

CANADA AND THE TRANSNATIONAL CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

A MARCH FROM SELMA TO CANADA:
CANADA AND THE TRANSNATIONAL CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines transnational connectivities centred on anti-discrimination and human rights activism, discourse, and policy spanning the Canada-United States border during the 1950s and 1960s. It focuses specifically on Canadian interactions with the African American civil rights movement, with particular attention to the ways Canadian activists contributed to the American movement, as well as the significance of the American movement to Canadian rights activism and policy. This dissertation contributes to historical understanding of the transnational nature of the American civil rights movement by illustrating how Canadian activists and organizations impacted directly on the American movement through financial and moral support. It also argues the American movement had important implications for Canadian rights activism and policy. Canadian anti-discrimination activists followed American civil rights campaigns, adapting ideas and techniques when relevant to their own efforts. Most significantly, they leveraged examples from south of the border and elsewhere around the world when pressing for change in local contexts. Through their local and global efforts, Canadian activists achieved notable successes in pushing Canadian public policy towards stronger human rights protections. While generating pressure for change, the international framework acted simultaneously as a restraining force on more fundamental transformations in conceptualizations of human rights in Canada. Many Canadians observed the civil rights movement from a sanctimonious perspective, denying that international examples carried applicability for their own country. Whether acting as a pressure for strengthened human rights protections, or a restraining force against the advent of more fundamental measures, this dissertation argues that Canadian human rights activism, discourse, and policy in the 1950s and 1960s can only be fully understood when intersections between local, national, and global contexts are considered.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

African Canadian Liberation Movement (ACLM)
African United Baptist Association (AUBA)
Black Panther Party (BPP)
Black United Front (BUF)
Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP)
Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC)
Canadian Commonwealth Federation (CCF)
Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC)
Canadian League for the Advancement of Colored People (CLACP)
Canadian Negro Women's Association (CNWA)
Colored Political and Protective Association (CPPA)
Combined Universities Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CUCND)
Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)
Economic Research and Action Project (ERAP)
Halifax Human Rights Advisory Committee (HHRAC)
Interdepartmental Committee on Human Rights (ICHR)
Jewish Labour Committee (JLC)
Joint Public Relations Committee (JPRC)
Juliette Derricotte Service Group (JDSG)
Martin Luther King Fund (MLK Fund)
Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA)

Member of Parliament (MP)

Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP)

Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP)

New Democratic Party (NDP)

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

National Black Coalition (NBC)

Negro Citizenship Association (NCA)

New Brunswick Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NBAACP)

Nova Scotia Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NSAACP)

Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC)

Sir George Williams University (SGWU)

South Essex Citizen's Advancement Association (SECAA)

Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)

Students for a Democratic Society (SDS)

Student Union for Peace Action (SUPA)

Union Générale des Étudiant du Québec (UGEQ)

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

United Nations (UN)

Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA)

CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT TIMELINE

**Note: This is a limited timeline, focused on African American civil rights movement events that received notable attention in the Canadian media and general public in the period under consideration. These events were therefore particularly relevant to Canadian-American links and influences. It is intended as a quick reference for civil rights movement events that are discussed in this dissertation, not as a comprehensive timeline of key civil rights movement events.*

1954

Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court Ruling

1955

Emmett Till Lynching
Montgomery Bus Boycott

1957

Little Rock School Integration Crisis

1958

Jimmy Wilson Case

1960

Student Sit-Ins
Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) Founded

1961

Freedom Rides

1963

Birmingham Integration Campaign
Medgar Evers assassinated
March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom
16th Street Baptist Church Bombing

1964

Freedom Summer
Civil Rights Act passed

1965

Selma Voting Rights Campaign
Voting Rights Act passed

1966

Black Panther Party founded

1968

Martin Luther King, Jr. assassinated

INTRODUCTION

Visuals of the African American civil rights movement in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s rank among the most widely recognized and memorialized in modern American history. Marches and speeches, preachers and students, sit-ins and fire hoses all form important parts of the country's collective memory. By contrast, images of a transformative movement in the same period rarely come to mind in popular representations of Canada. While lacking the intensity of its American counterpart, as well as a stream of equally dramatic visuals, sustained organizing against "race"-based discrimination *did* take place in Canada in the 1950s and 1960s.¹ A relatively small number of devoted activists drove this Canadian fight. Prominent among them were racialized minorities who themselves had personal experiences with discrimination.² These activists challenged officials at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels to legislate against discrimination, sought to educate the public on the damaging impacts of prejudice, and aimed to transform Canada into a fundamentally more fair and inclusive country.³ The differing scale, intensity, and visibility of their efforts compared with the

¹ Throughout this dissertation, the use the term "race" is grounded in recognition that "race" is a socially constructed category, not a biologically identifiable fact. References to discrimination on the basis of "race" denote discrimination against peoples who have been "racialized" – that is, those who have been subjected to, or categorized by, a process of racialization as a historically and socially constructed category of oppression. For more on the social construction of race, see Barbara J. Fields, "Slavery, Race and Ideology in the United States of America," *New Left Review* 1, no. 181 (May-June 1990): 95-118.

² Ruth Frager and Carmela Patrias, "'This is Our Country, These Are Our Rights': Minorities and the Origins of Ontario's Human Rights Campaigns," *Canadian Historical Review* 82, no. 1 (March 2001): 2.

³ This dissertation employs Kallen's definitions of "prejudice" and "discrimination." See Evelyn Kallen, *Ethnicity and Human Rights in Canada*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2003), 59: "Ethnic prejudice ... refers to biased beliefs about and attitudes toward members of particular ethnic communities based on unsubstantiated assumptions about their shared physical, cultural, and/or behavioural characteristics. Ethnic discrimination refers to biased acts or practices toward members of particular ethnic

civil rights movement south of the border ought not to overshadow their significance to Canadian history.

The struggle against racialized discrimination in Canada in the 1950s and 1960s was most often a local one. Discriminatory practices and policies were generally not enunciated explicitly in law, with the notable exceptions of racist immigration restrictions and the *Indian Act*.⁴ Prior to the passage of anti-discrimination legislation and enforcement mechanisms, however, the exclusion of racialized minorities from various realms of public life was both permitted and pervasive. Social norms and a body of jurisprudence prioritized the “right” of business owners, employers, and service providers to discriminate as a matter of “free commerce” and “freedom of contract” over the notion that customers, and specifically racialized minorities, had a right to not face such discrimination.⁵ Accordingly, discrimination was practiced openly, if inconsistently, in communities across Canada. Specific practices varied from place to place, and were exercised with greater regularity in some locales compared to others. This was particularly true of those places home to more sizeable populations of racialized

communities, which afford categorical advantage or disadvantage on the basis of unsubstantiated assumptions about their shared physical, cultural, and/or behavioural characteristics.”

⁴ For more on race and immigration, see Reg Whitaker, *Canadian Immigration Policy Since Confederation* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1991); Agnes Calliste, “Race, Gender and Canadian Immigration Policy: Blacks from the Caribbean, 1900-1932,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 28, no. 4 (Winter 1993-94): 131-148; Other notable measures beyond immigration that enshrined “race”-based discrimination in Canadian law include laws in Nova Scotia and Ontario that allowed for (though did not mandate) school segregation by race, and Saskatchewan’s “White Women’s Labour Law,” which legislated against the employment of white women by Asian men until the late 1960s. For more on this law, see Constance Backhouse, “The White Women’s Labor Laws: Anti-Chinese Racism in Early Twentieth-Century Canada,” *Law and History Review* 14, no. 2 (Autumn 1996): 315-368.

⁵ Esmeralda M.A. Thornhill, “So Seldom for Us, So Often Against Us: Blacks and the Law in Canada,” *Journal of Black Studies* 38, no. 3 (January 2008): 330.

minorities.⁶ Such localized variability meant the energies of anti-racist activists commonly focused, with the exception of immigration law, on reform at municipal and provincial levels.

Laws and conditions within the nation's borders shaped specific experiences with prejudice, as well as the most effective tactics for fighting it. Yet we must also consider postwar Canadian human rights activism and policy as part of a wider context of global activism. The decades following World War II saw movements unfold around the world that challenged the white supremacist notion of inequality based on "race," and sought to overturn the wide-ranging social and legislative practices grounded in this fallacy. Established following the war's devastation and the Holocaust, the United Nations (UN) and its Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) signified the new prominence of international human rights discourse. This development, David Goutor and Stephen Heathorn observe, "both reflected the growing interest in much of the world in human rights and signalled the arrival of human rights as a global issue."⁷ In Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean, anti-colonial movements gained momentum and heralded the founding of multiple new countries. The Cold War simultaneously generated pressure on Western countries to walk the talk of freedom and democracy. Blatant inequalities grounded in racism were an obvious source of vulnerability, as the United States and its allies sought

⁶ Though not discussed extensively in this dissertation, Asian immigrants encountered particularly intense and widespread racism in British Columbia. For more, see Stephanie Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest: Defending Citizens of Japanese Ancestry in North America, 1942-49* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008); Julie F. Gilmour, *Trouble on Main Street: Mackenzie King, Reason, Race and the 1907 Vancouver Riots* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2014); Kay Anderson, "The Idea of Chinatown: The Power of Place and Institutional Practice in the Making of Racial Category," in *Immigration in Canada: Historical Perspectives*, ed. Gerald Tulchinsky (Toronto: Copp Clark Longman Ltd, 1994).

⁷ David Goutor and Stephen Heathorn, "Introduction," in *Taking Liberties: A History of Human Rights in Canada*, eds. David Goutor and Stephen Heathorn (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2013), 7.

alliances with decolonizing nations by presenting themselves as leaders of the democratic world. The gap between Cold War era rhetoric of freedom, equality, and democracy in the West and lived experiences with racism provided an opportune moment for activists to pressure for change.⁸ Meanwhile, concern over racism was amplified as reactionary forces suppressed dissent and consolidated brutally racist regimes in South Africa and Rhodesia. Closest to Canada, scenes from the African American civil rights movement were regularly featured on the front pages of newspapers. That newest form of mass technology, the television, facilitated the swift dissemination of images from distant places into Canadian homes. These widely covered stories together provided a dramatic backdrop against which activists pressed for change in Canada. As Magda Fahrni and Robert Rutherford emphasize, social activism “like other key aspects of the period, remind[s] us of the extent to which postwar Canada was integrated into and attuned to what was happening elsewhere in the Western world.”⁹

The focus here is on linkages between Canada’s emerging framework for human rights protections and the African American civil rights movement. In its most basic sense, the civil rights movement in the United States was an interconnected series of African American led organizing efforts in the 1950s and 1960s to end legalized segregation and widespread restrictions to democratic participation. These efforts often, though not exclusively, involved non-violent direct action protest techniques as a means of highlighting systemic injustices and pressuring for change. More broadly, the

⁸ Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

⁹ Magda Fahrni and Robert Rutherford, “Introduction,” in *Creating Postwar Canada: Community, Diversity, and Dissent, 1946-75* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008): 5.

movement challenged white supremacy in its varied forms. The goal was to make America's promise of equality and democratic citizenship the reality for all its citizens.

Recent works challenge the civil rights movement's periodization in the 1950s and 1960s, and numerous scholars have emphasized its fluid nature, diverse impulses, ideas, and tactics, and varied goals and visions.¹⁰ While these historiographical developments are important, Canadian interactions with the deeply complex movement were largely shaped by mainstream media coverage stemming from the United States. This media attention focused primarily on a relatively narrow set of organizations, individuals, and events. As a result, the American movement's most famous events receive substantial attention here, even as much of the current scholarship has shifted the focus away from the "Brown to Selma" narrative.¹¹ Discussions of the most traditionally famous events of the movement reflect the notably strong transnational connectivities stemming from its most widely covered and familiar flashpoints. These events may not have had the most sustained impact on the changing landscape of racism and rights protections within the United States itself, but their prominence in the media lent them distinct transnational importance.

¹⁰ See for example Peter Ling, "SNCCs: Not One Committee, but Several," in *From Sit-ins to SNCC: The Student Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s*, eds. Iwan Morgan and Philip Davies (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2012); Timothy Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008).

¹¹ The "Brown to Selma" narrative characterizes the civil rights movement as ranging from the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court ruling against school segregation in 1954 to the Selma, Alabama voting rights campaign in 1965. Recent scholarship challenges this story as too limited, both in terms of its temporal framework and its focus on limited events and figures. See for example Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (March 2005): 1245; Charles Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

This dissertation argues that the global backdrop of prominent anti-racist movements was integral to the emergence and escalation of human rights activism, discourse, and public policy in Canada during the 1950s and 1960s. The focus here is on Canadian interactions with the African American civil rights movement. Widespread Canadian awareness of the movement in the United States, and cross-border linkages between Canadian and American rights activists, played key roles in the increasing prominence of Canadian human rights advocacy and the associated development of new human rights protections. While Canadian anti-discrimination activists developed distinctive local campaigns, they also found meaning and relevance in global movements. They paid particularly close attention to the American civil rights movement, in numerous instances offering its key organizations tangible support. When relevant, some Canadians referenced or adapted advocacy techniques and resources from south of the border to enhance local efforts. Most significantly, Canadian rights activists leveraged widely publicized and embarrassing examples of racism in the United States to build support for their efforts. Through local organizing, reinforced with transnational links and references, they achieved notable success in pressuring Canadians to accept new anti-discrimination measures.

While it helped generate pressure for some changes, this dissertation contends, the American example simultaneously acted as a restraining force against more fundamental transformations in conceptualizations of human rights in Canada. Many Canadians observed the American civil rights movement from a sanctimonious perspective, denying that international examples carried applicability for their own country. State officials

deemed relatively small changes to anti-discrimination laws acceptable, but generally considered more profound change unnecessary. Whether acting as a pressure for strengthened human rights protections, or a restraining force against the advent of more fundamental measures, this dissertation contends that Canadian human rights activism, discourse, and policy in the 1950s and 1960s can only be fully understood when intersections between local, national, and global contexts are considered.

Chapter 1 focuses on connections between African Canadian anti-discrimination organizing in Ontario and Nova Scotia and the American civil rights movement. It demonstrates the centrality of localized African Canadian advocacy, strengthened through diverse transnational links, to the arrival of new human rights protections. Chapter 2 considers the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the most important student organization of the civil rights movement, and its significance on Canadian campuses through Friends of SNCC support groups. Canadian Friends of SNCC groups were remarkably successful at supporting the American civil rights movement while concurrently creating transnational meaning for the movement in Canada. As Chapters 1 and 2 show, transnational influence traversed the border in both directions. The American movement benefited from Canadian activist efforts and the resultant flow of financial contributions, media attention, morale boosts, and direct activist work. Canadian rights activists, meanwhile, ensured the American movement held relevance for Canadians. In some cases they highlighted the similar experiences of racialized minorities in the two countries in an effort to embarrass Canadians into action. Other times, they warned of the worrisome path Canada too might be on, should measures not be implemented to firmly

distinguish their country from the disturbingly explicit racism south of the border.

Through these varied tactics, Canadian rights activists ensured that Canada was very much part of a global period of heightened anti-racist action.

Chapter 3 investigates public opinion in Canada towards the civil rights movement. It posits that the American movement was a particularly effective reference point for Canadian activists because the general public was keenly aware of its key actors, events, and issues. The movement received heavy and frequently sympathetic media exposure in Canada, which in turn helped create a favourable climate for Canadian activists to advance their demands. Chapter 4 considers the impact of Canadian rights activism on human rights public policy in Canada. Politicians in Ontario and Nova Scotia contemplating changes to domestic policy were highly attuned to shifts in public opinion towards explicit racism and the state's role in protecting human rights. They understood what activists meant when they warned that Canada did not want its own "Little Rock" or "Birmingham."¹² As a result, Canadian rights activists achieved notable successes in moving public policy toward stronger anti-discrimination protections. Their achievements included full-time human rights commissions and commissioners and new laws to outlaw discrimination on the basis of "race" in various realms of public life. These shifts in law and policy mirrored broader changes in public discourse, as outright racism became less

¹² "Little Rock" refers to a 1957 school integration crisis in Arkansas, when African American teenagers were assaulted and blocked from integrating the local high school in compliance with the Supreme Court's ruling that school segregation was unconstitutional. "Birmingham" refers to a 1963 movement to integrate businesses and services in the Alabama city. While utilizing nonviolent tactics like sit-ins, pickets, boycotts, and marches, protestors were violently suppressed by local authorities. The national and international press covered both stories intensively. See Richard Lentz and Karla K. Gower, *The Opinions of Mankind: Racial Issues, Press, and Propaganda in the Cold War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2010), 101, 158-9.

acceptable and a commitment to the principle of egalitarianism grew more widespread. Ruth Frager and Carmela Patrias describe the “discovery” of discrimination in Canada in the postwar period, noting “[t]his discovery of prejudice and discrimination, and the steps taken to safeguard human rights, were remarkable in a country where discriminatory practices remained largely unchallenged until the war.”¹³ The effective leveraging of contemporaneous international events played a significant role in Canada’s transition from a country where discrimination based on constructions of “race” was rarely questioned by the majority population, to one where it is no longer an accepted open practice.

The period from the end of World War II through the 1960s was undoubtedly a transformative period in Canadian attitudes and human rights policy. Nevertheless, Chapters 3 and 4 also argue that notable limitations impinged the scope and impact of these new human rights measures. New anti-discrimination laws addressed the most obvious manifestations of discrimination, such as businesses that explicitly excluded prospective patrons by “race.” But even with the arrival of new laws and human rights commissions, the onus remained on those subjected to prejudice to press for enforcement.¹⁴ Over the years, human rights commissions have faced staffing and financial constraints.¹⁵ While they addressed racism in its more visible forms, moreover, these policy developments did little to tackle its systemic but less obvious manifestations,

¹³ Frager and Patrias, “This is Our Country, These are Our Rights,” 1.

¹⁴ Kallen, *Ethnicity and Human Rights in Canada*, 211.

¹⁵ Jennifer Tunnicliffe, “Life Together’: Public Debates over Human Rights Legislation in Ontario, 1975-1981,” *Histoire sociale/Social History* 46, no. 92 (November 2013): 467; R. Brian Howe, “The Evolution of Human Rights Policy in Ontario,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 24, no. 4 (December 1991): 800.

including persistent economic inequalities.¹⁶ Ta-Nehisi Coates' recent discussion of racism in its variable forms is instructive. The fight against blatant racism, Coates argues, has proven more straightforward than the fight against what he terms "elegant racism." "Elegant racism," according to Coates, is "invisible, supple, and enduring." Coates cites discrimination in housing as an example of "elegant racism," and employment discrimination fits this category as well. As Coates puts it, "housing discrimination is as quiet as it is deadly. It can be pursued through violence and terrorism, but it doesn't need it. Housing discrimination is hard to detect, hard to prove, and hard to prosecute."¹⁷ This type of racialized inequality in Canada, as in the United States, has persevered alongside the advent of new laws and commissions. As Evelyn Kallen explains with reference to the arrival of anti-discrimination measures, "while discrimination has lost its public respectability, it has definitely not disappeared in Canada. What has happened is that blatant racism has gone 'into the closet', where it has transformed into its more subtle, 'polite' counterpart..."¹⁸

Perhaps the most significant conceptual limitation pressing against stronger human rights protections in Canada is what I call the "sanctimonious imagination," a term inspired by American historian Alice Kessler-Harris's influential concept of the "gendered imagination." As Kessler-Harris explains, the "gendered imagination" was

¹⁶ Dominique Clément, *Canada's Rights Revolution: Social Movements and Social Change, 1937-82* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008), 12; Agnes Calliste, "The Struggle for Employment Equity by Blacks on American and Canadian Railroads," *Journal of Black Studies* 25, no. 3 (January 1995): 303.

¹⁷ Ta-Nehisi Coates, "This Town Needs a Better Class of Racist," *The Atlantic*, 1 May 2014, accessed May 2014, <<http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/05/This-Town-Needs-A-Better-Class-Of-Racist/361443/>>

¹⁸ Kallen, *Ethnicity and Human Rights in Canada*, 214.

grounded in the prevalence of “gendered habits of mind” which “framed discussions of what was possible and shaped the boundaries of the politically plausible.”¹⁹ On a practical level, this imagined version of American society dictated that in the early twentieth century, only men were conceptualized as breadwinners. This was true even though this idealized image did not reflect the lived economic experiences of many Americans.²⁰ Similarly, the “sanctimonious imagination” is a lens through which many Canadians have viewed, and continue to view, their country as uniquely tolerant and free of racism. It is “imagined” because, as numerous scholars have shown, Canada has a long history of systemic racism.²¹ Though imagined, the enduring belief that Canada is distinctly tolerant and accepting had tangible impacts on rights activists in the period under discussion. To use Kessler-Harris’s terms, it “shaped the boundaries of the politically plausible.”²² In order for attitudes, laws, and policies to change, the burden rested with racialized minorities and their allies to prove there was a problem with the status quo in Canada.

¹⁹ Alice Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men, and the Quest for Economic Citizenship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 5-6.

²⁰ Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity*, 4.

²¹ See for example Frager and Patrias, “‘This is Our Country, These Are Our Rights’”; Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest*; Constance Backhouse, *Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); Karen Flynn, *Moving Beyond Borders: A History of Black Canadian and Caribbean Women in the Diaspora* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011); Sarah-Jane Mathieu, *North of the Color Line: Migration and Black Resistance in Canada, 1870-1955* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); In their transnational study, Lake and Reynolds place Canada in the late 19th and early 20th century alongside the United States, Australia, and South Africa as countries dedicated to building and maintaining an identity grounded in “whiteness” and the primacy of white men. See Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men’s Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); In a study of the national census in Canada and the United States in the early twentieth-century, Shanahan finds that though differences existed in how the two countries counted “race,” they shared a focused on dividing those they counted according to a “white” and “non-white” delineation. See Brendan A. Shanahan, “Enforcing the Colorline and Counting White Races: Race and the Census in North America, 1900-1914,” *American Review of Canadian Studies* 44, no. 3 (2014): 293-307.

²² Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity*, 5-6.

The sanctimonious imagination has long afforded Canadians a way to define their country against the imposing example of their American neighbours. In her assessment of “anti-Americanism” in Canada, Jennifer MacLennan discusses the longstanding position of the United States as a “foil” to Canada.²³ Anti-American views, she theorizes, “are not really about the mainland [United States] at all but about the articulation and authentication of a unique identity by a culture [Canada] marginalised on the rim of a larger, more aggressive neighbour.”²⁴ As George Elliott Clarke puts it, “[i]n a sense, Canada would not exist were it not for the irresistible boundary that America, quite unwittingly, provides. Canadians were the world’s first anti-Americans...”²⁵ Various scholars have highlighted the tendency to define Canada against historical examples of racism in the United States. James W. St. G. Walker refers to “[t]he North Star myth,” according to which, “only south of the border were blacks subjected to violence, denied their citizenship rights, forced into residential ghettos.”²⁶ “Canada defined itself as emphatically different than the United States,” Scott Rutherford likewise notes, “especially around questions of race.”²⁷ Barrington Walker considers how a “noticeable absence of laws that racially codified white supremacy” has facilitated a tendency to ignore its presence in Canada.²⁸ “Canadians do not believe that they have committed any

²³ Jennifer MacLennan, “Dancing with our Neighbours: English Canadians and the Discourse of ‘Anti-Americanism,’” in *Transnationalism: Canada-United States History into the 21st Century*, eds. Michael D. Behiels and Reginald C. Stuart (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010), 77.

²⁴ MacLennan, “Dancing with our Neighbours,” 72.

²⁵ George Elliott Clarke, “White Like Canada,” *Transition* 73 (1997): 100.

²⁶ James W. St. G. Walker, “Racial Discrimination in Canada: The Black Experience,” in *Canadian Historical Association Booklets* 41 (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1985), 6.

²⁷ Scott Rutherford, “Canada’s Other Red Scare: Rights, Decolonization, and Indigenous Political Protest in the Global Sixties,” Ph.D. Diss.: Queen’s University, 2011, 67.

²⁸ Barrington Walker, “Finding Jim Crow in Canada, 1789-1967,” in *A History of Human Rights in Canada: Essential Issues*, ed. Janet Miron (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press Inc., 2009), 81.

racial sins for which they should atone,” George Elliott Clarke explains. “If anything, they are self-righteous in maintaining their innocence.”²⁹ Constance Backhouse argues Canadians have long considered their country, in stark contrast to the United States, as a “raceless” place without a prominent history of divisions along “‘racial’ lines.”³⁰ “‘We are tolerant of ethnic and cultural diversity’ and ‘we are different from Americans,’” Frager and Patrias note, “are two key attributes habitually and often somewhat smugly invoked in the seemingly perpetual quest to define Canadian national identity.”³¹

Heightened attention to international racism helped unsettle this attitude, as activists exposed gaps between how Canadians *imagined* their country, and the reality of discrimination. While destabilized, however, the sanctimonious imagination proved enduring, particularly because examples of American racism in this era were often unapologetically bold and violent. To apply Coates’ terminology, this was not “elegant racism.”³² Sound bites of brash Southern politicians defending Jim Crow, images of bloodied nonviolent demonstrators, news stories of murdered civil rights workers – for many, these examples served not to raise questions about discrimination in Canada but to more clearly set this country apart.

Racism in Canada differed from its American manifestations in important ways, notably in the lack of explicit and often violently defended Jim Crow laws. These differences did not obviate the real and damaging impacts of discrimination in Canada for

²⁹ Clarke, “White Like Canada,” 102.

³⁰ Backhouse, *Colour-Coded*, 13.

³¹ Ruth A. Frager and Carmela Patrias, “Transnational Links and Citizens’ Rights: Canadian Jewish Human Rights Activists and Their American Allies in the 1940s and 1950s,” in *Taking Liberties: A History of Human Rights in Canada*, eds. David Goutor and Stephen Heathorn (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2013): 139.

³² Coates, “This Town Needs a Better Class of Racist.”

racialized minorities like African Canadians, but in the 1950s and 1960s, public discourse defined racism in limited terms. Racism was Birmingham's Bull Connor or Selma's Jim Clark – public officials who used violence to suppress peaceful protest. It was Alabama Governor George Wallace declaring “segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever!” By such measures, many observers comfortably dismissed racism as a relatively insignificant force in Canada. The mainstream media, general public, and state officials deemed some reform, such as the human rights legislation passed in the 1950s and 1960s, acceptable (though as Chapter 4 shows, even these achievements were only brought about through significant activist effort). Yet they commonly rejected more fundamental analyses of racism as a significant force in Canadian society. The international context of human rights activism had contradictory implications for human rights in Canada. Activists who drew upon its imagery attained some successes in pressuring government officials for change. While important new measures were achieved, American examples concurrently reinforced the sanctimonious imagination in popular conceptualizations of Canada. This was one of the era's enduring contradictions: a global environment of anti-racism helps explain Canada's “rights revolution,” just as it helps to explain its limitations.

Transnational history is an emerging and important field of study. As Vic Satzewich and Lloyd Wong observe, scholars have defined and used the term in diverse ways.³³ Ian Tyrrell's conceptualization of transnationalism is particularly useful to a study

³³ Vic Satzewich and Lloyd Wong, “Introduction: The Meaning and Significance of Transnationalism,” in *Transnational Identities and Practices in Canada*, eds. Vic Satzewich and Lloyd Wong (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006), 2.

of activist connections between Canada and the United States. He emphasizes that transnationalism

does not mean that the nation is unimportant. In many ways, the nation-state has determined who we humans are and what we do ... While [I do] not contest the currently reigning primacy of the nation as a legal and political fact, I do argue that the 'national' must not be assumed.³⁴

Rinaldo Walcott emphasizes that in many ways, African Canadian history is distinct from the experiences of African Americans in the United States.³⁵ Yet he also identifies instances of “cross-border political identification,” emphasizing that “[w]hat is crucially important is that we recognize that discourses of race are not merely nation-bound, but that they also cut across nations. Similarly, those who are oppressed understand their experiences both locally and extra-locally.”³⁶ Indeed, Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds demonstrate how a commitment to white supremacy was consolidated in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as countries that sought exclusive “white” identities, including Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, and the United States, exchanged and drew upon each others’ ideas, writings, and legislative examples when designing their own methods of exclusion. At the same time, this global spread of a white supremacist discourse contributed to transnational connections between racialized and marginalized peoples in their fight against white supremacy.³⁷

Tyrrell discusses two transnational frameworks that are particularly useful in this study. The first is transnational history as “framing contexts”: “[t]he ‘causes’ of a

³⁴ Ian Tyrrell, *Transnational Nation: United States History in Global Perspective Since 1789* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 3.

³⁵ Rinaldo Walcott, *Black Like Who?: Writing Black Canada* (Toronto: Insomniac Press, 2003), 37.

³⁶ Walcott, *Black Like Who?*, 146-147.

³⁷ Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*.

particular event might be not purely local, but instead operate simultaneously on different geographical and temporal scales, namely the local, regional, national, transnational, and global.”³⁸ Eric Foner makes a similar point, arguing that “even histories organized along the lines of the nation-state must be... placed in the context of international interactions.”³⁹ Tyrrell’s second relevant concept is of transnational history as “patterns of exchange,” or “reciprocal processes across boundaries.”⁴⁰ While the main focus here is on American impacts within Canada, exchanges sometimes traversed the border in both directions. International fundraising mattered to American civil rights organizations, and African American newspapers showed interest in anti-discrimination issues north of the border. Though such examples of “exchange” exist, it should come as little surprise that Canadians were more aware of American events than vice versa. Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau’s famous analogy of the neighbouring countries is useful here. Canada’s position next to the United States, Trudeau once told an American audience, was “like sleeping with an elephant... no matter how friendly and even-tempered is the beast, if I may call it that, one is affected by every twitch and grunt.”⁴¹ The unevenness of these interactions does not negate the applicability of a transnational interpretation. As Tyrrell reminds us, “the flow of information and the transnational exchanges that occurred were often unequal, even though they were multilateral and reciprocal.”⁴²

³⁸ Ian Tyrrell, “Reflections on the Transnational Turn in United States History: Theory and Practice,” *Journal of Global History* 4, no. 3 (November 2009): 462-463.

³⁹ Eric Foner, *Who Owns History? Rethinking the Past in a Changing World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2002), 54.

⁴⁰ Tyrrell, “Reflections on the Transnational Turn in United States History,” 464.

⁴¹ “Off to an encouraging start,” *Globe and Mail*, 26 March 1969, 6.

⁴² Tyrrell, “Reflections on the Transnational Turn in United States History,” 464.

Though this work is focused on transnational connectivity, distinctive national experiences remain important. The American example certainly did not *cause* rights activism in Canada. Such a perspective would, to quote Walker, “subordinate Canadian agency in initiating Canadian human rights reforms...”⁴³ Postwar African Canadian activism was built on a precedence of local organizing.⁴⁴ Alongside other international human rights reference points like the UN and UDHR, linkages with African American activism demonstrates how “rights activists were employing any available precedent, moral or legal declarations, or external examples that could support their claims.”⁴⁵ The purpose of a transnational framework here is to underline the myriad ways local circumstances, events, and actors interacted with counterparts elsewhere. It is influenced by Jessica Squires’ work on transnationalism and Vietnam War resisters, which she explains “replaces the common assumption that Canadian social movements merely imitate or are part of American ones with a picture of homegrown autonomous social movements that had mature and complex relationship with sister movements in the United States...”⁴⁶ Formal and informal linkages between activists across the border, and the American example’s dual position as both a help and hindrance to progress in Canadian human rights measures, reveals a similarly complex pattern of exchanges. The balance between local and transnational forces in this study reflects Patricia Clavin’s

⁴³ James W. St. G. Walker, “Decoding the Rights Revolution: Lessons from the Canadian Experience,” in *Taking Liberties: A History of Human Rights in Canada*, eds. David Goutor and Stephen Heathorn (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2013), 37.

⁴⁴ See also J. Walker, “Decoding the Rights Revolution,” 37: “...there is a long pre-war history of attempts to overcome racial disadvantage, and there was nothing sudden or automatic about the reforms that were introduced after 1945.”

⁴⁵ J. Walker, “Decoding the Rights Revolution,” 43.

⁴⁶ Jessica Squires, *Building Sanctuary: The Movement to Support Vietnam War Resisters in Canada, 1965-1973* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2013), 5.

articulation of “one of the central paradoxes of transnational studies: that transnational ties can dissolve some national barriers while simultaneously strengthening or creating others.”⁴⁷

Recent transnational works reimagine the civil rights movement beyond American borders, as a story deeply entwined with issues and events around the world.⁴⁸

Summarizing this shift in the scholarship towards a transnational focus, Wesley C. Hogan asserts “[t]he entire saga of the freedom movement in the United States is perhaps most usefully viewed as part of a worldwide uprising of people after World War II against the globalized culture of white supremacy.”⁴⁹ Scholars have shown particular interest in how the United States’ rhetorical emphasis on liberty and democracy in a Cold War context made domestic racism, and especially white supremacist retaliations against civil rights activists, especially embarrassing and problematic. A desire to defend their country’s reputation abroad led an otherwise unenthusiastic federal government to adopt new civil

⁴⁷ Patricia Clavin, “Defining Transnationalism,” *Contemporary European History* 14, no. 1 (November 2005): 431.

⁴⁸ See for example Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*; Carol Anderson, *Eyes off the Prize: The United Nations and the African American Struggle for Human Rights, 1944-1955* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Thomas Borstlemann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); Gerald Horne, *Black and Red: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Afro-American Response to the Cold War, 1944-1963* (New York: State University of New York, 1986); Robeson Taj P. Frazier, “Sketches of Black Internationalism and Transnationalism,” *Journal of African American History* 96, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 231-235; Susan D. Pennybacker, *From Scottsboro to Munich: Race and Political Culture in 1930s Britain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); Brenda Gayle Plummer, “Peace was the Glue: Europe and African American Freedom,” in *The New Black History: Revisiting the Second Reconstruction*, eds. Manning Marable and Elizabeth Kai Hinton (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011); Fanon Che Wilkins, “The Making of Black Internationalists: SNCC and Africa Before the Launching of Black Power, 1960-1965,” *The Journal of African American History* 92, no. 4 (Fall 2007): 468-491; Julia Erin Wood, “Freedom is Indivisible: The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Cold War Politics, and International Liberation Movements,” Ph.D. Diss., Yale University: 2011.

⁴⁹ Wesley C. Hogan, *Many Minds, One Heart: SNCC's Dream for a New America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009): 10.

rights measures.⁵⁰ While important contributions to civil rights movement historiography, many examinations of international connections have focused on foreign policy and elite actors at the state level. As Robyn Spencer observes,

[t]he historiography of black internationalism during the Cold War centers largely on presidential politics, State Department policies, international diplomacy, and the activities of leading black intellectuals and middle-class civil rights organizations. Few scholars have taken to heart Mary Dudziak's observation that 'an international frame need not eclipse a focus on the grassroots.'⁵¹

Rather than focussing on state level foreign policy links, the emphasis here is on small scale, local human rights organizing efforts in Canada, and the connectivities rights activists established across borders. In this sense, the movement's transnationalism stemmed from the decision of activists, though focused on specific issues within their own country, to look beyond its borders for inspiration and tangible support.

Canadian human rights history is an emerging discipline, which Janet Miron calls a "vibrant and growing field of academic scholarship."⁵² Though several works in the field briefly mention the international context as an influence on human rights in Canada, few investigate international connectivities as their primary focus.⁵³ Most of the

⁵⁰ Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*; Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*.

⁵¹ Robyn Spencer, "Merely One Link in the Worldwide Revolution: Internationalism, State Repression, and the Black Panther Party, 1966-1972," in *From Toussaint to Tupac: The Black International Since the Age of Revolution*, eds. Michael O. West, William G. Martin, Fanon Che Wilkins (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 217.

⁵² Janet Miron, "Introduction," in *A History of Human Rights in Canada: Essential Issues*, ed. Janet Miron (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc., 2009), 3.

⁵³ Works that focus in detail on international linkages and perspectives include Mathieu, *North of the Color Line*; Robert Vipond, "The Civil Rights Movement Comes to Winnipeg: American Influence on 'Rights Talk' in Canada, 1968-71," in *Constitutional Politics in Canada and the United States*, ed. Stephen L. Newman (Albany: State University of New York, 2004): 89-107; Jennifer Tunnicliffe, "A Limited Vision: Canadian Participation in the Adoption of the International Covenants," in *Taking Liberties: A History of Human Rights in Canada*, eds. David Goutor and Stephen Heathorn (Toronto: Oxford University Press,

scholarship on Canadian human rights history focuses primarily on domestic stories and objectives, such as fights against discrimination in particular locales or the roles of key organizations in these efforts.⁵⁴ As Goutor and Heathorn observe, “there is little awareness of how Canada’s experience fits into the international development of human rights discourse.”⁵⁵ Simon Wendt likewise asserts, with a specific focus on Canada and the United States, “transnational approaches can bring fresh perspectives to the emergence of racial ideologies and the attempts of minorities to combat the practices that resulted from such ideas.”⁵⁶

While this study contributes to scholarship on the African American civil rights movement, Canadian human rights history, and transnational perspectives on Canadian and American histories, its scope is nonetheless limited in important ways. One such parameter is this work’s emphasis on Canadian-American linkages, while paying less attention to other global anti-racist movements. The importance of human rights concerns in other parts of the world, including anti-Apartheid in South Africa and decolonization in

2013): 166-189; Frager and Patrias, “Transnational Links and Citizens’ Rights, 139-165; Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest*.

⁵⁴ See for example Miron, “Introduction,” 6; Lambertson, “Suppression and Subversion: Libertarian and Egalitarian Rights up to 1960,” in *A History of Human Rights in Canada: Essential Issues*, ed. Janet Miron (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press Inc., 2009), 31; Howe, “The Evolution of Human Rights Policy in Ontario,” 788; Dominique Clément, “‘Rights Without the Sword are but Mere Words’: The Limits of Canada’s Rights Revolution,” in *A History of Human Rights in Canada*, ed. Janet Miron (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press, 2009), 48; Clément, *Canada’s Rights Revolution*; Christopher MacLennan, *Toward the Charter: Canadians and the Demand for a National Bill of Rights, 1929-1960* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003); Ross Lambertson, “‘The Dresden Story’: Racism, Human Rights, and the Jewish Labour Committee of Canada,” *Labour/Le Travail* 47 (Spring 2001); Ross Lambertson, “The Black, Brown, White and Red Blues: The Beating of Clarence Clemons,” *Canadian Historical Review* 85, no. 4 (December 2004): 1-12.

⁵⁵ Goutor and Heathorn, “Introduction,” 2.

⁵⁶ Simon Wendt, “Transnational Perspectives on the History of Racism in North America,” *Amerikastudien/American Studies* 54, no. 3 (2009): 482.

Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean, receive some attention, but are not discussed in depth.⁵⁷

While other transnational intersections were also of undoubted importance, a more specific focus on links across the 49th parallel permits a level of detail that would be difficult in a geographically wider study.⁵⁸ The close proximity of Canada to the United States also meant that Canadians were particularly attuned to American events.

Specific attention to exchanges across the Canada-United States border also contributes to a growing body of work centred specifically on North American transnationalism, which pushes our understanding of relations between the two countries beyond the traditional lens of state-level foreign policy connectivities. Michael D. Behiels and Reginald C. Stuart's recent volume on transnationalism across the 49th parallel reminds us that the border has had varying levels of importance, depending on the type of interaction under consideration. "Scholars used to treat the border as a concrete line between two sovereign countries," Behiels and Stuart note. "They now understand that, although the border has separated the countries and their policies, it has had far less impact on cultural values, ideas, ways of life, human relationships, and even perspectives on international affairs."⁵⁹

Within Canada, this study focuses primarily on human rights activism and policy responses in Ontario and Nova Scotia. This is a conscious decision to highlight the two

⁵⁷ For more on these topics, see Robin Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History*, 2nd edition (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1997), 445-448.

⁵⁸ For example, Adrienne Shadd highlights the role Caribbean decolonization movements played in advocacy for the liberalization of Canada's immigration laws. See Adrienne Shadd, *The Journey from Tollgate to Parkway: African Canadians in Hamilton* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2010), chapter 8, e-book edition.

⁵⁹ Michael D. Behiels and Reginald C. Stuart, "Introduction: Forging a New American Continent; Transnational Theories and Studies," in *Transnationalism: Canada-United States History into the 21st Century*, eds. Michael D. Behiels and Reginald C. Stuart (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), 3.

provinces with the largest African Canadian populations in Canada. It was in Ontario and Nova Scotia where African Canadian activists made particularly notable contributions to broader anti-discrimination efforts. Indeed, African Canadian led activism was central to the rise of new human rights protections in this period. Similar experiences with racism on both sides of the border also lent notable transnational relevance to the African American movement for civil rights. More broadly, African Canadian history remains an under-examined topic in both historical scholarship and public representations of Canadian history.⁶⁰ The detailed consideration of the Friends of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (Friends of SNCC) also conforms to this geographical focus. An organization active on university campuses across Canada, SNCC was most prominent and influential in Ontario, especially at the University of Toronto.

It is possible, moreover, to link human rights activism in Ontario and Nova Scotia, and state level reactions to it, with broader themes in Canadian history. Even when African Canadian anti-discrimination activists focused on local or provincial issues, they regularly appealed to “Canadians,” and “Canada” as a whole. Moreover, many of their undertakings were locally focused but addressed underlying forms of discrimination that recurred across the country, and that other racialized minorities also encountered.⁶¹ As a result of these connections, select examples of related issues and efforts in provinces beyond Ontario and Nova Scotia receive some attention. Most importantly, the discussion

⁶⁰ Peggy Bristow, Dionne Brand, Linda Carty, Afua P. Cooper, Sylvia Hamilton, Adrienne Shadd, “Introduction,” in *“We’re Rooted Here and They Can’t Pull Us Up”*: *Essays in African Canadian Women’s History*, ed. Peggy Bristow (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 3.

⁶¹ Ross Lambertson, “The Black, Brown, White and Red Blues,” 1-12; James W. St. G. Walker, ‘Race,’ *Rights and the Law in the Supreme Court of Canada: Historical Case Studies* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1997); Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest*.

of the sanctimonious imagination applies to conceptualizations of nationalism across Canada as a whole.

The decision to focus on African Canadian and student activists with notably strong links to American rights activism necessarily means other significant manifestations of systemic racism, and other actors in Canadian anti-racist efforts, garner less attention. There is a more limited discussion, for example, of widespread and institutionalized racism against Indigenous peoples in Canada, as well as transnational Indigenous movements that developed in response in this period. Some attention is devoted to discussions in the press about perceived parallels between African American civil rights issues and Indigenous peoples in Canada. But the comparative lack of attention to political organizing and transnational *activism* among Indigenous peoples reflects Scott Rutherford's recent consideration of this topic in greater detail. With specific reference to Indigenous protest in Kenora, Ontario, Rutherford argues that Indigenous peoples were highly attuned to global anti-racist efforts.⁶² While the civil rights movement offered one reference point, Rutherford emphasizes that transnational Indigenous activism in Canada was often more connected with and influenced by ideas and examples stemming from anti-colonialism.⁶³

A similar point accounts for a relatively limited consideration of intersections across language rights, nationalism in Quebec, and transnationalism. Chapter 2's

⁶² Rutherford, "Canada's Other Red Scare," 21-22.

⁶³ Rutherford, "Canada's Other Red Scare," 26, 62, 63, 107-108; Bradley G. Shreve similarly notes that in the United States, "[t]he young women and men in the NIYC [National Indian Youth Council] could easily identify with the anti-imperialism of the peace advocates and the separatism of the Black Power movement. Indeed, sovereignty and self-determination stood as ideological pillars among Native student activists." See Bradley G. Shreve, *Red Power Rising: The National Indian Youth Council and the Origins of Native Activism* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011), chapter 8, e-book edition.

discussion of the Friends of SNCC, a group that was active in Quebec, offers an entry-point for considering the American civil rights movement's influences on language rights and Quebec nationalism. While this chapter reveals certain connections and influences, a greater portion of the study considers transnational activism and rights discourse in English Canada. This decision stems from Sean Mills' convincing assertion that anti-colonialism was the most important global factor tied to debates around language rights and nationalism in Quebec. This influence resulted from the increasingly common conceptualization among Quebec nationalists of their province's position in relation to Canada as akin to that of a colony.⁶⁴

Rights activists succeeded in impacting Canadian public policy in this period in part because they succeeded in swaying public opinion. Widespread and frequently sympathetic coverage of the American civil rights movement helped create a more favourable environment in which to push for stronger anti-discrimination measures. Examining large Canadian newspapers, such as the *Globe and Mail*, *Toronto Star*, *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, and *Winnipeg Free Press*, helps reveal these shifts in public opinion towards human rights in the 1950s and 1960s. It is challenging, of course, for historians to measure "public opinion." A historian reading an archived newspaper has few ways of deducing what its readers thought of the content at the time of publication. Only a sampling of reader responses is available in printed letters to the editor. Due to Canada's geographically expansive and regionally diverse nature, moreover, infinite variations in coverage and opinion exist across diverse newspapers.

⁶⁴ Sean Mills, *The Empire Within: Postcolonial Thought and Political Activism in Sixties Montreal* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2010).

In spite of these challenges, media sources offer a useful window into the zeitgeist of a particular historical moment.⁶⁵ Newspapers have long acted as mirrors and shapers of broader perspectives and ideas. They formed a notably influential part of Canadian public discourse in the 1950s and 1960s, a time when a substantial proportion of the population received its news, at least in part, from the pages of newspapers. As Jerry W. Knudson argues, “newspapers and other forms of communication strike responsive chords in the public; otherwise, they could not exist economically. To a certain extent, then, newspapers are also gauges of public opinion.”⁶⁶ While it is limiting to rely primarily on newspapers published in larger metropolitan areas, these newspapers offered the most detailed discussions of international events. Their comprehensive coverage of issues like the American civil rights movement was especially influential because of their wide readerships. The newspapers discussed herein do not cover all the possible regional variations in coverage across Canada, but they provide a useful window into the widespread nature of civil rights movement coverage in Canada.

