 2022, documents a 10-year journey of one woman's return to the arts following a prolonged absence to explore terminal illness, grief, loss, identity and healing within the shadow of an unbroken colonial legacy. The Triptych-Trilogy digests the HiStory of British Transatlantic Plantation Enslavement and spits out the bones. It consists of Before the Ships; MayBrex (Mayflower and Brexit) and African Violet...Hybrid of Circumstance. The final chapter could only close following her Windrush mother's death in 2020. She has recently been appointed Acting Director of the National Windrush Museum, established to preserve the legacy of the Windrush generation and their successors in the UK.

**Janelle Levy** is a PhD candidate in the Department of Anthropology at the University of California, Irvine. Her research focuses on anti-Blackness, Creolization and the politics of identity and aspiration among elite Jamaican youth in Kingston.

**Dr. Paul Lawrie** is a historian of Afro-America whose research examines the intersections of race, labour, disability, urbanism and time in modern America. He is the author of *Forging a Laboring Race: The African American Worker in the Progressive Imagination* (NYU Press, 2016), which details how evolutionary science and industrial management crafted taxonomies of racial labour fitness in early twentieth century America. His article, "Mortality as the Life Story of a People: Frederick L. Hoffman and Actuarial Narratives of African American Extinction," won the 2014 Ernest Redekop prize for Best Article in the *Canadian Review of American Studies*. He was also a contributor ("Race, Work and Disability in Progressive Era America") to the *Oxford Disability Handbook* (Oxford University Press, 2018), winner of the 2021 George Rosen Book prize from the American Association for the History of Medicine. His current SSHRC-funded project, *The Color of Hours: Race, Time and the Making of Urban America*, traces how time—as both lived experience and a category of analysis—mediated racial difference and identity in the American city from the time-work management of the factory floor to the vagrancy statutes of the streets.

**Dr. Paul E. Lovejoy** is Distinguished Research Professor, Department of History, York University, and Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. He is Founding Director of the Harriet Tubman Institute for Research on Africa and its Diasporas at York University, and has held the Canada Research Chair in African Diaspora History (2000–2015). He was a member of the UNESCO "Slave Route" Project (1996–2012) and continues as General Editor of The Harriet Tubman Series on the African Diaspora (Africa World Press). He was co-editor of the journal, *African Economic History*, for 37 years and have published more than forty books, including *Jihad in West Africa during the Age of Revolutions (1775–1850)* (2016), *Slavery in the Global Diaspora of Africa* (2019), and most recently has co-edited with Ali Moussa Iye and Nelly Schmidt, *Slavery, Resistance and Abolitions: A Pluralist Perspective* (2019) and have co-edited with Dale Tomich, *The Atlantic and Africa: The Second Slavery and Beyond* (2020). He has received numerous grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, currently holding multiple-year awards for a project, "Testimonies of Enslavement," which has as its website and portal ([www.freedomnarratives.org](http://www.freedomnarratives.org)) and "Islamic Terrorism in Africa" ([www.iptsa.org](http://www.iptsa.org)). Most recently he was awarded a grant from the Trans-Atlantic Platform for Social Innovation on Documenting Africans in Trans-Atlantic Slavery ([www.datasproject.org](http://www.datasproject.org)). The various web-based



projects also include digitization preservation associated with the British Library Endangered Archives Programme, currently involving the Sierra Leone Public Archives.

**Philestena McLeod** began her professional journey in the business and communication sector where she worked in various spaces such as the T. Eaton Company, the Canadian Army Recruitment Centre, and Ontario Social Services. Taking a break from the workspace, Philestena made the switch and became a wife and a parent. It was during her parenting years that she was reminded of her call to work with families and youths with cognitive disorders, and as she reflected on her childhood, she remembered how much her family endured when they tried to support her cousin's mental illness. Harled in memories, Philestena went to Humber College and enrolled in the Social Services Program, but after a couple semesters, she transferred to the Developmental Services Program, where her studies focused on cognitive and behavioural challenges, relevant to mental illnesses. After graduating from Humber College, Philestena enrolled in the Sociology program at York University, where she focused on culture, education and society.