Certain terms and concepts appear throughout this work. The term “rights activists” refers to the men and women who promoted legislative protections from discrimination based on “race” through formal organizations and campaigns. A small number of the individuals leading this fight in Canada worked directly for labour unions or organizations committed to fighting discrimination. More commonly, they were

⁶⁵ See José Igartua’s use of newspaper coverage to illustrate a shift in Canadian national identity away from a primary identification with Britain towards civic nationalism. José E. Igartua, *The Other Quiet Revolution: National Identities in English Canada, 1945-1971* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006).

⁶⁶ Jerry W. Knudson, “Late to the Feast: Newspapers as Historical Sources,” *Perspectives Online* 31, no. 7 (October 1993).

employed in other fields while allotting whatever spare time they could to the work of exposing and opposing racist practices in their local communities and across the country. Organized efforts that receive attention include African Canadian newspapers like Toronto's *Canadian Negro* and Nova Scotia's *The Clarion*, as well as groups such as the Nova Scotia Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NSAACP), the Canadian Negro Women's Association (CNWA) based out of Toronto, and Southwestern Ontario's South Essex Citizen's Advancement Association (SECAA), Guardian Club, and National Unity Association. The majority of these organizations focused primarily on Canadian issues, while maintaining mainly informal interests in American efforts. The Friends of SNCC and Martin Luther King Fund, by contrast, focused initially on fundraising for the American civil rights movement. This concern in turn led them to cast more attention to related matters in Canada.

The efforts of Canadian rights activists did not constitute a nationally recognizable and coordinated movement in the manner of the American civil rights movement. Yet their work compiling evidence and challenging discrimination at the local level, combined with strategic references to international concerns, succeeded in attracting the attention of government officials. The individuals and organizations discussed here were by no means a cohesive group with singular perspectives, and important ideological differences often divided them. They are considered together in the context of cooperative lobbying campaigns and protests focused on broadly shared goals like stronger fair accommodations measures and challenging widespread ideas about fundamental "racial"

inequalities.⁶⁷ The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters' (BSCP) anti-discrimination efforts and the Negro Citizenship Association's (NCA) focus on immigration reform stand out as examples of organizations with a more explicitly national (and transnational) scope.⁶⁸ While many of the activist efforts discussed herein concentrated on local issues, they also aspired to, and in many instances achieved, wider relevance. They formed part of a broader pattern of similar efforts across the country, which in turn attained heightened attention from the national media. In numerous instances, they were linked through cooperation with like-minded organizations fighting racist and religious discrimination, such as the Jewish Labour Committee (JLC), as well as the Joint Public Relations Committee (JPRC) of the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC) and B'nai B'rith.⁶⁹ An important commonality across such efforts was their interest in and links with relevant international efforts.

The terms "civil rights" and "human rights" are used interchangeably, just as many of the activists discussed herein used the terms themselves. Scholars are divided over the historical origins of "human rights," and relatedly, over when "human rights" came into being as a prominent concept and the rallying point for a widespread movement. Lynn Hunt locates the roots of modern human rights in the late 18th century Enlightenment, and especially in the French Revolution's *Declaration of the Rights of*

⁶⁷ Examples of joint efforts include the Toronto protests against Alabama Governor George Wallace, the Martin Luther King Fund, lobbying of Ontario Premier Leslie Frost for a stronger *Fair Accommodations Practices Act*, and opposition to Arthur Odland's appointment as Halifax City Manger, all discussed in Chapter 1.

⁶⁸ Mathieu, *North of the Color Line*, 184, 213.

⁶⁹ The JLC, for example, had links with anti-racist organizing in British Columbia, see Ross Lambertson, "The Black, Brown, White and Red Blues," and in Nova Scotia, see James W. St. G. Walker, "Black Confrontation in Sixties Halifax," in *Debating Dissent: Canada and the Sixties*, eds. Lara Campbell, Dominique Clément, and Gregory S. Kealey (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 178.

Man and of the Citizen. The concept of universal human rights, Hunt asserts, emerged gradually from that period onward. It encountered setbacks, but was consolidated following World War II with the founding of the UN and the arrival of its UDHR.⁷⁰ Samuel Moyn disputes this interpretation, arguing instead that human rights as a universal aim and global movement “exploded on the world stage” as late as the 1970s.⁷¹ It was only quite recently that rights were widely believed to transcend national sovereignty and thus conceived of as truly “human,” rather than national, in scope. Prior to this, rights were granted or taken away by individual nation states; as Moyn puts it, “rights have long existed, but they were from the beginning part of the authority of the state, not invoked to transcend it.”⁷² With the decline of vying ideologies, including communism and anti-colonialism, Moyn argues that space opened up for the acceptance of human rights as a universal concept. Non-governmental organizations embraced and defended a universalist perspective and vision for human rights during the 1970s, a decade when “human rights would begin to be invoked across the developed world and by many more ordinary people than ever before.”⁷³

Moyn’s argument is compelling if “human rights” are defined narrowly as requiring an appeal to supranational bodies, but it is less applicable when human rights are considered through a grassroots perspective. As Walker reminds us, while “[t]he distinction is important theoretically... on the ground the language could shift in both

⁷⁰ Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2007).

⁷¹ Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 106.

⁷² Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History*, 7.

⁷³ Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History*, 4.

directions.”⁷⁴ “The language of human rights is fluid,” Kenneth Cmiel has likewise noted. “The term has meant widely different things at different points in time.”⁷⁵ Canadian anti-discrimination activists in the postwar period employed the language of both civil and human rights, often interchangeably.⁷⁶ The use of these terms underlines the importance of a transnational perspective, as activists within Canada tied their efforts to the language of “human rights” that became more widespread with the founding of the UN and UDHR, as well as the language of “civil rights” prominently applied at the time in the American movement. I follow the discursive lead of the individuals and organizations at its centre. Fundamentally, the activists and organizations under consideration applied an understanding of “human rights” similar to Walker’s recent definition: “[h]uman rights, however else they might be defined, are entitlements eligible to be claimed by everyone; they are inclusive. Rights discourse enables an individual to make a claim as a rights-bearer...”⁷⁷

The focus of the rights activists in Ontario and Nova Scotia may at times appear narrow, particularly when their goals were specific, sometimes seemingly minor changes to “civil rights protections” for individuals like anti-discrimination legislation. Yet their

⁷⁴ J. Walker, “Decoding the Rights Revolution,” 50; Marie-Bénédicte Dembour’s discussion of the “protest school” as one of four key human rights schools is also useful here. According to Dembour, scholars in the protest school, “accept that the ultimate source of human rights lies on a transcendental plane, but most of them are more concerned with the concrete source of human rights in social struggles, which are as necessary as they are perennial.” See Marie-Bénédicte Dembour, “What Are Human Rights? Four Schools of Thought,” *Human Rights Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (February 2010): 3.

⁷⁵ Kenneth Cmiel, “The Recent History of Human Rights,” *American Historical Review* 109, no. 1 (February 2004): 125.

⁷⁶ See for example “CCL-TLC Meets Condemn Racial Discrimination,” *Canadian Negro* 2, no. 5 (November 1954). The front page features side-by-side pictures of Lyle Talbot, an African Canadian man who was denied service, and the person who denied him service in a Dresden, Ontario restaurant. The caption read “This HUMAN was denied his Human Rights by.... this HUMAN who got away with it.”

⁷⁷ J. Walker, “Decoding the Rights Revolution,” 49.

efforts were nonetheless grounded in a more expansive vision of “human rights.”

Through legislated anti-discrimination mechanisms, they sought equal access to the interactions, services, jobs, processes, education, activities, and opportunities that white Canadians could generally take for granted. Underlying their action was the goal of participating in the daily rituals of Canadian citizenship without the constant possibility that at every turn, whether entering a store, buying a movie ticket, finding lodgings, going on vacation, or seeking a job, discrimination might await. Fundamentally, they sought a more inclusive experience of their country, one more in keeping with its image as a tolerant place, but too often out of sync with daily realities. They tackled racism on a case-by-case basis, but they were motivated by a more ambitious vision for their country.

The transnational nature of these efforts made the term “human rights” particularly relevant and applicable. The activists discussed herein sought change within various levels of the Canadian state, not through appeals to international bodies. Yet there was a simultaneous belief that their actions, taken in a given locale against racism, formed part of global efforts against racism. This belief was sometimes manifested through concrete and institutional linkages. Most often, transnational connections were informal. They took various forms, whether financial contributions, speaking invitations, correspondence with counterparts, or tactics that spoke to local and international issues. Sometimes ties between local, national, and global actors and actions were as simple as a well-placed reference to a familiar incident elsewhere in the world. Whatever their form, there was a sense among Canadian human rights activists that racism was a worldwide phenomenon, that it was persistent in Canada and needed to be fought in locally relevant

ways, and that such challenges on home soil were simultaneously tied to concurrent efforts south of the border, and around the world. The importance of transnational forces within Canada in this period was so profound, this dissertation proposes, that we cannot understand both the significant growth of human rights protections and discourse in Canada, nor the forces pushing back against those same expansions, without an eye to the global context of which they were very much a part.

CHAPTER 1:
African Canadian Anti-Discrimination Activism,
Transnationalism, and the American Civil Rights Movement

In his autobiography, Malcolm X challenged the notion that vehement and institutionalized racism in the United States was a distinctly southern phenomenon. “As far as I am concerned,” he explained, “Mississippi is anywhere south of the Canadian border.”¹ With typical eloquence, Malcolm X indicted American racism as a national, not regional, problem. Though clearly not his central point, meanwhile, the juxtaposition of Canada with the national scope of racism in the United States also reflected the widely held notion that Canada was entirely distinct from the United States in terms of the prevalence and significance of racism.² Though discrimination in Canada has certainly looked different from its manifestations south of the border, however, discriminatory treatment of racialized minorities has played an integral role in Canadian history too. This chapter highlights the deep commitment of African Canadian anti-discrimination activists in the 1950s and 1960s to expose and fight the varied forms of racism they encountered in their day-to-day lives in Canada.

From the first slaves who were forcibly brought to Canada in bondage, African Canadians have resisted oppression.³ In this sense, the period of heightened rights

¹ Malcolm X and Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Ballantine Book, 1965), 276.

² It is important to note that with this phrase, Malcolm X intended to emphasize that racism in the United States was a *national* problem, rather than to comment on the situation in Canada *per se*. Malcolm X was likely quite attuned to the extent of racism in Canada. His parents had both lived and met each other in Montreal, where they were involved in Marcus Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association. See Manning Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* (New York: Viking, 2011), 16.

³ See for example Afua Cooper, *The Hanging of Angelique: The Untold Story of Canadian Slavery and the Burning of Old Montreal* (Toronto: HarperCollins Publishers Ltd., 2006) and Adrienne Shadd, *The Journey from Tollgate to Parkway: African Canadians in Hamilton* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2010), e-book edition.

activism following World War II continued a much longer history of struggle. But the postwar years were also different. The African American civil rights movement attracted extensive media coverage in Canada, as it did the world over. Other international events, including South African Apartheid and decolonization in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean, drew global attention. Many African Canadians, already engaged in anti-discrimination activism in Canada, seized upon this heightened international interest and press attention to matters of rights and prejudice. Prominent instances of international activism created a backdrop against which African Canadians could more effectively demand change in their own country. Recognizing its relevance to their efforts, some African Canadian activists lent the American civil rights movement support. They also expanded the transnational nature of global anti-racist activism by adapting and applying relevant language and tactics from elsewhere in their organizing. The growing sense that racism was a problem wherever it occurred extended the reach of activism in both directions across the 49th parallel.

A study of African Canadian connections with the civil rights movement in the United States provides a new perspective on several key aspects of historical scholarship. It builds on the long neglected but recently growing field of African Canadian history, and argues that African Canadian activists made vital contributions to a broader rights movement in Canada. This chapter also contributes to the broader study of Canadian history. It challenges the notion, which continues to retain a hold on popular perspectives, that Canada was a generally tolerant country where prejudicial attitudes and

discriminatory outcomes did not have significant impacts.⁴ It also undermines the idea that a quiescent decade preceded the raucous sixties, by situating the 1950s in Canada within a framework of bold and global anti-racist activism. Finally, this chapter adds a new dimension to American civil rights movement historiography. It highlights the importance of grassroots international support, whether moral, financial, or through publicity, to the movement. The civil rights movement was a truly transnational phenomenon whose activists, tactics, goals, and significance traversed national borders.

Historical Context: Prejudice and Discrimination in Twentieth-Century Canada

African Canadian rights activism did not, of course, develop as a result of the American civil rights movement. It would be a disservice to the long history of African Canadian struggle, which emerged in uniquely Canadian circumstances and through the work of local activists, to suggest such a trajectory. Nonetheless, American historical scholarship provides a useful framework for understanding the continuities across these earlier efforts and postwar Canadian activism. Studies of the civil rights movement have set aside the straightforward narrative arc that begins with the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court ruling against school segregation in 1954 and culminates with passage of the 1965 *Voting Rights Act*. Replacing this “Brown to Selma” story is the

⁴ Several recent works have challenged this assumption. See for example Ruth Frager and Carmela Patrias, “‘This is Our Country, These Are Our Rights,’” *Canadian Historical Review* 82, no. 1 (March 2001): 1-19; Stephanie Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest: Defending Citizens of Japanese Ancestry in North America, 1942-49* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008); Constance Backhouse, *Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); Karen Flynn, *Moving Beyond Borders: A History of Black Canadian and Caribbean Women in the Diaspora* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011); Sarah-Jane Mathieu, *North of the Color Line: Race and the Making of Transnational Black Radicalism in Canada, 1870-1950* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

concept of a “long civil rights movement,” which locates the origins of postwar activism in earlier decades. Angela Jones highlights the Niagara Movement’s role in the early twentieth century, paving the way for the NAACP in later decades.⁵ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall looks to the 1930s and 1940s, and highlights the role of “civil rights unionism” in fighting race and class oppression.⁶ Erik S. Gellman picks up on this theme with his examination of the National Negro Congress prior to World War II.⁷ Nan Elizabeth Woodruff has documented the efforts of African Americans in the Mississippi Delta to fight the profound injustices of the plantation labour system throughout the twentieth century.⁸ Danielle L. McGuire argues the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955 “was not a prairie fire, or a rising tide.”⁹ Of particular significance to McGuire were the organizing efforts of women, including Rosa Parks, who highlighted and challenged sexual assault against African American women decades before Parks refused to give up her bus seat.

African Canadian protest has a similarly long history – a necessary response to an equally long history of racism.¹⁰ This chapter examines mid-twentieth century activism

⁵ Angela Jones, “The Niagara Movement, 1905-1910: A Revisionist Approach to the Social History of the Civil Rights Movement,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 23, no. 3 (September 2010): 455.

⁶ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past,” *Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (March 2005): 1245.

⁷ Erik S. Gellman, *Death Blow to Jim Crow: The National Negro Congress and the Rise of Militant Civil Rights* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 3-4.

⁸ Nan Elizabeth Woodruff, *American Congo: The African American Freedom Struggle in the Delta* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 5.

⁹ Danielle L. McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance – A New History of the Civil Rights Movement from Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Press, 2010), 39.

¹⁰ For more on earlier African Canadian activism and protest see for example James W. St. G. Walker, *The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone, 1783-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992); Barrington Walker, *Race on Trial: Black Defendants in Ontario’s Criminal Courts 1858-1958* (Toronto: Osgoode Society and University of Toronto Press, 2010); Jason H. Silverman, “Mary Ann Shadd and the Search for Equality,” in *Black Leaders of the Nineteenth Century*, eds. Leon F. Litwack and August Meier (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1991): 87-100; Maureen G. Elgersman, *Unyielding Spirits: Black Women and Slavery in Early Canada and Jamaica* (New York:

against longstanding discriminatory practices that were sometimes de jure (rooted in law), but most often were of a de facto nature. In the de jure category, legislation permitted school segregation in Ontario and Nova Scotia until mid-century.¹¹ A 1918 Nova Scotia law allowed separate schools on the advice of a school inspector.¹² The law remained on the books until 1954, and in practice some segregated schools existed decades later.¹³ An 1850 Ontario law ostensibly permitted black families to request their own schools. In practice, it was used to keep schools forcibly separate, against the desire of many African Canadian communities.¹⁴ The systematic exclusion of black immigrants to Canada was also based on a combination of de jure and de facto practices.¹⁵ A 1910 immigration law allowed the government to exclude “immigrants belonging to any race deemed unsuited to the climate or requirements of Canada...”¹⁶ Immigration officials, concerned over black immigration to the western provinces, also implemented an “informal exclusionary programme,” according to which they used various excuses to turn the “undesired”

Garland Pub., 1999); Afua Cooper, “Acts of Resistance: Black Men and Women Engage Slavery in Upper Canada, 1793-1803,” *Ontario History* 99, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 5-17; Adrienne Shadd, “No ‘Back Alley Clique’: The Campaign to Desegregate Chatham’s Public Schools, 1891-1893,” *Ontario History* 99, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 77-95; David A. Sutherland, “Race Relations in Halifax, Nova Scotia, During the Mid-Victorian Quest for Reform,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 7, no. 1 (1996): 35-54.

¹¹ Barrington Walker, “Introduction: From a Property Right to Citizenship Rights – The African Canadian Legal Odyssey,” *The African Canadian Legal Odyssey: Historical Essays*, ed. Barrington Walker (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 26; Judith Fingard, “Race and Respectability in Victorian Halifax,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 20, no. 2 (1992): 182.

¹² Robin Winks, “Negro School Segregation in Ontario and Nova Scotia,” *Canadian Historical Review* 50, no. 2 (June 1969): 186.

¹³ Brianna Howard and Sarah E.K. Smith, “The Little Black School House: Revealing the Histories of Canada’s Segregated Schools – A Conversation with Sylvia Hamilton,” *Canadian Review of American Studies* 41, no. 1 (2011): 64.

¹⁴ Kristin McLaren, “Canada West Public Schools and Myths of British Egalitarianism,” *Social History/Histoire Sociale* 37, no. 73 (2004): 27-50; Shadd, “No ‘Back Alley Clique,’” 77-95.

¹⁵ B. Walker, “Introduction: From a Property Right to Citizenship Rights,” 30.

¹⁶ Immigration Act, 1910, accessed November 2013, <<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/immigrants/021017-2511.01-e.html>>

away.¹⁷ Explicitly discriminatory immigration laws and policies were on the books into the 1960s.

Most commonly, discrimination against African Canadians was not legislatively required but was legally permitted. It was also deeply woven into the pattern of daily life through de facto practices. For this reason, Canadian discrimination can be a difficult subject to study. Historian Robin Winks has usefully termed it a “moving target.”¹⁸ Unlike the American Jim Crow system, most laws in Canada did not dictate a rigid system of discrimination. Barrington Walker emphasizes the paradoxical nature of African Canadian experiences, “caught between formal legal equality and deeply entrenched societal and economic inequality.”¹⁹ Though hidden behind a mask of legal equality, discrimination was pervasive in Canada. As Barrington Walker explains, “[w]hile anti-Black discrimination was not supported by positive law in Canada, throughout Canadian history the law tended to passively support white supremacy by accepting the conditions that allowed it to thrive.”²⁰ Austin Clarke spoke to the wide-ranging nature of racism in a 1963 *Maclean's* article. In response to the common question of how he could be sure discrimination existed when it was not obvious, Clarke explained that “as a black man I am *ipso facto* an expert on discrimination. I do not want to experience prejudice, and I do not need to look for it – it is the very atmosphere in which

¹⁷ Harold Martin Troper, “The Creek-Negroes of Oklahoma and Canadian Immigration, 1909-11,” *Canadian Historical Review* 53, no. 3 (September 1972): 283.

¹⁸ Robin Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History*, 2nd edition (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1997), 464.

¹⁹ B. Walker, *Race on Trial*, 3.

²⁰ B. Walker, “Introduction: From a Property Right to Citizenship Rights,” 3.

a black man exists.”²¹ In a similar fashion, anti-racism and labour activist Bromley Armstrong has explained, “[a]lthough I had found a job that was paying me a good wage, as a Black person living in 1950s Canada, my soul was not well. Canadian racism and prejudice caused me to operate in an environment with narrow margins. The signs around me suggested that I could only go so far.”²² Indeed, African Canadians were regularly denied job and housing opportunities, often finding themselves low on the socio-economic ladder with limited opportunities to move up.²³ “Among my generation,” anti-discrimination activist Lyle Talbot recalls about growing up in Southwestern Ontario, “blacks were the last hired and the first fired.”²⁴

Though segregation was not mandated in law, legal precedence protected the right of businesses to refuse services to whomever they chose. This remained standard practice prior to the arrival of fair accommodations laws beginning in the 1950s, which prohibited the denial of services to the general public on grounds of “race.”²⁵ The Supreme Court protected this principle in 1936 with its ruling that a Montreal bar could refuse service to an African Canadian man named Fred Christie.²⁶ The “right” to discriminate was

²¹ Austin Clarke, “A Black Man Talks about Race Prejudice in White Canada,” *Maclean's*, 20 April 1963.

²² Bromley L. Armstrong with Sheldon Taylor, *Bromley: Tireless Champion for Just Causes* (Pickering: Vitabu Publications, 2000), 72.

²³ Tracey Adams, “Making a Living: African Canadian Workers in London, Ontario, 1861-1901,” *Labour/Le Travail* 67 (Spring 2011): 12-13; Lyle Talbot, *Memoir of a Black Canadian Activist* (Carol Talbot, 2013), 23; Pamela Sugiman, “Privilege and Oppression: The Configuration of Race, Gender, and Class in Southern Ontario Auto Plants, 1939 to 1949,” *Labour/Le Travail* 47 (Spring 2001): 86.

²⁴ L. Talbot, *Memoir of a Black Canadian Activist*, 69.

²⁵ For example, Ontario’s first *Fair Accommodations Practices Act*, passed in 1954, prohibited discrimination in businesses and services “available in any place to which the public is customarily admitted because of the race, creed, colour, nationality, ancestry or place of origin of such person or class of persons.” See “Fair Accommodation Practices,” 1954, accessed 2 February 2015, <http://www.historyofrights.com/statutes/provincial/ON_Fair_Ac.pdf>

²⁶ James W. St. G. Walker, *Race, Rights and the Law in the Supreme Court of Canada: Historical Case Studies* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1997), 161.

prioritized over any notion of a “right” to not be the subject of discrimination.²⁷ The principle was reconfirmed a decade later in Nova Scotia, when Viola Desmond was arrested for refusing to sit in a segregated seating area.²⁸ Across Southwestern Ontario, Lyle Talbot recalls, “[n]o private picnic grounds, bathing beaches, golf courses, bowling alleys or other amusement centers were accessible to blacks. It was common to see ‘Whites Only’ or ‘Restricted Clientele’ signs all over the county.”²⁹ Crystal Beach in Fort Erie, Ontario, a popular Canadian day-trip destination for American residents living just across the Canada-United States border in Buffalo, was similarly segregated by tradition and informal but strict enforcement.³⁰ In his memoir, Lyle Talbot recalls a minister who, reflecting on the status of racialized minorities in Canada, explained that “[t]he problem is the black man doesn’t present a problem until he presents himself.”³¹ Canadian claims that their country was not home to “racial” divisions akin to the United States were proven false in locales where racialized minorities were populous, or when they began visiting a new destination, like Crystal Beach, in significant numbers.³² It was easy for Canadians to deny that prejudice existed in a locale where few racialized minorities lived

²⁷ Esmeralda M.A. Thornhill, “So Seldom for Us, So Often Against Us: Blacks and the Law in Canada,” *Journal of Black Studies* 38, no. 3 (January 2008): 330.

²⁸ Backhouse, *Colour-Coded*, 266; J. Walker, ‘Race,’ *Rights and the Law*, 170.

²⁹ L. Talbot, *Memoir of a Black Canadian Activist*, 26;

³⁰ Victoria W. Wolcott, “Recreation and Race in the Postwar City: Buffalo’s 1956 Crystal Beach Riot,” *The Journal of American History* 93, no. 1 (June 2006): 75-77.

³¹ L. Talbot, *Memoir of a Black Canadian Activist*, 72.

³² For a discussion of this theme, see David Goutor, “Drawing Different Lines of Colour: The Mainstream English Canadian Labour Movement’s Approach to Blacks and the Chinese,” *Labor Studies in Working Class History of the Americas* 2, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 55-76.

or visited; where they did live or begin to visit, however, discrimination would quickly manifest.³³

Prejudice in Canada ran deeper than discriminatory practices in jobs, housing, services, and businesses. Common racial stereotypes had long undergirded nationalist understandings of Canada as a white country. Canadian nationalists in the early post-Confederation period conceptualized Canada as a strong, rugged, northern country, where only white Anglo-Saxons could succeed and prosper.³⁴ They claimed, Carl Berger notes, to therefore have “no Negro problem, ‘which weighs like a troublesome nightmare upon the civilization of the United States.’”³⁵ W.E.B. DuBois, a leading American intellectual and a founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), described the tenuous position of African Americans in terms that are pertinent to the impact of this nationalistic perspective in Canada: “Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question... How does it feel to be a problem?”³⁶ Ikuko Asaka links this form of Canadian nationalism to Britain’s larger project of empire, wherein Canada was specifically categorized (in contrast to warmer colonies located further south) as “a white settler destination.”³⁷ As George Elliott Clarke puts it, “[t]he

³³ Mark Paul Richard’s discussion of the popularity of the Ku Klux Klan with Anglo Canadians who immigrated to New England in the 1920s offers an interesting example of this. See Mark Paul Richard, “Why Don’t You Be a Klansman?": Anglo-Canadian Support for the Ku Klux Klan Movement in 1920s New England,” *American Review of Canadian Studies* 40, no. 4 (December 2010): 508-516.

³⁴ Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism 1867-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 129-131.

³⁵ Berger, *The Sense of Power*, 131.

³⁶ W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg and Co., 1903), 1; See also Rinaldo Walcott’s discussion of DuBois in Rinaldo Walcott, *Black Like Who? Writing Black Canada* (Toronto: Insomniac Press, 2003), 12.

³⁷ Ikuko Asaka, “Race Across Empire and Republic: Black Migration to Canada and Racial, National, and Gender Formations in Atlantic Context,” Ph.D. Diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison: 2010, 11; See also Paula Hastings, “Territorial Spoils, Transnational Black Resistance, and Canada’s Evolving Autonomy

original ‘two solitudes’ of Canadian nationalism – Anglo and Québécois – have never had a vision of Canada as anything but a white man’s country.”³⁸ This ideological construction of Canada was pervasive well into the mid-twentieth century. The Canadian state continued its efforts to limit black residence and citizenship in Canada following World War II through immigration restrictions and other means. In 1952, for example, the federal cabinet requested that American military units limit the proportion of black troops posted to northern radar stations to no more than ten per cent of their total deployments in Canada.³⁹

This is not to argue that conditions for black citizens were the same across the two countries. Prejudice was widespread in Canada, but it was not enforced through an encompassing matrix of law and terror. African Canadians could vote, in contrast with many American regions where voter registration was a primary civil rights movement objective.⁴⁰ While American historians increasingly reject constructs of racism as a distinctly southern phenomenon,⁴¹ Lichsteinstein cautions that regional similarities “should not be allowed to erase the fundamental, existential difference between the total

during the First World War,” *Histoire sociale/Social History* 47, no. 94 (June 2014): 450-451: “Euro-Canadians, particularly British settlers and immigrants, have historically defined the nation in opposition to a racialized Other, whether this Other resides within or outside the nation-state’s borders.”; James M. Pitsula similarly argues that the Ku Klux Klan’s popularity in Saskatchewan in the late 1920s reflected widespread concern that Canada was losing its British identity and character. As Pitsula argues, “[i]t’s central goal was to keep Canada British, which, to the Klan, meant building and preserving a white Protestant nation of British racial stock.” See James M. Pitsula, *Keeping Canada British: The Ku Klux Klan in 1920s Saskatchewan* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2013), 1.

³⁸ George Elliott Clarke, “White Like Canada,” *Transition* 73 (1997): 106.

³⁹ Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC), Cabinet Conclusions, RG 2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5-a v. 2651, “Admission of United States troops including negro personnel,” 28 November 1952.

⁴⁰ Sharon A. Roger Hepburn, *Crossing the Border: A Free Black Community in Canada* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 6, 22.

⁴¹ Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008); Jeanne F. Theoharis and Komozi Woodard, eds, *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940-1980* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

system of racial domination that reigned in the South and the myriad yet permeable forms of racial discrimination pervasive in the rest of the nation.”⁴² Anti-discrimination legislation arrived following World War II in parts of the northern United States, for example, while it remained a distinctly far-fetched prospect in the South.⁴³ When the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) began compiling a reference library of comparative North American human rights legislation in 1965, it requested information on laws from forty-two American states. No letters were sent to states located in the Deep South.⁴⁴

Life for African Canadians was more similar to African Americans living north of the Mason-Dixon line who, Sugrue notes, were “unencumbered by the most blatant of southern-style Jim Crow laws but still trapped in an economic, political, and legal regime that seldom recognized them as equals.”⁴⁵ James R. Dumpson, the first African American Commissioner of Welfare for New York City, spoke of this parallel in Halifax at a 1963 Human Rights Day event. “The similarities of the basic issues,” according to Dumpson, “outweigh the differences. I am struck by the familiar description of Negro social and economic status in Nova Scotia.”⁴⁶ While a generally useful comparison, however, an important distinguishing factor between Canada and the United States, including states in the North, was the consistent reality and sweeping scale of racialized violence across all

⁴² Alex Lichtenstein, “The Other Civil Rights Movement and the Problem of Southern Exceptionalism,” *Journal of the Historical Society* 11, no. 3 (September 2011): 370.

⁴³ Lichtenstein, “The Other Civil Rights Movement,” 361; Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 111: “Between 1945 and 1964, twenty-nine states outside the South enacted fair employment practices laws.”

⁴⁴ Archives of Ontario (hereafter AO), Ontario Human Rights Commission files, RG 76-3, B270369, Special Mailing – U.S. Attorney Generals, 1965.

⁴⁵ Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, xv.

⁴⁶ Public Archives of Nova Scotia (hereafter PANS), Fred R MacKinnon fonds, 1992-718, v.1, Emerging Horizons in Human Rights address by James R. Dumpson, Commissioner of Welfare for City of New York to Rotary Club and Combined Service Clubs in Halifax, 10 December 1963.

regions in the United States. Some Canadian rights activists, such as Dresden's Hugh Burnette and Nova Scotian Burnley "Rocky" Jones, did encounter threats of violence.⁴⁷ Yet the frequent and large scaled nature of racist rioting, terrorism, and violence against African Americans in the United States, (including in northern cities like Chicago and Detroit) distinguished these places from Canada.⁴⁸ Noting that right across the border from Windsor, "Detroit was sharply segregated," African Canadian anti-discrimination activist Howard McCurdy explains,

one of the things that I've always been conscious of is the need for us not to impose an interpretation of Canadian circumstances determined, that is too much influenced by really quite different circumstances different or otherwise in the United States. The fact is that even with the context of exclusion that we experienced in Windsor, it never came anywhere near Detroit."⁴⁹

Though of a different nature, discrimination in Canada was certainly not insignificant or unimportant. As McCurdy puts it, "[t]here was discrimination, and it was widespread."⁵⁰ Ontario's first Human Rights Commissioner Daniel G. Hill, a black man born in the United States who moved to Canada for graduate school early in the 1950s, described his experience in Canada as "discrimination of a more subtle, insidious nature

⁴⁷ L. Talbot, *Memoir of a Black Canadian Activist*, 175-6; "Hugh Burnett: Shaping Civil Rights in Canada," narrated by Kevin Philipupillai, *The Current*, CBC, 2 April 2013, accessed June 2013 <<http://www.cbc.ca/thecurrent/episode/2013/04/02/hugh-burnett-transforming-dresden-shaping-civil-rights-in-canada/>>; Robert Ashe, *Halifax Champion: Black Power in Gloves* (Halifax, NS: Formac Publishing Company Ltd., 2005), 115.

⁴⁸ See for example David J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (New York: Quill, 1999), 498-500; Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 40-42; Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

⁴⁹ Howard McCurdy, Interview with Philip Alexander, Howard McCurdy, and Freida Steele by Rosanne Waters, 24 January 2014.

⁵⁰ Howard McCurdy, Interview with Philip Alexander, Howard McCurdy, and Freida Steele by Rosanne Waters, 24 January 2014.

than I've seen in the U.S. ... [I]t exists in the snide remarks of a potential employer or the sly but highly polite way in which you are refused a room."⁵¹ One of the greatest challenges for racialized minorities was the uncertainty of when, where, and how discrimination might occur.⁵² The lack of consistency in Jim Crow practices across diverse businesses and services created a frustrating element of uncertainty over when and where they might be encountered. Sugrue observes a similar pattern in northern American states, where "racial barriers... were sometimes as hard and fast as they were in the South – but, at the same time, they could also be surprisingly and unpredictably flexible. The rules of racial engagement in the North were seldom posted."⁵³ An editorial in *The Clarion*, a postwar African Canadian newspaper published in Nova Scotia, addressed this unpredictability:

We do have many of the privileges which are denied our southern brothers, but we often wonder if the kind of segregation we receive here is not more cruel in the very subtlety of its nature. If we tell a child that he cannot have something he knows what to expect. But if we give him candy today, and beat him tomorrow for asking he is continually bewildered. Such is the case with segregation.⁵⁴

There was always the prospect of demeaning treatment when entering a barbershop, seeking a hotel room, applying for a job. Fred Christie's legal challenge against a bar near the Montreal Forum is instructive. He had patronized the business several times prior to Montreal Canadiens hockey games, but was suddenly denied

⁵¹ Dan Hill, *I am My Father's Son: A Memoir of Love and Forgiveness* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 2009), 12.

⁵² Simon Wendt, "Transnational Perspectives on the History of Racism in North America," *Amerikastudien/American Studies* 54, no. 3 (2009): 480.

⁵³ Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 133.

⁵⁴ "No Discrimination," *The Clarion* 2, no. 12 (15 August 1947).

service on the night of a boxing match.⁵⁵ “As Christie and his friends discovered that evening,” Eric M. Adams observes, “the informal rules that governed racist exclusions – the so-called colour bar – were fluid and contextual.”⁵⁶ Dennis St. Helene experienced similar unpredictability when a colleague recommended that he eat at a particular New Glasgow restaurant. Upon his arrival there, St. Helene “was curtly told that he could not eat in the restaurant because if the manager allowed it, his ‘white customers would not come in.’”⁵⁷ The Montreal branch of the NCA, an advocacy organization originally founded in Toronto, published an article in its *Expression* newspaper which challenged the claim that discrimination in Canada was “insignificant” in light of these types of experiences:⁵⁸ “[i]t is not the frequency of the acts of discrimination that is important, but the act itself. The victim suffers and receives little comfort, from the observation that this disease is widespread; in fact, it intensifies his suffering. The numbers game is totally absurd.”⁵⁹

African Canadian Anti-Racist Activism, 1914-1950

Just as racism was deeply ingrained in Canadian society, so too was a tradition of African Canadian protest. World War I was a milestone in twentieth-century anti-discrimination activism because participation in the war afforded some the hope of

⁵⁵ Eric M. Adams, “Errors of Fact and Law: Race, Space, and Hockey in *Christie v. York*,” in *The African Canadian Legal Odyssey: Historical Essays*, ed. Barrington Walker (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 340.

⁵⁶ Adams, “Errors of Fact and Law,” 339.

⁵⁷ “New Glasgow Restaurants Persist in ‘Jim Crow,’” *The Clarion* 2, no. 11 (1 August 1947).

⁵⁸ For more on the NCA in Montreal, see Dorothy Williams, *The Road to Now: A History of Blacks in Montreal* (Montreal: Véhicule Press, 1997), 103.

⁵⁹ LAC, Dorothy Wills fonds, MG 31, v. 9, Editorial, *Expression* 2, no. 4 (July 1967).

attaining respect and claiming citizenship.⁶⁰ In Windsor, African Canadians cited wartime contributions when lobbying the all-white police force to hire black officers. A twenty-five year effort ensued, finally resulting in Alton C. Parker's appointment in 1942.⁶¹ African Canadian residents of Toronto, Halifax, and other Canadian cities protested screenings of the 1915 film *The Birth of a Nation*.⁶² The first popular film of "feature" length, *The Birth of a Nation* was a blatantly racist work that celebrated the Ku Klux Klan's violent repression of African Americans. The NAACP orchestrated petitions, rallies, and protests against the film across the United States.⁶³ Toronto cinemas agreed to show an edited version, but it nevertheless played to great fanfare and huge audiences.⁶⁴ Though not the result they sought, the "strong opposition" in Toronto did unify many of the city's black residents and succeeded in drawing attention from the press and provincial government.⁶⁵ Protestors met with greater success in Halifax and Montreal, where screenings were halted.⁶⁶

⁶⁰ James W. St. G. Walker, "Race and Recruitment in World War I: Enlistment of Visible Minorities in the Canadian Expeditionary Force," *Canadian Historical Review* 70, no. 1 (March 1989): 3; B. Walker, "Introduction: From a Property Right to Citizenship Rights," 31; Mathieu, *North of the Color Line*, 19; Hastings, "Territorial Spoils, Transnational Black Resistance, and Canada's Evolving Autonomy during the First World War," 449, 462.

⁶¹ Albert G. Barnett, "No Jim Crow Found in Canadian Army," *Chicago Defender*, 8 December 1945.

⁶² "Colored People Protest," *Toronto Daily Star*, 17 September 1915; Greg Marquis, "A War Within a War: Canadian Reactions to D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*," *Histoire sociale/Social History* 47, no. 94 (June 2014): 421-442.

⁶³ Stephen Weinberger, "*The Birth of a Nation* and the Making of the NAACP," *Journal of American Studies* 45, no. 1 (2011): 77-93; Paul Polgar, "Fighting Lightning with Fire: Black Boston's Battle against 'The Birth of a Nation,'" *Massachusetts Historical Review* 10 (2008): 84-103; David Rylance, "Breech Birth: The Receptions to D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*," *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 24, no. 2 (July 2005): 1-20.

⁶⁴ "Birth of a Nation," *Globe and Mail*, 16 September 1915; "A Record Engagement," *Toronto Daily Star*, 8 January 1916; "The Birth of a Nation," *Globe and Mail*, 3 January 1916.

⁶⁵ "Birth of a Nation' Not Objectionable," *Toronto Daily Star*, 15 September 1915.

⁶⁶ James W. St G. Walker, "African Canadians," in *The Encyclopedia of Canada's Peoples*, ed. Paul Robert Magosci (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 165; Library of Congress (hereafter LOC), NAACP

Advocacy organizations proliferated in this period. Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) had an estimated 5,000 members in Canada, and was particularly strong between the world wars.⁶⁷ A black nationalist organization that advocated racial pride and economic independence, Canadian UNIA branches organized events to celebrate black heritage and culture, while also attempting to address specific concerns like housing and employment barriers.⁶⁸ An important organizing tradition emerged out of the concentration of black men working on the railroads in this period, primarily as porters. After they were excluded from a white railroad union, porters in Canada organized the Order of Sleeping Car Porters (OSCP) in 1917 to demand better working conditions, workforce mobility, and broader anti-discrimination reforms.⁶⁹ The OSCP later established transnational connections by joining with the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP), which A. Philip Randolph led in the United States.⁷⁰

In Montreal, African Canadians established the Colored Political and Protective Association (CPPA) in 1917. They organized a protest after a black patron was ejected from a movie theatre. In its fundraising pamphlet, the CPPA reminded readers, “[y]ou offered your life in the Great War because Democracy and Justice were the watch-words. Will you not join hands with hundreds of your own Race to secure redress for wrongs

Papers, Box I – G221, Folder 11 – Montreal, Que. Can., 1913-1924, Letter Laura Bell Taylor to James Weldon Johnson, 28 November 1921.

⁶⁷ Carla Marano, “‘Rise Strongly and Rapidly’: The Universal Negro Improvement Association in Canada, 1919-1940,” *Canadian Historical Review* 91, no. 2 (June 2010): 234.

⁶⁸ Marano, “‘Rise Strongly and Rapidly,’” 251-253; Jared G. Toney, “Locating Diaspora: Afro-Caribbean Narratives of Migration and Settlement in Toronto, 1914-1929,” *Urban History Review* 38, no. 2 (2010): 81-83.

⁶⁹ Sarah-Jane Mathieu, “North of the Colour Line: Sleeping Car Porters and the Battle Against Jim Crow on Canadian Rails, 1880-1920,” *Labour/Le Travail* (Spring 2001).

⁷⁰ Mathieu, *North of the Color Line*, 195.

done to us?”⁷¹ The legal challenge against the theatre ultimately failed, but the organization continued in an altered form when it evolved into a Canadian NAACP chapter.⁷² The prospect of joining the American organization was initially controversial. As one of the leaders of the Montreal group explained, “[m]any members are questioning the right of a Canadian Branch of the N.A.A.C.P. which they think is only for Americans in the United States.”⁷³ To allay this concern, the NAACP headquarters replied that a Montreal chapter would benefit from “financial support” from the central organization, shared resources through its hundreds of branches and hundred thousand plus members, and the organization’s central office in New York.⁷⁴ After the Montreal NAACP chapter emerged out of the CPPA, its activity levels fluctuated, and concern arose around competition for membership with the UNIA. The chapter’s NAACP Youth Council was active, and although the chapter reported to NAACP headquarters that “progress is slow,” the group organized a convention it deemed “a distinct success.”⁷⁵

While important examples of activism, these varied organizing efforts also encountered challenges. Fluctuating levels of support meant some were short-lived affairs, while others enjoyed greater staying power. Strong differences of opinion around how best to address racism in Canada were evident, for example in the Montreal NAACP branch’s concern that Marcus Garvey’s UNIA was competing for membership. There

⁷¹ LOC, NAACP Papers, Box I-G221, Folder 11, 1913-1924, The Colored Political and Protective Association of Montreal, n.d.

⁷² J. Walker, “African Canadians,” in *Encyclopedia of Canada’s Peoples*, 155.

⁷³ LOC, NAACP Papers, Box I – G221, Folder 11, Montreal, Que. Can., 1913-1924, R. A. Valentine to James Weldon Johnson, 12 December 1919.

⁷⁴ LOC, NAACP Papers, Box I – G221 Folder 11, 1913-1924, unknown to R.A. Valentine, 28 May 1919,

⁷⁵ LOC, NAACP Papers, Box I – G221, Folder 12 – Montreal, Quebec, Canada, Youth Council, 1937, Juanita C. DeShield to NAACP, 2 January 1937.

were also divisions between advocates of anti-discrimination activism and those who instead emphasized “self-improvement.” A London, Ontario resident wrote to the NAACP in 1926 with the intention of starting a chapter in the Southwestern Ontario city, but after reading the NAACP literature, replied to the American organization, “at present no part of it covers the situation here. The white people of Canada are particularly friendly and sympathetic toward the colored people. The task is with ourselves.”⁷⁶ While a great variety of organizing approaches and efforts existed, such divisions are less important to this chapter than the organizing framework these varied efforts established for future struggles. African Canadian anti-discrimination organizing in the 1950s and 1960s did not emerge out of nowhere but built on a long and diverse tradition of activism.

Participation in World War II contributed to intensified anti-discrimination organizing efforts.⁷⁷ Jeffrey Keshen’s description of the war on the home front as “a social accelerator, quickly thrusting people into situations that boldly challenged their moral and social conventions” is useful here.⁷⁸ In the United States, African Americans drew upon their contributions to the war effort to promote a “Double V” campaign of victory over racism abroad and at home.⁷⁹ A similar approach arose in Canada where the war, Carmela Patrias argues, presented a “unique opportunity” to demand rights.⁸⁰ The *Dawn of Tomorrow*, an African Canadian newspaper first published in the 1920s, seized

⁷⁶ LOC, NAACP Papers, Box I – G221, Folder 9 – London, Ont. Canada, 1926, Byron E. Fountaine to NAACP, 23 September 1926,

⁷⁷ B. Walker, “Introduction: From a Property Right to Citizenship Rights,” 31.

⁷⁸ Jeffrey Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers: Canada’s Second World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004), 11.

⁷⁹ Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 210-211.

⁸⁰ Carmela Patrias, *Jobs and Justice: Fighting Discrimination in Wartime Canada, 1939-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 26.

this opportunity when it published an editorial decrying the irony of blacks fighting overseas while lacking equal treatment at home: “The great numbers of Coloured Canadians as well as Americans, who are among the invasion force fighting, bleeding and dying to liberate those enslaved peoples, also know what it means to be oppressed.”⁸¹ American A. Philip Randolph of the BSCP spoke to this issue when visiting Canada early in the war, warning supporters in both countries to “‘not relax their efforts to protect the rights of labor and minority groups at home,’ lest the war be won in Europe but lost ‘in Canada and the U.S.A.’”⁸² African Canadian newspapers were sure to publish profiles of African Canadian servicemen, thereby suggesting that equal treatment at home was a reasonable expectation after their contributions overseas.⁸³ An article on desegregation activism in Dresden, Ontario reported that local leader Hugh Burnette was “brought up under the color-bar,” but experienced “race freedom in the Canadian Army and came home to struggle for it...”⁸⁴

Organizations stepped up their visibility and advocacy work during and after the war.⁸⁵ The Canadian League for the Advancement of Colored People (CLACP) was formed in the 1920s, though much of its early organizing concentrated on charitable work rather than advocacy.⁸⁶ This changed in the midst of the war through its linkages with the BSCP. The OSCCP had joined with the BSCP, and its membership established new

⁸¹ Quoted in Flynn, *Moving Beyond Borders*, 183.

⁸² Quoted in Patrias, *Jobs and Justice*, 69.

⁸³ “Last to Return, First to Enlist,” *The Clarion* 2, no. 1 (January 1947); “Thrice Wounded,” *The Clarion* 2, no. 3 (15 February 1947); “Russell Rudd,” *Dawn of Tomorrow* 4, no. 6 (September 1946); “Lloyd Kelly,” *Dawn of Tomorrow* 4, no. 9 (18 December 1946).

⁸⁴ AO, Alvin McCurdy fonds, MS 1166, Gordon Donaldson, “I Lived through Race Hatred in a Canadian Town,” *Liberty Magazine* (December 1955).

⁸⁵ B. Walker, “Introduction: From a Property Right to Citizenship Rights,” 32.

⁸⁶ Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 418.

branches in Montreal, Winnipeg, Vancouver, and elsewhere.⁸⁷ Described by Sarah-Jane Mathieu as “the BSCP’s civil rights wing,” CLACP branches pressed for legislation banning discrimination in employment and other realms of life across the country.⁸⁸ In Nova Scotia, the Nova Scotia Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NSAACP) emerged as an important advocacy organization in 1945.⁸⁹ It soon gained prominence in 1946 when it led fundraising efforts for the legal defense of Viola Desmond following her arrest for refusing to sit in a movie theatre’s segregated seating area.⁹⁰ Though unsuccessful, this legal challenge was important in solidifying the NSAACP’s organizing strength and reach, and in drawing attention to segregation in Canada. Carrie Best, a schoolteacher in New Glasgow, promoted Desmond’s cause in *The Clarion*, the newspaper she founded that same year.⁹¹ Best’s newspaper supported the NSAACP with frequent membership advertisements, including one that identified the NSAACP as “the Ladder to Advancement,” encouraging readers to “STEP ON IT! JOIN TODAY!”⁹²

Broader alliances across the relatively small community of Canadian anti-discrimination activists strengthened new organizing efforts, as African Canadians

⁸⁷ Melinda Chateaubert, *Marching Together: Women of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 173.

⁸⁸ Mathieu, *North of the Color Line*, 205; Nina Reid-Maroney argues that CLACP simultaneously represented connections to a longer history of abolitionist activism and linkages with modern anti-racist efforts in the United States through both the BSCP and NAACP. See Nina Reid-Maroney, *The Reverend Jennie Johnson and African Canadian History, 1868-1967* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2013), 106.

⁸⁹ Interview with Donald Oliver by Rosanne Waters, 14 January 2014.

⁹⁰ Backhouse, *Colour-Coded*, 228, 247.

⁹¹ “Takes Action,” *The Clarion I*, no. 1 (December 1946).

⁹² “N.S.A.A.C.P.,” *The Clarion I*, no. 1 (December 1946).

increasingly fought prejudice in tandem with other oppressed minorities after the war.⁹³ Joint efforts were notably common with Jewish organizations that, Walker notes, interpreted “anti-Semitism... as one aspect of the problem of prejudice.”⁹⁴ The leadership of Jews in the fight against racist and religious discrimination in Canada stemmed, Frager and Patrias note, from their established roles in labour organizing, existing organizational capacity (including the Jewish Labour Committee and the Joint Public Relations Committee), and strong transnational links with well-established Jewish anti-discrimination organizations in the United States.⁹⁵

African Canadian and allied anti-discrimination efforts in this period generally focused on a local, rather than national, scale. While this may seem to contrast markedly with the nationally visible American civil rights movement, local efforts were actually central to the movement in the United States as well. Many American historians now question the centrality of an overarching “national” narrative to that movement. Focus has shifted to the local activists who brought about change through their daily confrontations with injustice.⁹⁶ Similarly, African Canadian rights activism is best understood by considering the local level. This is hardly surprising, given that discrimination in Canada was permitted but not mandated nationally, and was therefore experienced most sharply at the hands of local businesses and services. Local organizing reflected the activist focus

⁹³ B. Walker, “Introduction: From a Property Right to Citizenship Rights,” 34.

⁹⁴ James W. St. G. Walker, “The ‘Jewish Phase’ in the Movement for Racial Equality in Canada,” *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 34, no. 1 (2002): 3.

⁹⁵ Ruth A. Frager and Carmela Patrias, “Transnational Links and Citizens’ Rights: Canadian Jewish Human Rights Activists and Their American Allies in the 1940s and 1950s,” in *Taking Liberties: A History of Human Rights in Canada*, eds. David Goutor and Stephen Heathorn (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2013): 139-165.

⁹⁶ Charles Payne, *I’ve Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Theoharis and Woodard, *Groundwork*.

following World War II on what Walker terms “Protective Shield” legislation, which fell mainly within provincial jurisdiction. Such legislation, including fair accommodations and fair employment laws, marked a move away from “British liberties” (which denoted a free-commerce based right to deny service), toward recognizing the right of individuals to not encounter discrimination in the public realm on grounds like “race” or religion.⁹⁷

Activists honed in on communities that were notorious for their discriminatory practices because the argument in favour of such protective measures was most powerfully made when clear, “case by case” instances of discrimination were exposed.⁹⁸

Commonly embedded in local fights against discrimination, however, was a long history of transnational activist connections. These connections were fuelled by shared experiences with prejudice, and a corresponding view that fighting it in one place could have a direct bearing on fighting it in another. Just as “racism... knew no borders,” neither were challenges to racism always defined by national borders.⁹⁹ Transnational anti-racist activism has a long history, dating to the abolitionist movement. In her study of the abolitionist Henry Bibb, Afua Cooper emphasizes the need “to see Black abolitionism not as a movement isolated within the confines of the United States, but as an international and diasporic movement.”¹⁰⁰ Jared Toney’s article on the Afro-Caribbean diaspora and the UNIA in Toronto in the early twentieth century considers interactions between the local and transnational. “Through trans-local and transnational networks,” Toney

⁹⁷ James W. St. G. Walker, “The ‘Jewish Phase’ in the Movement for Racial Equality in Canada,” 2.

⁹⁸ James W. St. G. Walker, “Decoding the Rights Revolution: Lessons from the Canadian Experience,” in *Taking Liberties: A History of Human Rights in Canada*, eds. David Goutor and Stephen Heathorn (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2013), 46.

⁹⁹ Reid-Maroney, *The Reverend Jennie Johnson*, 10.

¹⁰⁰ Afua Ava Pamela Cooper, “‘Doing Battle in Freedom’s Cause’: Henry Bibb, Abolitionism, Race Uplift, and Black Manhood, 1842-1854,” Ph.D. Diss., University of Toronto: 2000, 34.

explains, “immigrants engaged the diaspora and participated in a global community beyond the physical borders of the city and nation.”¹⁰¹ Mathieu emphasizes railroad porter organizing as a key site of transnational links between Canada and the United States. Prior to World War II, Mathieu argues, African Canadian activists already understood “that their plight was inextricably linked to that of African Americans. The two groups joined forces when possible and shared resources and strategies for social advancement; most important, both adopted transnational alliances as their assured path to success.”¹⁰²

Scholars of Canadian human rights history have highlighted the escalation of rights activism in the post-World War II period. Common explanations for this shift include shock and horror at the Holocaust, the founding of the United Nations (UN), and passage of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).¹⁰³ While various historians point to the American civil rights movement as a factor in mounting Canadian attention to discrimination, few have explored this connection in depth. Understanding this linkage is more fundamental than is commonly acknowledged. African Canadian postwar activists built on both a long history of local activism, and longstanding transnational connections. Their engagement with human rights issues at home and abroad signalled an understanding that the global context of postwar human rights activism offered an unprecedented opportunity to achieve concrete local reforms.

¹⁰¹ Toney, “Locating Diaspora,” 76.

¹⁰² Mathieu, *North of the Color Line*, 21.

¹⁰³ J. Walker, ‘Race,’ *Rights, and the Supreme Court*, 20; Janet Miron, “Introduction,” in *A History of Human Rights in Canada: Essential Issues*, ed. Janet Miron (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press Inc., 2009), 6; Dominique Clément, *Canada’s Rights Revolution: Social Movements and Social Change, 1937-82* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008), 17; R. Brian Howe, “The Evolution of Human Rights Policy in Ontario,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 24, no. 4 (December 1991): 784-802, 788.

African Canadians and the American Civil Rights Movement: Interest and Support

Many African Canadian rights activists paid close attention to American events relating to racism and segregation in the postwar period, with African Canadian community newspapers providing detailed reports. Published in the 1940s and 1950s, Carrie Best's *The Clarion* focused primarily on local concerns, with regular reports on Truro, New Glasgow, Amherst, Halifax, and other Nova Scotia communities. Yet Best also found space to cover American matters. Scattered throughout local articles were stories on African American minister and congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jackie Robinson and Major League Baseball's colour line, the NAACP in Boston, school segregation in California, and the all-white primary system in Mississippi.¹⁰⁴ The *Canadian Negro* newspaper reported with outrage on the vicious lynching of 14-year-old Emmett Till in Mississippi and celebrated the *Brown* Supreme Court decision outlawing school segregation.¹⁰⁵ The newspaper featured the Montgomery Bus Boycott against segregated buses in Alabama's capitol as a cover story.¹⁰⁶ In the 1950s and 1960s the *Dawn of Tomorrow* reported on similar themes and issues. The newspaper printed excerpts from American publications on topics ranging from anti-segregation activism in Mississippi and the National Council of Negro Women, to Martin Luther King, Jr. and

¹⁰⁴ "A Forward Thrust for the People," *The Clarion* 2 (1 April 1947); "Recalls Trials at Boston," *The Clarion* 2, no. 8 (May and June 1947); "Boston NAACP Enrols 5,000," *The Clarion* 2, no. 11 (1 August 1947); "Outlaw School Bias in California," *The Clarion* 2, no. 11 (1 August 1947); "Primary Law Gets Test," *The Clarion* 2, no. 12 (15 August 1947).

¹⁰⁵ "Lynching Aftermath," *Canadian Negro* 3, no. 6 (December 1955); "A Long Road Ahead," *Canadian Negro* 2, no. 5 (November 1954); "Unity and the Negro's Future," *Canadian Negro* 4, no. 1 (March 1956).

¹⁰⁶ "Alabama: The Boycott is Made of People," *Canadian Negro* 4, no. 2 (May 1956).

student-led protests.¹⁰⁷ This reporting was coupled with extensive attention to the civil rights movement by Canada's major newspapers and television networks. Canadians living near the border also received regular coverage of American civil rights issues through nearby American media outlets. As Freida Steele of Windsor, Ontario explains, "our news, most of our TV stations, certainly at that time, were focused on U.S. news, and we were very into what was happening just across the water."¹⁰⁸

Transnational awareness translated into instances of African Canadian support, both financial and moral in nature, for the American movement. When the bus boycott against segregated public transportation began in Montgomery, Alabama, African Canadians in Toronto organized support. The boycott against the state capitol's segregated bus system required substantial funding, not least to provide alternative transportation options to the thousands of boycotters across the city. The *Canadian Negro* ran a front page notice encouraging donations to the Montgomery Improvement Association, the organizing framework that arranged and supported logistics for the boycott.¹⁰⁹ The same edition advertised a talk by Reverend Thomas Gilmore, an individual who had recently visited Montgomery and could speak to the details of the campaign.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ "Young Negroes Risking Lives," *Dawn of Tomorrow* 38 (April 1961); "Appeal Court to the Rescue," *Dawn of Tomorrow* (April 1961); "Refuse to be Silenced by Threatenings," *Dawn of Tomorrow* 5, no. 36 (September 1955); "Last Will and Testament of Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune," *Dawn of Tomorrow* 5, no. 36 (September 1955).

¹⁰⁸ Freida Steele, Interview with Philip Alexander, Howard McCurdy, and Freida Steele by Rosanne Waters, 24 January 2014.

¹⁰⁹ "Notice," *Canadian Negro* 4, no. 2 (May 1956).

¹¹⁰ "Hear Rev. Thomas Gilmore, Jr Speak On Montgomery and the South," *Canadian Negro* 4, no. 2 (May 1956).

The Canadian Negro Women's Association (CNWA) celebrated its tenth anniversary in 1961. Initially a social club, the group had expanded its mandate to address broader social issues, including the fight against discrimination.¹¹¹ Their social conscience was evident in a commitment to supporting global anti-racist activism. In 1961, the group donated \$50.00 to the NAACP's legal branch, alongside a \$100.00 donation to the Committee of Concern for South Africa.¹¹² CNWA members were on hand at several civil rights movement fundraisers, including a speaking event with Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1962 at Toronto's Holy Blossom Temple and a charity concert put on by King's wife Coretta Scott King at Toronto's Massey Hall in 1966.¹¹³ Following King's assassination in April 1968, the CNWA sent member Alcenya Crowley to attend his funeral in Atlanta on the organization's behalf. "I felt I was carrying the spirit of the negro community of Toronto down there with me," Crowley reflected on the experience. "Being there was important."¹¹⁴

Other African Canadian organizations demonstrated a similar interest in fighting racism beyond Canada's borders. Toronto's division of the BSCP sent a 1965 donation to the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), a prominent American civil rights organization, "to assist in your efforts to obtain first class citizenship for Negro's [*sic*], as well as all others who are denied their rights as first class citizens."¹¹⁵ A friend of Coretta Scott

¹¹¹ Lawrence Hill, *Women of Vision: The Story of the Canadian Negro Women's Association, 1951-1976* (Toronto: Umbrella Press, 1996), 13-14.

¹¹² LAC, Stanley Grizzle fonds, R12294, v. 7, Canadian Negro Women's Club 10th Anniversary Banquet and Ball Program, 14 October 1961.

¹¹³ Hill, *Women of Vision*, 15.

¹¹⁴ AO, Records of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, RG 76-3, B270392, "Throngs of Supporters Made the Last March with Martin Luther King," *West Indian News Observer* 2, no. 4 (April 1968), 9.

¹¹⁵ LAC, Stanley Grizzle fonds, R12294, v. 7, Robert Willis to Congress of Racial Equality, n.d.

King, Toronto BSCP leader Stanley Grizzle took the lead in organizing her Toronto fundraising concert.¹¹⁶ Toronto's African Methodist Episcopal Church, First Baptist Church, and British Methodist Episcopal Church, all traditionally black churches, organized support following a particularly horrific act of violence in Birmingham, Alabama. Four young girls were killed when 16th Street Baptist Church, a large church in the city's African American community, was bombed on the heels of the 1963 integration campaign. The Toronto churches led a memorial service in memory of the murdered girls, with the collection sent to the Martin Luther King Fund.¹¹⁷ While it did not elaborate on the specific nature of the support offered, meanwhile, a report to the OHRC noted that Windsor's Tanner African Methodist Episcopal Church "has been involved very deeply in the civil rights movement in the U.S.A."¹¹⁸

Montreal's NCA branch organized a fundraiser to support the 1963 Birmingham integration campaign. The organization passed a resolution declaring that events in Birmingham, where nonviolent protestors had been brutally beaten, "should stir the conscience of America and unite the Negroes throughout the World to stand behind the gallant struggles for guaranteeing the worth and human dignity of the Negro citizens in this and other racially biased communities..." They also raised \$243.00 for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the civil rights organization Martin Luther

¹¹⁶ LAC, Stanley Grizzle fonds, R12294, v. 8, Coretta Scott King to Stanley G. Grizzle, 15 September 1966; LAC, Stanley Grizzle fonds, R12294, Coretta Scott King to Stanley G. Grizzle, 15 October 1968.

¹¹⁷ LAC, Stanley Grizzle fonds, R12294, v. 8, Pamphlet for United Memorial Service for Alabama Victims, 6 October 1963.

¹¹⁸ AO, Records of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, RG 76-3, B270378, Report Re: Panel Discussion Re: Windsor Study, 14 March 1966.

King, Jr. led.¹¹⁹ The Juliette Derricotte Service Group (JDSG) in Montreal demonstrated support for the American movement through their 1965 correspondence with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). The foremost American student civil rights organization, SNCC was deeply involved in drives for voting rights in the South. The JDSG described itself as “a group of American Negro women, living in Montreal,” who “felt a particular responsibility to assist the Civil Rights struggle.” The group asked how they could help, while congratulating SNCC on its “work in helping the Negro obtain his rights as an American citizen.”¹²⁰

Nova Scotia’s NSAACP sent President Lyndon Johnson a March 1965 letter to express the group’s support for voting rights protestors who encountered violent repression in Selma, Alabama. “The recent dreadful events, both immoral and unchristian,” the letter read, “cannot but have an adverse effect on American foreign policy and the American image abroad.”¹²¹ The press release accompanying the letter drew a lesson for Canadians, warning their country to “not deceive ourselves that such an enormity could not happen here. For we have much to set aright in our own house.”¹²²

W.P. Oliver, who was active with the NSAACP, paid close attention to the Selma campaign. It was, according to the *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, “being watched carefully by Negroes in Halifax,” and Oliver, the newspaper noted, “said the march would have

¹¹⁹ King Center Digital Archive (hereafter KCDA), C.A. Milton Hogg to Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Wednesday 24 July 1963. <<http://www.thekingcenter.org/archive/document/letter-c-milton-hogg-mlk#>>

¹²⁰ The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Papers Microfilm (hereafter SNCC Papers), Reel 55, Letter from Pearl Massiah to The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, 22 February 1965.

¹²¹ National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter NARA), General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, Soc 14-1, Box 3250, Local Reactions to Incidents in Alabama, Airgram from U.S. Consulate General Halifax to Department of State, 25 March 1965.

¹²² “NSAACP Urges Action, Minister’s Death Termed Senseless,” *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, 15 March 1965, 32.

world wide implications.”¹²³ The Halifax Colored Citizens Improvement League also followed Selma, sending President Johnson a message of support after he called for a federal voting rights law.¹²⁴ The African United Baptist Association (AUBA), an umbrella group for Nova Scotia’s historically African Canadian Baptist churches, donated \$100.00 to Ralph Abernathy after he took over leadership of the SCLC upon King’s assassination in 1968.¹²⁵

One of the most visible Canadian efforts to support the African American civil rights movement was the Martin Luther King Fund (MLK Fund). Based in Toronto, the MLK Fund reflected the type of coalition building common across a relatively small community of Canadian human rights advocates. The Social Action Committee at Holy Blossom Temple in Toronto established the MLK Fund in 1963, during the height of publicity stemming from the Birmingham integration campaign, to raise money for the American movement. Holy Blossom’s Rabbi W. Gunther Plaut was a longstanding champion of human rights causes in both Canada and the United States, where he was born. Following the Birmingham campaign, for which more than \$3,500 was raised, the group expanded to reflect an “inter-faith, inter-racial” ethos.¹²⁶ A permanent organization dedicated to supporting the American civil rights movement morally and financially, it came to include representatives from a variety of organizations and associations with an

¹²³ “Close Watch From Halifax,” *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, 22 March 1965.

¹²⁴ NARA, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, Soc 14-1, Box 3250, Local Reactions to Incidents in Alabama, Airgram from U.S. Consulate General Halifax to Department of State, 25 March 1965.

¹²⁵ Acadia University Archives (hereafter AUA), Minutes of the African United Baptist Association of Nova Scotia, 114th Session, 19 August 1967.

¹²⁶ Ontario Jewish Archives (hereafter OJA), Holy Blossom Temple Toronto Bulletins, MG3 A1, “Martin Luther King Fund Wins Wide Communal Support,” *Holy Blossom Temple* 38, no. 36 (28 May 1963).

interest in human rights issues, including Stanley Grizzle of the BSCP, Ontario's first Human Rights Commissioner Dr. Daniel G. Hill, Dr. A.S. Markham of the British Methodist Episcopal Church and NCA, and Anglican minister Roland de Corneille.¹²⁷ Early on, MLK Fund members contemplated establishing official links with the NAACP in the United States. Ultimately deciding not to narrow its identity in this manner, the group's members instead hoped that using King's name would allow them to act as "an umbrella organization in Canada working in support of civil rights."¹²⁸

The MLK Fund garnered headlines in 1964 when Alabama's segregationist governor George Wallace visited Toronto to address the Lions Club International gathering at Maple Leaf Gardens. The Lions International president was from Alabama, and tradition held that the governor of the president's home state spoke at the annual gathering. The MLK Fund published a message to Wallace in the *Toronto Star*, which articulated their transnational understanding of human rights:

We are not unaware that we here in Canada have unresolved racial problems of our own. We are forever pledged to solve them and pursue this objective with dedication borne of deep religious conviction. And because we know this we also know that justice like equality is indivisible. In civil rights there is no border line concern. We oppose your ideas as inimical to human progress everywhere. Our answer is not one of violence. It is of direct, generous help to those who labor for the rights of man.¹²⁹

Rabbi Plaut's open letter to the Alabama governor likewise reflected a transnational ethos: "[t]he fact is that the United States is of overriding concern to us and to the free world. Besides, we are neighbours and what happens in your backyard affects our front

¹²⁷ LAC, Stanley Grizzle fonds, R12294, v. 8, Martin Luther King Fund Minutes of Meeting, 7 May 1964.

¹²⁸ LAC, Stanley Grizzle fonds, R12294, v. 8, Martin Luther King Fund Minutes of Meeting, 7 May 1964.

¹²⁹ "Welcome Governor Wallace," *Toronto Star*, 8 July 1964.

porch. In human relations there is no borderline and no division of concern.” Events in the United States, Plaut continued, had also “reminded us once again that we have unfinished business in Canada.”¹³⁰

A coalition of groups, including the Canadian Anti-Apartheid Committee, various unions, the CNWA, the Toronto Labor Council, members of Holy Blossom Temple, and the MLK Fund joined in protest against Wallace at Maple Leaf Gardens.¹³¹ On the day of his arrival in the city, approximately 1,000 marchers gathered outside the Gardens, many carrying signs critiquing Wallace’s presence in Toronto and his unapologetically segregationist policies in Alabama. The following day, while Wallace delivered his speech, another 400 protestors gathered. Wallace used his platform in Toronto to criticize the civil rights movement and the *Civil Rights Act*, which had passed into law a week prior.¹³² The MLK Fund, meanwhile, tapped into the publicity and controversy surrounding Wallace’s visit to raise \$427.33 in one day.¹³³

The MLK Fund mobilized again early in 1965 to support voting rights protestors in Selma, Alabama. Its members joined with several of the same organizations from the Wallace protest action in a 250-person march on the United States consulate in Toronto on March 10, 1965.¹³⁴ The MLK Fund arranged another march on the consulate following an interfaith service a few weeks later, which involved over 1,500 participants.¹³⁵ The organization raised more than \$6,000 during the mid-March protest actions in Toronto,

¹³⁰ W. Gunther Plaut, “Open Letter to Governor Wallace,” *Globe and Mail*, 8 July 1964.

¹³¹ Ron Lowman, “1,000 march at Gardens to protest Wallace visit,” *Toronto Star*, 9 July 1964.

¹³² “Wallace slams civil rights law,” *Toronto Star*, 10 July 1964.

¹³³ “Election Whoopee of Lions a Soggy Bedlam in Color,” *Toronto Star*, 10 July 1964.

¹³⁴ Kenneth Drushka, “U of T Protesters Bed Down for Night,” *Globe and Mail*, 11 March 1965.

¹³⁵ “Thank You Citizens of Toronto From the Martin Luther King Fund,” *Toronto Star*, 24 March 1965.

and later reported an overall total of \$12,000.¹³⁶ An undated letter from King to the MLK Fund indicates the importance of such contributions. “The members and supporters of Toronto’s ‘Martin Luther King Fund’ are to be congratulated for the moral and material support which they have effectively asserted in the struggle for human dignity and freedom for all men,” the letter stated. “Without your continued support, it would be exceedingly difficult for SCLC to continue its nonviolent campaign...”¹³⁷

Canadians generally paid more attention to American events than vice versa, an unsurprising imbalance given the United States’ larger population and comparatively greater resources. This also reflected broader trends in cross-border news coverage, and the generally greater influence of American culture on its smaller neighbour.¹³⁸ Limited resources were another constraint on cross-border organizing. The NAACP had Canadian chapters before World War II, but eventually decided it was incapable of providing them with formal assistance while also pursuing its extensive projects across the United States.¹³⁹ Also influential was the common perception in the United States that Canada was a tolerant country that lacked “racial” inequalities. This widely held belief in the United States dated to Canada’s history as a destination for escaped slaves through the Underground Railroad. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke of this in a lecture series he delivered for radio broadcast in Canada in 1967. “Deep in our history of struggle for

¹³⁶ “Thank You Citizens of Toronto From The Martin Luther King Fund,” *Toronto Star*, 24 March 1965; LAC, Stanley Grizzle fonds, R12294, v. 8, Stanley Grizzle to Mr. Harry Belafonte, 7 June 1965.

¹³⁷ KCDA, Martin Luther King, Jr. to the Martin Luther King Fund, n.d.
<<http://www.thekingcenter.org/archive/document/letter-mlk-3#>>

¹³⁸ Jennifer MacLennan, “Dancing with our Neighbours: English Canadians and the Discourse of ‘Anti-Americanism,’” in *Transnationalism: Canada-United States History into the 21st Century*, eds. Michael D. Behiels and Reginald C. Stuart (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010), 71.

¹³⁹ Chateauvert, *Marching Together*, 173.

freedom,” King explained, “Canada was the north star.”¹⁴⁰ Buttressing this view was a lack of awareness that discrimination was a significant issue in Canada. When the Niagara Movement in the United States, predecessor to the NAACP, moved its inaugural meeting from Buffalo to the Canadian border city of Fort Erie, the common explanation was that the large group of African Americans could more easily find lodging in Canada.¹⁴¹ While a few African Canadians sought to participate in the meeting once it was moved to Fort Erie, however, they were not included.¹⁴² This suggests a lack of awareness on the part of Americans that African Canadians might have had an interest in joining the fight against similar concerns with racism.

While these factors hindered reciprocal awareness, interest, and influences, there is evidence that African American newspapers devoted at least some attention to racism and anti-racist activism in Canada. In some instances, this interest stemmed from personal connections. A.C. McNeal, an editor for the prominent black newspaper, the *Chicago Defender*, had lived for a time in Montreal prior to embarking on a career in journalism in the United States. The Ford Motor Company had denied him an office job in Montreal, though he did manage to acquire a plant position. From there, according to one description, “Mac with typical determination worked himself into the front office where he thumbed his nose at the personnel man who had first rejected him.”¹⁴³ As with the JDSG women, this story shows that transnational human rights awareness could be

¹⁴⁰ Martin Luther King, Jr., “Conscience for Change,” in *The Lost Massey Lectures* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 2007), 165.

¹⁴¹ Kyle D. Wolf, “The Niagara Movement of 1905: A Look Back to a Century Ago,” *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History* 32, no. 2 (July 2008): 13.

¹⁴² Walcott, *Black Like Who?*, 32.

¹⁴³ Enoc P. Waters, Jr., “McNeal’s Long Story Ends with Short Rights,” *Chicago Defender*, 16 August 1958.

facilitated through travel across the border. A related example is of Pat Neely-McCurdy, originally from Michigan, who had personal experience with Jim Crow segregation while travelling in the South. After moving to Canada, she became involved in the fight against discrimination in Windsor, Ontario.¹⁴⁴

The *Chicago Defender* ran a series of articles about the position of African Canadians in Canadian society. While some highlighted rights and privileges in Canada, other pieces were not entirely positive. One article focused on economic inequalities, bleakly observing that while “he is not discriminated against through legislation, the Canadian Negro finds himself standing still in the march of progress while the rest of the Dominion moves on...”¹⁴⁵ A *Norfolk New Journal and Guide* article likewise reported on parallels in the conditions faced by blacks in Nova Scotia and the northern United States.¹⁴⁶ Articles on racism in Canadian apartment rentals, extensive poverty, and limited employment options peppered African American newspapers.¹⁴⁷ Other articles highlighted positive steps against discrimination in Canada, coverage that served an important political purpose in the United States.¹⁴⁸ By highlighting progress elsewhere, African American newspapers encouraged similar steps for their own country.

¹⁴⁴ Multicultural History Society of Ontario (hereafter MHSO), AFR-013744-NEE, Pat Neely-McCurdy, interviewed 23 March 1991.

¹⁴⁵ Albert G. Barnett, “Canadian Negroes Find Equality Grim Illusion,” *Chicago Defender*, 17 November 1945.

¹⁴⁶ “Subtle Discrimination Practiced in Nova Scotia,” *Norfolk New Journal and Guide*, 25 June 1949.

¹⁴⁷ “Canada Club Finds 60% of Landlords Practice Bias,” *Chicago Defender*, 14 February 1963; “Couple Seeks Aid for Impoverished Halifax Negroes,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 16 February 1963; Albert G. Barnett, “Canada’s Negro Railroad Workers Hit By Dominion Color Bar,” *Chicago Defender*, 29 December 1945.

¹⁴⁸ “Schools Integrated in Canadian Province,” *Atlanta Daily World*, 15 February 1956; Albert Barnett, “Canada Passes FEPC Law, But Its Scope is National, Not Local,” *Chicago Defender*, 23 May 1953; “Canadians hit housing bars,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 2 January 1960.

Personal connections facilitated transnational linkages. Indeed, the majority of connections between rights activists in the two countries were not established through official institutional channels. Most African Canadian anti-discrimination organizations were set up and organized in particular Canadian locales. These organizations sought to address local matters, and were not part of equivalent American organizations. In discussing the Guardian Club, a prominent anti-discrimination organization he led in Windsor, Ontario, Howard McCurdy recalls that while they might have “had notions of maybe having some connection” with the NAACP, “the fact is that the Americans are so totally ignorant of Canada, that it has never really gone very far.”¹⁴⁹ Many American organizations were largely unaware of equivalent Canadian issues, and were therefore uninterested in establishing official links. As McCurdy puts it, “there’s never been any real organic connection between black organizations in the States and organizations here.”¹⁵⁰

Reverend W. P. Oliver of the NSAACP in Nova Scotia established personal connections with American counterparts during his travels. In 1949 he visited the NAACP headquarters in New York before continuing south to visit Morehouse College, the Tuskegee Institute, and other traditionally African American educational institutions. While there, he delivered speeches that noted similarities in experiences with discrimination in both countries.¹⁵¹ The NSAACP was not officially affiliated with the

¹⁴⁹ Howard McCurdy, Interview with Philip Alexander, Howard McCurdy, and Freida Steele by Rosanne Waters, 24 January 2014.

¹⁵⁰ Howard McCurdy, Interview with Philip Alexander, Howard McCurdy, and Freida Steele by Rosanne Waters, 24 January 2014.

¹⁵¹ “Subtle Discrimination Practiced in Nova Scotia,” *Norfolk New Journal and Guide*, 25 June 1949; “Nova Scotian Studies Nation,” *Atlanta Daily World*, 3 July 1949.

NAACP, but sustained informal connections with American organizations. Donald Oliver recalls that during his involvement with the NSAACP, he wrote “letters from time to time to the National Urban League in the United States telling them about the situation in Nova Scotia, seeking advice and counsel and so on... So from early days I had a relationship with similar organizations in parts of the United States.”¹⁵² Oliver had the opportunity to learn about the civil rights movement in its early stages when he attended a talk by Martin Luther King, Jr. at the World Baptist Youth Conference in Toronto. Coming just after the Montgomery Bus Boycott, Oliver recalls that King “gave one of his classic uplifting speeches with that southern drawl of his... and it was very moving.”¹⁵³ As a law student at Dalhousie University, Oliver would go on to advocate for and help draft Nova Scotia’s first fair accommodations law a few years later. All the while, he followed King’s role in the civil rights movement, recalling that on the day of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963, “I wasn’t there but I felt that I was a part of it, of the struggle.”¹⁵⁴

While links were most commonly informal, the BSCP and MLK Fund stand out as examples with more official organizational networks. Stanley Grizzle of Toronto personally maintained connections with rights activists in the United States through his roles in the BSCP, MLK Fund, and other Canadian human rights organizations. He was a member of the American NAACP, subscribed to their magazine, and corresponded with

¹⁵² Interview with Donald Oliver by Rosanne Waters, 14 January 2014.

¹⁵³ Interview with Donald Oliver by Rosanne Waters, 14 January 2014.

¹⁵⁴ Interview with Donald Oliver by Rosanne Waters, 14 January 2014.

American activists.¹⁵⁵ A. Phillip Randolph, leader of the BSCP in the United States, followed what was happening in Canada closely.¹⁵⁶ When Grizzle sent him updates on various protest efforts against discriminatory practices in Canada, Randolph congratulated Grizzle, and emphasized the significance of such activism across national borders: “Unless peoples of color fight uncompromisingly for the status of complete equality in their community and country, no forms of progress they make will be secure.”¹⁵⁷ This was not mere talk – the BSCP in the United States made financial contributions to Canadian human rights organizing efforts, including to the Jewish Labor Committee of Canada.¹⁵⁸ Grizzle also exchanged ideas through these connections. Alongside allied human rights activists, he lobbied the Ontario provincial government to strengthen its fair accommodations and fair employment laws with the creation of a “Citizen’s Advisory Group” that would assist with enforcing the laws. Grizzle sent letters requesting information and advice to the AFL-CIO’s Civil Rights Department, A. Philip Randolph, and NAACP president Roy Wilkins. “I would like to know what you think of our suggestions in the light of experiences,” Grizzle wrote. “How many Anti-Discrimination Commissions and Citizen’s Advisory Bodies are there in the United States of America? How many of these groups have Negro persons on them?”¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵ LAC, Stanley Grizzle fonds, R12294, v. 8, Coretta Scott King to Stanley G. Grizzle, 15 September 1966; LAC, Stanley Grizzle fonds, R12294, Coretta Scott King to Stanley G. Grizzle, 15 October 1968; LAC, Stanley Grizzle fonds, R12294, v. 20, A. R. Blanchette to A. Phillip Randolph, 14 December 1966; LAC, Stanley Grizzle fonds, R12294, v.20, A. Phillip Randolph to S.G. Grizzle, 13 January 1954.

¹⁵⁶ Mathieu, *North of the Color Line*, 195, 198-199.

¹⁵⁷ LAC, Stanley Grizzle fonds, R12294, v.20, A. Phillip Randolph to S.G. Grizzle, 13 January 1954.

¹⁵⁸ LAC, Stanley Grizzle fonds, R12294, v. 20, A. R Blanchette to A. Phillip Randolph, 14 December 1966.

¹⁵⁹ LAC, Stanley Grizzle fonds, R12294, v. 10, S.G. Grizzle to Theodore Brown, 9 June 1958; LAC, Stanley Grizzle fonds, R12294, v. 10, S.G. Grizzle to Roy Wilkins, 15 June 1958.

A broader network of informal linkages extended beyond those of rights activists, with family, friend, and work connections deepening interest in various issues, including discrimination, on both sides of the border. Nora Faires has examined close connections across the Ontario-Michigan border, where she observes

the development of a transnational black community in the Great Lakes region, knit together by formal institutions such as religious organizations; by networks of information such as newspapers; by regular participations such as the festival of West Indian Emancipation held each August; and by less structured, more intimate ties of kin and friendship, reinforced by visits undertaken within this borderland.¹⁶⁰

While Faires focuses on the late nineteenth century, her observations apply to subsequent periods. The popularity of annual Emancipation Day celebrations in Windsor, Ontario attests to these connections. Held to commemorate the end of slavery in the British Empire, Windsor's event was the largest celebration of the sort in North America.¹⁶¹ During the 1940s and 1950s, over 200,000 people attended the celebration each year, including family and friends who visited from across North America. Beyond its popular social events, Emancipation Day attracted well-known civil rights leaders to deliver speeches and rally support for their work. As Victoria Campbell argues, Windsor's Emancipation Day celebrations in the 1950s and 1960s "became increasingly associated with the Civil Rights Movement across the border..."¹⁶² The 1953 event included a speech by Dr. William Holmes Borders, minister of a church in Atlanta, in which he "lashed fearlessly at Jim Crow, segregation, and discrimination, holding 35,000 people in the

¹⁶⁰ Nora Faires, "Going Across the River: Black Canadians and Detroit Before the Great Migration," *Citizenship Studies* 10, no. 1 (February 2006): 118.

¹⁶¹ Natasha L. Henry, *Emancipation Day: Celebrating Freedom in Canada* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2010), 65.

¹⁶² Victoria Campbell, "'The Greatest Freedom Show on Earth': Emancipation Celebrations in Windsor, Ontario, 1957-1968," *Southern Journal of Canadian Studies* 5, no. 1-2 (December 2012): 67.

spell of his brilliant imagery.”¹⁶³ Other speakers during the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s included Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., Mary McLeod Bethune of the National Council of Negro Women, Daisy Bates of the NAACP, Martin Luther King, Jr., Fred Shuttlesworth from Birmingham, Alabama, and Myrlie Evers, the wife of murdered NAACP leader Medgar Evers.¹⁶⁴

Myrlie Evers spoke at Emancipation Day less than two months after the assassination of her husband in the driveway of their Mississippi home. Her determination to carry on with the work of civil and voting rights in Mississippi helped spread interest and concern about these issues to Canada. Evers noted that she “received many letters from Canada expressing the same sorrow. Those Canadians will never know how much the letters meant to me. All I can do is thank them.”¹⁶⁵ Through their attendance, Evers and other American civil rights leaders demonstrated the value they placed on transnational support for their efforts. Mary McLeod Bethune articulated this point when she praised Emancipation Day, which she felt “served to blend ideals together and to help people to know one another better so that they might be an inspiration to the people who are yet asleep to the need for brotherhood.”¹⁶⁶

Trips to Canada also served to heighten transnational awareness among the American activists whose knowledge of Canadian issues might otherwise have been limited. This was the case when Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered a speech in Windsor,

¹⁶³ “Emancipation Rally Brings Out 75,000,” *Canadian Negro* 1, no. 3 (September 1953).

¹⁶⁴ Henry, *Emancipation Day*, 69.

¹⁶⁵ “Husband’s Death Not in Vain, Negro Leader’s Widow Asserts,” *Globe and Mail*, 29 July 1963.

¹⁶⁶ Quoted in Peggy Bristow, “A Duty to the Past, a Promise to the Future: Black Organizing in Windsor – The Depression, World War II, and the Post-War Years,” *New Dawn: The Journal of Black Canadian Studies* 2, no. 1 (2007): 38.

Ontario at a 1962 event organized by the Canadian Council on Christians and Jews. Howard McCurdy, president of Windsor's Guardian Club, met with King before his speech and used the opportunity to discuss local issues of discrimination with him. McCurdy felt it was important to highlight these issues because, he recalls explaining to King, "when you are introduced, they'll tell you this is the greatest place on earth because this is where people escaped through the Underground Railroad, and that therefore Canada is the best of all possible worlds, and there's no discrimination here..."¹⁶⁷ Sure enough, the speaker before King described Canada in this precise manner. King then challenged this description of Canada by relating the details of his recent conversation about local discrimination with McCurdy.¹⁶⁸

Burnley "Rocky" Jones emerged as one of the most important activists in Nova Scotia following his return to his home province in the mid-1960s. Jones was involved in the 1965 sympathy protests at the United States consulate in Toronto with voting rights protestors in Alabama. Following this, he moved to Nova Scotia to organize against discrimination there. He quickly emerged as a dynamic leader who was deeply involved in diverse community organizing efforts. While local in focus, his efforts sustained transnational linkages. Jones arranged for Fannie Lou Hamer, an important leader with SNCC, to visit the province.¹⁶⁹ Jones was also involved in organizing a fundraising visit by the Freedom Singers, a musical group that raised funds for SNCC and spread

¹⁶⁷ Howard McCurdy, Interview with Philip Alexander, Howard McCurdy, and Freida Steele by Rosanne Waters, 24 January 2014.

¹⁶⁸ Howard McCurdy, Interview with Philip Alexander, Howard McCurdy, and Freida Steele by Rosanne Waters, 24 January 2014.

¹⁶⁹ Dr. Burnley Rocky Jones (part 2), speech at St. Francis Xavier University, accessed 19 September 2013, <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IuxA8IFNxm0>>

information about the movement through their performances. Speaking of his visit to Halifax, Freedom Singer Chico Nesbitt felt there were parallels in the experiences of African Canadians in the province with his own experiences with racism in the United States. According to a newspaper report, “[h]e was, however, heartened by the work of a Truro, N.S. man, Rocky Jones, to revitalize the community.”¹⁷⁰

Rocky Jones’ vision for anti-racist activism was similar to the Black Power advocates who became increasingly influential in the United States in the late 1960s. Jones defined Black Power as “recognition that power can bring about more changes than an appeal to man’s morals. It is a concept of black consciousness; the need to assert that blacks can make decisions for themselves.” This organizing philosophy, which emphasized linkages with “other oppressed peoples of the world,” was built on strong transnational connections.¹⁷¹ In 1968, Jones arranged visits to the province by former SNCC leader Stokely Carmichael and members of the Black Panther Party.¹⁷² Jones, who newspapers labelled “Canada’s own Stokely Carmichael,”¹⁷³ described his relationship with Carmichael this way: “We just clicked. There was something about his energy and my energy – there was a synergy. We were able to talk about everything. We could see things almost through the same lens.”¹⁷⁴ More broadly, Jones noted that at the time,

¹⁷⁰ LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 755, Friends of Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee Canada, “Halifax Negroes Compare,” *Kingston Whig-Standard*, 3 February 1966.

¹⁷¹ LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, box 119, “‘Support Black Power’ Plea By Rocky Jones,” *Halifax Mail Star*, 18 March 1967; Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 355.

¹⁷² James W. St. G. Walker, “Black Confrontation in Sixties Halifax,” in *Debating Dissent: Canada and the Sixties*, eds. Lara Campbell, Dominique Clément, and Gregory S. Kealey (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 175.

¹⁷³ LAC, RG 146, Records of CSIS, Box 119, Dan Proudfoot, “Canada’s own Stokely Carmichael,” *Dalhousie Gazette*, 9 March 1967.

¹⁷⁴ Robert Ashe, *Halifax Champion: Black Power in Gloves* (Halifax, NS: Formac Publishing Company Ltd., 2005), 107.

“there was lots of interaction, a lot of different conferences, interacting with the same people. You have to have a sense of what it was like in the mid-sixties, the movement of people, back and forth across the border.”¹⁷⁵ Donald Oliver recalls that events in Nova Scotia with international activists represented “an opportunity for an awakening... the fact that that they were there made people start to say, lets have a look at the state of black housing, black employment, black unemployment...”¹⁷⁶

The Civil Rights Movement and Canada: Anti-Racist Activism

A time of intensive anti-racist action around the world, the 1950s and 1960s offered Canadian activists a useful backdrop against which to pursue their own efforts. The American movement was certainly not the cause of anti-discrimination activism in Canada; this chapter highlights a long tradition of anti-discrimination organizing in Canada that preceded postwar efforts. But as Mathieu explains, the civil rights movement “heartened African Canadians because it coincided with their efforts at securing their own human rights in Canada.”¹⁷⁷ This effect was evident during a Southwestern Ontario battle against school segregation in 1964. The African Canadian led protest challenged a longstanding practice wherein local black children were sent to a segregated school, S.S. #11, with inadequate and unequal resources and facilities. The children were, Howard McCurdy recalls, “being driven right by a newly built white school to go to this black

¹⁷⁵ Daniel McNeil, “Afro(Americo)centricity in Black (American) Nova Scotia,” *Canadian Review of American Studies* 35, no. 1 (2005): 59.

¹⁷⁶ Interview with Donald Oliver by Rosanne Waters, 14 January 2014.

¹⁷⁷ Mathieu, *North of the Color Line*, 189.

school.”¹⁷⁸ In a September 1964 letter of protest to the local school board, George F. McCurdy described “a pervading quiet resentment of the fact that our coloured children have been the victims of de facto discrimination and segregation...”¹⁷⁹ The local citizens rallied around the issue through the South Essex Citizens Advancement Association (SECAA), an organization for which George F. McCurdy served as president. The organization’s submission to the local school board alluded to the international backdrop:

with all that has been happening in this changing world the rate-payers at S.S. # 11 have been given hope. The fear and silence identified with the past has been supplanted with courage and determination to make certain that their children are going to receive the best possible education from this day forth, on an integrated basis, equal to the standards established for other children of the area and the Province.¹⁸⁰

While the document did not cite specific international events that made the parents hopeful, it is logical to deduce that the reference to “this changing world” included events south of the border in addition to international reference points like the newly founded UN, anti-colonial movements in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean, and opposition to Apartheid in South Africa.

The campaign against S.S. #11 succeeded in attracting media attention, particularly when parents publicly discussed boycotting the segregated school.¹⁸¹ The local school board opened discussions with the protestors, “following warnings last weekend by the 60 Negro parents that they would boycott SS 11, the school in question, if

¹⁷⁸ Howard McCurdy, Interview with Philip Alexander, Howard McCurdy, and Freida Steele by Rosanne Waters, 24 January 2014.

¹⁷⁹ AO, Records of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, RG 76-3, B270363, George F. McCurdy to Central School Trustees, South Essex Citizens Adv. Assoc. Amherstburg, 30 September 1964.

¹⁸⁰ AO, Records of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, RG 76-3, B270363, Submission to the Public School Board of the Township School Area “B”, Township of Colchester South, South Essex Citizens Adv. Assoc. Amherstburg, 9 November 1964.