After graduating from York University, Philestena went on to work as an instructor at the post-secondary level, where she spent 15 years teaching the social and community services curriculum. In addition, she spent 12 years at the community services level where she worked with youths and young adults with mental illness, behavioural challenges and experiencing homelessness. Meeting her accomplishments, Philestena decided to start her own community support program to meet the needs of youths, immigrants, families and Blacks who are experiencing mental distress, but are unable to express their symptoms or emotions in order to receive the desired resources. From years working in the community service sector, she acknowledges the gap in relevant support for youths and families from ethnically diverse backgrounds. In various cases she recognizes that lack of knowledge was a bigger hindrance when families or youth reach out to access resources.

In 2018, AGATA Resource Centre. Inc. was established, and it became federally incorporated in 2019. It provides psychosocial education programs for the ethnically diverse communities in the catchment areas of Don Valley North and Scarborough North. Philestena has written articles addressing the impact of mental distress, barriers to mental health support and resources, and the outlook of health-wellness when resources are accessible to ethnically diverse communities. Many of her articles are featured in *Caribbean Camera*. Throughout her career and in everything she does, she always strives to advocate for and promote social justice.

**Dr. CL Nash** obtained her PhD in Historical Theology from the University of Edinburgh and the University of Gloucestershire. She is currently a new recipient of the IASH Duncan Forrester Fellowship at Edinburgh University. In addition to her post in Edinburgh, she is a Visiting Scholar at the University of Leeds where she initiated and still manages a research project, *Misogynoir to Mishpat* (or from Hatred of Black Women to Restorative Justice). She launched the website (<https://misogynoir2mishpat.com/>) and hosted the inaugural, international seminar on May 13 (featuring Professor Esther Mombo) with the second seminar hosted on September 20 (featuring Professor Rosetta Ross). Look for their new blog, "Conversations in Race, Gender and Religion," which will be launched later this year. A new member of the editorial board for *Black*

*Women and Religious Cultures*, she is also published in various theological blogs including with the Centre for Religion and Public Life, Leeds University. Her work is also featured in journals including *The Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*. In addition to several articles and chapters being released throughout 2021, her first book is scheduled for release in 2022 with SCM Press.

**Dr. Adele N. Norris** is Senior Lecturer in Sociology and Social Policy in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand. Adele's scholarship engages black feminist methodologies to explore global forms of [anti-blackness](#) and state-sanctioned violence against Black and Indigenous people. She is a co-editor of [Neo-Colonial Injustice and the Mass Imprisonment of Indigenous Women](#).

**Chanel Prince** studies Black existential experiences and identities as a PhD student in Sociology at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, and she is excited to be in community with you all!

**Dr. Célia Romulus** is an Assistant Professor in Glendon College's Department of International Studies. She completed her PhD in the Department of Political Studies at Queen's University, where her research focused on: the normalization of gendered state repression under the Duvalier dictatorship; how these systematized forms of violence shaped movements of population out of Haiti; and the notion of citizenship as experienced by multiple generations of migrants. Her research and teaching draws from anti-oppression and anti-racist education, Afro and decolonial feminisms, and explores questions related to the gender and the politics of memory, migrations, citizenship, political violence and interdisciplinary methods. Prior to completing her PhD, Romulus worked as a program director in the areas of gender-based violence in public spaces and in security sector reform for UN Women, the United Nations entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. She continues to work as a consultant and trainer on questions related to anti-oppression, anti-racism, Black femininities/masculinities, and gender mainstreaming in public policies and in development.

**Dr. Sam Tecle's** research and scholarly work spans across the areas of Black and diaspora studies, urban studies, and sociology of education. His work focuses on the analysis of diverse experiences, trajectories and expressions of Blackness, grounded in particular histories of racialization, colonialism, community formation and resistance. His forthcoming work, *Black Grammars: On Difference and Belonging*, explores the experiences and perspectives relating to blackness and Black identification of East African Diasporas across the UK, Canada and the US. More broadly, Sam is interested in questions of Black sociality, Black cultural production and its expressions across the diaspora. His research and teaching draws on his deep experience in community-engaged work, focussed largely on Blackness and educational settings in Toronto. This community-engaged work has been conducted in partnership with organizations to create new supports and opportunities for Black students at the secondary level and in the transition to post-secondary education, in the face of a variety of systemic barriers they encounter. He has particularly prioritized work with Success Beyond Limits, a program serving students in the Jane and Finch community.