¹⁸¹ “50 Negro pupils segregated near Windsor,” *Toronto Star*, 9 November 1964.

trustees rejected their demands.”¹⁸² The school board was surely aware of the negative press attention that had so recently followed boycotts against Jim Crow across the American South. The schools were eventually integrated as a result of local activism, and with the support of Ontario’s first black Member of Provincial Parliament, Leonard Braithwaite.¹⁸³ The American parallel proved useful in helping attract sympathetic publicity. Anticipating surprise that school segregation existed in Ontario, a *Globe and Mail* editorial noted that this “story was not the usual tale of segregation and neglect in Mississippi or Alabama... what is most shameful is that an Ontario school is to all intents and purposes segregated.”¹⁸⁴

An incident in Nova Scotia reveals how personal connections and communications with American activists could help facilitate and support a local protest. Rocky Jones, W.P. Oliver, and other anti-racist activists in the province drew on transnational connections to oppose the appointment of a new city manager for Halifax in 1970. Controversy over the position emerged, W.P. Oliver explained, following “a call... from the United States to a very responsible citizen in our Community” about the likely appointment of Arthur Odland from Oklahoma City to the position.¹⁸⁵ During his tenure in Oklahoma City, Odland was reported to have used racist language and was described, particularly for his role in opposing a garbage worker strike, as notably “[a]nti labour and

¹⁸² Marvin Schiff, “School Board Agrees to Meet 30 Families Over Negro School, *Globe and Mail*, 10 November 1964.

¹⁸³ Winks, “Negro School Segregation,” 190.

¹⁸⁴ “Trouble at SS 11,” *Globe and Mail*, 10 November 1964.

¹⁸⁵ PANS, Black United Front fonds, Dr. W. P. Oliver, “The Arthur Odland (City Manager) Issue and the Role of the Black United Front,” n.d.

insensitive to the needs of minorities.”¹⁸⁶ Though representing distinct philosophical approaches to anti-racist activism, the NSAACP, the Black United Front (BUF), and the African Canadian Liberation Movement (ACLM) jointly lobbied against the appointment. When the city council rejected their concerns, the organizations arranged for Archibald Hill, an African American member of the Oklahoma State Assembly, to deliver a presentation at Halifax’s city hall summarizing concerns with the proposed appointment. Hill flew to Halifax and made his presentation on March 12, while 800 people rallied outside city hall in support of his presentation.¹⁸⁷ While the council initially approved the appointment anyway, the protests ultimately proved successful when Odland decided to turn down the job.¹⁸⁸

On a more personal, but no less important level, Carol Talbot, whose father Lyle Talbot was deeply involved in anti-discrimination work, describes the personal impact of transnational human rights organizing in her memoir *Growing up Black in Canada*. After years of straightening her hair, Talbot explains, “I let those marvellous chemical straighteners grow out and went ‘natural.’” Considered a way to demonstrate respectability through adherence to white middle class norms of beauty, Tanisha C. Ford notes that hair straightening “caused much mental and physical anguish.”¹⁸⁹ Cheryl Foggo describes the hair straightening process she experienced regularly as a child:

¹⁸⁶ PANS, Black United Front fonds, Dr. W. P. Oliver, “The Arthur Odland (City Manager) Issue and the Role of the Black United Front,” n.d.

¹⁸⁷ PANS, Black United Front fonds, Dr. W. P. Oliver, “The Arthur Odland (City Manager) Issue and the Role of the Black United Front,” n.d.

¹⁸⁸ PANS, Black United Front fonds, Dr. W. P. Oliver, “The Arthur Odland (City Manager) Issue and the Role of the Black United Front,” n.d.

¹⁸⁹ Tanisha C. Ford, “SNCC Women, Denim, and the Politics of Dress,” *Journal of Southern History* 79, 3 (August 2013): 634.

Hairday, as my sister and I referred to it, was a torment, a day of relentless brushing, pulling, plunging into the yellow tub of water and then, at the end, the dreaded 'hot comb.' After a vigorous towel-drying at the hands of our mother, there was an hour's grace for air-drying, then we endured another hour, longer for me because of my thicker (bad) hair, beside the gas stove.¹⁹⁰

Carol Talbot made the change to her hairstyle in light of global anti-racist activism. As she explains, it marked "the beginning of the most significant years of my life. My Afro was a public statement of my identity and the knowledge and courage it took to make that statement were the first small steps towards evolving towards a really 'black' me."¹⁹¹

Rella Braithwaite of Toronto has described a similar impact on her children:

When the Civil Rights movement started in the States it had quite a reaction here. Most of them beforehand were just glad to get by: you had such a hard time and our parents had a hard time, just glad to make a living. But we didn't have the pride in our race that we should've, and the Civil Rights movement really affected Canadian Blacks: before our children would go to bed the children were all marching up and down the floor: 'I'm Black and I'm proud, I'm Black and I'm proud.' It was so funny when I think back. I remember that there was a whole awakening here – it really hit here in Canada, very strongly, about the pride of being Black.¹⁹²

In her article on postwar "interracial" adoptions in Montreal, Karen Dubinsky similarly posits that "[e]ncounters between blacks and white social workers speak volumes about changing racial politics in 1960s Canada."¹⁹³ Towards the end of the 1960s, social workers described black women as more "full of 'pride'" and more "color conscious."¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁰ Cheryl Foggo, *Pourin Down Rain* (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 1990), 11.

¹⁹¹ Carol Talbot, *Growing up Black in Canada* (Toronto: Williams-Wallace Publishers Inc., 1984), 51.

¹⁹² Dionne Brand, *No Burden to Carry: Narratives of Black Working Women in Ontario 1920s to 1950s* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1991), 233-234.

¹⁹³ Karen Dubinsky, "'We Adopted a Negro': Interracial Adoption and the Hybrid Baby in 1960s Canada," in *Creating Postwar Canada: Community, Diversity, and Dissent, 1946-75*, eds. Magda Fahrni and Robert Rutherford (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008): 280.

¹⁹⁴ Dubinsky, "'We Adopted a Negro': Interracial Adoption and the Hybrid Baby in 1960s Canada," 280.

African Canadian rights activists also incorporated, exchanged, and adapted ideas and tactics into their own organizing efforts. The more substantial resources available to American human rights organizations occasionally proved useful for Canadians. The Joint Public Relations Committee, a group committed to fighting racist and religious discrimination under the Canadian Jewish Congress and B'nai B'rith, brought an American radio program about overcoming prejudice, *The Dream*, to the CBC for broadcast in Canada.¹⁹⁵ Similarly, an American produced film about prejudice, *It Happened in Springfield*, was screened in Sydney, Nova Scotia accompanied by a talk about sources of prejudice and ways to move past it.¹⁹⁶ The CNWA showed *Your Brotherhood*, a film about the BSCP's relationship to the broader labour movement in the United States, in Toronto in 1961.¹⁹⁷

American civil rights movement actions against Jim Crow, including boycotts, sit-ins, voter registration drives, rallies, and marches, aimed to attract media attention and sympathy. One of the period's most famous tactics, sit-ins at segregated businesses, were initiated en masse after four college students sat down and attempted to order at a Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina in 1960. While this was not the first use of the sit-in tactic in the United States, efforts during the previous decade had not attracted widespread attention. Unlike prior sit-ins, news spread quickly from Greensboro, and African American students organized similar protests across the South

¹⁹⁵ Frager and Patrias, "This is our country, these are our rights," 11.

¹⁹⁶ "Delivers Address on Prejudice of Races," *The Clarion* 2, no. 4 (28 February 1947).

¹⁹⁷ LAC, Stanley Grizzle fonds, R12294, v. 7, S.G. Grizzle to Mrs. Williams, 8 November 1961.

that same year.¹⁹⁸ The sit-in tactic also spread to other countries, including England, where a pub sit-in shed light on local practices of racial discrimination.¹⁹⁹

Sit-ins were occasionally used to expose discrimination in Canadian businesses. As in the United States, Canadian activists had used this tactic prior to the 1960s. It would be inaccurate to suggest that Canadian activists followed the example of their American counterparts when using it. Quite the contrary, Philip Alexander recalls, sit-ins in Canada “preceded the publicity of lunch counters in the Southern United States.”²⁰⁰ Volunteers in Dresden, Ontario in the late 1940s and early 1950s gathered evidence of discrimination by sitting at diners and requesting service, with full knowledge that they would not be helped. An anti-discrimination organization carried out sit-ins at segregated businesses in nearby Windsor in 1949 and 1950. Lyle Talbot was a member of an organization behind one such sit-in, the Windsor Interracial Council (later the Windsor Council on Group Relations). This organization’s small membership of about fifteen individuals reflected a common pattern of alliance across the relatively small number of Canadians who were committed anti-discrimination activists at the time. Included in its ranks were a few members of the United Auto Workers, pacifists, and select religious leaders. Talbot, who served as secretary, recalls that one of the founders, a member of the international peace organization the Fellowship of Reconciliation, “had read the writings of a black pacifist

¹⁹⁸ Iwan Morgan, “The New Movement: The Student Sit-Ins in 1960,” in *From Sit-ins to SNCC: The Student Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s*, eds. Iwan Morgan and Philip Davies (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2012), 1-6.

¹⁹⁹ Stephen Tuck, “From Greensboro to Notting Hill: The Sit-Ins in England,” in *From Sit-ins to SNCC: The Student Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s*, eds. Iwan Morgan and Philip Davies (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2012), 153-171.

²⁰⁰ Philip Alexander, Interview with Philip Alexander, Howard McCurdy, and Freida Steele by Rosanne Waters, 24 January 2014; In addition to sit-ins in Southwestern Ontario, Adrienne Shadd details sit-ins at restaurants, a skating rink, and entertainment venues in Hamilton, Ontario in the late 1940s and 1950s. See Shadd, *The Journey from Tollgate to Parkway*, chapter 7, e-book edition.

named Bayard Rustin who advocated nonviolent resistance to racial discrimination.

Rustin had conceived the idea of peaceful resistance to combat racism...²⁰¹ A leading thinker and organizer for non-violent direct action techniques in the American civil rights movement, Rustin would later serve as the primary organizer of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963.

The initial response to the 1949 and 1950 Windsor sit-ins illustrates the profound obstacles anti-discrimination activists in Canada faced. A newspaper account described the sit-ins as “intimidation—tactics which will do their cause no good, nothing but harm. The campaign against racial discrimination, however well justified, cannot be furthered by antagonizing hotel and restaurant operators and the public alike.”²⁰² Contrasting this report, which denied that the protests had emerged in response to actual experiences with prejudice, was the Council’s press release:

The sole purpose of the Committee’s action was to ascertain whether or not discrimination was being practiced. In the establishment visited on Saturday night, the entire group, including the members of the Interracial Council was denied service. In fact they were denied a seat, although they waited patiently for two hours.²⁰³

Recalling her father Lyle’s role, Carol Talbot describes “a memory of newspaper photos of his group sitting at a restaurant counter patiently but stubbornly insisting on service.”²⁰⁴ Lyle Talbot, moreover, counters criticism by noting that the only way other Canadians could be made to acknowledge that discrimination was a problem was with concrete evidence:

²⁰¹ L. Talbot, *Memoir of a Black Canadian Activist*, 146.

²⁰² Quoted in Bristow, “A Duty to the Past, a Promise to the Future,” 33-34.

²⁰³ L. Talbot, *Memoir of a Black Canadian Activist*, 160.

²⁰⁴ C. Talbot, *Growing up Black in Canada*, 67.

[T]he Council adopted direct action in the form of peaceful resistance to expose specific discriminatory actions and practices. Many Canadians have always believed that discrimination was not a serious problem in this country. They would compare Canada with South Africa or the southern United States and conclude like the nursery rhyme character, little Jack Horner, ‘What good boys we are!’... The Council decided that Canadians needed well documented proof of the extent of discrimination before any legislation could be expected. To those who contended for less legislation and more education, the Council’s viewpoint was to let the evidence speak for itself.²⁰⁵

Though met with censure, such protests applied pressure on local and provincial governments for stronger anti-discrimination tools. As Talbot argues, the anti-discrimination laws eventually put in place “were all the direct results of actions taken by the Council and other similar groups across Canada.”²⁰⁶

A 1964 sit-in in New Brunswick was a distinctly local protest, but it is also helpful to consider it with an eye to the global context. Three New Brunswick Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NBAACP) members staged a sit-in at a barbershop that year as a protest against barbers who refused to cut their hair. “Few barbers in Saint John,” NBAACP leader Joseph Drummond stated, “are abiding by the provisions of the New Brunswick Fair Accommodations Act.”²⁰⁷ The NBAACP identified a sit-in as an effective tactic to expose the gap between the law’s promising language and a much more ugly reality on the ground. Drummond’s protest attracted substantial press coverage, likely in part due to its symbolism and timing. It followed closely on the heels of several highly publicized American civil rights movement incidents. The Birmingham integration campaign had garnered global headlines the year before when police officers viciously

²⁰⁵ L. Talbot, *Memoir of a Black Canadian Activist*, 163-164.

²⁰⁶ L. Talbot, *Memoir of a Black Canadian Activist*, 166.

²⁰⁷ LAC, Jewish Labour Committee fonds, MG28 V13, “NBAACP Protests Discrimination,” *Saint John Evening Times*, 12 May 1964.

beat non-violent demonstrators with the help of attack dogs. The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom and Birmingham church bombing were also major news items that year. Few in 1964 would have missed the allusion inherent in such a sit-in to related concerns elsewhere. With their sit-in, the NBAACP challenged Canadians to recognize discrimination as a reality at home, not just abroad. Anti-racist protestors in England used a similar tactic during a bus boycott and “drink-ins” at discriminatory pubs, Stephen Tuck notes, as a way to “legitimize their complaints.”²⁰⁸ In New Brunswick, *A Moncton Daily Times* editorial connected international events with the NBAACP action: “[a]ll too often one can condemn hatred and violence when it takes place a long way from home... [W]e want no prejudice in New Brunswick. And we are as prepared to speak out against it when it happens here as we are when it takes place thousands of miles away.”²⁰⁹

While significant, direct action protest was less common in Canada. African Canadians faced distinct forms of discrimination, which gave rise to particular forms of activism tailored to their experiences. Unlike in the American South, legislation prohibiting discrimination in businesses and services had been made law in several Canadian jurisdictions by the 1950s and early 1960s. A complicating factor was the tendency of businesses to claim not to discriminate, and then do so anyway. One of the primary goals of African Canadian anti-discrimination activists and their allies was therefore to gather concrete evidence of on-going discrimination. This evidence was used to pressure for stronger laws that were actually enforced on the ground, an important goal

²⁰⁸ Stephen Tuck, “Malcolm X’s Visit to Oxford University: U.S. Civil Rights, Black Britain, and the Special Relationship on Race,” *American Historical Review* 118, no. 1 (February 2013): 92-94.

²⁰⁹ LAC, Jewish Labour Committee fonds, MG28 V13, “Discrimination in Saint John,” *Moncton Daily Times*, 13 May 1964.

in a system wherein the onus rested on victims to prove discrimination had actually taken place. A variation on sit-ins, the “test case,” proved an effective mechanism for gathering the necessary proof. Prospective African Canadian patrons would attempt to access a service, followed closely by allied white patrons who would do the same. As Freida Steele of Windsor’s Guardian Club explains,

we did testing, for both housing rentals and purchases, and for employment ... [W]here a black couple would go in, for instance, for a house, and then, well it would already be sold, or some even blatantly said, ‘oh, I couldn’t do that to my neighbours,’ and so on, and a white couple would go in and it would miraculously be available.²¹⁰

Test cases differed from sit-ins in that the aim was not necessarily to draw immediate, intensive attention, but to accumulate evidence and build a strong case. Sit-ins in the American South took place in a context wherein segregation was no secret. In Canada, test cases provided proof of the on-going prevalence of discrimination, a reality many Canadians otherwise preferred to ignore.

Examples of test cases from 1950s and 1960s Canada are abundant. Indeed, anyone who questions how truly widespread discrimination was in this period need only look to the frequency with which this tactic was utilized. Alan Borovoy of the Jewish Labour Committee helped organize tests of adherence to new fair accommodations legislation by Nova Scotia businesses, landlords, and employers.²¹¹ Pat Neely-McCurdy participated in test cases at golf clubs, restaurants, and beaches across Southwestern Ontario.²¹² Howard McCurdy recalls attempting to play a round of golf with family

²¹⁰ Freida Steele, Interview with Philip Alexander, Howard McCurdy, and Freida Steele by Rosanne Waters, 24 January 2014.

²¹¹ J. Walker, “Black Confrontation in Sixties Halifax,” 178.

²¹² MHSO, AFR-013744-NEE, Pat Neely-McCurdy, interviewed 23 March 1991.

members in 1961: “we went from Amherstburg to Kingsville, from Kingsville to Dominion Golf course, Dominion golf course to Roseland, and Lakeview, none of which would let us play golf ... [they] told us we had to have memberships.”²¹³ White golfers, meanwhile, were playing without memberships. McCurdy and a few others established the Guardian Club shortly thereafter, which “then began organizing tests of golf courses, of public accommodations of various sorts,” while also “helping people enter complaints against discrimination” with the newly established OHRC.²¹⁴

Similar tests were organized for apartment rentals in Toronto. After the testers had gathered sufficient evidence of discrimination, the data was provided to the media and government in support of calls for stronger anti-discrimination measures.²¹⁵ In the Toronto apartment case, the Ontario Legislature moved a year later to strengthen fair accommodations provisions banning discrimination in apartment rentals. While less dramatic than sit-ins, test cases rested on a similar premise: generating clear evidence of discrimination was a necessary means of drawing attention and condemnation. As Howard McCurdy puts it with regards to Windsor’s Guardian Club, “what we deliberately did was make sure that everything we did was publicized.”²¹⁶ Philip Alexander recalls a relevant example of the Guardian Club’s involvement in an apartment discrimination case that was under discussion at Windsor’s city hall. “[W]e prepared an ad to go in the newspaper to cite the examples of discrimination in the city and to let people know,”

²¹³ Howard McCurdy, Interview with Philip Alexander, Howard McCurdy, and Freida Steele by Rosanne Waters, 24 January 2014.

²¹⁴ Howard McCurdy, Interview with Philip Alexander, Howard McCurdy, and Freida Steele by Rosanne Waters, 24 January 2014.

²¹⁵ “Mimico apartment refused to Negro, labor charges,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 13 June 1964.

²¹⁶ Howard McCurdy, Interview with Philip Alexander, Howard McCurdy, and Freida Steele by Rosanne Waters, 24 January 2014.

Alexander notes, “because things like that didn’t often get, at that time, widespread publicity...”²¹⁷ When the *Windsor Star* refused to print their ad with “every heading that we could find from the newspaper about an incident of some sort,” the Guardian Club printed and distributed their own copies at city hall.²¹⁸ Test cases in Canada, similar to sit-ins, helped force the media, state, and general public to admit to, and condemn, discrimination.

Marches were another direct action technique commonly associated with the African American civil rights movement. While used much less frequently in Canada, marches were occasionally organized with the dual aim of supporting global anti-racism and highlighting Canadian issues. In early 1965, human rights activists across Canada organized sympathy marches with American voting rights protestors in Selma, Alabama, where a mass-action campaign to register voters had encountered shocking violence. Rights activists, including Freida Steele, organized one such sympathy march in Windsor on March 29, 1965. “[T]hat whole period,” Steele is quoted in a recent book by Karen Flynn, “just enflamed me so. And we decided to have a sympathy march here in the city.” Steele was deeply involved in encouraging others to take part across the city: “We conscripted everybody. My husband even talked our milkman, who was white, into walking with us. The children wanted to march too... We had to make a stand and say what we believed in.”²¹⁹ The march down Windsor’s main street, which involved approximately 700 participants, was imbued with transnational symbolism and

²¹⁷ Philip Alexander, Interview with Philip Alexander, Howard McCurdy, and Freida Steele by Rosanne Waters, 24 January 2014.

²¹⁸ Philip Alexander, Interview with Philip Alexander, Howard McCurdy, and Freida Steele by Rosanne Waters, 24 January 2014.

²¹⁹ Flynn, *Moving Beyond Borders*, 184.

purpose.²²⁰ It was at once a demonstration of support for African American voting rights in Selma and an indictment of discrimination at home. Reminding Canadians of discrimination in their own city and country, marchers held signs demanding “Open Apartments, Open Golf Clubs, Open Housing.”²²¹ Windsor’s mayor John Wheelton addressed this theme in his speech: “Let us not be complacent and think there is no need for a march from Selma to Canada. It is not as necessary only because discrimination in Canada is more subtle.”²²²

Other marches drew parallels between Canadian and global issues. Toronto’s 130th annual Emancipation Day celebration in 1964 included a memorial march to commemorate the black soldiers who had fought in the War of 1812, while simultaneously serving a more contemporary political purpose. Several participants carried “Canada Needs Racial Equality Too” signs, with the word “too” presumably serving as a reference to international anti-racist movements.²²³ Several memorial events and marches were organized following Martin Luther King, Jr.’s assassination on April 4, 1968. At Toronto’s Shaw Street British Methodist Episcopal Church, a traditional meeting place of the city’s black population, 1,000 mourners gathered to remember and honour King.²²⁴ In Montreal, 2,000 marchers gathered at the city’s cenotaph in a memorial to King. En route, the marchers sang “We Shall Overcome,” widely considered the unofficial anthem of the civil rights movement, and chanted “We want freedom

²²⁰ “Windsor March,” *Toronto Star*, 29 March 1965.

²²¹ “Windsor Fights Bias: Police Clear the Way,” *Globe and Mail*, 29 March 1965.

²²² “Windsor Fights Bias: Police Clear the Way,” *Globe and Mail*, 29 March 1965.

²²³ “Colorblindness Will End War of Races: Rabbi,” *Globe and Mail*, 27 July 1964.

²²⁴ Don Dutton, “1,000 Jam Church in Tribute to Negro Martyr Dr. King,” *Toronto Star*, 8 April 1968.

now.”²²⁵ With reference to her participation in Calgary’s memorial march at eleven years of age, Cheryl Foggo recalls, “although I had only a vague understanding of what Martin Luther King had actually done in his lifetime, I felt changed by his death. That cool spring evening, for the first time, I no longer felt far removed from the toil of other Black people.”²²⁶

A key similarity between African Canadian anti-discrimination activism and the civil rights movement was the centrality of women as organizers, activists, and leaders. While men in Canada and the United States commonly held the most prominent and obvious leadership positions in anti-discrimination organizations, a closer inspection reveals the essential contributions of women in both countries. American historians have come to devote considerable attention to the previously unheralded yet integral contributions of women as leaders, especially at the local level. Because contemporary media coverage of civil rights campaigns mostly reported on male actors, historical works that rely on those same sources have uncovered only limited evidence of the roles women played.²²⁷ Biographies of women like Ella Baker and Fannie Lou Hamer help correct this oversight, as do other works, published mostly in the last twenty years, that give more attention to grassroots organizing.²²⁸

²²⁵ “Montreal Negroes March,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, 9 April 1968.

²²⁶ Foggo, *Pourin Down Rain*, 45.

²²⁷ Kathryn L. Nasstrom, “Down to Now: Memory, Narrative, and Women’s Leadership in the Civil Rights Movement in Atlanta, Georgia,” in *Gender and History* 11, no. 1 (1999): 116; Steve Estes, *I am a Man!: Race, Manhood, and the Civil Rights Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 8.

²²⁸ Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Chana Kai Lee, *For Freedom’s Sake: The Life of Fannie Lou Hamer* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Belinda Robnett, *How Long? How Long? African-American Women in the Struggle for Civil Rights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Christine Greene, *Our Separate Ways: Women and the Black Freedom Movement in Durham, North*

African Canadian women played key roles in Canadian anti-discrimination activism. They organized and sustained local causes, volunteered for test cases, and engaged in transnational advocacy. As in American scholarship, Canadian historical writings have given insufficient attention to this important point. Dionne Brand has observed the “dearth of information about and references to Black women’s history.”²²⁹ Similarly, contributors to a volume on African Canadian women’s history express “collective concern that the history of Black people in Canada and of Black women in particular is missing from the pages of mainstream Canadian history.”²³⁰ “Black women in this country have made history and therefore do have a history,” Cooper emphasizes. “This history must be constructed and made available if we are not to become victims of amnesia.”²³¹

The evidence is clear that women were actively involved in fighting Canadian discrimination. Brand highlights the involvement of African Canadian women in the UNIA throughout the early twentieth century.²³² Lawrence Hill describes the CNWA as “one of the most dynamic and best organized Black organizations in Canada in the period from 1951 to 1976.”²³³ As previous discussions of the CNWA in this chapter illustrate, the organization consistently demonstrated a transnational interest in human rights issues,

Carolina (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Deborah Gray White, *Too Heavy a Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves, 1894-1994* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999).

²²⁹ Dionne Brand, *No Burden to Carry: Narratives of Black Working Women in Ontario 1920s to 1950s* (Toronto: Women’s Press, 1991).

²³⁰ Peggy Bristow, Dionne Brand, Linda Carty, Afua P. Cooper, Sylvia Hamilton, Adrienne Shadd, “*We’re Rooted Here and They Can’t Pull Us Up*”: *Essays in African Canadian Women’s History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 3.

²³¹ Afua Cooper, “Constructing Black Women’s Historical Knowledge,” *Atlantis* 25, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2000): 39.

²³² Brand, *No Burden to Carry*, 16.

²³³ Hill, *Women of Vision*, 14-15.

while also engaging with discrimination in Canada.²³⁴ Reflecting its broad transnational focus, the group organized Toronto's first Calypso Carnival in the mid-1950s. Later re-named Caribana, Amoaba Gooden notes that it "espoused a Diasporic sensibility."²³⁵ The 1961 event raised \$1,000 in contributions toward new construction at the University of Ghana.²³⁶

Carrie Best's leadership at *The Clarion* and her support for the NSAACP were central to the organization's emergence as an important anti-discrimination organization following World War II. Jean Daniels had a similar impact through her work at the *Canadian Negro*. As a regular contributor to the newspaper, Daniels helped push it towards a more assertive stance against discrimination.²³⁷ Her column, "The Woman's Window," focused in part on traditionally gendered domestic matters, but such subjects were often featured alongside explicitly political issues. A similar combination of traditional representations of gender roles and assertive anti-discrimination activism was apparent in the American civil rights movement. Activists who challenged segregation through direct action protests were adept at "skillfully tapping pervasive ideas of respectability to gain moral and political leverage within the system."²³⁸ The emphasis on a middle class dress code and behavioural norms in the midst of political activism against Jim Crow was, Ford argues, a "performance of respectability," meant to undermine white

²³⁴ Hill, *Women of Vision*, 15.

²³⁵ Amoaba Gooden, "Community Organizing by African Caribbean People in Toronto, Ontario," *Journal of Black Studies* 38, no. 3 (January 2008): 414.

²³⁶ LAC, Stanley Grizzle fonds, R12294 v. 7, *Globe and Mail*, 10 June 1961.

²³⁷ J. Walker, "African Canadians," in *Encyclopedia of Canada's Peoples*, 172.

²³⁸ Marisa Chappell, Jenny Hutchinson and Brian Ward, "Dress modestly, neatly... as if you were going to church": Respectability, Class, and Gender in the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Early Civil Rights Movement," in *Gender in the Civil Rights Movement*, eds. Peter J. Ling and Sharon Monteith (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004): 69-100.

supremacist attacks on the character of anti-segregation protestors.²³⁹ This tactic was rooted in a longer protest tradition. Higginbotham has discussed its centrality to the efforts of African American women who challenged racism through the black Baptist Church in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Their emphasis on what Higginbotham labels “a politics of respectability” evolved to counter racist representations of African Americans as the embodiment of immorality.²⁴⁰ As Higginbotham puts it,

Duty-bound to teach the value of religion, education, and hard work, the women of the black Baptist church adhered to a politics of respectability that equated public behavior with individual self-respect and with the advancement of African Americans as a group. They felt certain that ‘respectable’ behavior in public would earn their people a measure of esteem from white America, and hence they strove to win the black lower class’s psychological allegiance to temperance, industriousness, thrift, refined manners, and Victorian sexual morals.²⁴¹

There was little contradiction in the simultaneously domestic focus of Jean Daniels’ “The Women’s Window” column and its appeals for women to take on active roles in the fight against discrimination. Indeed, economic necessity had long meant that many African Canadian women had personal experiences with prejudice in the workforce. Their employment opportunities, limited by constructs of gender and race, contributed to both their heightened experiences with injustice, and their related interest in change.²⁴² As Brand notes,

²³⁹ Ford, “SNCC Women, Denim, and the Politics of Dress,” 628.

²⁴⁰ Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women’s Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 186, 188; Judith Fingard discusses claims to “Victorian respectability” among elite African Canadians who challenged discrimination in late nineteenth century Halifax. See Fingard, “Race and Respectability in Victorian Halifax,” 169-195.

²⁴¹ Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 14.

²⁴² Peggy Bristow, “The Hour-A-Day Club,” in *And Still We Rise: Feminist Political Mobilizing in Contemporary Canada*, ed. Linda Carty (Toronto: Women’s Press, 1993): 149.

the availability of work outside the home – long an imperative in their lives – was structured by both their gender and their race. They found themselves in the gender- and race-bound work of their day, which placed them at the lower end of the economic strata... Black women of the time had inherited not only the burdensome legacy of a labour force stratified by race and gender but also a social milieu steeped in racial hatred. But if they were burdened, they were not hopeless.²⁴³

“We women must come out of the back seat,” Jean Daniels wrote in one column, “and sit side by side with our leading men.”²⁴⁴ Daniels acted on these words by helping organize the Open-Door Club, a woman’s advocacy group that drew publicity when promoting a ban on the book *Little Black Sambo* in Toronto schools. The book, they explained when presenting their arguments against it at a 1956 school board meeting, “has brought anxiety, embarrassment and mental suffering to Negro citizens in general, and our children in particular.”²⁴⁵ As Karen Flynn has explained, “[r]egardless of whether these books were viewed merely as fictional literature or not, some Black students were humiliated by their usage. Surely these moments helped to shape Black children’s understanding of self and feelings of belonging.”²⁴⁶ It was not an easy battle; over the course of their protest the parents were accused of communism and treated, according to one participant, like a “sordid bunch of idiotic morons.”²⁴⁷ Ultimately, however, they were successful. One of the women involved tied their effort to the context of global anti-

²⁴³ Dionne Brand, “‘We weren’t allowed to go into factory work until Hitler started the war’: The 1920s to the 1940s,” in eds. Peggy Bristow, Dionne Brand, Linda Carty, Afua P. Cooper, Sylvia Hamilton, Adrienne Shadd, *“We’re Rooted Here and They Can’t Pull Us Up”*: Essays in African Canadian Women’s History (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 172.

²⁴⁴ Jean Daniels, “The Woman’s Window,” *Canadian Negro* 3, no. 4 (October 1955).

²⁴⁵ “Brief Presented to the Toronto Board of Education Feb. 2 by a Delegation of Negro Parents,” *Canadian Negro* 4, no. 1 (March 1956).

²⁴⁶ Karen Flynn, “‘Who would play with me?’ Childhood Narratives of Racial Identity,” *Southern Journal of Canadian Studies* 5, no. 1-2 (December 2012): 107-108.

²⁴⁷ “Little – Sambo, *Globe and Mail*, 4 February 1956; Mildred Lynch, “Quiet – Brains at Work!!” *Canadian Negro* 4, no. 1 (March 1956).

colonial and anti-racist activism. “If the African mother, under threat of losing her very life, can fight for her dignity,” the woman asked, “how much greater should be the effort of we Canadian mothers?”²⁴⁸ Daniels drew inspiration from African American protests and encouraged Canadians to support the American movement.²⁴⁹ “Is it not part of our right here to assist our U.S. Negro brothers and sisters in every way possible in their fight,” she asked during the Montgomery Bus Boycott.²⁵⁰

The Hour-A-Day Study Club made important contributions to the battle against discrimination in Windsor, Ontario. Founded as a women’s club in the 1930s and still in existence today, it was a forum for women to discuss their roles as mothers, encourage education for their children, organize study sessions, arrange cultural events, and distribute academic scholarships.²⁵¹ The Women’s Institute of the AUBA played a similar role in Nova Scotia.²⁵² Sylvia Hamilton argues that such organizations were necessary because the Canadian state failed to extend equal “social safety net” services to African Canadians.²⁵³ A major impetus for the Hour-A-Day Club’s founding, after all, was concern over African Canadian youth who too frequently left school before graduating, an experience no doubt influenced by the interrelated experiences of prejudice in schools and in the job market.²⁵⁴

²⁴⁸ Jean Daniels, “The Woman’s Window,” *Canadian Negro* 4, no. 1 (March 1956).

²⁴⁹ Jean Daniels, “The Woman’s Window,” *Canadian Negro* 4, no. 2 (May 1956).

²⁵⁰ Jean Daniels, “The Woman’s Window,” *Canadian Negro* 4, no. 2 (May 1956).

²⁵¹ Bristow, “The Hour-A-Day Club,” 145-172.

²⁵² Sylvia Hamilton, “The Women at the Well: African Baptist Women Organize,” in *And Still We Rise: Feminist Political Mobilizing in Contemporary Canada*, ed. Linda Carty (Toronto: Women’s Press, 1993): 189-203.

²⁵³ Hamilton, “The Women at the Well,” 191.

²⁵⁴ Bristow, “The Hour-A-Day Club,” 155.

While not formed with the explicit goal of anti-discrimination work, the club was involved in these efforts. In some instances, members challenged discrimination in their day-to-day lives. Freida Steele recalls one such instance with her mother, a founding member of the group. When she was a child, her mother had arranged piano lessons for her with the Ursuline Nuns by phone, only to be informed once they arrived for the first lesson that it would not take place. In response, Steele recalls,

my mother gave them a very ladylike lecture about their being religious, and so on and so forth, and we went... I don't think my feet touched the ground until we hit Erie street, it was a block, and she was just sailing, steam coming out of her ears... But as I remember back, she was just so very contained and so ladylike, and I thought that was a pretty good lesson.²⁵⁵

On other occasions the group engaged with organized anti-racist efforts. In the 1940s, they publicly called for anti-discrimination protections in the *Windsor Star*.²⁵⁶ Some members participated simultaneously in the Study Club and anti-discrimination organizations like the Central Citizens' Association, Guardian Club, and SECAA.²⁵⁷ The Hour-A-Day and Guardian Clubs co-hosted a major exhibit on African Canadian history at the University of Windsor in 1966.²⁵⁸ Freida Steele and Howard McCurdy were co-chairs for the event, which was the first of its kind in Canada. Another Guardian Club member, Philip Alexander, recalls the exhibit's impact on him, in terms of his knowledge of black history and the importance of preserving it: "I think they were successful in my

²⁵⁵ Freida Steele, Interview with Philip Alexander, Howard McCurdy, and Freida Steele by Rosanne Waters, 24 January 2014.

²⁵⁶ Jennifer P. Mills, "A Critical Examination of the Early Years of the Hour a Day Study Club 1935-1955," M.A. Thesis, University of Windsor: 1995, 1.

²⁵⁷ Bristow, "The Hour-A-Day Club," 154; Freida Steele, Interview with Philip Alexander, Howard McCurdy, and Freida Steele by Rosanne Waters, 24 January 2014.

²⁵⁸ Freida Steele, Interview with Philip Alexander, Howard McCurdy, and Freida Steele by Rosanne Waters, 24 January 2014.

case in ... striking a cord of positivity about background that might not have been there otherwise.”²⁵⁹

Interwoven with these local efforts were the Hour-A-Day Study Club’s transnational links. The club maintained connections with counterpart organizations in nearby Detroit, where members attended events like the 1937 “Interracial Problems of Today” conference.²⁶⁰ The Hour-A-Day women were also integral to organizing the city’s 1954 Emancipation Day events, in cooperation with other Windsor-based groups and a group of women from Detroit. As part of the event, they brought in Mary McLeod Bethune, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Adam Clayton Powell as speakers.²⁶¹ Concern with global human rights issues was also evident in the group’s study topics, which in the 1960s included readings and films on Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr.²⁶²

Canadian Activism, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Sanctimonious Imagination

While sharing and adapting ideas, resources, and tactics was important, the American movement was most useful to Canadian activists as a foil to Canada. Canadian rights activists understood the reach and power of the sanctimonious imagination. They recognized the usefulness of suggesting, sometimes subtly and sometimes boldly, that parallels existed between their own struggles and contemporaneous events south of the border. Canadian activists could highlight existing similarities, or warn that should the Canadian situation not improve, comparable examples of the blatant racism that was so

²⁵⁹ Philip Alexander, Interview with Philip Alexander, Howard McCurdy, and Freida Steele by Rosanne Waters, 24 January 2014.

²⁶⁰ Bristow, “The Hour-A-Day Club,” 164.

²⁶¹ Bristow, “A Duty to the Past, a Promise to the Future,” 36-37.

²⁶² Bristow, “The Hour-A-Day Club,” 164.

embarrassing to the United States might manifest more often at home. This was a powerful tactic because Canadians generally conceived of themselves as sympathetic to the aims of the African American civil rights movement. According to Winks, “Canadians looked across the border with concern – and some air of superiority.”²⁶³ Comparison with American racism was a forceful pejorative, and in many instances an effective call to action.

African Canadian newspapers alluded to American circumstances when addressing domestic concerns. An editorial in *The Clarion* thanked a local businessman for donating to the NSAACP in support of Viola Desmond’s court case against a segregated movie theatre. “In spite of the fact that the name ‘New Glasgow’ stands for Jim-crowism, at its basest, over the entire globe,” the editorial warned, “we will need have no fear, while we have men of his courage and generosity.”²⁶⁴ Another editorial made a similar point in response to the accusation, early in the newspaper’s existence, that Carrie Best was creating trouble where non actually existed. “Racial and Religious hatred is trouble of the gravest kind,” the editorial countered. “It is a vicious, smoldering and insidious kind of trouble, born of fear and ignorance. It often lays dormant for years until some would be Hitler, Bilbo or Rankin emerges to fan the flame...”²⁶⁵ Few readers in this period would have missed the reference to the two white supremacist politicians from Mississippi. This allusion carried the implicit caution that Canadians might follow in their footsteps, lest stronger anti-discrimination measures be taken. The editorial “Canada or

²⁶³ Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 448.

²⁶⁴ “Editorial: A New Year’s Message,” *The Clarion* 2, no. 1 (January 1947).

²⁶⁵ “Editorial: Taking Inventory,” *The Clarion* 2, no 4 (28 February 1947).

Dixie” wasted no time making the comparison. It denounced persistent segregation in New Glasgow businesses, and referencing prominent American politicians, warned they were “fast becoming a town that the Bilbo’s and Huey Long’s can be proud of.”²⁶⁶

The *Canadian Negro* employed this tactic with particular impact in its editorial cartoons, written content, and layout. One cartoon depicted two Canadian businessmen at the fictional “Superwijit Corp” reading *Life* magazine, with the caption, “Isn’t it dreadful the way those Americans treat the Negroes down South?” Directly below was an image of a “Superwijit” employment officer dismissing a qualified black applicant.²⁶⁷ Canadians, this cartoon made plain, should not feel too secure in their smugness. The *Canadian Negro* sent the same message through its front page layout and content. One issue carried two front page articles side-by-side under large, bold headlines. One headline, “Second Class – Canadian Style,” led a story about Canada’s racially restrictive immigration policies. Right next to this was the headline “Second Class – U.S.A. Style,” about a black family facing violent attacks after moving to a new neighbourhood in Louisville, Kentucky.²⁶⁸ Another *Canadian Negro* edition printed the headline “Mississippi – Dresden.” Below the headline, the newspaper placed its report on the horrifying lynching of Emmett Till, a 14-year-old child in Mississippi, beside a story about segregation in Dresden. The Dresden article related that the courts had dismissed complaints against the town’s segregated businesses, and thereby rendered the fair accommodations law toothless: “[n]ow we can all see what the government’s anti-discrimination legislation is

²⁶⁶ “Canada or Dixie,” *The Clarion* 2, no. 11 (1 August 1947).

²⁶⁷ Editorial Cartoon, *Canadian Negro* 4, no. 5 (November 1956).

²⁶⁸ “Second Class – Canadian Style,” *Canadian Negro* 2, no. 6 (December 1954); “Second Class – U.S.A. Style,” *Canadian Negro* 2, no. 6 (December 1954).

worth! Next to nothing at all.”²⁶⁹ In both of these examples, the *Canadian Negro* headlines suggested multiple meanings. They highlighted clear differences between the two countries, because the American examples were obviously more explicitly violent and shocking. Though describing very different stories from the two countries, the format of the articles also made the case that racism was a problem in Canada. The decision to print these stories side-by-side can be read as both an argument that racism needed attention and redress in Canada, and a warning to Canadians that their country might be headed in a far more troubling direction, should corrective actions not be taken.

Human rights advocacy organizations employed the comparative tactic when advocating specific measures. The Windsor Council on Group Relations framed Canada against a global context in a 1955 newsletter about Dresden. Following passage of Ontario’s new fair accommodations law the previous year, anti-discrimination activists were frustrated with the failure of courts and the government to enforce it.²⁷⁰ Though now against the law to do so, businesses continued denying services to racialized minorities. With the law not functioning as promised, the Council aimed to embarrass the government into action: “The British Commonwealth has its South Africa. The United States has its Deep South and Canada has its Dresden.”²⁷¹ Stanley Grizzle of the BSCP drew on the proverbial glass house again in a 1962 speech: “we as Canadians have no reason to take an ‘I am holier than thou’ attitude towards our sister nations... Most of the white nations are vulnerable on the race question – the United States, Australia, New

²⁶⁹ John White, “Mississippi – Dresden?” *Canadian Negro* 3, no. 4 (October 1955).

²⁷⁰ Ross Lambertson, “‘The Dresden Story’: Racism, Human Rights, and the Jewish Labour Committee of Canada,” *Labour/Le Travail* 47 (Spring 2001): 75-78.

²⁷¹ AO, Alvin McCurdy fonds, MS 1166, Windsor Council on Group Relations Newsletter, November-December 1955.

Zealand, Canada, Belgium and South Africa.”²⁷² In Quebec, the NCA published an editorial in its newsletter that invoked racist violence in England and the American South.

It called

upon the Government of Quebec to learn from the mistakes of Great Britain and, through the enactment of relevant laws, set the proper moral tone for this society. Let us work, therefore, to prevent Canadian ‘Notting Hills’ and ‘Birminghams’. Let us not only talk of the ‘Just Society’, but also actively lay the foundations upon which such a society is based.²⁷³

In a few sentences dense with meaning, the editorial linked the local (Quebec), and the national (Pierre Trudeau’s call for Canada to be a “just society”), with the international (both across the border and the Atlantic Ocean).

The struggle to strengthen Ontario’s fair accommodations law, discussed further in Chapter 4, continued into the 1960s. A major bone of contention was its initial failure to prohibit discrimination in housing rentals and sales. Various community organizations, including select churches, the Association for Civil Liberties, the Canadian Jewish Congress, the Toronto Labour Committee for Human Rights, the BSCP, the NCA, and the CNWA sent a letter to Premier Leslie Frost advocating a remedy to this loophole. As part of its argument, the letter referenced the 1957 Little Rock, Arkansas school integration crisis. Little Rock attracted international media coverage and condemnation when nine black teenagers were verbally and physically assaulted in their attempt to integrate the local high school. The students ultimately required a National Guard escort, which President Dwight Eisenhower only called in with the utmost reluctance when facing

²⁷² LAC, Stanley Grizzle fonds, R12294 v. 15, Speech by Stanley G. Grizzle, 18 February 1962.

²⁷³ LAC, Dorothy Wills fonds MG 31, v. 9, Editorial, *Expression* 3, no. 2, Summer 1968.

worldwide condemnation.²⁷⁴ As the letter to Frost about the province's fair

accommodations amendments explained,

[t]he amended legislation we propose is designed to further this concept of one world in Ontario, a province where our common and earnest desire is to have people live in brotherhood. In this way we can strengthen ourselves on the world scene, secure in our minds that we have no 'Little Rock's' to undermine our position morally and destroy the mutual respect and confidences we enjoy and share with those nations and peoples of the world which are of different race and colour, and we can honestly discharge our responsibilities as members of the United Nations whose ideals and goals are so closely identified with this legislation.²⁷⁵

This was a powerful reference at a time when, Borstlemann explains, "[t]he name 'Little Rock' quickly became the foremost international symbol of American racism..."²⁷⁶

It is difficult to measure how effective the comparative tactic was, because government officials rarely identified it as the primary reason behind policy changes. Yet the evidence suggests it played a role in convincing officials of the need for better anti-discrimination measures. African Canadian activists and their allies presented undeniable evidence of discrimination in Canada, and drew comparisons with the American situation. Such comparisons had increasingly negative connotations in this period. This helped create an atmosphere wherein doing nothing was less of a viable option. While local activism was clearly the primary factor behind new laws and policies, the strategic references to the international backdrop likely helped the cause. Chapter 4 explores the effects of local and transnational activism on government policy in greater detail.

²⁷⁴ Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 119-134.

²⁷⁵ LAC, Stanley Grizzle fonds, R12294v. 20, Letter to Prime Minister of Ontario, n.d.

²⁷⁶ Thomas Borstlemann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 104.

Conclusion

In the 1950s and 1960s, African Canadian activists established diverse links with the African American civil rights movement. Their activism around local examples of racism was essential to the legislative shift in this period towards anti-discrimination laws. Prejudice and discrimination, however, continued throughout the 1960s in the midst of new laws, and African Canadian protest grew more pronounced as a result.

Transnational connections continued towards the end of the decade, with the call of Black Power serving as an increasingly important link.²⁷⁷ Scholarly works on African Canadian activism in this period tend to focus on the final years of the 1960s.²⁷⁸ There is good reason for this, as several events at decade's end attracted extensive national attention. These include a "riot" at Sir George Williams University in Montreal that resulted from protests against a professor accused of racism, and Black Panther visits to Montreal, Halifax, and elsewhere. New, more prominent advocacy groups also emerged in this period, including BUF in Nova Scotia and the National Black Coalition (NBC), an umbrella group that sought to connect local organizations across the country. While important developments, this chapter suggests that some of their roots can be found in a dynamic network of transnational rights activism, which stretched back throughout the

²⁷⁷ J. Walker, "Black Confrontation in Sixties Halifax"; Marcel Martel, "'Riot at Sir George Williams': Giving Meaning to Student Dissent," in *Debating Dissent: Canada and the Sixties*, eds. Lara Campbell, Dominique Clément, and Gregory S. Kealey (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012); David Austin, "All Roads Led to Montreal: Black Power, The Caribbean, and the Black Radical Tradition in Canada," *Journal of African American History* 92, no. 4 (Fall 2007): 516-529; David Austin (ed.), *You Don't Play with Revolution: The Montreal Lectures of C.L.R. James* (Oakland: AK Press, 2009).

²⁷⁸ See Martel, "'Riot at Sir George Williams'"; Austin, "All Roads Led to Montreal"; McNeil, "Afro(Americo)centricity in Black (American) Nova Scotia," 57-85.

century, and gained particular strength during the 1950s and early 1960s in a period of global anti-racist efforts.

There is a risk in Canadian history, as in American civil rights literature, of drawing a false dichotomy between earlier organizations and activists, who more often advanced their cause through an emphasis on “respectability” and liberal notions of equality and later activists who promoted concepts like Black Power and black nationalism. While ideas and approaches certainly differed over time and across space, a transnational understanding of anti-racist activism suggests an important linkage between these diverse approaches. For example, the ACLM, founded in Nova Scotia in 1969, called for “[t]he elimination of all forms of racial oppression, social, and economic injustices against Black People – by whatever means necessary.”²⁷⁹ An independent organization that grew from local conditions, the ACLM also reflected transnational interests, particularly in the Black Panther Party. The ACLM emerged shortly after headline-grabbing Panther visits to Halifax, and structured its demands into ten points, reminiscent of the Black Panther’s “Ten Point Program.” The call for justice “by any means necessary” also recalls both the Black Panthers and Malcolm X. These specific transnational influences might have been particular to this organization, but the ACLM’s global awareness is reminiscent of the UNIA’s influence in the 1920s, as well as the more “moderate” activists discussed in this chapter in the 1950s and 1960s who also paid close attention to battles against racism elsewhere. There were fundamental differences in ideological approaches across activists and organizations, but their efforts in some

²⁷⁹ LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, Box 119 v. 2976, The ACLM, March 1969.

instances were connected through a broader tradition of exchange between local and global struggles.

African Canadian human rights activism in the postwar period was at once local and transnational. It was local because it emerged in response to racism in Canada, developed through local leadership and participation, and attained significant results in specific communities. Yet many of the individuals and organizations discussed in this chapter were not constricted in their activism by their country's national boundaries. They also supported the African American civil rights movement and sometimes referenced its actors, events, and ideas in support of their own efforts. Neither Canadian nor American rights activism in this period can be understood as strictly national in scope, because those driving it in both countries lived an understanding of human rights that was at once local, national, and transnational.

CHAPTER 2:
Student Activists, the Friends of SNCC, and
Transnational Human Rights Organizing

Diane Burrows, 22 years of age and a recent philosophy graduate from the University of Toronto, spent the summer of 1964 in Biloxi, Mississippi, some 1,800 kilometres from home. Before her departure, she “had a hard time convincing my family about going to Mississippi,” alongside hundreds of other white students from northern colleges across the United States for a sizeable civil and voting rights project called Freedom Summer. “My mother,” Burrows explained afterwards, “thought I might be killed.”¹ This was not an unfounded concern; at her project orientation upon arriving in the Magnolia State, Burrows learned that three civil rights workers had disappeared and were presumed murdered. A few months later, that fear was confirmed. Staying in the homes of local African American families during the summer, Burrows learned of the distinct risk local black residents undertook to participate in the movement: “The people who took us into their homes there were risking their lives. No white family would take us in.”²

Burrows’ involvement with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC, pronounced Snick) did not end upon completion of her two-months with its Freedom Summer project; deeply moved by her experiences, the Belleville, Ontario native committed herself, upon returning to Canada at summer’s end, to supporting

¹ Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC), Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 754-755, Canadian Friends of the Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee – Univ. Of Toronto, “She’ll Risk Her Life Again For Mississippi Civil Rights,” *Toronto Telegram*, 21 January 1965.

² LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 754-755, Canadian Friends of the Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee – Univ. Of Toronto, “She’ll Risk Her Life Again For Mississippi Civil Rights,” *Toronto Telegram*, 21 January 1965.

SNCC's work from north of the border. From Toronto, Burrows took on a leading role organizing civil rights movement support groups, called the Friends of SNCC, on several Canadian campuses. This chapter examines the origins, actions, and impacts of the Friends of SNCC on the American civil rights movement and on human rights in Canada. Operating on a handful of Canadian university campuses in the mid-1960s, the Friends of SNCC were remarkably successful, if short-lived, at their dual aim of supporting the civil rights movement in the United States while simultaneously creating transnational meaning for the movement in Canada.

A relatively small collection of students organized Friends of SNCC groups in Canada, which were only active on Canadian university campuses for a brief period in the mid-1960s. As Clayton Ruby puts it regarding the University of Toronto's Student Union for Peace Action (SUPA, a New Left student activist group) and Friends of SNCC, "we were a tiny number ... if we were 50 people on a warm sunny day I'd be surprised."³ Yet the group's significance and influence outweighed its small numbers and relatively brief existence. Doug Owram and Roberta Lexier both argue that relatively small numbers of student activists had disproportionate impacts on public discourse in the 1960s, both on university campuses and across Canada as a whole.⁴ Those actively involved in Friends of

³ Interview with Clayton Ruby by Rosanne Waters, 23 October 2012.

⁴ Doug Owram, *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby Boom Generation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 217; Roberta Lexier, "The Backdrop Against Which Everything Happened": English-Canadian Student Movements and Off-Campus Movements for Change," *History of Intellectual Culture* 7, no. 1 (2007): 3; Shreve similarly argues that the National Indian Youth Council in the United States, which "launched the Red Power movement," was driven by a small "core group" of less than twenty members. See Bradley G. Shreve, *Red Power Rising: The National Indian Youth Council and the Origins of Native Activism* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011), introduction, e-book edition.

SNCC groups were likewise small in number, but their activities attracted wider attention and had significant impacts on human rights campaigns in the United States and Canada.

Student activists involved with campus Friends of SNCC groups were primarily concerned with aiding the American movement. They provided important financial assistance for SNCC's activities in the South, where the student organization struggled to maintain the funding necessary to support its intensive grassroots projects. Beyond fundraising, the Friends of SNCC in Canada offered moral support, while also contributing to global grassroots pressure upon the American government to take action on civil rights. Most significant was the manner in which Friends of SNCC efforts and actions, centred on Canadian campuses, acted as a nexus between the local and global. They helped make SNCC, and by extension the broader civil rights movement, transnational. When civil rights protestors were beaten in Alabama, the actions of the Friends of SNCC and their allies in Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, Regina, and Vancouver helped make those events matter at home. With their high media profile, the Friends of SNCC increased awareness of the American movement in Canada. As a result, the Friends also contributed to dialogues and debates within their own country about the prevalence of discrimination and the need for strengthened state responses. As Clayton Ruby recalls, groups like the Friends of SNCC and SUPA engaged with events south of the border while also contributing to conversations about discrimination and rights within Canada: "we helped to change the dialogue and create a vocabulary, we created a

constitutional importance for certain rights, which before had been written on paper but were not real, and we started the process of making that real.”⁵

This chapter’s focus on student activism also provides an opportunity to examine linkages between American civil rights issues and rising French Canadian nationalist sentiments, particularly as expressed by students in Quebec. The Friends of SNCC at McGill joined forces with the Union Générale des Étudiants du Québec (UGEQ) to organize Selma sympathy protests. An assessment of UGEQ and related nationalist perspectives reveals particular Quebec interest in the American movement. The widespread belief that parallel experiences linked oppressed minorities around the world with Quebec fuelled this influence. While decolonization thinkers and movements in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean were more influential on Quebec nationalism, American civil rights played a role.⁶ This chapter builds on recent works by Mills, Meren, and Lamarre to demonstrate that 1960s discussions of the place of French Canadians within Quebec, of Quebec vis-a-vis the federal government, and of the French language within Canada as a whole, are best understood with an eye to transnational influences.

Organizations like the Friends of SNCC and UGEQ demonstrate that in spite of its predominantly domestic focus, the American civil rights movement is best viewed through a transnational lens. Recent scholarship has considered the movement’s impacts on American foreign policy, as well as its links to decolonization movements.⁷ This

⁵ Interview with Clayton Ruby by Rosanne Waters, 23 October 2012.

⁶ Sean Mills, *The Empire Within: Postcolonial Thought and Political Activism in Sixties Montreal* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2010), 3-11.

⁷ See for example Penny Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold*

transnational interpretation can be pushed further still, because as this chapter illustrates, Canadian students engaged directly with the American movement while simultaneously insisting it held meaning for their own country.

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)

It is impossible to examine Friends of SNCC branches in Canada without first considering SNCC itself. Formed shortly after student sit-ins swept the American South in 1960, SNCC was the preeminent student organization of the civil rights movement, and one of its most important drivers as a whole. SNCC developed a reputation for greater radicalism than other civil rights movement organizations. Its members were eager to push for change at a much faster pace than leaders of other organizations seemed willing to embrace. Noted SNCC scholar Clayborn Carson observes that SNCC was more willing to criticize liberal allies who responded to their demands with caution and hesitation. SNCC also approached organizing efforts from a fundamentally different perspective than other mainstream organizations.⁸ The students favoured independence from established, hierarchical organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). SNCC emphasized grassroots, long-term local leadership stemming from the communities in

War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); Brenda Gayle Plummer, "Peace was the Glue: Europe and African American Freedom," in *The New Black History: Revisiting the Second Reconstruction*, eds. Manning Marable and Elizabeth Kai Hinton (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011): 99-121; Julia Erin Wood, "Freedom is Indivisible: The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Cold War Politics, and International Liberation Movements," Ph.D. Diss., Yale University: 2011; Fanon Che Wilkins, "The Making of Black Internationalists: SNCC and Africa Before the Launching of Black Power, 1960-1965," *The Journal of African American History* 92, no. 4 (Fall 2007): 468-491.

⁸ Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 2.

which they worked.⁹ Significantly, this grassroots approach also provided more space for the prominent role of women as SNCC organizers compared to other mainstream civil rights groups at the time.¹⁰

From 1960 to 1962 SNCC focused on sit-ins, the Freedom Rides to integrate interstate bus travel, and other direct action challenges to segregation. By 1963, the group began to focus more attention and resources on voting rights through voter registration efforts and challenges to all-white primaries in the South.¹¹ Voter registration numbers among African Americans in Mississippi, where SNCC focused much of its voting activities, were incredibly low. The voter registration rate among African Americans in the state was below two per cent, due to racist enforcement of literacy tests, poll taxes, as well as the constant threat and exercise of white supremacist terrorism and violence.¹²

SNCC's activities in Mississippi were complex and expensive undertakings. SNCC was unique in its focus on fostering local leadership in the Deep South. This approach required substantial financial resources to cover the ongoing expenses of the many staff members who lived and worked on the ground in communities for long periods of time. The local residents who risked their livelihood and lives to join SNCC also required support.¹³ Additionally, SNCC mobilized vast numbers of students from across the United States (as well as a smaller number of international students) to spend

⁹ Charles Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Iwan Morgan, "The New Movement: The Student Sit-Ins in 1960," in *From Sit-ins to SNCC: The Student Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s*, eds. Iwan Morgan and Philip Davies (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2012), 8.

¹⁰ Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, 268.

¹¹ Morgan, "The New Movement: The Student Sit-Ins in 1960," 18.

¹² Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, 1.

¹³ See for example Chana Kai Lee, *For Freedom's Sake: The Life of Fannie Lou Hamer* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), x.

their summers in the state working on voter registration. Their most visible effort of this variety came in 1964, with Freedom Summer. Freedom Summer aimed to draw the nation's attention to the fight for voting rights by sending white student volunteers, who inevitably received more sympathetic media coverage, to Mississippi. "You had to bring the country's attention to the state," SNCC's Charles Cobb explained, "and the obvious way to do that was to bring the country's children down there. You make Mississippi a big campaign – you nationalized Mississippi, especially, by bringing America's children to Mississippi. Nobody can ignore the state then."¹⁴ Beyond voter registration activities, SNCC established Freedom Schools to teach civics and black history.¹⁵ Training just shy of one thousand student volunteers, and then supporting their work in Mississippi, was a massive and expensive undertaking.¹⁶ While national attention peaked in 1964, the substantial costs of SNCC's on-going projects continued after Freedom Summer.

The Friends groups provided SNCC with an important source of financial support. First established in 1962 in a few large northern cities, the Friends of SNCC could eventually be found on university campuses and cities across the North and West, as well as in Canada, England, Sweden, and France.¹⁷ The international expansion of Friends of SNCC groups, beginning in 1963, is consistent with recent interpretations of SNCC as a profoundly international organization. Julia Erin Wood frames SNCC as "a human rights

¹⁴ Quoted in Vanessa Murphree, *The Selling of Civil Rights: Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the Use of Public Relations* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 57.

¹⁵ William Sturkey, "I Want to Become a Part of History": Freedom Summer, Freedom Schools, and the *Freedom News*," *Journal of African American History* 95, no. 3-4 (Summer and Fall 2010): 348-368; Jon Hale, "The Student as a force for social change": The Mississippi Freedom Schools and Student Engagement," *Journal of African American History* 96, no. 3 (Summer 2011): 325-347.

¹⁶ Sturkey, "I Want to Become a Part of History," 355.

¹⁷ Carson, *In Struggle*, 70.

organization impacted by, interested in, and active in international and transnational freedom struggles.”¹⁸ According to Fanon Che Wilkins, “SNCC organizers saw their local efforts as inseparable from larger international movements engaged in similar and sometimes overlapping struggles for freedom and self-determination.”¹⁹ A long time civil rights leader, Ella Baker was instrumental in founding SNCC and framing its intellectual and strategic visions. In an article on SNCC’s founding conference, she observed that the attendees “emphasized that the movement was concerned with the moral implications of racial discrimination for the ‘whole world’ and the ‘Human Race.’”²⁰

Friends groups played an important role in SNCC’s financial viability. As one SNCC coordinator put it, “all of our direct action is carried out in the South, and ... Northern support for this work comes mainly through Friends of SNCC...”²¹ Friends fundraising helped cover expenses for projects in the South, including “subsistence wages” for staff, vehicles, gas, insurance, office space, telephones, and related needs.²² SNCC also directed its own vast public relations operation, which was essential to its success attracting national and international attention to injustices in Mississippi and elsewhere.²³ Without this, the movement was at the mercy of the national media’s fleeting spotlight. Paul Good of ABC television has highlighted the mainstream media’s limitations. “We operated with a policy of crisis reporting,” Good has explained, “moving

¹⁸ Wood, “Freedom is Indivisible,” v-vi.

¹⁹ Wilkins, “The Making of Black Internationalists,” 469.

²⁰ Ella Baker, “Bigger Than a Hamburger,” *The Southern Patriot*, May 1960, <<http://www.crmvet.org/docs/sncc2.htm>>

²¹ Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Papers, 1959-1972 (hereafter SNCC Papers), Reel 55, Jon Else to Frater Julian Paul Takacs, O. Carm., 22 September 1964.

²² SNCC Papers, Reel 55, Betty Garman to Pearl Massiah, 22 March 1965.

²³ Murphree, *The Selling of Civil Rights*, 34.

on a story as it boiled up, quickly dropping it the moment its supposed public interest had died, and racing off to a newer crisis.”²⁴ SNCC responded to this uneven coverage by producing its own resources, from press releases and newsletters to branded goods.²⁵ SNCC’s extensive communications operation and fieldwork projects were expensive to maintain; the organization’s projected budget for its various costs in 1965 was \$1,128,000.00.²⁶

The University of Toronto group articulated the Friends of SNCC aims of their group, and by extension the Friends of SNCC more generally, this way:

The purpose of this organization will be to give moral and financial support to the educational programs of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) to aid in their effort to bring about an interracial democracy by non-violent means in the Southern States of the United States of America. It is also our purpose to inform the student body of the University of Toronto and the residents of the city of Toronto concerning the racial struggle in the U.S.A. and its implications for the future of Democracy.²⁷

The dual fundraising and publicity efforts served one another in a cyclical fashion. The Friends fundraised for SNCC’s work in the South; this drew attention to SNCC’s work, which then encouraged more donations. The groups organized campus and community events, such as talks by movement veterans, concerts, poetry readings, and film screenings.²⁸ They also sold SNCC goods, including buttons, posters, bumper stickers,

²⁴ Quoted in Leigh Raiford, *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare: Photography and the African American Freedom Struggle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 77.

²⁵ Raiford, *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare*, 72.

²⁶ SNCC Papers, Reel 55, SNCC Unofficial and Projected Budget for 1965, n.d.

²⁷ Archives of Ontario (hereafter AO), Records of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, RG 76-3, B270363, “A Prospectus,” University of Toronto Friends of SNCC, 1964.

²⁸ AO, Records of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, RG 76-3, B270363, “A Prospectus,” University of Toronto Friends of SNCC, 1964.

and records of songs from the movement.²⁹ Their events concurrently served SNCC's communications efforts, with Friends volunteers reaching out to the local press for coverage of their initiatives. "The SNCC lobbyists and Friends of SNCC groups who worked in satellite offices, who provided background information to media representatives, and who tirelessly pushed government representatives to take action," Vanessa Murphree argues, "received their satisfaction from knowing that their efforts had contributed to a growing number of victories."³⁰ The Toronto Friends reported to Atlanta on their efforts to increase Canadian press coverage of SNCC's work in the South: "[p]ublicity wise, we did a tape which was carried on radio across Canada on the Trans-Canada Matinee and had a couple of articles in the University of Toronto newspaper. We made good contacts and received a good deal of attention at two conferences we went to."³¹

Structurally, the Friends of SNCC reflected SNCC's ideology of developing grassroots leadership rather than driving actions from the top-down.³² Friends groups had a great deal of autonomy to run their own organizations and projects, though they were "directly affiliated with SNCC and its national office in Atlanta, Georgia."³³ A Northern Coordinator at SNCC's head office in Atlanta was the go-between with the Friends groups, providing materials, information, and support. Northern Coordinators liaised with Friends of SNCC contacts, but their role was to support efforts rather than provide

²⁹ McMaster University Archives (hereafter MUA), CUCND/SUPA fonds, Box 5, A Guide to Forming a Friends of SNCC Group in Canada, n.d.

³⁰ Murphree, *The Selling of Civil Rights*, 5.

³¹ SNCC Papers, Reel 55, Diane Burrows to Betty Garman, 30 September 1964.

³² Carson, *In Struggle*, 50.

³³ MUA, CUCND/SUPA fonds, Box 5, A Guide to Forming a Friends of SNCC Group in Canada, n.d.

specific instructions and direction. Individual SNCC staff, volunteers, and local groups were not constrained in terms of what they could discuss or say publicly.³⁴ SNCC did provide some general guidelines and ideas for establishing Friends groups. They suggested new branches start with a small number of members, set up an office space, and reach out for support, volunteers, and sponsorship within their community.³⁵ The most direct connection was through the exchange of fundraised money, which Friends groups sent to Atlanta for distribution to SNCC's projects. According to a coordinator in Atlanta, money from the Friends branches "would come here and be marked for Mississippi. We spend most of our money there anyway."³⁶ Friends groups, SNCC suggested, should keep ten per cent of fundraised money for local operations and overhead costs, such as purchasing materials and printing letterhead, pamphlets, flyers and other publicity tools, with the remainder sent to Atlanta.³⁷

The Friends of SNCC in Canada

The first Canadian Friends of SNCC group formed at the University of Western Ontario (now Western University) in London in late 1963.³⁸ Soon after they were established, the Friends group encountered obstacles to their growth. According to one participant, the students "had spent all last year fighting for recognition by the Student

³⁴ Wood, "Freedom is Indivisible," ix.

³⁵ MUA, CUCND/SUPA fonds, Box 5, A Guide to Forming a Friends of SNCC Group in Canada, n.d.

³⁶ SNCC Papers, Reel 55, Betty Garman to Diane Burrows, 8 October 1964.

³⁷ MUA, CUCND/SUPA fonds, Box 5, A Guide to Forming a Friends of SNCC Group in Canada, n.d.

³⁸ "Militant rights group formed," *The Ubysey*, 7 November 1963; LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 754, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, University of Western Ontario, "Former UW Student Hopes to Form Group to Fight Segregation," *London Free Press*, 23 October 1963.

Govt at the risk of expulsion.”³⁹ While it is unclear precisely why they faced opposition, they were not the only student activists on Western’s campus with this experience. Student mental health advocates undertook campus mental health research, Patricia Jasen relates, “in secret ‘for fear our plan would be squashed,’ and press commentary reflected the resistance students faced.”⁴⁰ An effort in Toronto to organize a Friends group also got off to a slow start. While the group managed to fundraise about \$300 in 1964, this first incarnation did not last long as an active feature of the campus. According to Diane Burrows, a major challenge was “lack of support from the Atlanta Office. They wrote for buttons and literature which never came...”⁴¹ As a SNCC Northern Coordinator allowed, “[w]e have thus far had very little contact with Canadian students” though “this is not because of lack of support but because of problems in communication.”⁴² It was undoubtedly challenging for SNCC to provide start-up support to Friends groups in various locations across North America, when the Atlanta office’s primary focus was understandably on its core activities in the South.

This situation changed with a new wave of Friends of SNCC groups established in late 1964 and early 1965 at the University of Toronto, Carleton, Western, Queen’s, McGill, the University of Saskatchewan, and the University of British Columbia. Diane Burrows played the leading role in coordinating this growth. While she expressed a desire to eventually work again on SNCC’s projects in the South, she explained to a newspaper reporter, “I can do more good right here” because “[r]ight now the crying need is for

³⁹ SNCC Papers, Reel 55, Diane Burrows to Betty Garman, 30 September 1964.

⁴⁰ Patricia Jasen, “Student Activism, Mental Health, and English-Canadian Universities in the 1960s,” *Canadian Historical Review* 92, no. 3 (September 2011): 470.

⁴¹ SNCC Papers, Reel 55, Diane Burrows to Betty Garman, 30 September 1964.

⁴² SNCC Papers, Reel 55, Jon Else to Frater Julian Paul Takacs, O. Carm., 22 September 1964.

funds.” Articulating the broader inspiration behind her work in Mississippi, and her subsequent efforts to support SNCC from Canada, Burrows highlighted SNCC’s transnational focus: “[o]ur movement has been called the battle of our generation, and it is just that... This isn’t just an American problem, it’s a problem of democracy – our whole way of life.”⁴³ SNCC employed her to coordinate activities in Canada on a full time basis, and the previous year’s efforts at establishing Friends groups proved useful as building blocks for these renewed efforts.⁴⁴ Several students involved in the first SNCC group at the University of Toronto participated in its revival meeting, which Burrows arranged early in the 1964-1965 school year.⁴⁵ She pursued a busy schedule that fall, travelling to London, Kingston, Ottawa, and Montreal to discuss her experiences in Mississippi, highlight the goals and needs of civil rights efforts in the United States, and establish campus support clubs.⁴⁶

It is difficult to garner a clear sense of the makeup of Friends of SNCC groups in Canada. This same challenge applies equally to SNCC in the United States, which was not a hierarchical organization structured around official membership rolls.⁴⁷ SNCC experienced a lot of turnover outside of a small, core group throughout the sixties. “SNCC attracted new people far more than it retained the old,” Peter Ling explains, remarking that “the central fact about SNCC’s experience as an organization between 1960 and 1963 was that its fleeting members were far more numerous than its genuine

⁴³ LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 754-755, Canadian Friends of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee – Univ. Of Toronto, Walt Lacosta, “She’s back from the battlefield in Mississippi,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 12 January 1965.

⁴⁴ SNCC Papers, Reel 55, Diane Burrows to Betty Garman, 7 November 1964.

⁴⁵ SNCC Papers, Reel 55, Diane Burrows to Betty Garman, 30 September 1964.

⁴⁶ SNCC Papers, Reel 55, Diane Burrows to Betty Garman, 7 November 1964.

⁴⁷ Wood, “Freedom is Indivisible,” ix.

veterans and stalwarts.”⁴⁸ The same was true of Canadian Friends of SNCC groups during their most active period in the mid-1960s. While undoubtedly a varied collection of students across the campuses where they were active, a cross-section of historical sources provides some insight into general trends in terms of the motivations of their participants.

Among those students actively involved with the Friends of SNCC, many had experience with, or were simultaneously involved in, other activist organizations. Several engaged concurrently with the most prominent Canadian leftist student group of the period, SUPA. This connection made practical as well as ideological sense, certainly for students at the University of Toronto where the two organizations shared office space. Emerging in 1964 out of the Combined Universities Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CUCND), SUPA was a New Left group active on several campuses around the country. Though SUPA, as Brian Palmer notes, “defied easy categorization,” the group shared key ideological perspectives with SNCC and Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the prominent American New Left student group that itself had important linkages with SNCC.⁴⁹ The New Left in both countries shared a common focus on structural inequalities, particularly based on racism and poverty. Reflecting a similar perspective to both SDS and SNCC, SUPA valued what Palmer describes as “a fusion of forms and contents in which non-violence, participatory democracy, equality, non-hierarchical

⁴⁸ Peter Ling, “SNCCs: Not One Committee, but Several,” in *From Sit-ins to SNCC: The Student Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s*, eds. Iwan Morgan and Philip Davies (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2012), 92-93.

⁴⁹ Brian Palmer, *Canada's 1960s: The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 258; Carson, *In Struggle*, 175-180.

structures, and open-ended objectives that valued consensus became both means and ends.”⁵⁰

Some Friends of SNCC members participated in other politically engaged organizations, such as the Canadian Anti-Apartheid Committee, student’s unions, or United Nations (UN) clubs.⁵¹ A small number, particularly those with leadership roles, had prior experience with rights activism in the United States. Tamio Wakayama, like Diane Burrows, was active with SNCC in the South before helping establish the Canadian Friends of SNCC. Clayton Ruby first became involved living in Boston for a summer, where he encountered a Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) boycott. He joined the protest, was arrested, and worked with CORE for the remainder of the summer.⁵² Some participants had past experience with anti-discrimination activism in Canada. Gary Perly had previously worked with the Ontario Labour Committee for Human Rights, helping gather evidence on discriminatory businesses. As he explained,

this is not the first time in my life that I’ve been actively involved in civil rights... We are working full time on the problems of Human Rights and discrimination in this country. I’m also concerned with what’s going on in the United States because what happens there affects what happens here.⁵³

There was a prevailing sense that issues involving prejudice and inequality in Canada, the United States, and elsewhere around the world were interconnected. SNCC was a natural

⁵⁰ Palmer, *Canada’s 1960s*, 258-259.

⁵¹ “U of T Pickets Sit Out in Shifts Chanting ‘We Shall Not Be Moved,’” *Globe and Mail*, 12 March 1965; SNCC Papers, Reel 55, Dimitrios Roussopoulos to Betty Garman, 22 April 1965; SNCC Papers, Reel 55, John W. Roberts to S.N.C.C., 25 March 1965.

⁵² Interview with Clayton Ruby by Rosanne Waters, 23 October 2012.

⁵³ LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 754-755, Canadian Friends of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee – Univ. Of Toronto, “The Non-Violent Approach,” *Scan Magazine*, May 1965.

fit for Canadian students applying a transnational lens to current events because its organizational philosophy also emphasized transnational awareness and concern.⁵⁴

Overlapping concern with injustice at the local and global levels was also a factor for those involved with the Friends of SNCC who had personal experience with discrimination. Tamio Wakayama's family, along with other Japanese Canadians, was sent to an internment camp during World War II.⁵⁵ His family moved to Chatham, Ontario after the war, where Wakayama experienced intense racism growing up. Explaining his decision to join the American movement in 1963, Wakayama recalls watching coverage of the movement on television, and notes that "[i]n some deep but still unnamed part of me I understood the essence of their struggle, and I had a compelling need to witness it first hand."⁵⁶ Establishing some of the first Friends groups in Canada upon his return, Wakayama explained,

[w]hat I would eventually like to see is an active protest group here. While I was in Atlanta I had heard or read of protest groups springing up in many universities the world over; none of these was on a Canadian campus. I think it would be very helpful for both Snick and Western if such a thing could develop here.⁵⁷

After speaking at several Canadian universities on his experiences and playing a key role in establishing Friends groups, Wakayama returned to the American South

⁵⁴ Wood, "Freedom is Indivisible," vi.

⁵⁵ For more on racism against Japanese Canadians and Internment during WWII, see Stephanie Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest: Defending Citizens of Japanese Ancestry in North America, 1942-49* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press), 2008; Stephanie Bangarth, "The Second World War and Canada's Early Human Rights Movement: The Asian Canadian Experience," in *A History of Human Rights in Canada: Essential Readings*, ed. Janet Miron (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press), 61-78.

⁵⁶ Quoted in Xiaoping Li, *Voices Rising: Asian Canadian Cultural Activism* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007), 89-92.

⁵⁷ LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 754, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, University of Western Ontario, "Western Students Back Sit-Ins," *The Chevron*, n.d.

in 1964 as a SNCC photographer.⁵⁸ Burnley “Rocky” Jones was working for the provincial government in Toronto when the local Friends of SNCC organized Selma sympathy protests. Jones became involved in the protests, during which time he travelled to Washington, D.C. with a small contingent of Canadians in an effort to lobby President Lyndon Johnson. After the protests, Jones worked on Friends of SNCC publicity in Toronto before returning to his home province of Nova Scotia.⁵⁹ Describing the newly created Queen’s University group, meanwhile, Nesta Scott informed the Northern Coordinator at SNCC’s office in Atlanta, “[o]ur coordinating group here is an integrated one, the President Dennis Awander is a Negro from Trinidad, the Secretary-Treasurer is also a Negro from Jamaica (that’s me) the Fund Raising, Education, and Publicity Managers are all Canadians.”⁶⁰ Many, likely most, members were white, reflecting a broader lack of diversity on Canadian campuses at a time when racist immigration policies remained in place. But some members had more direct experiences with prejudice.

For students involved with the Friends of SNCC in Canada, one of the most powerful motivating factors was a desire to participate in something that seemed especially relevant and meaningful at that particular historical moment. These students came of age while the powerful new medium of television brought stories of decolonization, Apartheid, and Jim Crow into their living rooms on a daily basis. Clément

⁵⁸ LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 755, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Univ. Of Toronto, memo, University of Toronto Communist Activities Within Toronto, Ontario, 17 June 1964; Raiford, *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare*, 105.

⁵⁹ LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 755, Canadian Friends of the Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee, Univ. of Toronto, memo, 15 April 1965.

⁶⁰ SNCC Papers, Reel 55, Nesta Scott to Betty Garman, 4 February 1965.

argues, with reference to the use of “generation” as a category of historical analysis, “that a community of people who were all born within the same short span of years shared a common historical and cultural experience that collectively shaped their lives...”⁶¹ For students in the 1960s, media coverage of fights against racial discrimination contributed to this shared experience. Harvey L. Shepherd spoke to a desire for engagement with meaningful activism after the 1965 Selma protests in Toronto. He mused, “what brought people to the consulate, and to participate in Friends of SNCC, was mainly something about their own lives. There must have been a feeling that whatever they were doing normally was pretty meaningless and futile, and that here was a chance to change that fact about their own lives.”⁶² Robertson Wood explained his work with the Toronto Friends of SNCC and for SNCC in Mississippi in comparable terms: “indifference and apathy are unspoken support for those who are perpetrating prejudice, injustice, hate, beatings and murder. So, I must do something. Suddenly it is more important to work for freedom, than to earn money, to establish a home, to gain position...”⁶³ Students in Canada involved themselves in SNCC through a range of activities, events, and efforts. Some were deeply involved; others connected fleetingly. No matter their level of engagement, there was a prevailing sense that this was one of the most pressing issues of the period.

Following her return to Canada, Diane Burrows proposed that the Friends of SNCC set up a Canadian exchange program for Mississippi students who had participated in SNCC’s Freedom Schools. Burrows arranged to meet Canadian government officials in

⁶¹ Dominique Clément, “Generations and the Transformation of Social Movements in Postwar Canada,” *Histoire sociale/Social History* 42, no. 84 (November 2009): 371.

⁶² MUA, CUCND/SUPA fonds, Box 21, Harvey L. Shepherd, “SNCC in Canada,” *SUPA Newsletter* 1, no. 8, 30 August 1965.

⁶³ SNCC Papers, Reel 55, Robertson Wood to Betty Garman, 26 March 1965.

education and immigration to discuss the idea, but ultimately decided it was not the best project for the young Canadian organizations. It would mean, she noted,

that only half of the money we would raise would [sic] be leaving the country – the remainder would remain in a scholarship fund for Mississippi students.... after talking to a lot of people I have decided that the exchange program is really too complicated to consider as an initial project and there are easier things we can be doing in the meantime.⁶⁴

Burrows concentrated instead on developing Friends campus groups and orchestrating much-needed fundraising. One of the first major activities was to organize a tour of the Freedom Singers, four SNCC veterans who raised money by travelling and performing around North America. The Freedom Singers concerts raised funds through ticket sales and donations, while their stories about working for civil rights attracted media attention. As one member of the Freedom Singers put it, “[t]hey became a major way of making people who were not on the scene feel the intensity of what was happening in the South.”⁶⁵ According to another Freedom Singer, they were “a singing newspaper.”⁶⁶ The SNCC musicians travelled the United States performing at events and venues small and large, all the while raising just shy of \$50,000 for SNCC.⁶⁷ The early 1965 tour brought the activist-musicians to Canada for the first time, with concerts in Windsor, Hamilton, Waterloo, London, Toronto, Kingston, Ottawa, and Montreal. The shows raised varying amounts, whether \$35 in Hamilton or \$400 in Kingston.⁶⁸ A free Toronto concert drew a

⁶⁴ SNCC Papers, Reel 55, Diane Burrows to Betty Garman, 30 September 1964.

⁶⁵ Quoted in Carson, *In Struggle*, 64.

⁶⁶ Quoted in Leslie Paige Rose, “The Freedom Singers of the Civil Rights Movement: Music Functioning for Freedom,” *Applications of Research in Music Education* 25, no. 2 (January 2007): 61.

⁶⁷ Rose, “The Freedom Singers of the Civil Rights Movement,” 61.

⁶⁸ SNCC Papers, Reel 55, Nesta Scott to Betty Garman, 4 February 1965; SNCC Papers, Reel 55, Gilles Poulin to Student Non Violent Coordinating Committee, 8 February 1965; SNCC Papers, Reel 55, Paul D. Perry to Betty Garman, 1 February 1965; SNCC Papers, Reel 55, Judy ? to Betty Garman, 2 March 1965.

crowd of 1,400 people and voluntary donations totalling about \$1,500.⁶⁹ At the Kingston show, where the Freedom Singers reportedly “found an enthusiastic audience,” one of the members explained, “[s]uccess in our case doesn’t mean reaction to our capabilities as singers, but rather if we ‘turn on’... potential leaders in conditions as they exist today.”⁷⁰ Based on events in the months that followed, the Freedom Singers, and the Friends of SNCC more broadly, succeeded in sparking local awareness, interest, and participation.

The Selma Protests in Canada

While Canadian Friends groups engaged in some fundraising efforts in early 1965, these operations were generally quite small. They are important to chronicle because though limited in size, they established a foundation upon which a more dramatic period of activism was built. The apogee of Friends activities in Canada was a period of intensive protest in March 1965, catalysed by events 1,600 kilometres away in Selma, Alabama. Civil rights organizations had been working to register African Americans, who accounted for a mere two per cent of all voters, to vote since 1963.⁷¹ The Selma campaign attracted international media attention in early 1965. When a state trooper killed a nonviolent protestor named Jimmie Lee Jackson, voting rights activists planned an 80-kilometer march from Selma to the State Capitol in Montgomery. Alabama state troopers and the local police, led by Sheriff Jim Clark, responded with brutal violence. The height of this violence came on “Bloody Sunday,” March 7, 1965. Embarking on their planned

⁶⁹ “Net \$2,500 in campus drive for civil rights workers,” *The Varsity*, 25 January 1965.

⁷⁰ LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v.755, Student’s Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee – Queen’s University, David Cleland, “Freedom Singers Hit on Campus With Message from U.S. South,” *Kingston Whig-Standard*, 25 January 1965.

⁷¹ Carson, *In Struggle*, 158.

journey to Montgomery, nonviolent marchers encountered a deep line of police and state troopers on the Edmund Pettis Bridge. Waves of club wielding troops, many mounted on horseback, unleashed tear gas and levelled a brutal assault upon the marchers caught on the bridge. Prathia Hall was a young SNCC activist working in the Atlanta office that day, and she recalled hearing “[o]ver the phone... screams of people who were being attacked.” She travelled to Selma shortly thereafter, and later described it as “a very traumatic time for me. When we got there we saw what had happened. It was a bloody mess; people’s heads had been beaten; they’d been gassed.”⁷² SNCC chairman John Lewis, who was seriously injured that day, has reflected on the impact of Bloody Sunday:

The American public had already seen so much of this sort of thing, countless images of beatings and dogs and cursing and hoses. But something about that day in Selma touched a nerve deeper than anything that had come before. Maybe it was the concentrated focus of the scene, the mass movement of those troopers on foot and riders on horseback rolling into and over two long lines of stoic, silent, unarmed people... This was a face-off in the most vivid terms between a dignified, composed, completely nonviolent multitude of silent protestors and the truly malevolent force of a heavily armed, hateful battalion of troopers. The sight of them rolling over us like human tanks was something that had never been seen before.⁷³

Demonstrations and protests against violence in Selma spread across the United States and to several other countries.⁷⁴ “From Bangor to Honolulu,” a *Globe and Mail* article put it, “citizens of varied estates and persuasions joined during the past week in protest

⁷² Prathia Hall, “Bloody Selma,” in *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC*, eds. Faith S. Holsaert, Martha Prescod Norman Noonan, Judy Richardson, Betty Garman Robinson, Jean Smith Young, and Dorothy M. Zellner (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 471.

⁷³ John Lewis, *Walking With the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998), 331.

⁷⁴ David S. Churchill, “SUPA, Selma, and Stevenson: The Politics of Solidarity in mid-1960s Toronto,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 44, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 46.

marches, sit-ins, prayer vigils, rallies and other shows of empathy for the beleaguered Negroes in Selma...”⁷⁵

Against this backdrop, a protest arose in Toronto. Organized by the local Friends of SNCC, hundreds of University of Toronto students and allies marched on the American consulate on March 10. Upon their arrival at the consulate on University Avenue, a group of students numbering in the sixties sat-down and promised to remain in place, “until satisfactory action is taken in Selma to remedy the situation.”⁷⁶ The organizers released an open letter to articulate their specific aims. They demanded federal government protection for the voting rights workers in Selma, the arrest of Selma Sheriff Jim Clark, and new federal legislation to protect voting rights. The statement also addressed the inevitable questions about how Canadian students could justify their actions over the domestic events of another country:

As Canadians concerned with the dignity and safety of our fellow human beings, and as individuals who believe that violence is never a solution to crisis, we call on Washington to enforce the American constitution and support freedom in Alabama ... The gravity of this situation compels us to remain on the premises of the Consulate until we are assured that the US Government has taken positive steps to relieve the situation in Alabama and to implement the above demands. We hope the seriousness of our action will make it clear that responsible people around the world will not tolerate such a situation in a country which claims to be a defender of Freedom – Racism has no place in Democracy.⁷⁷

The sit-in protest spanned a week, with temperatures falling well below zero throughout.

A few days in, they managed to arrange a meeting with the American consul general, who

⁷⁵ “Thousands Protest,” *Globe and Mail*, 15 March 1965.

⁷⁶ “Students plan vigil for Negroes,” *Toronto Star*, 10 March 1965.

⁷⁷ LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 754-755, Canadian Friends of the Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee – Univ. Of Toronto, “Open Letter to the Consul General of the United States of America,” 10 March 1965.

reportedly expressed a level of sympathy, but informed the deputation, “[n]either I nor my associates can comply with your request to act in a purely personal capacity.”⁷⁸

The Canadian protest movement around Selma expanded quickly, with the Friends of SNCC and allied organizations playing an integral role in its various elements. While it seemed to emerge suddenly, the protest was actually built upon a foundation the student group had established during the previous months. More experienced members of the Friends of SNCC and SUPA trained new sit-in participants in non-violent techniques, and that training paid dividends as the group “sat singing and listening to lectures on non-violence techniques.”⁷⁹ They put their training into practice through the use of nonviolent resistance when members of the Toronto police attempted to move the protestors from their position directly in front of the consulate.⁸⁰ A major reason such an intense action unfolded in Canada, moreover, was a personal connection between the Canadian Friends of SNCC and events in Selma. Several months before the Selma action, the nascent Friends groups in Toronto and Montreal had arranged speaking engagements for SNCC chairman John Lewis. The invitation to Lewis was one of the University of Toronto group’s earliest actions, while at McGill University he was to be their first featured speaker.⁸¹ Both campus groups had to cancel the events suddenly after Lewis was seriously injured on Bloody Sunday. As the Toronto protestors put it bluntly, Lewis had

⁷⁸ “U of T Pickets Sit Out in Shifts Chanting ‘We Shall Not Be Moved,’” *Globe and Mail*, 12 March 1965.

⁷⁹ Churchill, “SUPA, Selma, and Stevenson,” 48; “Demonstrators undaunted by cold,” *The Varsity*, 12 March 1965.

⁸⁰ Kenneth Drushka, “U of T Protesters Bed Down for Night,” *Globe and Mail*, 11 March 1965.

⁸¹ SNCC Papers, Reel 55, R. Zev Freedman to John Lewis, 27 October 1964; LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 754, Friends of the Student Non Violent Co-ordinating Comm. – McGill Univ., “Lewis to Consider SNCC and Alabama,” *McGill Daily*, 12 December 1964.

to cancel his visit “because his skull was fractured by an Alabama state trooper...”⁸² This injury, Churchill argues, personalized the violence in Selma for Canadian students in a way the film footage, photographs, and newspaper stories from Alabama could not.⁸³ Diane Burrows explained at the outset of the Toronto-based protests, “[w]e are here because we are concerned about the crisis in Alabama. We are particularly concerned because John Lewis, the SNCC chairman was to have spoken here tomorrow...”⁸⁴

Recognizing the momentum, fundraising potential, and media coverage stemming from events in Canada, SNCC in Atlanta sent a young man and woman in Lewis’ place. Upon their arrival at the University of Toronto, Lafayette Surney and Prathia Hall spoke at a 600-person rally. Articulating a transnational view of the movement, Hall linked the Canadian protests with Alabama and decolonization in Africa:

Those students sitting on the sidewalk in front of the flag to which I have pledged my allegiance makes a statement which I hope reminds my government that the question of humanity is international and can maybe even cross state lines into Alabama. Our cry in Alabama is not simply for a token vote, but is the same as that of many African nations – one man, one vote...⁸⁵

A march down University Avenue and past the United States consulate drew 2,000 participants the following day, in what the *Toronto Star* described as “one of the city’s biggest-ever street demonstrations.”⁸⁶

The Friends of SNCC and allies organized a march on Parliament Hill in Ottawa on March 14, which involved between 1,500 and 2,000 marchers. The march had been

⁸² “Demands at the Consulate,” *The Varsity*, 11 March 1965.

⁸³ Churchill, “SUPA, Selma, and Stevenson,” 48.

⁸⁴ Kenneth Drushka, “U of T Protesters Bed Down for Night,” *Globe and Mail*, 11 March 1965.

⁸⁵ “U of T Pickets Sit Out in Shifts Chanting ‘We Shall Not Be Moved,’” *Globe and Mail*, 12 March 1965.

⁸⁶ “2,000 March Here – Next Stop Ottawa,” *Toronto Star*, 13 March 1965.

planned two days previous at a strategy meeting in Toronto, which representatives from Friends groups across Ontario campuses attended.⁸⁷ At the meeting, planners arranged transportation from across the province, including a caravan of cars and “freedom buses” to transport students from Toronto to Ottawa.⁸⁸ One hundred students travelled to the Ottawa protest from Queen’s, while two buses of students made the trek from Western in London.⁸⁹ “Some longtime Ottawa residents,” one newspaper reported, “described it as the biggest march they could recall and speculated it may have been the biggest civil rights demonstration in Canada.”⁹⁰ In her speech to the Ottawa protestors, Prathia Hall again emphasized transnational activism:

our destinies are bound together. Freedom is not a sectional issue but applies to people all over the world. I’m sure the action of our Canadian friends has caused reaction in Washington. We need you to continue to pressure our President to create enforceable legislation, rather than issue just another statement.⁹¹

Following this lead, ten Canadian activists travelled to Washington seeking a meeting with President Johnson to discuss voting rights. The group, including Diane Burrows and Rocky Jones, was “diplomatically turned aside by White House aides” in their effort to

⁸⁷ LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 755, Student’s Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee – Queen’s University Branch, Report Student’s Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee – Queen’s University Branch – Communist Activities Within – Kingston, Ontario, 16 March 1965.

⁸⁸ “2,000 March Here – Next Stop Ottawa,” *Toronto Star*, 13 March 1965.

⁸⁹ LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 755, Canadian Friends of the Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee Queen’s University Branch, Sally Barnes, “100 Queen’s Students Join in Ottawa Protest March,” *Kingston Whig Standard*, 15 March 1965; LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 754, Student Nonviolent Co-ordinating Committee University of Western Ontario, “UWO Group Among 2,000 in Ottawa Protest March,” *London Free Press*, 15 March 1965; LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 754, Student Nonviolent Co-ordinating Committee University of Western Ontario, “SNCC,” *The Gazette*, 7 October 1966.