**Betel Tesfamariam** is a graduate student at York University, pursuing her master's degree in Gender, Feminist and Women's Studies. She completed her undergraduate degree at Pomona College in southern California, where she majored in Environmental Analysis, within the Environmental Justice: Race, Class, and Gender track and minored in Africana Studies. She is interested in developing research that explores queer Black feminist visual art and poetry that engage ecologies, Black Liberation and decolonization through creative imaginaries in the contexts of Africa and the Black Diaspora. Her work interrogates the discursive and material scales of heteropatriarchy, antiblackness and racial capitalism that structure knowledge production and Black non/being, a concept she draws from Christina Sharpe's (2016) work *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, within the academy and world, by offering abstraction, queer Black feminism, and Black feminist visual art and poetry, as generative sites from which memory, fugitivity and meaning can be theorized. She will be completing her studies this fall and is looking forward to getting involved in community-based, popular, political education efforts that promote abolition, anti-imperialism and Black feminism in the global Black world.

**Sydney Tye** is a recent graduate of Transylvania University located in Lexington, Kentucky where she received her Bachelor's degree in Religious Studies with a focus on African American traditions. Beginning in the fall, Sydney will attend the Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta to receive her Master's of Divinity. Following completion of her MDiv, Sydney will venture on to receive her PhD in efforts of joining the academy. Outside of school Sydney enjoys reading on her porch, taking her pup to the dog park, driving on the highway, browsing local bookstores, viewing films with her mother, and visiting family.

**Dr. Hanétha Vété-Congolo** is Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures at Bowdoin College, Maine, Chair of the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, and President of the Caribbean Philosophical Association. She is a member of the Africa Academic Hub Initiative and affiliated to the Africana, the Latin American, Caribbean and Latinx, and the Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies programs of her institution. She is also Membre d'Honneur of the Research Group on Black Latin America at the Université de Perpignan Via Domitia, France (CRESEM/GRENAL, Languages and identities) and a member of AI 4 Afrika, Artificial Intelligence for Afrika.

Her scholarship focuses principally on Caribbean and (West/Central) African critical thought, philosophy, literature, culture and orality, and on discourses by women and about women of the Caribbean and, West and Central Africa. She is the author of *Nous sommes Martiniquaises. Pawòl en bouches de femmes châtaignes : Une pensée existentialise noire sur la question des femmes* [2020], *L'interoralité caribéenne: le mot conté de l'identité (Vers un traité d'esthétique caribéenne)* [2011.2016], co-editor of *Pensées et philosophie d'Afrique: Pour demain, voir, comprendre et penser l'Afrique d'aujourd'hui* [2021], editor of *The Caribbean Oral Tradition* [2016], *Léon-Gontran Damas : Une Négritude entière* [2015] and *Le conte d'hier, aujourd'hui : Oralité et modernité* [2014].

Her poetry collections are *Avoir et Être : Ce que j'Ai, ce que je Suis*, published with Le chasseur Abstrait in 2009 and *Mon parler de Guinée*, published in 2015 with L'Harmattan, coll. Poètes

des cinq continents. Her unpublished collection of poetry, “Womb of a Woman,” was shortlisted for the 2015 Small Axe Literary Competition.

**Dr. Amar Wahab** is Associate Professor of Gender and Sexuality in the School of Gender, Sexuality and Women’s Studies at York University. He has taught in the areas of critical sexuality studies, critical studies in masculinity, critical race studies, introductory and advanced sociological theory and Caribbean cultural studies. His research interests include sexual citizenship in liberal and postcolonial nation-state formations (mainly related to the Caribbean and Canada), race and queer transnational politics, critiques of queer liberalism, and queer studies of indentureship in the Caribbean. His current creative research project is entitled: *Trans-Oceanic Erotics: A Queer Coolie Odyssey*.

**Dr. Hapsatou Wane** is an Assistant Professor of English at Georgia Southern University. Her research interests include African migrant literature, transglobal narratives of return, and postcolonial theory.

**J. Norma Watson** is a second-year graduate student at Penn State University. She studies Latin American History and African American Studies. She received her MA in spring 2022 in Latin American History with specializations in transnationalism and race. Her research focuses on ambiguities of emancipation in Cuba during the turn of the twentieth century. With the use of Black feminist theory, transnational feminist theory, and speculative interpretation, Norma uncovers the ways in which plantations, urban work places and homes were both spaces of control and negotiations. Her research provides an alternative lens in understanding the Black experience in different geographical locations in Latin America and creates a nuanced understanding of Black “resistance” as just surviving in places where they are not intended to do so.

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