⁹⁰ Bernard Dufresne, “2000 Join in Protest at Ottawa,” *Globe and Mail*, 15 March 1965.

⁹¹ LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 754, Student Nonviolent Co-ordinating Committee University of Western Ontario, “UWO Group Among 2,000 in Ottawa Protest March,” *London Free Press*, 15 March 1965.

meet with the president or vice-president, though they did get a meeting with two of the president's advisors.⁹²

Students with the University of British Columbia's Friends of SNCC organized a 150 student strong picket at the American consulate in Vancouver.⁹³ They also arranged a rally of more than 1,000 students, featuring speakers from the campus Friends of SNCC and a SNCC representative from the United States.⁹⁴ These efforts built on previous civil rights support work in the province. In 1964 the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association and British Columbia Association for the Advancement of Colored People had teamed up to establish the Fund for Racial Equality to raise money for the legal defense of American civil rights activists.⁹⁵ The University of Saskatchewan Friends of SNCC sent two students to participate in the march from Selma to Montgomery from March 21-25. Following their departure for the march, the Friends of SNCC distributed a letter describing their trip to Alabama and seeking donations.⁹⁶ Upon their return to the province, the students who had joined the Alabama march travelled Saskatchewan to discuss their experience and raise money for the movement.⁹⁷

⁹² "Toronto Delegation Visits US: Wants Marchers Protected," *Globe and Mail*, 20 March 1965; LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 755-755, Canadian Friends of the Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee – Univ. Of Toronto, "Only 500 at SNCC Rally: Lack of Support Alarms Group," *The Telegram*, 21 March 1965.

⁹³ LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 755, Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee Vancouver, B.C., "We'll picket till Negro has right to march, say students," *Vancouver Province*, 17 March 1965.

⁹⁴ "Rights workers plead for aid," *The Ubysey*, 16 March 1965.

⁹⁵ National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter NARA), General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, SOC 14-1, Box 4221, "Reaction in British Columbia to U.S. Racial Situation," Airgram from AmConGen Vancouver, B.C. to Department of State, 17 July 1963.

⁹⁶ LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, 755, Friends of the Student Non Violent Co-ordinating Committee – Univ. Of Sask., "Saskatchewan Students In Alabama Freedom March," *The Commonwealth*, 31 March 1965.

⁹⁷ LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, 755, Friends of the Student Non Violent Co-ordinating Committee – Univ. Of Sask., Lorne A. Brown, "Campaign To Help Alabama Negroes," *The Commonwealth*, 28 April 1965.

The Civil Rights Movement, Language Rights, and Nationalism in Quebec

SNCC Executive Secretary James Forman visited Montreal to encourage the city's energetic Selma protests.⁹⁸ A French speaker, Forman discussed transnational human rights concerns in a manner that spoke directly to his audience: "Aucun homme dans le monde n'est vraiment libre lorsque d'autres homes luttent pour la reconnaissance de leurs droits. Nous ne luttons pas seulement pour les Noirs. Nous luttons pour tous ceux, Noirs ou Blancs, qui souffrent de discrimination."⁹⁹ He concluded his address to the protestors with the words, "[v]ive la solidarité étudiante."¹⁰⁰ Surney and Hall also travelled to Montreal following the rallies in Toronto and Ottawa. Efforts in the city included fundraisers for SNCC, an on-going sit-in at Montreal's American consulate, a 1,500-person march, and "a triumphal 3000 student sit-down during the heaviest traffic hour, by the Union Generale des Etudiant du Quebec [*sic*] (UGEQ)."¹⁰¹ UGEQ sent a letter to President Johnson during the protests, expressing "l'indignation des étudiants devant les actes de barbarie qui se sont déroulés récemment en Alabama et particulièrement à Selma."¹⁰² During the march on the consulate, a delegation of students, joined by Lafayette Surney, managed to gain a brief audience with the Consul-General.¹⁰³ The

⁹⁸ Richard Lentz and Karla K. Gower, *The Opinions of Mankind: Racial Issues, Press, and Propaganda in the Cold War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2010), 195.

⁹⁹ Quoted in Jean Lamarre, « Le mouvement étudiant américain et la contestation dans les années 1960. Incompatibilité et inspiration pour le mouvement étudiant québécois, » *Histoire sociale/Social history* 46, no. 92 (Novembre/November 2013) : 413.

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in Jean Lamarre, « Au service des étudiants et de la nation, » *Bulletin d'histoire politique* 16, no. 2 (2008).

¹⁰¹ Lentz and Gower, *The Opinions of Mankind*, 195; SNCC Papers, Reel 55, Dimitrios Roussopoulos to Betty Garman, 22 April 1965.

¹⁰² Quoted in Lamarre, « Au service des étudiants et de la nation ».

¹⁰³ LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v.754, Friends of the Student Non Violent Co-ordinating Comm. – McGill Univ., Bryan Goodyer, "Nine Demonstrators Forcibly Removed," *Montreal Gazette*, 17 March 1965.

Montreal sit-in at the consulate, involving students from McGill's Friends of SNCC, UGEQ, and the Montreal Peace Centre, continued until marchers from Selma had successfully completed their weeklong trek to the Alabama state capitol in Montgomery, fulfilling the planned march from Selma that had been disrupted so violently on Bloody Sunday.¹⁰⁴

This was not the first time students in Quebec had engaged with international activism. As Nicole Neatby explains, those involved with the international peace movement in the 1950s “strongly believed they could and should break out of their national framework and work in collaboration with fellow students at a supra-national level. They felt it was their duty to behave primarily as ‘citizens of the world.’”¹⁰⁵ The same philosophy was evident in 1965. While marking continuity with past efforts, the Selma actions also underlined the prevailing view that the American example held particular relevance for Quebec. The enthusiastic participation of Quebec students resulted in part from the view that there was a parallel between the marginalized position of African Americans in the United States and French Canadians.¹⁰⁶ Pierre Vallières offered the most famous discussion of this perspective in his influential book, *Nègres blancs d'Amérique*, which posited that French Canadians mirrored oppressed and colonized populations around the world. In Vallières' view, Palmer explains, “[i]t

¹⁰⁴ SNCC Papers, Reel 55, Press Release, Sit-Down Before US Consulate Against Violence in Alabama and Vietnam, 18 March 1965; LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 754, Friends of the Student Non Violent Coordinating Comm. – McGill University, Bryan Goodyer, “Mass March Staged on U.S. Consulate,” *Montreal Gazette*, 17 March 1965.

¹⁰⁵ Nicole Neatby, “Student Leaders at the University of Montreal from 1950 to 1958: Beyond the ‘Carabin Persona,’” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 29, no. 3 (Fall 1994).

¹⁰⁶ José Igartua, “The Sixties in Quebec,” in *Debating Dissent: Canada and the Sixties*, eds. Lara Campbell, Dominique Clément, and Gregory S. Kealey (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 261.

mattered not that the French in Canada, however subjugated, were not marked with a visible blackness... They bore the material scars of this subjugation in their depressed housing conditions, their lowly place on the national wage scale, and their coerced subservience to Anglo-American authorities...”¹⁰⁷ Likewise, an article in the leftist Quebec nationalist magazine *Parti Pris* argued, “il apparaît évident que nous sommes les Noirs du Canada.”¹⁰⁸

Quebec was in the midst of widespread and profound social and political transformations in the 1960s. Building for years, the Quiet Revolution emerged in full force with the election of Jean Lesage in 1960. His party’s slogan “maître chez nous” undergirded the provincial government’s varied efforts to increase the status and power of French Canadians within Quebec and of the province vis-a-vis the federal government. Igartua describes the Quiet Revolution as “a form of collective dissent against an established order which oppressed French Canadians economically and socially.”¹⁰⁹ The civil rights movement offered one source of inspiration and ideas for those in Quebec seeking to protect and promote the French language, enhance French Canadian power within the province, and increasingly for some, to attain independence. It was an obvious reference point because, as in other parts of Canada, events associated with the American civil rights movement were covered extensively in Quebec. Future Parti Québécois leader René Lévesque spoke of the emerging importance of international influences, via global media connections, on Quebec: “Radio and films, and now television, have opened for us

¹⁰⁷ Palmer, *Canada’s 1960s*, 339.

¹⁰⁸ Gérald Godin, « la folie bilinguale », *Parti Pris* 3, no. 10, mai 1966.

¹⁰⁹ Igartua, “The Sixties in Quebec,” 249.

a window onto everything that goes on throughout the world: the events – and the ideas too – of all humanity invade our homes day after day.”¹¹⁰

The increasingly radical student movement in Quebec was especially attuned to international matters. The province’s student population had grown in size during the Quiet Revolution, and the emergent student movement was, Igartua suggests, “more vigorous” than in other provinces.¹¹¹ Established in 1964, UGEQ had a demonstrated interest in issues like international human rights, decolonization, and the African American civil rights movement.¹¹² A militant syndicalist student organization, UGEQ’s founding charter drew on the UN’s Declaration of Human Rights and called for a global end to racial, linguistic, and religious discrimination.¹¹³ The charter established UGEQ’s goal, Lamarre notes, “de stimuler chez l’étudiant une prise de conscience de ses responsabilités sociales et politiques,” both in Quebec and around the world.¹¹⁴ In keeping with its international outlook, an American CORE representative spoke at UGEQ’s first general meeting. The CORE speaker, attendee Dimitrios Roussopolous noted, “was given a standing ovation, and [was] asked to speak twice the following day.”¹¹⁵ The same meeting included a screening of a film on the March on Washington for Jobs and

¹¹⁰ René Lévesque, “An Option for Québec,” in *Interpreting Canada’s Past: A Post-Confederation Reader 4th ed.*, eds. J.M. Bumsted, Len Kuffert, and Michel Ducharme (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2012): 360.

¹¹¹ Igartua, “The Sixties in Quebec,” 264.

¹¹² Marcel Martel, “Riot at Sir George Williams: Giving Meaning to Student Dissent,” in *Debating Dissent: Canada and the Sixties*, eds. Lara Campbell, Dominique Clément, and Gregory S. Kealey (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 103.

¹¹³ Jean Lamarre, « Au service des étudiants et de la nation ».

¹¹⁴ Jean Lamarre, « Au service des étudiants et de la nation ».

¹¹⁵ SNCC Papers, Reel 55, Dimitrios Roussopolous to Betty Garman, 11 March 1965.

Freedom, translated into French.¹¹⁶ Shortly thereafter, the UGEQ hosted the Freedom Singers for a performance in Montreal during their Canadian tour.¹¹⁷

UGEQ's Selma actions unfolded a month after the Freedom Singers concert. Dimitrios Roussopoulos, a leader with the CUCND and then SUPA, was actively involved in the Selma protests in Quebec. He informed SNCC's Atlanta office in the midst of the protests, "there is a great deal of interest in Quebec amongst French-Canadian youth in the Freedom Movement. Largely because there is a Freedom movement of sorts in Quebec as well."¹¹⁸ Roussopoulos concluded the letter by indicating that students from Quebec hoped to visit SNCC's Atlanta office, "to study non-violent techniques, study the movement, examine the working conditions of the people and so on."¹¹⁹ While it is unclear whether the proposed trip took place, the Selma protests proved integral to UGEQ's arrival as a leading voice in Quebec in the later 1960s. According to Lamarre, events in March 1965, "consacrent, selon plusieurs observateurs, la réelle naissance de l'UGEQ." It was through their highly visible protests against racial discrimination in the United States, Lamarre continues, "que l'UGEQ acquiert une crédibilité aux yeux de ceux et celles qu'elle veut défendre et auprès de la population."¹²⁰ While an important early influence, however, Lamarre argues elsewhere that connections with the broader student movement in the United States were limited to these civil rights movement events: "Or exception faite de la marche en Alabama, à aucun moment, le mouvement étudiant québécois n'a voulu s'arrimer avec le mouvement étudiant

¹¹⁶ SNCC Papers, Reel 55, Dimitrios Roussopoulos to Betty Garman, 11 March 1965.

¹¹⁷ Jean Lamarre, « Au service des étudiants et de la nation ».

¹¹⁸ SNCC Papers, Reel 55, Dimitrios Roussopoulos to Betty Garman, 11 March 1965.

¹¹⁹ SNCC Papers, Reel 55, Dimitrios Roussopoulos to Betty Garman, 11 March 1965.

¹²⁰ Jean Lamarre, « Au service des étudiants et de la nation ».

américain, sous ses différentes forms, pour créer un mouvement continental de revendications.”¹²¹

Other political organizations in Quebec demonstrated awareness and interest in American civil rights matters. A nationalist political organization in favour of independence, Le Rassemblement pour l'Indépendance Nationale (RIN) drew specifically on civil rights movement protest strategies. Detailing its political program, aims, and purpose, RIN's leader explained that the organization “est un parti politique et doit conquérir le pouvoir.”¹²² To do so,

nous devons varier la forme de nos manifestation. Le piquetage ne suffit plus; il faudra s'engager résolument dans la résistance passive : s'asseoir dans la rue, boycotter les manifestation fédéralistes (exemple : manifestations de l'armée 'canadian') faire du 'sit-in' (méthode employée par les Noirs américains) dans les restaurants qui refusent le respect aux Canadiens français, dans les gares, dans les bars, partout ou cela sera nécessaire.¹²³

The RIN employed these strategies on a few occasions. The group orchestrated a sit-in to demonstrate its view that CN Rail should grant employees in the province a paid vacation day on St-Jean Baptiste Day.¹²⁴ In June 1965, a few months after the Selma protests, about 75 RIN members participated in a sit-in at a restaurant in Montreal as a protest against businesses that only offered their services in English. RIN's leader warned at the time that such “[s]it-ins’ will not be confined to restaurants but extended to other kinds of businesses such as department stores and automatic parking garages.”¹²⁵

¹²¹ Lamarre, « Le mouvement étudiant américain et la contestation dans les années 1960 », 422.

¹²² Pierre Bourgault, « programme politique et électoral », *Parti Pris 1*, no. 3 (décembre 1963), 8.

¹²³ Bourgault, « programme politique et électoral », 19.

¹²⁴ Igartua, “The Sixties in Quebec,” 257.

¹²⁵ “Montreal Demonstrators Use New Tactics,” *The London Times*, 24 June 1965.

While these examples demonstrate interest in American civil rights issues, this was far from the only international influence on nationalism in Quebec. The importance of anti-colonial movements was notably more widespread and profound. The civil rights movement's focus on equality in terms of civil and political rights held limited applicability in a province where debates around cultural rights, economic power, and nationhood predominated. The example of an oppressed minority challenging legalized marginalization offered inspiration, but its specific rhetoric, tactics, and goals were of limited applicability. As Mills notes, anti-colonial movements and theories proved more influential among Quebec nationalist thinkers and activists. Quebec's position was frequently portrayed as a colonial situation wherein economic, social, and political power was concentrated in the hands of an English-speaking minority.¹²⁶ *Parti Pris*, Meren observes, "developed a virulent analysis of Quebec as a colony."¹²⁷ "L'aliénation dont nous avons souffert individuellement," one article contended, "ne faisait que refléter celle d'un peuple qui, relativement au contexte nord-américain, est sous-développé, parce qu'il est COLONISÉ..."¹²⁸ An RIN leader likewise portrayed Quebec as "un cas manigeste de colonization... vous avez... une nation... qui existe depuis deux siècles avant d'être conquise et occupée par une autre."¹²⁹ While the Selma protests helped catalyse UGEQ's presence in the province, moreover, decolonization was its more common international reference point. "Résolument nationaliste," Lamarre explains, UGEQ "met l'accent sur le

¹²⁶ Mills, *The Empire Within*, 4. See also Éric Bédard, "The Intellectual Origins of the October Crisis," in *Creating Postwar Canada: Community, Diversity, and Dissent*, eds. Magda Fahrni and Robert Rutherford (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008): 45-60.

¹²⁷ David Meren, "An Atmosphere of Libération: The Role of Decolonization in the France-Quebec Rapprochement of the 1960s," *Canadian Historical Review* 92, no. 2 (June 2011): 278.

¹²⁸ Pierre Maheu, « de la révolte à la révolution », *Parti Pris* 1, no. 1, octobre 1963.

¹²⁹ Quoted in Meren, "An Atmosphere of Libération," 279.

droit à l'autodétermination de tous les peuples et à l'émancipation des pays du Tiers-Monde."¹³⁰

One American perspective that was interwoven with both the civil rights movement and anti-colonial movements received substantive and continued attention in Quebec throughout the sixties. The discourse on decolonization facilitated a particular interest among Quebec activists in the concept of Black Power.¹³¹ The emphasis Black Power advocates placed on demanding political and economic power, and on enhancing cultural pride and self-determination, were influential in Quebec. The interrelationship between global decolonization movements and Black Power activists like Stokely Carmichael also lent these ideas relevance, for example in Pierre Vallières' writing.¹³² Black Power activists and leftist nationalist activists in Quebec also shared a common critique of United States government actions, which they interpreted through a lens of imperialism.¹³³ The connectivity of radical student activism and Quebec nationalism with Black Power and decolonization was on display when a small group of student protesters gathered in 1967 at Montreal's American consulate. There to oppose a proposed American law that would curtail intra-state travel for noted activists in the wake of urban riots, the protestors released a statement reading, "[l]es défenseurs d'un Québec libre se

¹³⁰ Jean Lamarre, « Au service des étudiants et de la nation ».

¹³¹ Mills, *The Empire Within*, 70.

¹³² Palmer, *Canada's 1960s*, 338; Mills, *The Empire Within*, 77-78.

¹³³ Concerns with American economic and cultural influences had previously played a role in sparking the Quiet Revolution. See Michael D. Behiels, *Prelude to Quebec's Quiet Revolution: Liberalism versus Neo-Nationalism, 1945-1960* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985); William D. Coleman, *The Independence Movement in Quebec 1945-1980* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984).

sont vite rendu compte que leurs lutes étaient liée à la lute des noirs américains. Nous avons tous ennemi commun et cet ennemi n'est nul autre que l'impérialisme des E-U!"¹³⁴

Though widespread, comparisons of French Canadians with decolonization movements in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean were problematic. "Few could honestly argue," Mills notes, "that Quebec faced the same type of repression as colonial nations in Africa, Latin America, or Asia..."¹³⁵ The "Quebec as colony" concept, Mills observes, also disregarded Quebec and Canada's own history of colonizing Indigenous peoples and land. "[T]he natural starting point for anti-colonial analysis in the province, one would have thought," Mills notes, "would have been a critical reflection upon Quebec's own process of colonization. Yet Aboriginals are, with a rare few exceptions, almost completely absent from the early writings about Quebec decolonization."¹³⁶ Also missing was attention to the marginalized position of the black population within Quebec.¹³⁷ If a parallel could be drawn between African Americans and French Canadians, where did that leave African Canadians in the province? That Quebec was slow at adopting anti-discrimination legislation makes this gap especially notable. The Negro Citizenship Association had pushed for such measures in the province, and its frustration is palpable in a 1967 letter to Quebec premier Daniel Johnson:

We wish again to draw your attention to the fact that there is no legislation in Quebec affording citizens the right to Fair Accommodation in apartments, houses, flats and duplexes. We wish further to remind you that we have

¹³⁴ NARA, Records of the Department of State, RG 59, Box 1947, "Montreal Pickets Protest Against 'Charmichael Bill' and Black Ghettos in U.S.," Airgram from Amconsul Montreal to Department of State, 31 July 1967.

¹³⁵ Mills, *The Empire Within*, 45.

¹³⁶ Mills, *The Empire Within*, 60.

¹³⁷ Mills, *The Empire Within*, 7, 96.

consistently urged the passage of Comprehensive Human Rights Legislation including a Fair Accommodation Practices Act.¹³⁸

It was not until 1975 that such anti-discrimination protections arrived.¹³⁹ The significance of colonial analogies, however, was not rooted solely in how effectively they bespoke parallel experiences. The very existence of such discourse is important in its own right because it was so widespread. Its weight in informing and driving growing nationalist sentiments, therefore, should not be underestimated.¹⁴⁰ As these examples show, ideas and thinking within Quebec in this period around language, culture, and nationhood cannot be understood without considering how students and nationalist activists positioned the province within a global context. Though less significant than decolonization movements, this did include the American civil rights movement.

International events also informed broader discussions on the national status of the French language, and of Canada as a bilingual country. National language rights and bilingualism were hot topics in this period, particularly on account of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (B & B Commission). Created in 1962, the B & B Commission had a mandate

to inquire into and report upon the existing state of bilingualism and biculturalism in Canada and to recommend what steps should be taken to develop the Canadian Confederation on the basis of an equal partnership between the two founding races, taking into account the contribution made by the other ethnic groups to the cultural enrichment of Canada and the measures that should be taken to safeguard that contribution...¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ LAC, Dorothy Wills fonds, MG 31, v. 9, "Translation of Text from Negro Citizenship Association to Daniel Johnson, Premier of Quebec," *Expression* 2, no. 4 (July 1967).

¹³⁹ Eric M. Adams, "Errors of Fact and Law: Race, Space, and Hockey in *Christie v. York*," in *The African Canadian Legal Odyssey: Historical Essays*, ed. Barrington Walker (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 325.

¹⁴⁰ Meren, "An Atmosphere of Libération," 286.

¹⁴¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism*, Book 1, xxi.

For some observers, this discourse on “rights” and “equality” accorded relevance to the American civil rights movement. The violent repression of civil rights workers and examples of urban riots in the United States seemingly lent urgency to Canada’s linguistic divisions. A 1963 *La Presse* article proposed that the civil rights movement was “a grave warning to those of our politicians who would be inclined to wait another century for the solution of Canadian cultural problems.”¹⁴² A *Globe and Mail* piece cautioned that the B & B Commission “may have to learn how to deal with sit-ins.”¹⁴³ Elsewhere, the newspaper reported on a group of Canadian religious leaders who, after participating in the Selma-Montgomery march, challenged English Canadians to reassess the status of French Canadians within Canada: “I think we ought to make statements, present briefs and eventually protest to the nation’s capital in a dramatic way if need be that many of our Canadians are not equal among themselves.”¹⁴⁴

French Canadian parents and student allies organized one such action, shortly after the Selma protests, in Georgetown, Ontario. A school board in the town west of Toronto announced its plan in May 1965 to cease operating a bilingual kindergarten the following year. Local French-speaking parents responded by withdrawing their children in a boycott of the school. They invited Friends of SNCC members to discuss the sit-in tactics so recently deployed at the Selma consulate protests. Members of the University of Toronto Friends visited Georgetown and joined the parents in what a *Toronto Star*

¹⁴² NARA, Records of the Department of State, RG 59, Pol 2-1 CAN, Box 3851, “Info: All Consular Posts in Canada; USIS Toronto London BNA,” Airgram from Amembassy, Ottawa to Department of State, 21 June 1963.

¹⁴³ “Back on the home front,” *Globe and Mail*, 19 March 1965.

¹⁴⁴ Frank Adams, “Clerics Back from Selma Turn to Canadian Issues,” *Globe and Mail*, 18 March 1965.

editorial described as “an Alabama-style ‘sit-in’ in a school building.”¹⁴⁵ The action lasted ten days, during which time the school board had to temporarily shut the school down. School officials were undoubtedly very aware of recent events in Alabama, and the parents succeeded in protecting the bilingual kindergarten.¹⁴⁶

According to the B & B Commission report, the civil rights movement was on the minds of Canadians as they contemplated the future of language rights. “At our meetings,” the official report explains, “witnesses have compared the aspirations of French-speaking Canadians with the aspirations of American Negroes, identifying the one with the other.”¹⁴⁷ The Commission rejected the comparison, noting that African Americans were challenging a rigid form of legal inequality not present in Canada. While “linguistic” and “cultural rights” did not factor into the civil rights movement, the commission argued, these were the matters of primary concern for French Canadians.¹⁴⁸ Despite these arguments, the perception that equivalences did exist was quite widespread; as a result, they in turn informed government responses to the B & B Commission. Following the B & B report, Pierre Trudeau’s government introduced the *Official Languages Act*, which made English and French official languages and mandated the federal government to provide services in both tongues.¹⁴⁹ This policy was designed primarily in response to specific domestic concerns. It allowed the federal government to

¹⁴⁵ “French: a right, not a privilege,” *Toronto Star*, 26 May 1965; LAC, RG 146, v. 754-755, Canadian Friends of the Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee – Univ. Of Toronto, Dave Dent, “Georgetown’s minority rights sit-in,” *Canadian Tribune*, 31 May 1965.

¹⁴⁶ “Parents win... kindergarten bilingual,” *Toronto Star*, 19 May 1965.

¹⁴⁷ *Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism*, Book 1, xl.

¹⁴⁸ *Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism*, Book 1, xl.

¹⁴⁹ Matthew Hayday, *Bilingual Today, United Tomorrow: Official Languages in Education and Canadian Federalism* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press), 43.

define a stronger role for itself on language issues, and represented the federal government's answer to the mounting popularity of the Quebec independence movement.¹⁵⁰ Though assuredly less significant than these domestic dynamics, international issues and events held relevance. As Matthew Hayday explains, “for many English-speaking Canadians, the bilingual Trudeau held the potential to usher in ‘safe,’ manageable changes rather than the often violent and radical upheavals that were rocking the world in the late 1960s.”¹⁵¹

English Canadian Student Activism after Selma

Following widespread coverage of the Selma campaign, President Johnson announced his support for the voting rights legislation that would become law later that summer. Almost as quickly as it began, so ended the dramatic two weeks of sympathy protest in Canada. Though a brief period of intense action, its significance stretched beyond those cold days in March. As Canadian students rallied around Selma, they turned their attention to Selma's lessons for Canada. They were compelled to consider the movement's transnational significance after facing criticism for their actions. While numerous observers in the press were supportive, others countered that Canadians had no business telling another country how to deal with its domestic affairs. The underlying theme of these critiques was the adage that those living in houses made of glass should not throw stones. York University's student newspaper printed an editorial summarizing

¹⁵⁰ Hayday, *Bilingual Today, United Tomorrow*, 42.

¹⁵¹ Matthew Hayday, “Reconciling the Two Solitudes? Language Rights and the Constitutional Question from the Quiet Revolution to the Victoria Charter,” in *Debating Dissent: Canada and the Sixties*, eds. Lara Campbell, Dominique Clément, and Gregory S. Kealey (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 233.

this oft-repeated critique: “We are not U.S. citizens. It is our duty to show respect for others if we expect our criticisms to be given the respect we would like them to have.”¹⁵²

Such reproaches forced student protestors to justify their actions. The civil rights movement’s importance and lessons, they countered, did not stop at the border.

According to a Friends of SNCC report, the sympathy protests had the effect of highlighting how “[f]ew Canadians are aware of the subtle but violent discrimination that exists all over their country, and some are even less aware of the actions that are being taken to combat it.”¹⁵³ As such, those involved tried to make Selma directly relevant to Canada. As one participant in the Toronto protests asserted,

[w]e cannot accept the claim that the problem in Alabama is ‘none of our business.’ Racial problems – hate – know no boundaries and it is because of the phrase ‘none of our business’ that people in the past have allowed such problems to be treated. Moreover, we are not saying that we Canadians are any better. We recognize that the problem exists here.¹⁵⁴

Another participant in the Ottawa march explained, “[w]e were showing our protest against the United States. At the same time we were discussing the legality of our actions and the whole subject of racial prejudice.”¹⁵⁵ The McGill Friends group likewise expressed, as a core principle, its view “that justice is indivisible.” While focused on supporting SNCC’s work in the United States South, the group’s statement of purpose noted it would not, “ignore those more subtle tactics of discrimination in Canada, but dedicates itself to expose and combat every vestige of racism and racial bigotry in this

¹⁵² “Demonstration: A Case of Diminishing Returns,” *PRO-TEM* 4, no. 21, 18 March 1965.

¹⁵³ LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 754-755, Canadian Friends of SNCC-University of Toronto, Jeannie Cohen, Report, 29 October 1965.

¹⁵⁴ Ron B. Thomson, “Protest,” *Globe and Mail*, 18 March 1965.

¹⁵⁵ LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 755, Canadian Friends of the Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee Queen’s University Branch, Sally Barnes, “Queen’s Students Describe their Racial Equality March,” *Kingston Whig-Standard*, 13 March 1965.

country.”¹⁵⁶ Churchill highlights how through their Selma actions, students linked their “political aspirations” for equality in the United States with a similar concern for Canada:

[Prathia] Hall and [Lafayette] Surney’s words underscore the ease with which Canadians could be incorporated into the movement, despite their physical distance from Alabama and their exclusion from the US polity. As such, the students at the University Avenue protest transcended physical, historical, and political boundaries, matching their own political aspirations to those in the American South. This was a point underscored by MPP Stephen Lewis at a Queen’s Park rally in support of the Selma marchers: ‘The struggle for inalienable rights in the United States,’ Lewis argued, ‘is our struggle here.’¹⁵⁷

With this transnational rights discourse, students were motivated after Selma to engage in other organizing efforts around inequality and discrimination in both the United States and Canada. This expansion into other issues reflects David S. Meyer and Nancy Whittier’s point that “[t]he ideas, tactics, style, participants, and organizations of one movement often *spill over* its boundaries to affect other social movements.”¹⁵⁸ One of the first events following the Selma protest was the Friends of SNCC and SUPA Spring Conference, held May 8 to 10 in Toronto. A Canadian Friends of SNCC newsletter described the conference’s purpose:

[s]tudents involved with Canadian Friends of SNCC have acted on their concern for the oppressed people of the American South whose lives are defined by a rigid and degrading system. These students are now beginning to see how they are part of that system, how it has affected their lives, why they want to reject it and what the consequences of that rejection are.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 754, Friends of the Student Non Violent Co-ordinating Comm. – McGill University, Organizational Assessment Form, Friends of Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee, McGill University, 16 May 1966.

¹⁵⁷ Churchill, “SUPA, Selma, and Stevenson,” 34.

¹⁵⁸ David S. Meyer and Nancy Whittier, “Social Movement Spillover,” *Social Problems* 41, no. 2 (May 1994): 277.

¹⁵⁹ SNCC Papers, Reel 55, *Freedom Now I*, no. 2.

The conference denoted a shift toward more consideration of Canadian matters in tandem with the American movement. Its pamphlet described a broad mandate to fight “racial determination wherever it exists...”¹⁶⁰ Speakers included Charles Cobb and Fannie Lou Hamer of SNCC, and sessions dealt with “Freedom and Political Action in the South; Vietnam; Poverty and Civil Rights; Indians in Canada; Africville; Approach to Education.”¹⁶¹ Reflecting widespread interest stemming from the Selma protests, about 400 participants attended. They “endorsed continued support of SNCC in its fight to improve conditions for U.S. Negroes,” and “urged their association... to fight for improved social conditions in Canada.”¹⁶²

Opportunities arose to engage with American and Canadian issues in subsequent months. One of SNCC’s programs that year was a “Washington Lobby” in June, for which two thousand students, the vast majority American, travelled to the American capitol for a massive lobbying campaign. The goal was to dissuade Democratic politicians from recognizing all-white Democratic Party delegations from Mississippi. The Democratic National Convention had seated such a delegation the previous year, over the opposition of SNCC and its Mississippi-based political movement, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP). According to a Canadian Friends of SNCC memo, “[t]he Canadian SNCC office has been requested to send a large

¹⁶⁰ SNCC Papers, Reel 55, Pamphlet, Canadian Friends of Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Spring Conference ’65, 8-10 May 1965.

¹⁶¹ SNCC Papers, Reel 55, Pamphlet, Canadian Friends of Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Spring Conference ’65, 8-10 May 1965; MUA, CUCND/SUPA fonds, Box 21, Harvey L. Shepherd, “SNCC Conference May 8-10: A Step Towards a Movement in Canada,” *Student Union For Peace Action Newsletter* 1, no. 3(6 June 1965).

¹⁶² “Students for Canada Selma,” *Toronto Star*, 10 May 1965.

delegation.”¹⁶³ While the precise size of the Canadian contingent is unknown, at least a few Canadian students participated.

A small number of Canadians worked on SNCC projects in the South. Some, like Tamio Wakayama and Diane Burrows, did so before returning to Canada to support SNCC activities here. For others, engagement in Canada was their first step leading them south. Already active with the Toronto Friends of SNCC, Robertson Wood worked for SNCC in Mississippi in summer 1965, where he was imprisoned with other protestors, including fellow Canadians Robert Lower and Paul Saltzman.¹⁶⁴ Wood explained that he “went down because I ran out of excuses for not going... People are responsible to make society and this is a responsibility that can’t be evaded.”¹⁶⁵ Paul Saltzman decided to volunteer after attending a SNCC talk at the University of Toronto. The talk, he recalls, “gave me the doorway, that showed me a way to manifest my belief system, my caring, my concern.”¹⁶⁶ Saltzman drove to Washington for SNCC’s lobbying efforts, before continuing on to Mississippi for the summer. Upon his release from jail in Jackson, he worked on voter registration in Greenwood, Mississippi.¹⁶⁷ Louise Casselman, another Washington Lobby participant, became involved with SNCC after attending a talk in Ottawa by Diane Burrows. Along with Peter Logan of Ottawa, Casselman also spent the

¹⁶³ SNCC Papers, Reel 55, Memo: To Anne and Mirja in the Canadian Office Re: Washington Lobby, n.d.

¹⁶⁴ MUA, CUCND/SUPA fonds, Box 21, Harvey L. Shepherd, “SNCC Report: MFDP Challenge Brings Arrests, Brutality,” *Student Union For Peace Action Newsletter 1*, no. 4 (23 June 1965); “Police in Mississippi arrest second Canadian,” *Toronto Star*, 30 June 1965.

¹⁶⁵ LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 755, Canadian Friends of the Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee – Univ. of Toronto, “A Dead White Man is a Fund Booster: SNCC,” *Toronto Telegram*, 3 August 1965.

¹⁶⁶ Interview with Paul Saltzman by Rosanne Waters, 24 October 2012.

¹⁶⁷ Interview with Paul Saltzman by Rosanne Waters, 24 October 2012.

summer of 1965 in Mississippi.¹⁶⁸ Pat Gladman of Western worked with SNCC in Arkansas registering voters and challenging segregation, where she was also arrested during a protest.¹⁶⁹

Beyond the work itself, the Canadian students who joined SNCC also had the effect of boosting press attention. The Selma protests garnered extensive coverage in the Canadian media because they made international events simultaneously local. When Canadians travelled south, they generated coverage in Canada for SNCC and the civil rights movement as a whole. A SUPA newsletter reporting on imprisoned protestors in Mississippi was explicit about this goal. Beyond encouraging SUPA members to write to American government representatives, raise money, and participate in the Washington Lobby, it also suggested they “[u]rge local newspapers to carry full news of what is happening, and spread the word in your communities, with a view to having as many telegrams as possible sent to Washington.”¹⁷⁰ Long time SNCC member Casey Hayden similarly described Friends groups as “the ‘source of calls to northern liberal politicians, and a lifeline to local press who could then ask the Associated Press for stories.’”¹⁷¹ The University of Western Ontario’s Friends recognized their role as a link between international and local issues following Pat Gladman’s arrest in Arkansas. When they

¹⁶⁸ LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 755, Ottawa Friends of the Student Non Violent Co-ordinating Committee Ottawa, ONT., Catherine Janitch, “‘Snickers’ at \$10 a Week,” *Ottawa Journal*, 31 July 1965.

¹⁶⁹ LAC, RG 146, v. 754, Student Nonviolent Co-ordinating Committee University of Western Ontario, “UWO group plans hootenanny to pay co-ed’s fine,” *London Free Press*, 21 September 1965; For more on SNCC in Arkansas see Brent Riffel, “In the Storm: William Hansen and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in Arkansas, 1962-1967,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 63, no. 4 (Winter 2004): 411-415.

¹⁷⁰ MUA, CUCND/SUPA fonds, Box 21, Harvey L. Shepherd, “SNCC Report MFD Challenge Brings Arrest, Brutality,” *Student Union for Peace Action Newsletter 1*, no. 4 (23 June 1965).

¹⁷¹ Quoted in Wesley C. Hogan, *Many Minds, One Heart: SNCC's Dream for a New America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 115.

organized a fundraiser for her, group chair Lynn Moore explained that “[s]uddenly civil rights has been brought right into our back yard and it’s not something happening way down in the States.”¹⁷² Such press attention also helped protect activists from violent treatment while they were in jail.¹⁷³

The Canadian media gave substantial attention to Paul Saltzman, the son of well-known CBC television journalist and weatherman Percy Saltzman. While in jail, Saltzman wrote open letters about his experiences to publicize the issues for which he was working. As Saltzman recalls, “I didn’t know who the managing editor of the Toronto Star was or even the address, so I just addressed it ‘Managing Editor, Toronto Daily Star, Toronto Canada’, and what I didn’t know till that phone call was they were printing that on the front page in the red headlines.”¹⁷⁴ These front page stories brought issues in Mississippi to the attention of Canadians. In the House of Commons, NDP MP Stanley Knowles raised Saltzman and Robertson Wood’s imprisonment in Question Period.¹⁷⁵ Shortly thereafter, Saltzman received a phone call from the Canadian Consul in New Orleans, informing him that the Consul had “been instructed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs to secure my release as a Canadian citizen.”¹⁷⁶ A condition of his release was that Saltzman return to Canada. Saltzman declined the offer, just as he declined other offers from Canada to cover his bail.¹⁷⁷ This decision was in keeping with SNCC’s

¹⁷² LAC, RG 146, v. 754, Student Nonviolent Co-ordinating Committee University of Western Ontario, “UWO group plans hootenanny to pay co-ed’s fine,” *London Free Press*, 21 September 1965.

¹⁷³ Raiford, *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare*, 92.

¹⁷⁴ Interview with Paul Saltzman by Rosanne Waters, 24 October 2012.

¹⁷⁵ Canadian House of Commons, 25 June 1965 (Stanley Knowles).

¹⁷⁶ Interview with Paul Saltzman by Rosanne Waters, 24 October 2012.

¹⁷⁷ Paul Saltzman, “Why Paul Saltzman is in a Mississippi jail,” *Toronto Star*, 29 June 1965.

strategy of “jail, no bail,” wherein filling jail cells was a means of attracting attention to unjust arrests and the conditions that made their activism necessary in the first place.¹⁷⁸

The involvement of Canadians mirrored students from the northern United States who worked with SNCC in the South, then tried to implement lessons learned upon returning to their colleges in the North.¹⁷⁹ The Selma protests likewise inspired some Canadian students to join SUPA summer projects, which themselves featured cross-border linkages with related American efforts. Representatives from SUPA and the Canadian Friends of SNCC travelled to Michigan in June 1965 to attend a conference for SDS’s Economic Research and Action Project (ERAP). ERAP was a collection of summer projects wherein American students worked on local community empowerment efforts and tenant organizing in the poor, ghettoized neighbourhoods of northern cities like Newark, New Jersey. The Canadian students who attended the conference learned about the strategies, techniques, and approaches ERAP utilized in their community empowerment organizing efforts.¹⁸⁰ Reflecting the ERAP example, SUPA initiated several projects in the summer of 1965, including tenant organizing in Kingston, Ontario, the Student Neestow Partnership with Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan, and an effort to organize anti-discrimination and community empowerment projects with African

¹⁷⁸ Carson, *In Struggle*, 28; Interview with Paul Saltzman by Rosanne Waters, 24 October 2012.

¹⁷⁹ Wesley Hogan, “How Democracy Travels: SNCC, Swarthmore Students, and the Growth of the Student Movement in the North, 1961-1964,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 126, no. 3 (July 2002): 440-445.

¹⁸⁰ MUA, CUCND/SUPA fonds, Box 21, Ken Drushka, “SDS-ERAP Conference,” *Student Union For Peace Action Newsletter 1*, no. 4 (23 June 1965).

Canadians in Nova Scotia.¹⁸¹ A SUPA organizer described the effect of the Selma protests on the Student Neestow project:

[u]ntil two weeks ago we were going to send out 10 Saskatchewan students, but that was before the demonstrations by U of T students over Alabama. A lot of interest has developed among students who took part in the demonstrations and there may be 20 students going from here – if they can get the money.¹⁸²

A SUPA pamphlet on the projects emphasized transnational links between ERAP, SNCC, and SUPA's summer initiatives: “[f]rom Mississippi, to Boston, to the Gaspé, students are spending their summers working in communities to find solutions to problems of civil rights, unemployment, poverty, and peace.”¹⁸³ Similarly, as a report on the projects explained, the summer projects “did not begin in a vacuum. Behind them lie the approaches that inform SUPA and, in general, the movement – which also includes the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and Students for a Democratic Society – for what the jargon terms ‘participatory democracy.’”¹⁸⁴

The dual aims of these SUPA projects were for students to engage with and learn about marginalized populations, while simultaneously trying to develop grassroots leadership and support the people with whom they worked in challenging the status quo.¹⁸⁵ Palmer notes, however, that the SUPA projects resulted in a level of frustration and disappointment for many participants. The Student Neestow project, Palmer explains, “had little political possibility of making inroads into communities which were sensibly

¹⁸¹ For a detailed discussion of these projects see Palmer, *Canada's 1960s*, 261-272.

¹⁸² “Project for Indians Planned by Students,” *Globe and Mail*, 31 March 1965.

¹⁸³ LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 754-755, Canadian Friends of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee – Univ. Of Toronto, “SUPA Summer Projects in the Community,” n.d.

¹⁸⁴ MUA, CUCND/SUPA fonds, Box 2, “A Report on Community Organizing Projects Summer 1965.”

¹⁸⁵ Palmer, *Canada's 1960s*, 260.

suspicious of white students and kept their silence among 'visitors' they knew too little about."¹⁸⁶ The American examples in Northern ghettos and SNCC's Freedom Schools did not translate directly, moreover, to seemingly related situations in Canada. Student organizers in Kingston found tenants sceptical, and they lacked a single, visible issue around which to attract attention and mobilize support.¹⁸⁷ American ERAP projects encountered comparable challenges. Compared with pickets, boycotts, marches, and sit-ins against segregation in the South, Hogan observes, "those in ERAP projects never found acts people could perform at the local level that addressed in a dramatic and effective way the inequalities of the economic system."¹⁸⁸

One undertaking with a long-term impact was Rocky Jones' Nova Scotia Project. Jones explained, following involvement with the Friends and SUPA in Toronto, "I have decided to form an action group in the East and help local people to change their immediate environment and the society around them."¹⁸⁹ With a need for volunteers, Jones requested assistance from SUPA and the Friends of SNCC.¹⁹⁰ Some volunteers arrived, though SUPA ultimately provided only limited financial support and resources.¹⁹¹ Jones spent the summer of 1965 travelling the province to determine what measures would be most useful to support the African Canadian population.¹⁹² Resulting from this process was a youth community centre, Kwacha House, which hosted clubs and

¹⁸⁶ Palmer, *Canada's 1960s*, 265.

¹⁸⁷ Palmer, *Canada's 1960s*, 263.

¹⁸⁸ Hogan, "How Democracy Travels," 467.

¹⁸⁹ MUA, CUCND/SUPA fonds, Box 21, Rocky Jones, "Letter from Nova Scotia," *SUPA Newsletter 1*, no. 8 (30 August 1965).

¹⁹⁰ MUA, CUCND/SUPA fonds, Box 21, Lynn Burrows, "The Nova Scotia Project," *SUPA Newsletter 3*, no. 1 (January 1967).

¹⁹¹ Palmer, *Canada's 1960s*, 267; Myrna Kostash, *Long Way From Home: The Story of the Sixties Generation in Canada* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1990), 12.

¹⁹² MUA, CUCND/SUPA fonds, Box 2, "A Report on Community Organizing Projects, Summer 1965."

community activities for local youth. Nova Scotia Project aims included building local leadership, addressing poverty, improving relationships between African Canadian and white residents, and encouraging “young people to use facilities for creative purposes to prepare and enable them to take responsible roles in our changing world.”¹⁹³ The project also engaged in opposition to a planned housing development that “would have the effect of overpopulating the area, overcrowding schools and forcing home-owners to move into government owned buildings.”¹⁹⁴ They managed to halt the planned development, after organizing “two successful mass meetings of the residents, a petition, [and] a fiery speech delivered in City Hall by Rev. Coleman of the Community’s Baptist Church.”¹⁹⁵ Rocky Jones’ leadership continued throughout the decade, and as noted in Chapter 1, he was particularly significant in expanding the conversation around racism and rights in Canada through his articulation of Black Power.

Though not all summer projects had sustained local impacts, taken as a whole they did have longer-term implications. 1965 was a busy year for student engagement in Canada, and the Selma protests and SUPA summer projects created ample opportunity for political engagement. As Palmer argues, Selma “both galvanized SUPA and brought fresh forces of radicalizing youth into its midst...”¹⁹⁶ Participation in these efforts radicalized students around other issues that would dominate their activism later in the decade,

¹⁹³ LAC, RG 146, Records of CSIS, Friends of the Student Non Violent Co-ordinating Comm. – McGill Univ., Nova Scotia Project Letter, 22 August 1966.

¹⁹⁴ LAC, RG 146, Records of CSIS, Friends of the Student Non Violent Co-ordinating Comm. – McGill Univ., “(SNCC) Plans Summer Programme in Halifax,” *McGill Daily*, 28 February 1966.

¹⁹⁵ MUA, CUCND/SUPA fonds, Box 21, Lynn Burrows, “Report from Nova Scotia Project,” *SUPA Newsletter* 2, no. 5 (15 March 1966).

¹⁹⁶ Palmer, *Canada’s 1960s*, 269.

including opposition to the Vietnam War.¹⁹⁷ The civil rights movement, Lexier notes, was also an encouraging influence on the burgeoning student movement in Canada, through which students challenged the status quo of rigid university hierarchy and paternalism.¹⁹⁸ Students, Lexier notes, adapted strategies and protest tools commonly associated with the American struggle for their actions in Canada.¹⁹⁹

An important long-term impact of Canadian student engagement with the civil rights movement relates to the women's movement. Intensifying feminist activism emerged in the late 1960s in varied forms, including liberal feminism and more radical calls for fundamental economic and societal shifts to bring about liberation.²⁰⁰ Its diverse perspectives, approaches, and elements are all best understood as connected to the heightened political engagement of the sixties. As Judy Rebick puts it, "[t]he 1960s was a decade of revolutionary change," and the emergence of second wave feminism in Canada was linked with interrelated global issues and movements, from anti-colonialism and civil rights activism to Vietnam and the student movement.²⁰¹ Linkages between anti-racism and anti-sexism, were not, however, immediately evident to postwar Canadian human rights activists. As Frager and Patrias explain regarding activism in the 1940s and 1950s, "[m]en and women who fought against racist injustice were frequently unaware of gender injustice. Conversely, some of the most outspoken advocates of women's rights were

¹⁹⁷ Palmer, *Canada's 1960s*, 272.

¹⁹⁸ Lexier, "'The Backdrop Against Which Everything Happened,'" 3.

¹⁹⁹ Lexier, "'The Backdrop Against Which Everything Happened,'" 6.

²⁰⁰ Nancy Adamson, Linda Briskin and Margaret McPhail, *Feminist Organizing for Change: The Contemporary Women's Movement in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988), 7-8.

²⁰¹ Judy Rebick, *Ten Thousand Roses: The Making of a Feminist Revolution* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2005), 7.

unconscious of – or chose to ignore – racism.”²⁰² Proponents of a fair employment law in Ontario viewed it as a necessary measure to counter racism in employment, for example, but did not necessarily see sexism as a related issue. Anti-racist activists in the period were largely committed to the traditional concept of male breadwinners earning a “family wage.” There was little inclination at that time to champion employment opportunities for women.²⁰³

The involvement of women in the Canadian student movement in the 1960s, and their related engagement with activism elsewhere in the world, helped catalyse challenges to traditional gender norms as the decade wore on.²⁰⁴ By the end of the sixties, new and increasingly radical women’s advocacy organizations had emerged to contest the status quo around education, employment, traditional family roles, reproductive health, and the broader underpinnings of a deeply patriarchal society.²⁰⁵ Canadian women, this chapter shows, were notably active in transnational student mobilizations around civil rights. Through their very involvement in protests, their bold political activism, and their leadership, they challenged traditional expectations about socially acceptable roles for young women.

Consider, for example, Lafayette Surney and Prathia Hall’s tour of Canadian Selma protests in March 1965. While SNCC sent both students in place of John Lewis,

²⁰² Ruth Frager and Carmela Patrias, “Human Rights Activists and the Question of Sex Discrimination in Postwar Ontario,” *Canadian Historical Review* 93, 4 (December 2012): 586.

²⁰³ Frager and Patrias, “Human Rights Activists and the Question of Sex Discrimination in Postwar Ontario,” 586.

²⁰⁴ Adamson, Briskin and McPhail, *Feminist Organizing for Change*, 39; Rebick, *Ten Thousand Roses*, 7.

²⁰⁵ See for example Rebick, *Ten Thousand Roses*; Ruth Roach Pierson, Marjorie Griffin Cohen, Paula Bourne, and Philinda Masters, eds., *Canadian Women’s Issues: Strong Voices*, vol. 1 (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1993); Constance Backhouse and David H. Flaherty, eds., *Challenging Times: The Women’s Movement in Canada and the United States* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992); Adamson, Briskin and McPhail, *Feminist Organizing for Change*.

more public attention anticipating their arrival appears to have centred on the male SNCC member, Surney. An article in the University of Toronto *Varsity* explained that John Lewis “is being replaced by Lafayette Surney, a fellow organizer of the Students’ Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee,” but made no mention of Hall.²⁰⁶ Prathia Hall’s talent as a speaker, however, ensured that those participating in and covering the protests took notice of her. In the end, newspaper reports quoted Hall more extensively than the other speakers at several rallies.²⁰⁷ That they gave her so much attention was a reflection of Hall’s oratorical skills and leadership, for which she was widely celebrated within SNCC. Upon hearing Hall speak, for example, Faith S. Holsaert recalled, “I was bowled over by Prathia – I had not imagined a young woman my age could possess such oratorical power.”²⁰⁸ Another woman recalled the powerful emotional reaction she experienced while reading and typing one of Hall’s speeches: “As she described the violence in Selma, the awful beauty of her words – the intensity of her moral outrage – took me by such force that I remember typing onto that long, green mimeo stencil with tears just streaming down my face.”²⁰⁹ One of Hall’s audiences at the University of Toronto responded to her speech with a standing ovation reportedly lasting two minutes.²¹⁰

²⁰⁶ “Will demonstrate today,” *The Varsity*, 10 March 1965.

²⁰⁷ “U of T Pickets Sit Out in Shifts Chanting ‘We Shall Not Be Moved,’” *Globe and Mail*, 12 March 1965; “2,000 Student Pickets To March on Ottawa,” *Globe and Mail*, 13 March 1965; “Keep it up, Alabama girl tells sidewalk sitters,” *Toronto Star*, 12 March 1965.

²⁰⁸ Faith S. Holsaert, “Resistance U,” in *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC*, eds. Faith S. Holsaert, Martha Prescod Norman Noonan, Judy Richardson, Betty Garman Robinson, Jean Smith Young, and Dorothy M. Zellner (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 186.

²⁰⁹ Judy Richardson, “My Enduring ‘Circle of Trust,’” in *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC*, eds. Faith S. Holsaert, Martha Prescod Norman Noonan, Judy Richardson, Betty Garman Robinson, Jean Smith Young, and Dorothy M. Zellner (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 352.

²¹⁰ “Keep it up, Alabama girl tells sidewalk sitters,” *Toronto Star*, 12 March 1965.

Coverage of Hall's visit to Canada illustrates how the public roles of women within the movement challenged patriarchal assumptions about traditional gender roles.

A key SNCC contribution to the emerging women's movement was, Carson notes, as "a training ground" for other protest movements, from anti-Vietnam War activism to the women's movement.²¹¹ Some of the Canadian women involved with the Friends of SNCC and SUPA, such as Heather Dean, would later become active in the women's movement as well as the anti-Vietnam War draft efforts in Canada.²¹² Shannon Stettner offers examples of women involved in a 1970 Abortion rights protest in Canada who cited the civil rights movement, alongside other factors, as an inspiration and influence on their activism.²¹³ There were also American women with experience in civil rights and student activism that became involved with the women's movement after moving to Canada.²¹⁴ A participant in Toronto's Friends of SNCC and founding member of a Toronto women's liberation group, Myrna Wood had previously worked in SNCC's Atlanta office.²¹⁵

For some women, their experiences working for civil rights highlighted the need for specific attention to the status of women. This was so because the movement provided

²¹¹ Carson, *In Struggle*, 3.

²¹² Gayle Graham Yates, *What Women Want: The Ideas of the Movement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 7; Jessica Squires, *Building Sanctuary: The Movement to Support Vietnam War Resisters in Canada, 1965-1973* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2013), 47.

²¹³ Shannon Stettner, "'We Are Forced to Declare War': Linkages between the 1970 Abortion Caravan and Women's Anti-Vietnam War Activism," *Histoire sociale/Social history* 46, no. 92 (November 2013): 428, 432.

²¹⁴ Marjorie Griffin Cohen, "The Canadian Women's Movement," in *Canadian Women's Issues: Strong Voices*, vol. 1, eds. Ruth Roach Pierson, Marjorie Griffin Cohen, Paula Bourne, and Philinda Masters (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1993), 4.

²¹⁵ Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1979), 40-41; LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 755, Canadian Friends of the Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee, Univ. of Toronto, memo, 15 April 1965.

inspiring examples of women leaders (such as Prathia Hall), offered young women new opportunities to engage in political issues, and because some women found themselves limited to gendered roles in the movement.²¹⁶ More generally, the egalitarian focus of anti-racist civil rights protests led some activists to place more emphasis on egalitarian concerns around gender as well. A group of SNCC women contributed a now famous paper entitled “Women in the Movement” to SNCC’s 1964 conference, which identified gender-based inequalities within the organization. Though of little immediate impact, Carson calls the paper “an opening salvo of the feminist movement of the 1960s.”²¹⁷ Similarly, women in SUPA produced the paper “Sisters, Brothers, Lovers ... Listen,” which paralleled the treatment of women in student activism with their broader subordination across Canadian society.²¹⁸ The document described the civil rights movement’s influence on the burgeoning women’s movement: “[t]he bulk of the membership and leadership of the MFDP, MFLU [Mississippi Freedom Labor Union], and Poor People’s Corporation (the only truly grass roots organizations in the South) were and are women.” It also observed, in calling for new attention to sexism and patriarchy, “Negro men are asserting their manhood in the ghettos of the U.S. Perhaps the women of the world will be asserting their womanhood soon...”²¹⁹ This 1967 document,

²¹⁶ Evans, *Personal Politics*, 24, 67, 70, 76-77.

²¹⁷ Carson, *In Struggle*, 148.

²¹⁸ MUA, CUCND/SUPA fonds, Box 21, Judi, Peggy, Myrna and Linda, “Brothers, Sisters, Lovers..... Listen.”

²¹⁹ MUA, CUCND/SUPA fonds, Box 21, Judi, Peggy, Myrna and Linda, “Brothers, Sisters, Lovers..... Listen.”

according to Palmer, marked an important turning point towards the intensifying feminism of the late 1960s and 1970s.²²⁰

The civil rights movement, student activism, anti-Vietnam War protests, and the women's movement were connected through overlapping participants, tactics, and ideas in the United States and Canada. It is important to not overstate the civil rights movement's specific influence on Canadian feminism. As Cohen observes, "often the explanations for the re-emergence of active feminism in the 1960s in Canada rely too heavily on the influences of forces outside this country..."²²¹ Kostash similarly notes that while American developments were influential, sixties activism also emerged from distinctively Canadian experiences.²²² Canadian second wave feminism had diverse origins, including continuities with earlier feminist efforts, growing opportunities in education and employment, new peace organizations like the Voice of Women, *Chatelaine* magazine's inclusion of feminist editorials and articles in the 1950s and 1960s, and women's groups that advocated for a commission on the status of women in Canadian society.²²³ Stettner emphasizes, moreover, that for women involved in the Abortion Caravan, a protest demanding abortion access for Canadian women, engagement with anti-Vietnam War activism was the most important site of intersection

²²⁰ Palmer, *Canada's 1960s*, 300-301.

²²¹ Cohen, "The Canadian Women's Movement," 4.

²²² Myrna Kostash, *Long Way From Home*, xii.

²²³ Jill Vickers, "The Intellectual Origins of the Women's Movement in Canada," in *Challenging Times: The Women's Movement in Canada and the United States*, eds. Constance Backhouse and David H. Flaherty (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), 39; Adamson, Briskin and McPhail, *Feminist Organizing for Change*, 37-38; Rebick, *Ten Thousand Roses*, 3-5; Monique Bégin, "The Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada: Twenty Years Later," in *Challenging Times: The Women's Movement in Canada and the United States*, eds. Constance Backhouse and David H. Flaherty (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), 24; Valerie S. Korinek, *Roughing It in the Suburbs: Reading Chatelaine Magazine in the Fifties and Sixties* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

with related protest movements.²²⁴ While not a singular factor, the highly visible civil rights movement, and particularly its egalitarian rhetoric, is undoubtedly one piece of the complex story behind surging Canadian feminist activism.

Canadian Student Contributions to the Civil Rights Movement

The Canadian Friends of SNCC outlasted their counterparts as the only international group still in existence after 1965.²²⁵ The peak of the Friends of SNCC in Canada was nevertheless relatively short-lived. According to its Ottawa members in late 1965, “Friends of SNCC groups in Canada have pretty well run out of steam over the summer.”²²⁶ A report likewise observed, “SNCC support in Canada and other Canadian activities undertaken under the SNCC name are not exactly brimming with vitality.” The report noted the challenge of maintaining momentum after the excitement of Selma, describing only limited success in initiating local efforts. “[E]xcept for the shining example of Truro-born Rocky Jones’s return to Nova Scotia to try to begin a project there,” the report explained, “this is not what happened.”²²⁷ The Canadian Friends of SNCC newsletter was published intermittently following the apogee of the groups’ activities in 1965, though it did continue to circulate donation requests for SNCC’s work

²²⁴ Stettner, “‘We Are Forced to Declare War’: Linkages between the 1970 Abortion Caravan and Women’s Anti-Vietnam War Activism,” 424.

²²⁵ Stephen Tuck, “From Greensboro to Notting Hill: The Sit-Ins in England,” in *From Sit-ins to SNCC: The Student Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s*, eds. Iwan Morgan and Philip Davies (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2012), 157.

²²⁶ LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 755, Ottawa Friends of the Student Nonviolent Co-ordinating Committee Ottawa, Ont., Unknown to Cynthia Washington, 24 October 1965.

²²⁷ MUA, CUCND/SUPA fonds, Box 21, Harvey L. Shepherd, “SNCC in Canada,” *SUPA Newsletter 1*, no. 8 (30 August 1965).

in the Deep South into 1966.²²⁸ McGill's Friends of SNCC maintained a campus presence in 1967, when the group hosted then SNCC chairman Stokely Carmichael for a well-attended fundraising talk.²²⁹

Various factors explain the decline in Friends of SNCC activities. To an extent, the organization was a victim of its own success in promoting transnational concern about discrimination and inequality. Its activism made events in Alabama matter to Canadians, and as a result, Canadians who participated in the Selma actions were driven to think more actively about its implications for their own country. Escalated interest in local matters of inequality and discrimination strained the Friends of SNCC, a relatively small group trying to address issues in several locations at once. Many students shifted their attention to SUPA, which emerged around this time as Canada's preeminent New Left student organization and focused directly on social injustices within Canada. Another factor in the decline of enthusiasm for American civil rights work was the success of the Selma campaign's advocacy for federal voting rights legislation. The act was far from a cure-all, but it did reduce the sense of urgency around which so many students had rallied in spring 1965. SNCC was also undergoing profound organizational changes in this period, as staff in Atlanta grappled with its vision and purpose moving forward.²³⁰ The Mississippi programs were slowing by 1966, and SNCC's decision to become an

²²⁸ AO, Records of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, RG 76-3, B270378, Newsletter, 7 January 1966.

²²⁹ LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 754, Friends of the Student Non Violent Co-ordinating Comm. – McGill Univ., "SNCC Invites Carmichael," *McGill Daily*, 20 February 1967; LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 754, Friends of the Student Non Violent Co-ordinating Comm. – McGill Univ., S. Robertson Gage, "Stokely puts down whitey," *McGill Daily*, 24 February 1967.

²³⁰ Carson, *In Struggle*, 133-174.

organization of only black staff members prompted debates around whether they should draw on northern Friends groups for support.²³¹

Protests against the Vietnam War, meanwhile, came to overshadow civil rights as the foremost focus for many student activists in the United States and around the world. A *Globe and Mail* article noted this transition. It observed Selma's role in "[t]he revival of student radicalism in Toronto," but continued, "[s]ince then, Toronto SNCC has become inactive and much of its support has shifted to SUPA as the radicals have turned from civil rights in the United States to the war in Vietnam and the social and political power structure in North America."²³² Relatedly, Canadian leftist activism grew more concerned towards decades end with American economic and cultural influence and power in Canada. This increasingly nationalistic perspective, grounded in anti-Americanism, pushed Canadian activists away from a focus on American issues.²³³

During the Canadian Friends' short existence, however, the group did offer significant support in the form of financial contributions. Miriam Smith has described financial resources as a key components of social movements, noting "[t]he success and failures of social movements is determined by their ability to bring diverse resources – money, organization, sympathetic allies, and expertise – to bear in their struggles."²³⁴

SNCC organized extensive fundraising efforts in the early to mid-1960s to help sustain its

²³¹ Carson, *In Struggle*, 238.

²³² Martin Knelman, "A Revolt Without Dogma," *Globe and Mail*, 12 February 1966.

²³³ Stephen Azzi, "The Nationalist Moment in English Canada," in *Debating Dissent: Canada and the Sixties*, eds. Lara Campbell, Dominique Clément, and Gregory S. Kealey (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 213; Ryan Edwardson, "Kicking Uncle Sam out of the Peaceable Kingdom": English-Canadian 'New Nationalism' and Americanization," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 37, 4 (2003): 131-152; Stephen Azzi, *Walter Gordon and the Rise of Canadian Nationalism* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999).

²³⁴ Miriam Smith, *A Civil Society?: Collective Actors in Canadian Political Life* (Peterborough: Broadview Press Ltd., 2005), 38.

various projects in the Deep South. According to Carson, SNCC had initially intended to support its work in Mississippi through large donations from philanthropic foundations. Some money was indeed raised through these sources, but substantial contributions were more commonly directed to mainstream civil rights groups. SNCC consequently boosted attention to its own fundraising efforts and activities by developing a network of Friends groups in northern states and in a few other countries in Europe, as well as in Canada.²³⁵

SNCC generally raised sufficient funds to support its operations in this period, though finances were always tight.²³⁶ This situation worsened when the *Civil Rights Act* became law in 1964, and the *Voting Rights Act* followed in 1965. Some liberal donors felt these legislative measures wrapped up a successful movement.²³⁷ This point is borne out in communications between SNCC, Canadian Friends of SNCC groups, and other individual donors in Canada. Based on descriptions of its activities in reports, memos, and fundraising appeals, SNCC was frequently in need of funds. According to one letter thanking a contributor, such donations were what “enables us to carry on with the main work of organizing around the right to vote and to pay expenses incurred during the jailings and beatings.”²³⁸ A memo to the Friends of SNCC painted a vivid picture of the financial situation in late 1964:

SNCC’s financial situation is acute. While you and your friends are preparing for the Christmas season, those who live in the Black Belt South are preparing for another winter of hardship and deprivation. Barbara Jones from the SNCC office in Atlanta writes that prospects look very dim not only for the local communities but

²³⁵ Carson, *In Struggle*, 70.

²³⁶ Carson, *In Struggle*, 70.

²³⁷ Jennifer Jensen Wallach, “Replicating History in a Bad Way? White Activists and Black Power in SNCC’s Arkansas Project,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 67, no. 3 (Autumn, 2008): 287.

²³⁸ SNCC Papers, Reel 55, Betty Garman to John W. Roberts, 8 April 1965.

also for the 150 volunteers who have agreed to stay with them but have no means of support.²³⁹

These conditions persisted into the following year. When the University of Toronto Friends of SNCC undertook a fundraising campaign in January 1965, it encouraged donations by informing students that SNCC's staffing budgets for its operations in the South had been reduced from \$95 to \$10 per week, and in some locations, finances were so tight that they had disconnected office telephone lines. "Once again," the SNCC literature explained, "the hang-up is money, because anybody who goes to jail now knows there isn't a penny in Jackson to get him out. So if you can send that check (or better, wire it today)."²⁴⁰ The situation remained the same when Robertson Wood worked for SNCC in the summer of 1965. While giving talks about his experiences and seeking donations for the organization upon his return to Canada, Wood described SNCC as "[q]uite literally financially broke."²⁴¹ A SUPA newsletter advertising a second Freedom Singers tour of Canada in 1966 likewise encouraged readers to "let all your friends know, and remind them to go with their pockets as full as possible as SNCC is so deep in debt that they cannot support us with any material for information publicity and the like."²⁴²

The constant need for contributions gave Friends of SNCC groups the opportunity to play a meaningful role. SNCC's approach to fundraising, which focused more on its Friends groups than large contributors, was in keeping with its decentralized approach to

²³⁹ SNCC Papers, Reel 55, Memo to: Canadian Friends of SNCC, From: Diane Burrows, 18 December 1964.

²⁴⁰ "SNCC launches fund campaign," *The Varsity*, 11 January 1965.

²⁴¹ LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 754-755, Canadian Friends of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee – Univ. Of Toronto, "A Dead White Man is a Fund Booster: SNCC," *Toronto Telegram*, 3 August 1965.

²⁴² MUA, CUCND/SUPA fonds, Box 21, "US Liason Report," *SUPA Newsletter* 2, no. 1 (27 January 1966).

social activism. Every donation counted, and each Canadian group was a small but important part of a wider net of concurrent operations in other locales. As the frequent appeals from SNCC to Friends groups suggest, the organization valued all contributions, large and small, that arrived in the mail. The Friends of SNCC in Canada organized several successful fundraisers, including the 1965 Freedom Singers tour. Another fundraising drive in early 1965 at the University of Toronto got off to a slow start. The Friends set up booths across the campus, distributed a letter from SNCC workers in Mississippi describing the need for funds, and sold SNCC buttons. After a week, these efforts had only amounted to \$500 in donations, leading to an editorial in the student newspaper *The Varsity*. The piece beseeched students, who otherwise spoke sympathetically of the civil rights movement, to add to the collection: “[s]urely it is not asking too much to hope that every student at U of T who support SNCC’s work verbally will support it with a generous donation today or tonight. Is the price of a few packs of cigarettes too much of a sacrifice for any of us?”²⁴³ A spotlight on the campaign seemed to do the trick; three days later *The Varsity* reported a more satisfying total. On-campus donations doubled to \$1,000, and were combined with \$1,500 from the Freedom Singers concert. A fundraising party at the home of Frank Shuster (of the comedy duo Wayne and Shuster) raised \$1,500 more.²⁴⁴

The Selma protests ushered in a particularly successful period of fundraising, unsurprisingly given the heightened publicity that accompanied them. A SUPA newsletter

²⁴³ William N. Coulthard, “Where your mouth is,” *The Varsity*, 22 January 1965.

²⁴⁴ “Net \$2,500 in campus drive for civil rights workers,” *The Varsity*, 25 January 1965.

reported that events in Toronto brought in donations in the range of \$4,000 to \$5,000.²⁴⁵ The University of Toronto Students' Administrative Council (the student union) sent SNCC a cheque for \$1,000 a week after the consulate sit-in wrapped up. The University of British Columbia Friends of SNCC contributed \$100, raised during their protests at the American consulate in Vancouver.²⁴⁶ The University of Saskatchewan Friends of SNCC organized an evening event with several speakers, including a veteran SNCC staff member, which brought in \$72.²⁴⁷ Canadian Friends of SNCC fundraising efforts throughout the summer of 1965 earned SNCC an additional \$1,313.²⁴⁸

The Canadian groups were far from the only source of SNCC's funding. They represented a handful among many more Friends groups across North American campuses, and the Canadians were also not the only sources of international funding. The Friends of SNCC in England formed in 1963, and John Lewis went on a fundraising trip of Europe, which students in Norway arranged, in early 1966.²⁴⁹ Fundraising in Canada also tended to have uneven results. A consistent source of frustration for long time civil rights activists was the tendency for money to stream in during heightened protest periods, such as Birmingham and Selma, while slowing significantly in between. This was a particularly acute problem for SNCC, which operated consistently in the Deep South across periods of high and low media coverage. Canadian fundraising efforts

²⁴⁵ LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 755, Canadian Friends of the Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee – Univ. Of Toronto, "Civil Rights Demonstration in Toronto," *SUPA Newsletter*, 1 April 1965.

²⁴⁶ LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 755, Friends of Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee – Canada British Columbia, "We'll picket till Negro has right to march, say students," *Vancouver Province*, 17 March 1965.

²⁴⁷ LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 755, Friends of Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee – Canada, Report – Friends of SNCC University of Saskatchewan, 10 May 1965.

²⁴⁸ "SNCC," *Globe and Mail*, 31 August 1965.

²⁴⁹ Tuck, "From Greensboro to Notting Hill, 157; Carson, *In Struggle*, 200.

certainly reflected this pattern, as they were most successful during the period of heightened activism around Selma. Not all Canadian fundraisers were successful. The second Freedom Singers tour in 1966 attracted disappointingly small attendance at several stops, though the group did sell more than a hundred tickets for its Queen's performance.²⁵⁰ Clayton Ruby recalls an effort to organize a fundraiser with musician and civil rights figure Harry Belafonte in Toronto, which yielded lower than hoped for results because the organizers, as students, were not acquainted with enough individuals to invite who were capable of granting sizeable donations.²⁵¹

While it is difficult to tabulate a precise total stemming from the Canadian fundraising efforts, however, the Friends in Canada made substantial contributions during their peak efforts. Information on total contributions to SNCC in Atlanta comes from scattered sources reporting on a variety of events, and some of the numbers might overlap. We do know from Carson's work on SNCC that in 1965, 57.9 per cent of the organization's fundraised income (which amounted to \$65,006.53) was derived from Friends of SNCC activities.²⁵² A portion of that total would have come from Canadian groups. Beyond contributions specifically raised by the Friends groups, moreover, were donations individual Canadians sent directly to SNCC, sometimes following encounters with the Friends. As SNCC's Betty Garman reported to Diane Burrows, shortly after the expansion of Friends of SNCC groups in Canada,

²⁵⁰ MUA, CUCND/SUPA fonds, Box 21, "US Liason Report," *SUPA Newsletter* 2, no. 1 (27 January 1966); LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 754, Student Nonviolent Co-ordinating Committee University of Western Ontario, "SNCC," *The Gazette*, 7 October 1966; LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 755, Friends of Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee Canada, Alan McNie, "Music Replaces Viciousness," *Kingston Whig-Standard*, 3 February 1966.

²⁵¹ Interview with Clayton Ruby by Rosanne Waters, 23 October 2012.

²⁵² Carson, *In Struggle*, 328, footnote 45.

we still get letters from Canada by the dozen. Tis great. We can't believe our mail. And people have started sending money in with the Friends of SNCC flyer you did up... We all certainly think its worth it to keep you on the staff in Canada – in fact I think its one of the best things we ever did in terms of fund raising and support.²⁵³

While the contributions from individuals were sometimes small, cumulatively they mattered a great deal. Garman made this point in a letter to a Canadian supporter, in which she explained, “we are very broke and really struggle to keep up with our bills.”²⁵⁴ Carson notes that by mid-decade, the majority of SNCC's financial support came from individual donations rather than large philanthropic organizations and institutions.²⁵⁵ The increase in Canadian financial contributions mattered in 1965, though so too did the drop that came with reduced Friends of SNCC activities in Canada thereafter.

While financial support was the most practical contribution Friends of SNCC groups made to their parent organization, they also offered moral support. Value in terms of morale is difficult to quantify. SNCC was dealing with substantial organizational turmoil by mid-decade. In particular, a sizeable portion of the membership was increasingly questioning the place of white activists in the organization, as well as its use of northern allies for financial support. This shift in perspective, which grew from 1964 onwards, likely tempered the value placed in Canadian support activities (and northern support activities more broadly). Most SNCC activists, meanwhile, were undoubtedly too busy with day-to-day efforts and concerns to follow the contributions of Canadian Friends groups. Yet evidence does suggest that SNCC staff members were heartened to receive

²⁵³ SNCC Papers, Reel 55, Betty Garman to Diane Burrows, 14 January 1965.

²⁵⁴ SNCC Papers, Reel 55, Betty Garman to Dimitri Roussopoulos, 28 April 1965.

²⁵⁵ Carson, *In Struggle*, 173.

news of international support. This was evident, for example, in Lafayette Surney and Prathia Hall's speeches at the Selma protests in Canada. At one stop, Hall asked a crowd in Toronto, "What price freedom? Ain't no tellin.' But those of us who care about freedom are mighty glad that you care."²⁵⁶ In Ottawa, Surney told thousands of gathered marchers, "We thank you... your interest in us is encouraging."²⁵⁷ Jim Colbert, a SNCC staff member on a fundraising tour in Saskatchewan, offered a similar outlook. "Canadian demonstrators are a great moral support," Colbert informed his audience. "Just the fact that people from another country are aware of our cause and travel so far to help us – this is a great moral support," he explained with reference to two Saskatchewan students who participated in the Selma to Montgomery march.²⁵⁸ Betty Garman voiced appreciation in a letter to a donor: "[w]e were very excited over the support we received from our friends in Canada during the Alabama crisis. The response from the students in Toronto was a great encouragement to the Alabama students who bore the brunt of police brutality during the past week."²⁵⁹

Support for civil rights activities in countries outside of the United States also helped generate political pressure. In the midst of the Cold War, embarrassing examples of violent racism proved damaging to the United States' claim of leadership in the democratic world.²⁶⁰ The United States government was mainly concerned, while battling

²⁵⁶ "U of T Pickets Sit Out in Shifts Chanting 'We Shall Not Be Moved,'" *Globe and Mail*, 12 March 1965.

²⁵⁷ LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 755, Student's Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee Queen's University Branch, Sally Barnes, "100 Queen's Students Join in Ottawa Protest March," *Kingston Whig-Standard*, 15 March 1965.

²⁵⁸ LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 755, Friends of Student Non Violent Co-ordinating Committee, Don Sawatsky, "Civil rights worker says Indian-Negro plight similar," *Regina Leader-Post*, n.d.

²⁵⁹ SNCC Papers, Reel 55, Betty Garman to John W. Roberts, 8 April 1965.

²⁶⁰ Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*.

the Soviet Union for influence and alliances, with negative reactions to events like Selma in decolonizing and newly decolonized countries. Pressure on the United States government stemming from Canada was undoubtedly far less significant than from the so-called “third world.” Canada was already firmly allied with the United States in the Cold War, and American officials likely worried little about events in Alabama impacting their close relationship. Yet impressions in Canada of domestic civil rights matters were not unimportant. The intense Canadian protests around Selma impacted on the United States’ broader global image, because the press coverage that global sympathy protests generated could fuel other protests, which in turn contributed to more media interest. *New York Times* and *Washington Post* pieces covered the Canadian actions in March 1965.²⁶¹ Implying concern, American consular officials reported regularly and in great detail on Canadian reactions and responses to American civil rights events and issues. Of particular concern was the “extensive” attention to Selma in the local media.²⁶² One of the Canadian protestors’ greatest successes was to make Alabama relevant on a local level, and thereby raise its media profile. Bringing the protest to Canada made Selma a story that mattered to the Canadian press locally, nationally, and internationally. While there was some criticism of the protestors in the Canadian press, a consular report to Washington noted that “a majority were in sympathy with the aims of the demonstrators and believed that the civil rights treatment accorded the Negro, in the South in particular, was of such a

²⁶¹ “Canadian Students Protest,” *New York Times*, 11 March 1965; “Johnson Meets 2 Rights Groups on Selma Today: To See Congressmen,” *Washington Post*, 12 March 1965; “Toronto Students Turned Back,” *New York Times*, 17 March 1965; Lawrence Stern, “Selma ‘Etched’ on World Conscience,” *Washington Post*, 17 March 1965

²⁶² NARA, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, Soc 14-1, Box 3250, Incoming Telegram from Amembassy Ottawa to SecState WashDC, 12 March 1965.

kind as to transcend national boundaries.”²⁶³ In combination with other international responses, the Canadian protests had Washington’s attention.

The protestors successfully urged Prime Minister Lester Pearson to issue a public statement at the Ottawa protest march. This was a notable achievement, for Canadian political leaders generally hesitated to criticize domestic happenings within their powerful neighbour to the south. Pearson had addressed the civil rights movement before, though not at an event on the scale of the Ottawa protest. In the midst of violence against the Birmingham integration demonstrators, the Martin Luther King Fund had publicly pressured Pearson to raise the issue in his May 1963 meeting with President John F. Kennedy.²⁶⁴ The main topics of conversation at the meeting included stationing nuclear weaponry in Canada, the Organization of American States, and the Columbia River Treaty, alongside other matters, but Birmingham does not appear to have been on the agenda.²⁶⁵ Pearson did mention Birmingham publicly several months later, upon receipt of a Humanitarian Award at the National Conference of Christians and Jews. Rabbi W. Gunther Plaut, who was in attendance, quoted Pearson as saying, “[w]hen freedom falters in the United States, ours is diminished in Canada. Your racial problems are ours also, although we have no right to shout stridently in accusation. Discrimination knows no

²⁶³ NARA, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, Soc 14-1, Box 3250, “Nonstop 8 ½ Day Sit-Down Protest at Toronto Consulate General over Civil Rights in U.S.,” Airgram from AmConsul Toronto to Department of State, 29 March 1965.

²⁶⁴ “Want PM to Discuss Alabama with JFK,” *Toronto Star*, 9 May 1963.

²⁶⁵ NARA, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, Pol 2-1, Box 3851, Airgram from All Consular Posts in Canada; USIS Toronto London BNA to Department of State, 10 May 1963; Memorandum of Conversation, Hyannis Port, 11 Mar 1963, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, Volume XIII: Western Europe and Canada* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1994), 1201.

national boundary.”²⁶⁶ While Pearson, according to Plaut, “spoke with frankness,” it is also important to note that the comments came months after President Kennedy had already called for a wide-ranging new civil rights law.²⁶⁷ He did not make these comments during the height of public pressure on Kennedy to take action in Birmingham. Pearson also stressed his opinion that “[n]either national governments nor a world assembly can legislate human emotions. The ideals of brotherhood are not enforceable. There is no formula for making human relations smooth and without friction...”²⁶⁸ This view was commonly used in the period to excuse governments from taking firm action on prejudice. In this instance, it ensured Pearson’s remarks were read as a critique of what transpired in Birmingham, not the Kennedy administration’s handling of the situation.

During the Selma protests, activists were initially unsuccessful in lobbying Pearson to issue a statement. With the Canadian protests showing no signs of abating, however, a Liberal Member of Parliament, Lloyd Francis, delivered a statement on behalf of Pearson to the crowd at the Ottawa march. According to a report from American consular officials, the statement noted the shock with which Pearson had observed events in Selma. “I honor those in Alabama, or anywhere else, who are fighting within the law for their rights as free citizens,” the statement read. Careful to appear balanced, the statement continued, “I know that the United States government is deeply concerned and

²⁶⁶ Ontario Jewish Archives (hereafter OJA), Holy Blossom Temple Toronto Bulletins, MG3 A1, W. Gunther Plaut, “Jottings from a Journey,” *Holy Blossom Temple Bulletin* 39, no. 7 (7 October 1963).

²⁶⁷ OJA, Holy Blossom Temple Toronto Bulletins, MG3 A1, W. Gunther Plaut, “Jottings from a Journey,” *Holy Blossom Temple Bulletin* 39, no. 7 (7 October 1963).

²⁶⁸ “Race Statutes Alone Not Enough: Pearson,” *Globe and Mail*, 30 September 1963.

is striving to remove the cause of this concern through its civil rights legislation.”²⁶⁹ A measured response to events in Selma, the statement also took pains to paint the Johnson administration in a positive light. Given the rarity with which Canadian political leaders made any public comments on issues of this sort, however, particularly when the Johnson administration had yet to act, it did matter. On its own, this statement would not have had much impact. As part of a chorus of worldwide attention to events in Selma, the protestors’ success in attracting both Canadian media and government attention was significant. The protestors compelled the prime minister to do something he had hesitated to do; this added to the cacophony of voices around the world that helped generate pressure for federal government action in Selma. It was also an early example in the student movement of the ability to sway governments through collective action.

Conclusion

Though small in size, the Friends of SNCC in Canada played a role in the American civil rights movement. They raised needed financial support, while also attracting and intensifying international media coverage. Recognition of their involvement in the movement contributes to the increasing attention scholars have paid to its transnationalism. While domestic in its immediate focus, this was a movement that impacted upon, and was impacted by, global activism. The most significant contribution of Canadian activists, Chapters 1 and 2 have shown, was to make the civil rights movement in the United States relevant in Canada. This chapter cites multiple examples

²⁶⁹ NARA, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, Soc 14-1, Box 3250, Incoming Telegram from Amem Ottawa to Department of State, 15 March 1965.

of Canadians defending their engagement with issues and events beyond their national border by interpreting them as directly relevant to Canada. These activists were engaged in a transnational discourse on human rights, wherein national borders receded as barriers to interest, concern, and action. This phenomenon was likewise evident elsewhere, like in Australia, where activists connected anti-Apartheid and African American protests with opposition to discrimination against Indigenous peoples and restrictive immigration policies.²⁷⁰ The Canadians who supported the civil rights movement did so because they cared about what was happening in places like Alabama and Mississippi; they also did so because they increasingly felt that injustices in Alabama and Mississippi were linked to issues in their own country. As Chapters 3 and 4 will illustrate, these activists attained a level of success in leveraging that international context to generate change in Canada.

²⁷⁰ Jennifer Clark, "'The Wind of Change' in Australia: Aborigines and the International Politics of Race, 1960-1972," *International History Review* 20, no. 1 (March 1998): 89-117; Raymond Arsenault, *Freedom Riders: 1961 and the Struggle for Racial Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 511.

CHAPTER 3:
The Press, Public Opinion, and Human Rights in
Domestic and Global Contexts

In August 1957, the *Globe and Mail* printed an editorial proposing that Canada replace its annual Civic Holiday with one to honour Emancipation Day. Also landing at the beginning of August, and long celebrated in African Canadian communities, Emancipation Day marked the British Empire's abolition of slavery in 1833. The editorial argued it would be worth celebrating as a national holiday in part because "[t]he abolition of slavery in the Empire was decreed thirty-two years before the United States took the same step forward — and the Empire managed it without civil war."¹ A month later, events in Arkansas presented a similarly tempting (but more current) point of comparison between the two countries. Newspapers around the world published near daily stories throughout September 1957 about the violent opposition nine African American children encountered in Arkansas, while attempting to integrate a Little Rock high school. The celebratory tone of the former editorial about "race" in Canada and the condemnatory tone of stories on Little Rock reflected a common pattern in major Canadian newspapers throughout the 1950s and 1960s of favourable representations of Canada compared with the United States. While recurrent, such contrasting tones were increasingly under the microscope in this period, as Canadian anti-discrimination activists drew attention to parallels, rather than sharp contrasts, between the two countries in their discussions of racism and human rights protections. These trends in Canadian media coverage offer a window into wider Canadian attitudes towards human rights issues domestically and

¹ "Why Not Emancipation Day?," *Globe and Mail*, 8 August 1957.

abroad, at a time when racism and anti-racist protests around the world were regularly featured in the Canadian news media.

Having examined the myriad ways Canadian rights activists engaged with the African American civil rights movement, this chapter considers its transnational meanings and impacts in the Canadian media and, by extension, on the broader public. It argues that certain key themes are apparent across Canadian reactions, responses, and interactions with news stemming from the United States. Namely, a fundamental tension existed between a discourse of sympathy with the goals of the civil rights movement, and profound disagreement over whether that sympathy should have any bearing on the status of rights protections in Canada itself. Mainstream Canadian media coverage was largely sympathetic with the goals of nonviolent African American protestors in the late 1950s and early 1960s. This sympathetic discourse intersected with the narrative that unlike in the United States, inequalities grounded in “race” were not widespread in Canada. Positive responses to African American civil rights raised questions about levels of commitment, or lack thereof, to equality in Canada. In this sense, the American civil rights movement produced tangible transnational impacts. It forced issues like discrimination and inequality onto front pages and into conversations not just in the United States, but in Canada too. African American protests against injustices in their country helped compel citizens of other countries to ponder whether similar problems existed in their own backyard. While this prompted some questioning of the sanctimonious imagination, the American movement ultimately did not translate into a widespread belief that Canada, too, had fundamentally similar issues with which to

reckon. It inspired more discussion around the place of discrimination in Canada and contributed to an environment conducive to certain tangible actions, but the sanctimonious imagination remained a powerful force. Curiously, the civil rights movement at once encouraged broader discourse on discrimination and rights in Canada and also propped up an exceptionalist understanding of Canada as uniquely moral in the midst of worldwide “racial” tensions.

Canadian Coverage of the Civil Rights Movement

Through newspapers, radio, and increasingly television, Canadians received regular coverage of key events, actors, and incidents in the American civil rights movement. Most often, the coverage represented what historians would today consider the movement’s “traditional” narrative arc. This version of the story emphasizes events like the *Brown* Supreme Court school desegregation decision in 1954, the Montgomery Bus Boycott the following year, sit-ins and Freedom Rides in the early 1960s, 1963’s Birmingham integration movement and March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, the 1964 *Civil Rights Act*, and the Selma voting rights campaign and subsequent passage of the *Voting Rights Act* to round out the story in 1965. Large organizations like the NAACP and SCLC, as well as a few prominent (male) leaders, were the central actors in a story concentrated in the United States South. SNCC leader Julian Bond has wryly and

effectively summarized this incomplete narrative: “Rosa [Parks] sat down, Martin [Luther King] stood up, and the white kids came down and saved the day.”²

Over the past two decades, American historians have problematized this narrative by arguing that a few nationally covered campaigns do not tell the full story. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s SCLC, for example, has come into criticism as a “‘hit-and-run’ organization, which entered communities... used them to capture national headlines, and then abandoned them to deal with the aftermath of intense racial confrontations.”³ In light of this critical perspective, several works have shifted their focus towards the dedicated women and men who sustained protests in their local communities over a much longer period of time, often without the shine of the national and international media’s spotlight.⁴ While a small number of Canadians engaged with this style of local civil rights activism through direct participation in the American movement, most Canadians were not involved in such efforts. The mainstream media’s fixation on a relatively limited cadre of actors and events shaped exposure to the movement for most Canadians.

Canadian media reporting was notably similar to American coverage due to the ubiquity of reports from American news agencies.⁵ Large Canadian media outlets did

² Quoted in Wesley C. Hogan, *Many Minds, One Heart: SNCC's Dream for a New America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 7.

³ Peter Ling, “SNCCs: Not One Committee, but Several,” in *From Sit-ins to SNCC: The Student Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s*, eds. Iwan Morgan and Philip Davies (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2012), 82.

⁴ See for example Chana Kai Lee, *For Freedom’s Sake: The Life of Fannie Lou Hamer* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Charles M. Payne, *I’ve Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard, eds., *Groundwork: Local Black Freedom Movements in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2005); Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

⁵ Richard Lentz and Karla K. Gower, *The Opinions of Mankind: Racial Issues, Press, and Propaganda in the Cold War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2010), 8-10.

sometimes send their own staff reporters south for on-site coverage. The *Toronto Star* featured articles by staff writer Alan Edmonds from the 1963 March on Washington, while the *Globe and Mail's* Bruce MacDonald was on the ground reporting from Selma in 1965. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) produced original works for radio and television, including a 1962 radio program "A Portrait of Atlanta," and the acclaimed 1963 television documentary "One More River to Cross."⁶ For the majority of stories, photographs, and video footage, however, the Canadian media relied on major American news services. This was hardly unique; most civil rights coverage in publications around the world came from American sources.⁷ Mallory Schwartz likewise notes that CBC television made frequent use of American reporting and film when covering diverse stories.⁸ Beyond the use of American wire services and news reports in the Canadian media, a sizeable number of Canadians in this period subscribed directly to major American newspapers such as the *New York Times*. As a result, Canadians reading about the civil rights movement were exposed to a fairly limited narrative of events. Much of this chapter necessarily focuses on Canadian interactions with this mainstream-media narrative. Such a focus is not intended to challenge the recent scholarly emphasis on local

⁶ National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter NARA), General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, Pol 2-1, Box 3851, Airgram from All Consular Posts in Canada; USIS Toronto London BNA to Department of State, 3 May 1963; King Centre Digital Archives (hereafter KCDA), Ms. Eleanor Fischer to Martin Luther King, 13 November 1961.

⁷ Lentz and Gower, *The Opinions of Mankind*, 8-9.

⁸ Mallory Schwartz, "A 'Golden Age' of CBC Television News for the Military, 1952-1956," *Canadian Historical Review* 94, no. 4 (December 2013): 490, 494.

movements and lesser-known actors. Rather, it reflects the limited perspective most Canadians received through common media sources.⁹

While much of this chapter explores printed material, particularly newspaper reports, the emerging importance of television cannot be underestimated. By the period in question a majority of Canadians had a set in their home.¹⁰ At the same time, American media presence and influence in Canada had grown substantially. As Fahrni and Rutherford note, “the American empire went beyond the diplomatic and the political: cultural products such as magazines, movies, and beginning in the 1950s, television also advertised the American way of life in the postwar decades.”¹¹ The scope and scale of television coverage and viewership is difficult to measure, but evidence suggests the civil rights movement received regular attention on news broadcasts in Canada. This included live coverage of events like the March on Washington, where Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his now famous “I Have a Dream” speech. “All news media gave [the] Washington march heavy play,” a U.S. consular telegram from Ottawa informed the Department of State, “with CBC TV August 28 devoting one hour prime time to [a] special program from Washington carrying addresses [by] Brando, King and Randolph.”¹² Schwartz has analysed coverage of American domestic and foreign policy

⁹ Leigh Raiford, *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare: Photography and the African American Freedom Struggle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 75.

¹⁰ Dominique Clément, “Generations and the Transformation of Social Movements in Postwar Canada,” *Histoire sociale/Social History* 42, no. 84 (November 2009): 369.

¹¹ Magda Fahrni and Robert Rutherford, “Introduction,” in *Creating Postwar Canada: Community, Diversity, and Dissent, 1946-75*, eds. Magda Fahrni and Robert Rutherford (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008): 4.

¹² NARA, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, SOC 14-1, Box 4221, Incoming telegram from Ottawa to Department of State, 30 August 1963.

issues on CBC television's English news. Throughout the 1960s, she notes, American civil rights issues "received a notable amount of attention" on CBC television.¹³

Canadian reporting on civil rights frequently employed what Schwartz classifies as "positive language."¹⁴ This point is certainly reflected in a 1961 CBC television *Newsmagazine* episode about the Freedom Riders, a group of integrated travellers who challenged segregation on interstate bus travel through the American South. The host used the word "savage" to describe the violent assault the freedom riders sustained at the hands of segregationists. Reporter Kingsley Brown pronounced Alabama a place where "discrimination... shouts at every turn; the separate fountains because one person's skin is different from another." The host, meanwhile, used the word "contradictory" to describe the state Governor's justification of segregation.¹⁵

While audience reception is difficult to measure, sources indicate that televised reporting of civil rights protests invoked shocked and concerned responses. A still new medium at the time, television coverage of the movement, and particularly of its violent suppression, evoked strong reactions. Tamio Wakayama was first drawn to the American civil rights struggle through his television set, watching sit-in students calmly seated at lunch counters while insults and assaults were hurled in their direction.¹⁶ Paul Saltzman's concern about civil rights was sparked while following reports of the search for three

¹³ Mallory Schwartz, "Like 'Us' or 'Them'? Perceptions of the United States on the CBC-TV National News Service in the 1960s," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 44, no. 3 (Fall 2010): 129.

¹⁴ Schwartz, "Like 'Us' or 'Them'?", 130.

¹⁵ CBC *Newsmagazine*, *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Digital Archives* video, 27:03, 28 May 1961, accessed 2 April 2013, <<http://www.cbc.ca/archives/categories/politics/rights-freedoms/general-2/freedom-riders-stand-up-with-martin-luther-king-against-segregation.html>>

¹⁶ Xiaoping Li, *Voices Rising: Asian Canadian Cultural Activism* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007), 91.

murdered civil rights workers in Mississippi. “I was watching the unfolding of the [James] Cheney, [Andrew] Goodman, and [Michael] Schwerner killings,” Saltzman recalls, “and I just remember being horrified.”¹⁷ A *Winnipeg Free Press* piece on film footage from Selma illustrates the still young medium’s power. After describing a scene from a news broadcast of the bloodied Selma protestors on “Bloody Sunday,” the author explained, “[a]s a viewer I have never had more revulsion, utter disgust and shock. This was not a ‘staged’ show. It was real – brutal, sadistic, senseless.”¹⁸

The protestors in Selma, and at other prominent movement events, were aware of television’s potential power. Addressing a group of marchers in Selma, Martin Luther King, Jr. declared, “[w]e are here to say to the white men that we no longer will let them use clubs on us in the dark corners. We’re going to make them do it in the glaring light of television.”¹⁹ Civil rights activists were quite successful in realizing this goal of attracting televised attention, not only in the United States but the world over. As Tuck notes, British television broadcasts “followed the action like a soap opera.”²⁰

Whether through broadcast news or printed material, Canadian coverage of African American civil rights activism followed a pattern of peaks and valleys. Attention increased around certain flashpoints, and decreased in between. Periods of widespread reporting tended to occur in response to the most dramatic protests, and particular interest was directed at events involving large numbers of participants, especially those facing

¹⁷ Interview with Paul Saltzman by Rosanne Waters, 24 October 2012.

¹⁸ “Etched In The Memory,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, 13 March 1965.

¹⁹ Quoted in Aniko Bodroghkozy, *Equal Time: Television and the Civil Rights Movement* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 2.

²⁰ Stephen Tuck, “Malcolm X’s Visit to Oxford University: U.S. Civil Rights, Black Britain, and the Special Relationship on Race,” *American Historical Review* 118, no. 1 (February 2013): 87.

violent suppression in the name of Jim Crow.²¹ Violence against protestors resulted in a significant amount of sympathetic press coverage in Canada. An early example, that incorporated these themes in Canadian reportage, was the aforementioned Little Rock school integration crisis. Images of black teenagers facing racist taunts, hostility, and violence while simply trying to attend school led to widespread news interest across the United States, in Canada, and around the world.²²

The American consulate in Montreal reported back to the State Department on the extensive local play the story received. The Little Rock crisis was regularly featured on the front page of Montreal's major newspapers, a significant shift for publications that, according to American consulate officials, would otherwise go "a week and two weeks at a time without front-paging anything except local news."²³ Recognizing an opportunity to leverage global media interest to their advantage, African American newspapers highlighted international coverage and condemnation of Little Rock. One newspaper reprinted an article from the *Montreal Star*:

[w]here they... get the sheer guts to go through with it, we don't know. Nor is it easy to imagine the soul-searching that their parents went through before letting the children step into such a maelstrom of terror... What sort of dedication does a man – or more important, a youngster need to face the stones of a crowd, their knives or guns or clubs, of being cornered by a mob?²⁴

²¹ Raiford, *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare*, 77.

²² Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 119; Lentz and Gower, *The Opinions of Mankind*, 100.

²³ NARA, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, 811.411/4-1456, Box 4158, High Local Interest in United States Race Problems, Foreign Service Dispatch from AMCONGEN, Montreal, 11 September 1956.

²⁴ "Press of Nation Praises Courage of Negro Pupils," *Atlanta Daily World*, 21 October 1957.

The unfolding story earned front page play on the *Toronto Star* throughout the month of September, with bold headlines and stories accompanied by dramatic photographs.²⁵ Editorials in the *Toronto Star* announced support for school integration while condemning the “[u]gly demonstrations of race hatred and prejudice” displayed by those defying the *Brown* ruling.²⁶ The *Globe and Mail* published almost fifty front page articles about Little Rock between September and November 1957.²⁷ The *Halifax Chronicle-Herald* featured the story on a near daily basis as it unfolded throughout September.²⁸ The American consulate in Calgary informed the Department of State, “[f]or some time Southern Alberta newspapers have given front page spread to the ‘hate-filled struggle over integration in Little Rock.’”²⁹ Throughout the fall of 1957, a Canadian picking up a major newspaper would have been hard-pressed not to come across at minimum a few pictures or headlines from Little Rock.

Another event that was important to early awareness in Canada of African American civil rights organizing does not typically feature as prominently in the

²⁵ See for example “Arkansas Governor Says Calling Guard ‘Prevents Violence,’” *Toronto Star*, 3 September 1957; “200 U.S. Troops Armed, Hold Back Negro Schoolgirl,” *Toronto Star*, 4 September 1957; “Southern Whites Jeer,” *Toronto Star*, 5 September 1957; “The Little Rock Story,” *Toronto Star*, 7 September 1957.

²⁶ “Negroes Gaining Despite Little Rock,” *Toronto Star*, 5 September 1957.

²⁷ See for example “Arkansas Troops Out, But Integration Ordered,” *Globe and Mail*, 4 September 1957; Benjamin Fine, “Integration Situation Explosive: Governor of Arkansas Fears FBI, Calls State Troops in Race Row,” *Globe and Mail*, 5 September 1957; “Negroes Turned From School, Judge Requests Injunction to Curb Arkansas Governor,” *Globe and Mail*, 10 September 1957; Benjamin Fine, “Faubus Will Keep Troops on Duty,” *Globe and Mail*, 16 September 1957; Benjamin Fine, “Faubus Away, Police Take Over, Negroes to Try Once More,” *Globe and Mail*, 23 September 1957.

²⁸ See for example Bryce Miller, “Guardsmen Halt School Integration,” *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, 4 September 1957; “Troops Turn Back 9 Negro Students,” *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, 5 September 1957; “Defiant Governor Faces Injunction,” *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, 10 September 1957; “Ike Takes Hand in Integration Row,” *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, 12 September 1957; “Ike Will Meet Governor Today,” *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, 14 September 1957.

²⁹ NARA, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, 811.411/4-1456, Box 4158, Integration, Foreign Service Dispatch from AMCONSUL Calgary, 27 September 1957.

traditional narrative of the movement. Jimmy Wilson was not a well-known activist himself, though his situation shed light on the nature of Jim Crow “justice,” or more specifically injustice, and of institutionalized racism and violence in the American South. Wilson was an African American man imprisoned in Alabama and given a death sentence after he was charged with the theft of pocket change from his white employer. The shockingly disproportionate penalty for a purported theft of less than two dollars drew international attention and condemnation.³⁰ The flood of protest letters from around the world demanding that he overturn the sentence overwhelmed Alabama’s governor, James E. Folsom. According to the *Chicago Defender*, “[l]etters in the governor’s office were postmarked Chile, Canada, the Netherlands, Holland, Sweden, France, Brazil, England, Spain, and from virtually every state in the country.”³¹ The case was widely covered in Canadian media outlets, and over 3,000 Canadian letters arrived by airmail for Folsom in a single day.³² In a summary of world-wide protests, American Secretary of State John Foster Dulles informed Folsom that the Canadian “press, radio and television have given the Wilson case prominent attention, including publicizing activities by individuals seeking to protest the death sentence.”³³ This came after the American embassy in Ottawa warned the State Department of a “[l]ocal newscaster in Ottawa [who] at one point urged

³⁰ Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 3-5.

³¹ “Ask Governor to Spare Life,” *Chicago Defender*, 26 August 1958.

³² Donald F. Martin, “Clemency Pleas Swamp Folsom,” *Chicago Defender*, 15 September 1958.

³³ NARA, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, 811.411/4-2348, Box 4158, Outgoing Telegram Department of State from John Foster Dulles to James E. Folsom, 4 September 1958.

Canadians to stage crusade by writing Governor Folsom.” The embassy, the report continued, had received “[s]everal telephone calls... from Canadians protesting case.”³⁴

A few Canadian organizations lent their voices to the protest. The Quebec Federation of Labor sent Folsom a message charging that racism was behind the sentence, because it was “for no other reason valid in the context of human rights or progressive jurisprudence.”³⁵ Members of the International Commission of Jurists in Canada forwarded Folsom their condemnation of the death sentence in the case, which they felt “would shock the conscience of the world.”³⁶ The story was of such importance internationally that the *Toronto Star* sent one of its own correspondents, Marty Goodman, to Alabama for coverage. Goodman interviewed Wilson in prison, and his report from Alabama ran on the front page in a story highlighting the miscarriage of justice: “They never asked me anything,” Goodman quoted Wilson. “The policeman that arrested me... he didn’t ask. He say ‘that’s how it happened wasn’t it?’ I say ‘no.’ He cuffed me until I say ‘yeah’...”³⁷ Lest the case be portrayed as a simple matter of crime and punishment and not a direct result of Jim Crow racism, Goodman also contextualized it by pointing out that “[o]nly four men, all Negroes, have been put to death for robbery since the electric chair was installed here in 1927.”³⁸

³⁴ NARA, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, 811.411/4-2348, Box 4158, Incoming Airgram Department of State Amembassy Ottawa, 28 August 1958.

³⁵ “Quebec Labor Protest,” *Toronto Star*, 3 September 1958.

³⁶ “Canada Protests Ala. Wilson Death Edict,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, 20 September 1958.

³⁷ Marty Goodman, “Robs White Widow Can’t Read, Write Aware He’ll Die,” *Toronto Star*, 20 August 1958.

³⁸ Marty Goodman, “‘Liberal’ Governor Seen as Negro’s Only Hope to Escape \$1.95’ Chair,” *Toronto Star*, 21 August 1958.

The actions of Kay Lines, a Toronto resident, effectively illustrate why rights discourse and activism in this period is best understood with both a local and transnational perspective in mind. Lines had developed a friendship with Ghana's first prime minister, Kwame Nkrumah, while she and her journalist husband lived in Accra as employees of a media company. Living in Toronto and disturbed by news of Wilson's sentence, Lines took the dramatic and unusual step of appealing directly to Nkrumah for help. "There is a Negro in Alabama being sentenced to death for stealing \$1.95," Lines informed Nkrumah over the long-distance phone call she had arranged. "He will be executed in one-and-a-half weeks time. Everyone here is shocked. Would you investigate and lead a world protest? We're relying on you. Can you do it?"³⁹ The phone call broke up before Nkrumah could respond, but Lines also sent a telegram detailing the case to ensure Ghana's prime minister received the message in full. "To impose a death sentence on anyone – white or black – for a \$1.95 robbery such as this one is almost unbelievable, especially when it happens in the United States," Lines explained in an interview afterwards. "But since Jimmy Wilson is a Negro, I felt that the best way to focus world attention was to get a world Negro leader such as Nkrumah to take up the cause."⁴⁰ Lines' phone call earned coverage on the front page of the *Toronto Star*, in the *New York Times*, and in the *Pittsburgh Courier*, an important African American newspaper.⁴¹ Nkrumah, moreover, appears to have responded to her action. In a telegram to Folsom about building international pressure on the United States, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles

³⁹ "Phones Ghana for Aid for Doomed Negro," *Toronto Star*, 22 August 1958.

⁴⁰ "Phones Ghana for Aid for Doomed Negro," *Toronto Star*, 22 August 1958.

⁴¹ "Nkrumah is Urged to Aid Negro in U.S.," *New York Times*, 23 August 1958; "Appeals to Nkrumah," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 6 September 1958.

advised the Alabama governor, “Prime Minister Nkrumah of Ghana has inquired urgently as to the facts of the case and our embassy in Liberia has reported that the execution of Wilson would greatly damage the position of the United States in all of West Africa.”⁴² In the midst of a worldwide propaganda battle with the Soviet Union, this attention was of great importance to the American government.

As Mary Dudziak argues, global interest in the embarrassing situation ultimately forced Folsom, under pressure from Dulles, to intervene and remove the death penalty. The decision was made, as Dudziak quotes Folsom, in light of the “international hullabaloo.”⁴³ Canadian media attention, as well as the actions of the thousands of letter-writers and Kay Line’s dramatic phone call, all contributed to building international pressure. With the United States engaged in a Cold War propaganda battle with the Soviet Union, contradictions to America’s proclaimed status as the defender of freedom and democracy did great damage to the country’s international reputation.⁴⁴

The Little Rock and Jimmy Wilson cases were not the only issues to receive intensive international scrutiny. Other protest actions attracted media coverage in Canada into the next decade, including the Freedom Rides to end segregation on interstate bus travel in 1961, the Birmingham integration campaign of 1963, the March on Washington a few months later, and of course, Selma in 1965. Fairly widespread sympathy with and support for the African American protestors existed across the mainstream Canadian media. Indeed, the very language of media coverage, whether American wire service

⁴² NARA, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, 811.411/4-2348, Box 4158, Outgoing Telegram Department of State from John Foster Dulles to James E. Folsom, 4 September 1958.

⁴³ Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 6.

⁴⁴ Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 12.

stories or the works of Canadian journalists, commonly invoked shock at the violence inflicted upon nonviolent protestors, and implied a resultant sympathy with the movement's efforts. Headlines like the *Toronto Star*'s "100,000 March For Freedom" about the March on Washington and the *Winnipeg Free Press*'s "Guards Ready To Curb Racists" report on the Freedom Rides reflected this perspective. So too did a *Halifax Chronicle-Herald* editorial, entitled "American Milestone," about a 1957 federal voting rights law.⁴⁵

Mainstream commentary generally presented the civil rights movement as a necessary effort to overturn racial discrimination in the United States. The *Toronto Star* commended Montgomery Bus Boycott participants for their dedication to nonviolence. "[I]f the Southern Negroes can unite and persevere in a movement of non-violent protest," the article argued, "the day when they achieve equal rights will probably be hastened."⁴⁶ Celebrating non-violent protestors in Birmingham, Alabama, a *Toronto Star* reporter described the organizing process behind each day's events as planning for "today's attack on the white man's hate."⁴⁷ When James Meredith, who faced violent rioters when he integrated the University of Mississippi in 1962, earned his degree, the *Kingsville Reporter* described his achievement as "a great victory for integration..."⁴⁸ Though the *Winnipeg Free Press* questioned whether it would result in tangible policy impacts, the newspaper nevertheless praised the March on Washington as an "orderly and

⁴⁵ Alan Edmonds, "100,000 March For Freedom," *Toronto Star*, 28 August 1963; Stuart Loory, "Guards Ready To Curb Racists," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 23 May 1961; "American Milestone," *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, 3 September 1957.

⁴⁶ "The Weapon of Love," *Toronto Star*, 25 February 1956.

⁴⁷ Jeremy Brown, "Non-violence is way of life for Negro leader," *Toronto Star*, 7 May 1963.

⁴⁸ "His Battle Won," *Kingsville Reporter*, 29 August 1963.

dignified affair.”⁴⁹ A *Halifax Chronicle-Herald* editorial described the Selma protestors as the manifestation of America as “the home of the brave”; voting injustices, by contrast, showed that some parts of the United States did not yet deserve the description “land of the free.”⁵⁰ These excerpts offer a sampling of a wider trend in Canadian reporting that was likewise evident in British coverage. The mainstream British media, Sewell notes, indicated that “[g]ains for the civil rights movement were progress. Setbacks were defeat.”⁵¹

Particular shock was reserved for the murder of civil rights workers. In 1964, civil rights workers James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner went missing and were presumed (and later found) murdered in Mississippi. Several Canadian newspapers expressed indignation, alongside publications around the world. According to the *Sarnia Observer*, “humanity has suffered a setback and the white majority of North America has reason to feel ashamed after what happened in Meridian, Mississippi.”⁵² *Maclean’s* journalist Ian Sclanders wrote a tribute to murdered Mississippi NAACP activist Medgar Evers, who Sclanders labelled “one of the true heroes of our time.”⁵³ Similar coverage followed the death of two activists in Selma, James Reeb and Viola Liuzzo. The *Halifax Chronicle-Herald* ran a front page banner reading “Minister Dies After Beating” on the former, and the headline, “Johnson Plans War on Klan,” after

⁴⁹ “The Washington March,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, 29 August 1963.

⁵⁰ “The Brave,” *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, 13 March 1965.

⁵¹ Mike Sewell, “British Responses to Martin Luther King Jr and the Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1968,” in *The Making of Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement*, eds. Brian Ward and Tony Badger (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 194.

⁵² NARA, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, Box 3062, Info: All Consular Posts in Canada; USIS Toronto Amembassy London Cinclant Poland, Airgram from Amembassy Ottawa, 21 December 1964.

⁵³ Ian Sclanders, “The day-to-day heroism of my friend Medgar Evers,” *Maclean’s*, 27 July 1963.

Liuzzo's murder.⁵⁴ An editorial cartoon in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, reprinted from the *Washington Post*, depicted a stark coffin, inscribed "James J. Reeb – Selma, Alabama."⁵⁵

There was an important limit to sympathetic coverage of civil rights murders, which Hogan describes as "[a] grotesque repercussion of white supremacy."⁵⁶ Various contemporary observers and scholars of American history have noted greater levels of shock and sympathy after the murder of white volunteers compared with African Americans. The organizers of Freedom Summer in 1964, for example, understood that the national media would pay more attention to Mississippi if white students from northern colleges put their lives on the line. National press coverage had largely eluded black civil rights workers in Mississippi prior to Freedom Summer, many of whom had already died in the fight to attain the basic rights of American citizenship.⁵⁷ Rita Schwerner commented on this following the murder of her husband, Michael Schwerner, alongside two other civil rights workers in Mississippi. Two of the murdered men were white, while one, James Chaney, was black. As Rita Schwerner put it, "[i]t is tragic that white Northerners must be caught in the machinery of Southern injustice before the American people registered concern. If Mr. Chaney [the black volunteer] had been alone, I suspect this case would have gone unnoticed."⁵⁸ Canadian SNCC volunteer Robertson Wood made a similar remark about SNCC's fundraising efforts after returning from Mississippi:

⁵⁴ "Minister Dies After Beating," *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, 12 March 1965; "Johnson Plans War on Klan," *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, 27 March 1965.

⁵⁵ Editorial Cartoon, *Winnipeg Free Press*, 16 March 1965.

⁵⁶ Hogan, *Many Minds, One Heart*, 149.

⁵⁷ Vanessa Murphree, *The Selling of Civil Rights: Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the Use of Public Relations* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 63; Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 114.

⁵⁸ Quoted in Murphree, *The Selling of Civil Rights*, 68.

“[t]he unfortunate thing is that if there’s a death of a white civil rights worker, SNCC doesn’t have to worry about money.”⁵⁹ Another SNCC member remarked on the same problem while fundraising in Canada. As reported in the *Regina Leader-Post*, “Mr. [Jim] Colbert said the deaths of civil rights workers Viola Liuzzo and James Reeb had aided the Negro cause in Selma greatly. The fact that they were white gave the cause publicity, he said. If the two murdered had been Negroes, the effect on public opinion would not have been so great.”⁶⁰ While highlighting this media trend is not intended to diminish the contributions of all volunteers to the movement, it does illustrate an important limitation to sympathetic coverage, in Canada and elsewhere.

Another key theme in Canadian press coverage was that, while the mainstream media condemned legalized segregation as unbefitting a democratic society, such critiques tended to focus squarely on the American South. They also gave disproportionate attention to a few vocally racist individuals, such as Birmingham’s Public Safety Commissioner Bull Connor and Sheriff Jim Clark in Selma. This style of reportage implicitly exonerated the American nation as a whole by suggesting that inequalities resulted from a small number of increasingly out-of-touch and regionally isolated individuals. Bodroghkozy has studied the overrepresentation of Southern white “moderates” in American national network news coverage, who were portrayed as “earnestly trying to come to terms with challenges to their previously naturalized segregationist common sense.” By contrast, Bodroghkozy argues, “[d]ied-in-the-wool

⁵⁹ LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 754-755, Canadian Friends of the Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee – Univ. Of Toronto, “A Dead White Man is a Fund Booster: SNCC,” *Toronto Telegram*, 3 August 1965.

⁶⁰ LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, 755, Friends of the Student Non Violent Co-ordinating Committee – Univ. Of Sask., “Indian Life ‘Shocking,’” *Regina Leader-Post*, 22 April 1965.

segregationists and white supremacists, when presented, were typically shown as deviant.”⁶¹ Relatedly, Canadian coverage contrasted the violent suppression of protestors with a broader narrative of progress. While the mainstream media denounced violent defenses of Jim Crow, it simultaneously focused on overall improvements in “race relations” and implied the situation would inevitably get better. This theme is important, because it helps explain a decline in mainstream support in Canada and the United States for African American protestors, as coverage of the movement’s tactics and goals shifted throughout the decade. It also elucidates the unwillingness of many observers to identify lessons for Canada in the American situation, a theme that is discussed further below.

Civil Rights Movement Coverage in Canada: Transnational Lessons

Coverage of the civil rights movement in Canada stimulated interest in events south of the border. Attention to American events also raised questions about whether the civil rights movement could offer lessons for Canada. Intense attention to racism marked this period, as debates raged in Canada and around the world over the place of legislated rights protections in a democratic society. The civil rights movement regularly appeared on the front pages of Canadian newspapers and on radio and television news alongside stories about decolonization and racist regimes in South Africa and Rhodesia. During the late 1950s and 1960s, it would have been difficult for anyone paying even cursory attention to the news in Canada to escape a basic awareness of these issues. One of the

⁶¹ Bodroghkozy, *Equal Time: Television and the Civil Rights Movement*, 46.

most important impacts of civil rights movement coverage in Canada, combined with related global stories, was its contribution to a transnational dialogue about discrimination and human rights. The civil rights movement's significance did not stop at the 49th parallel; rather, the issues then receiving so much attention in the United States were increasingly up for debate in Canada as well.

Unprecedented attention to global human rights struggles, combined with locally targeted Canadian rights activism, contributed to heightened Canadian discourse around how to deal with discrimination and better protect certain human rights. These matters moved to the forefront of public discussion in this period, making the issues Canadian rights activists were already highlighting difficult to ignore. H.A.J. Wedderburn made this observation when reflecting on attention the media paid him in his role as president of the Nova Scotia Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NSAACP). According to an article in the *United Church Observer*, Wedderburn felt "his appearance on a national television program was likely a result of the publicity given to unrest in the U.S."⁶² This was not an isolated experience, but part of a broader trend. As Robert Ashe puts it, "with civil rights a conspicuous and broadening story in the United States, other parts of Canada suddenly grew curious about their own cultural currents and focused on Nova Scotia..."⁶³

Numerous examples demonstrate how the backdrop of the American movement helped draw the spotlight to related Canadian issues. This impact was no accident;

⁶² Provincial Archives of Nova Scotia (hereafter PANS), Fred R MacKinnon fonds, 1992-718, v. 1, E.L. Homewood, "The Maritimes' Race Problems," *The United Church Observer*, 1 December 1963.

⁶³ Robert Ashe, *Halifax Champion: Black Power in Gloves* (Halifax: Formac Publishing Company Ltd., 2005), 34.

Canadians with an interest in human rights intentionally highlighted comparisons between the American situation and discrimination in Canada. The media attention surrounding American civil rights, activists recognized, created an opportune moment to challenge the sanctimonious imagination. The Canadian media in turn paid closer attention to Canadian discrimination issues when reporting on and editorializing about American events.

Challenges to segregation in Dresden, Ontario under the province's new fair accommodations law occurred partly in the wake the United States Supreme Court's 1954 school desegregation ruling. When a segregationist restaurant owner in Dresden was fined under the fair accommodations law, a 1955 *London Free Press* editorial invoked the American situation:

[i]t is unfortunate in a nation which prides itself on being even nominally Christian that members of a minority race must go to court to secure what should be theirs without question. Too many of us believe superficially that all men are brothers – so long as we are not called upon to fraternize. As the school desegregation problems in the United States has demonstrated, discrimination and bigotry cannot be abolished by passing laws. But we must at least have a background of law before we can hope to change men's hearts.⁶⁴

An article in *Maclean's* likewise framed segregation in Dresden with the American situation: "Jim Crow lives! The Canadian who looks down on the Southern United States for 'Jim Crow' racial segregation will suffer a rude shock on visiting [this] sleepy agricultural center..."⁶⁵ A *Globe and Mail* article, printed shortly after Jimmy Wilson's sentence attained notoriety, followed a similar pattern. Reporting on a conference about the place of Indigenous people in Canada, the article regretted that "[t]he color bar in the

⁶⁴ Ontario Jewish Archive (hereafter OJA), Canadian Jewish Congress, JCRC fonds 17, series 5, "Dresden Decision Vital to Human Rights," *London Evening Free Press*, 15 January 1955.

⁶⁵ Quoted in Sarah-Jane Mathieu, *North of the Color Line: Migration and Black Resistance in Canada, 1870-1955* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 213.

United States, Africa or elsewhere excites many Canadians considerably; but the color bar in Canada seems to excite them or their government not at all.”⁶⁶ Agnes Calliste has described the efforts of railroad porters in Canada throughout the 1950s and 1960s to end racist hiring practices. Publicity was a big part of their efforts. “In 1961,” Calliste notes, “the porters launched a massive national media campaign against the discrimination practiced by the CBRT [Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Workers] and the CNR [Canadian National Railway].”⁶⁷ With the background of the Cold War and international matters like the civil rights movement, Calliste explains, “the national and international environment was favourable to equal employment opportunity legislation.”⁶⁸

While earlier 1950s *Chatelaine* magazine pieces tended to portray Canada in a positive light vis-a-vis the experiences of immigrants, Korinec notes that toward “the end of the decade the self-congratulatory tone was replaced by concern...”⁶⁹ As evidence, Korinec discusses a 1959 article entitled “Are Canadians *Really* Tolerant.” Co-authored by a young woman named Yvonne Bobb who had immigrated to Canada from the West Indies, the article quoted Bobb that “[m]ost Canadians are, in fact, no friendlier toward people whose colour and customs differ from their own than are those residents of Little Rock or London’s Notting Hill whose behaviour white Canadians loudly deplore.”⁷⁰ In the same period, well-known African American journalist Carl T. Rowan asked, in a *Toronto Telegram* piece, “Are we color-blind smug?” The article cited statistics on

⁶⁶ “Apartheid, Canadian Style,” *Globe and Mail*, 3 November 1958.

⁶⁷ Agnes Calliste, “The Struggle for Employment Equity by Blacks on American and Canadian Railroads,” *Journal of Black Studies* 25, no. 3 (January 1995): 310.

⁶⁸ Calliste, “The Struggle for Employment Equity by Blacks on American and Canadian Railroads,” 299.

⁶⁹ Valerie S. Korinec, *Roughing It in the Suburbs: Reading Chatelaine Magazine in the Fifties and Sixties* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 285-286.

⁷⁰ Quoted in Korinec, *Roughing It in the Suburbs*, 288.

discrimination in housing, and quoted a black Canadian Football League player, “[y]ou don’t have to be a football hero to avoid discrimination in Canada – but it sure helps.” While the article quoted some individuals who cited “‘American influence’ for at least some of Canada’s racial troubles” it also quoted a man that, “while Canada has no Deep South, ‘there are areas in which discriminations are more severe than others...’”⁷¹ While the article assigned blame for racism in part to American visitors, it is also an example of self-reflection in light of African American civil rights activism. A 1961 CBC television report on the Freedom Riders offers further evidence of this trend. The show ended with host Norman DePoe’s warning, “‘One Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.’ Our neighbors to the south, like ourselves in some cases, are still trying to translate a noble phrase into reality. In today’s world, there might not be very much time left.”⁷² Though the comparison to Canada was moderated by the words “in some cases,” DePoe nevertheless indicated that Canadians could find meaning in a story on the American Freedom Rides.

The wider international context was of critical importance in this period. Apartheid in South Africa and an openly racist government in Rhodesia, coupled with events in North America, collectively heightened interest in the prevalence and implications of racism. A 1960 *Newmarket Era* story on a landlord accused of rejecting prospective renters based on “race” suggests the simultaneous importance of American Jim Crow and South Africa’s Apartheid regime as reference points. The incident, in a city

⁷¹ Archives of Ontario (hereafter AO), Alvin McCurdy fonds, MS 1166, F 2076-3-0-44, Carl T. Rowan, “Are we color-blind smug?,” *Toronto Telegram*, n.d.

⁷² CBC Newsmagazine, *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Digital Archives* video, 27:03, 28 May 1961, accessed 2 April 2013, <<http://www.cbc.ca/archives/categories/politics/rights-freedoms/general-2/freedom-riders-stand-up-with-martin-luther-king-against-segregation.html>>

north of Toronto, took place mere weeks after the massacre of 69 anti-Apartheid demonstrators in Sharpeville, South Africa.⁷³ This, coupled with sit-ins at segregated lunch counters across the American South, informed the Canadian story. “Occurring as it has when world attention is focused on the problems of the southern United States and South Africa,” the newspaper stated, “it is significant that while Newmarket citizens indignantly joined in condemning South Africa’s apartheid policy they find the same seed of discrimination in their own backyard.”⁷⁴ The article referenced the Association of Civil Liberties’ efforts to strengthen Ontario’s fair accommodations legislation, but worried, “contrary to the public’s mouthing of democratic ideals, [we] may well have a long delay before final approval of a provincial government.... all too often ideals turn sour when subject to contentions closely affecting an individual.”⁷⁵ In this instance, international parallels encouraged Canadians to contemplate changes at home. Following the lead of anti-discrimination activists, this type of newspaper reporting challenged the sanctimonious imagination and pressured Canadians to walk the talk of equality.

Events in Birmingham, Alabama in 1963 similarly inspired discussions of racism, rights, and equality in Canada. The movement in Birmingham challenged widespread segregation in a city known colloquially as “Bombingham,” for its reputation as a bastion of a violent Jim Crow order.⁷⁶ The SCLC and local organizers correctly anticipated that

⁷³ As Peter Henshaw notes, “[t]his tragedy hardened Canadian and international opinion against apartheid and focused additional public attention on South Africa’s Commonwealth membership.” See Peter Henshaw, “Canada and the ‘South African Disputes’ at the United Nations, 1946-1961,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 33, no. 1 (1999): 31.

⁷⁴ “The Thin Black Line,” *Newmarket Era*, 7 April 1960.

⁷⁵ “The Thin Black Line,” *Newmarket Era*, 7 April 1960.

⁷⁶ David J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (New York: Harper Collins, 1986), 232.

Bull Connor, the city's Commissioner for (ironically enough) Public Safety, would meet nonviolent marchers with aggressive and disproportionate force. This expectation was integral to their strategy for, as Wyatt T. Walker of SCLC later explained, "[w]e did with design precipitate crises, crucial crises in order to expose what the black community was up against."⁷⁷ The organizers achieved this goal, as reporters beamed images around the world of vicious beatings, police dog attacks, and high-pressure water-hoses turned on non-violent marchers. Newspaper and television coverage was extensive; according to Richard Lentz and Karla K. Gower, "Canada, which shared a border and one language with the United States, probably had the most timely and complete televised coverage from Alabama."⁷⁸ Beyond this coverage, the large proportion of Canadians residing near the border picked up American television signals.⁷⁹ Through American and Canadian coverage, images from Birmingham were ubiquitous.

It should come as no surprise that Birmingham stimulated reflections in Canada about related domestic issues. In one piece, the *London Free Press* discussed the nature of discrimination in Canada. "Our color bar is polite and unwritten," an article stated, "but it exists all the same and we have no cause to feel superior to our southern neighbors until we have demonstrated some legislative tolerance of our own."⁸⁰ The *Toronto Telegram* located a message for Canadians in Birmingham, positing that "[i]f there is any lesson to be learned by Canadians from Birmingham it is that we must educate ourselves and our

⁷⁷ Quoted in Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, 248.

⁷⁸ Lentz and Gower, *The Opinions of Mankind*, 158.

⁷⁹ Schwartz, "A 'Golden Age' of CBC Television," 500.

⁸⁰ NARA, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, Pol 2-1 CAN, Box 3851, Info: All Consular Posts in Canada; USIS Toronto London BNA Airgram from Amembassy, Ottawa to Department of State, 13 September 1963.

children to a sense of acceptance of people of different races, color and creed as fellow citizens within our national community.”⁸¹ About a year later, concern about prejudice in Ontario unfolded around evidence of pervasive discrimination by landlords who rented to university students. While Birmingham was not specifically referenced in the coverage, logic suggests that recent events informed this letter to the editor:

[w]hat hypocrisy for Canadians to throw up their hands in horror at the ruthless racial discrimination practiced in the Southern United States when right here at home we are informed that 25 per cent of the landlords approached have stated that they will not rent to foreign students presently studying at the University of Ottawa and Carleton University.⁸²

In these cases and others, the American example helped bring the issues Canadian activists had been pressing for years further into the public consciousness. Interest in the American situation had the consequence of shedding light on local issues and activists, thereby helping to make them part of a national conversation on discrimination, tolerance, and acceptance in Canada.

One of the most common parallels drawn with the American situation was the position of Indigenous peoples in Canada. This point had been raised before the civil rights movement garnered widespread attention. Scott R. Sheffield quotes a late 1940s editorial, published in the midst of a government committee examining the *Indian Act*, which argued Canadians, “are inclined to deplore the treatment of coloured people in the Southern United States; we are eager to spring to the defence of the Jews of Europe. But we are strangely reluctant to gaze inward for even a momentary consideration of our

⁸¹ NARA, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, Pol 2-1 CAN, Box 3851, Info: All Consular Posts in Canada; USIS Toronto London Moscow Paris, Paris for USRO, BNA, Airgram from Amembassy, Ottawa to Department of State, 20 September 1963.

⁸² AO, Records of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, RG 76-3, B270363, H.R. Allen, “Discrimination,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 13 March 1964.

obligation to the race to which we owe the most.”⁸³ Such perspectives grew more common alongside more widespread discussions of human rights on a global scale in the 1950s and 1960s. Events in Birmingham, Alabama provided the backdrop for a 1963 Peter Gzowski *Maclean's* article, wherein he referred to Saskatchewan as “Canada’s Alabama.” The parallel to events in Birmingham was intended to shock Canadians into acknowledging related examples of prejudice in their midst. While Saskatchewan did not have strict Jim Crow laws such as those in Birmingham, Gzowski argued, “the other pressures exerted on the Southern Negro – social, economic, and just plain discrimination – are exerted at least as strongly on the Saskatchewan Indian.”⁸⁴ A *Chatelaine* article published that same year, “The Forgotten Canadians,” described life on a reservation in Alberta, and argued “[w]e self-righteously denounce nations that repress their native peoples... yet we force some 200,000 Canadians – our Indians – to live in segregation to preserve their rights, deny them control of their own affairs, do little to help them from near poverty.”⁸⁵

Significant interest in Canadian parallels with the American situation arose during the 1965 voting rights campaign in Selma, Alabama. Rights activists and protestors in Canada made their nation pay attention to Selma. Canadian coverage of events in Selma was arguably more extensive than any previous civil rights protest, and while many newspapers carried regular stories about the voting rights campaign beginning in January 1965, coverage reached its apogee in mid-March with the start of sit-ins in Toronto and

⁸³ Scott R. Sheffield, *The Red Man's on the Warpath: The Image of the 'Indian' and the Second World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004), 135.

⁸⁴ Peter Gzowski, “This is Our Alabama,” *Maclean's*, 6 July 1963.

⁸⁵ Quoted in Korinek, *Roughing It in the Suburbs*, 344.

Montreal and sympathy marches across Canada. Actions on Canadian soil spurred more coverage, and as a result, further discussion of discrimination and human rights in both countries. Alan Borovoy spoke of Selma's impact on his own work as a Canadian human rights advocate, explaining it "created a climate in which persons who suffer or witness discrimination will feel less reluctant to come forward."⁸⁶ A *Globe* editorial called for more attention to Canadian issues in the wake of events in Selma. While praising Canadian student engagement in March 1965, the editorial also expressed,

a touch of regret that all this heart and all this energy are being given to the problem – the shame, if you will – of another country. How about our own country? Is Canada to be judged perfect? Is there no racial persecution here? Are there no problems of inequality or discrimination close to home? There are... Within weeks, within months, the trouble in Selma will die down. And what will Canadian university students do then? Could they not direct some heart and some energy to Canada's own racial, religious and political tensions – which differ from those of Alabama only in degree?⁸⁷

The *Winnipeg Free Press* printed a similar perspective in its editorial section, wherein author Shaun Herron imagined a conversation between a fictional student protestor named Joel Canuck and the American ambassador. Described as "a smiling, friendly man," the American ambassador pushed back against Joel Canuck's protest demands. He countered Joel's advocacy with the argument that Canadians should not criticize the domestic affairs of another country, unless they were prepared for similar censure. Potential critiques of Canada, the ambassador informed Joel, were abundant. "Did you know a Canadian Negro can't get a white haircut in Halifax," he asked. "Have you ever been on an Indian reservation in Saskatchewan? ... I haven't heard your

⁸⁶ Marvin Schiff, "Why don't Canadians march against discrimination at home?" *Globe and Mail*, 19 March 1965.

⁸⁷ "Our students have spirit," *Globe and Mail*, 15 March 1965.

authoritative voice reaching out to French students across the B and B barrier.”⁸⁸ This piece reads less as a demand for action on these matters than a condemnation of interference in the domestic affairs of other nations. Indeed, some protestors interpreted these “look who’s talking” critiques as insincere acts of Canadian self-reflection. Following the March 1965 protests at the United States consulate in Toronto, Gary Perly suggested “people who say they don’t care about the United States don’t care about Canada either.”⁸⁹ In other words, some commentators levelled criticism at the protestors not because they actually wanted more attention cast on prejudice in Canada, but simply because it was an easy tool for expressing fault with the protests.

Whatever the motivation, the broader impact of such analysis was to heighten interest in discrimination and human rights in Canada. Many student activists in Canada engaged with the United States civil rights movement explicitly because they viewed anti-racist activism in both countries as connected in processes and goals. They responded to such critiques, moreover, with a variety of programs to address and seek redress for inequalities in Canada. As chapter four explains, Canadian activists managed to spur some tangible changes in Canadian law and public policy.

Civil Rights Movement Coverage in Canada: Limits to Transnational Lessons

Though events in the United States created pressure for more dialogue on discrimination and rights protection in Canada, the story does not end there. Equally

⁸⁸ Shaun Herron, “Tramp, Tramp, Tramp, the Boys...” *Winnipeg Free Press*, 23 March 1965.

⁸⁹ Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC), Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 755, Canadian Friends of the Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee – Univ. Of Toronto, “The Non-Violent Approach,” *Scan Magazine*, May 1965.

significant is the way the international context helped solidify and strengthen the sanctimonious imagination. For many Canadians, regular reports from the United States on violence in the name of white supremacy further reinforced the notion that Canada was entirely different. In his study of the baby boom generation, Doug Owrarn notes that for some protestors, the fight for voting rights in Selma “was a comfortable issue, both for northern Americans and for Canadians... People could demand change in Alabama or Mississippi while assuming that their own lives, in Boston, Toronto, Winnipeg, or elsewhere, would be unaffected.”⁹⁰ It was simpler to offer sympathy with civil rights goals in the United States when these issues were detached from local matters. While civil rights issues south of the border motivated some Canadians to reflect on discrimination at home, it led others to distinguish Canada as uniquely moral. A report from the American consulate in Montreal about Canadian reactions to American school integration battles noted that “[p]rincipal popular reaction to the whole affair seems to be one of smug satisfaction that such things just could not happen in Canada.”⁹¹ An analogous pattern was evident in Britain, where Sewell notes that while the American movement elicited sympathy and some increased attention to racism at home, many saw it as “a uniquely *American* matter.”⁹²

Examples of this outlook abound in the Canadian print media. Bromley Armstrong observes, with reference to the *Windsor Star's* coverage of discrimination in

⁹⁰ Doug Owrarn, *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby Boom Generation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 167.

⁹¹ NARA, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, 811.411/4-1456, Box 4158, High Local Interest in United States Race Problems, Foreign Service Dispatch from AMCONGEN, Montreal, 11 September 1956.

⁹² Sewell, “British Responses to Martin Luther King, Jr.,” 195.

Dresden, “like many of its readers, the newspaper was unwilling to accept the fact that racism was a pervasive feature of Canadian society.”⁹³ When the *Stouffville Sun-Tribune* reported on the recent appointment of a black police officer in Toronto and the convocation of a black woman from Osgoode Hall, the newspaper related these stories to the United States:

There are those who try to claim that Canada cannot justly hold her head high when the question of racial discrimination in the United States is the topic for discussion. We do not agree. We realize that there are those who would discriminate but we feel that these persons represent a small minority number as compared with the masses of Canadian citizenry who practice the teachings of brotherly love... It is action such as this that permits Canada to hold her head high.⁹⁴

In a similar vein, a *Liberty* magazine article argued that discrimination was exaggerated in Canada: “[w]e are all prejudiced, but few Canadians allow their prejudice to become outright discrimination.”⁹⁵

A CBC television segment indicates that such perspectives were common among members of the general public. When a CBC reporter asked individuals on the streets of Halifax whether the city had a problem with racism, most interviewees thought not, and two made this point with specific reference to the United States. When asked if the black population could go anywhere whites could go in Halifax, one interviewee replied, “I think so. You don’t hear... [of] them being molested or anything like in the States...” Another individual weighed in, in response to the reporter’s query of whether Halifax had a problem with racism, “[n]ot really. Not the way it would be in well, shall we say, in

⁹³ Bromley L. Armstrong with Sheldon Taylor, *Bromley: Tireless Champion for Just Causes* (Pickering: Vitabu Publications, 2000), 82.

⁹⁴ “Taking Their Proper Places,” *Stouffville Sun-Tribune*, 30 June 1960.

⁹⁵ Quoted in “Little Racial Prejudice in Canada,” *Kingsville Reporter*, 31 March 1960.

Little Rock as we hear from the States or maybe Upper Canada...”⁹⁶ Even when the United States was not explicitly mentioned in the reporter’s question, respondents framed answers with that comparison in mind.

Just as the violence against voting rights protestors in Selma led some Canadians to question their own self-righteousness, it led others to hold more fiercely to perceived differences between the countries. A *Maclean’s* editorial entitled “We have bigotry all right – but no Alabamas,” illustrates this point. “We have much sympathy with those who complain that Canadians tend to be self-righteous about other people’s troubles,” the editorial read. “But the anti-Pharisees go too far when they imply that the Canadian pot is as black as the American kettle – that Canadian Indians and Eskimos are as ill-treated as the Negroes of Alabama and Mississippi.”⁹⁷ After all, the editorial asserted, Canada’s Indigenous people could mostly vote. The editorial made no mention that Inuit peoples could not then vote in the Northwest Territories; they voted in territorial elections for the first time in 1966.⁹⁸ The piece also failed to note just how recent a development the expansion of the franchise to most First Nations was, nor the fraught nature of the process. The Canadian government extended the federal vote in 1960 less from altruistic principle than, Heidi Bohaker and Franca Iacovetta argue, as a result of “the rise of human rights movements within Western nations and the international community’s

⁹⁶ Close-Up, *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation video*, 2:40, 24 June 1962, accessed 3 April 2013, <<http://www.cbc.ca/archives/categories/society/racism/africville-expropriating-black-nova-scotians/racism-in-halifax.html>>

⁹⁷ “We have bigotry all right – but no Alabamas,” *Maclean’s*, 17 April 1965.

⁹⁸ R. Quinn Duffy, *The Road to Nunavut: The Progress of the Eastern Arctic Inuit Since the Second World War* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1988), 226-227.

criticism of Canada's treatment of Aboriginal peoples."⁹⁹ Initiated without consultations, moreover, the vote was not viewed favourably by all Indigenous peoples. Many associated it with the previous process of individual "enfranchisement," wherein Indigenous peoples in previous decades had, sometimes involuntarily, lost their Indian status in exchange for the vote and private property. Seen in this context as a tool of assimilation, J. R. Miller aptly notes, "First Nations have not exercised the franchise they were granted with much enthusiasm or frequency."¹⁰⁰

The same editorial further claimed Indigenous people were not subject to legally enforced discrimination in Canada: "the discrimination that exists is an effect of private bigotry and race prejudice; it is not supported by law and enforced by police."¹⁰¹ In fact, discrimination was at the core of the *Indian Act*, a law that Miller notes "assumed that First Nations peoples were not adults. It structured the relationship between the federal government and First Nations as that of a trustee and ward, or parent and child." "[T]hat legislation's main elements," Miller continues, "including its gross violations of human rights – would persist until late in the twentieth century."¹⁰² Not all *Maclean's* journalists held the editorialist's view. Peter Gzowski's aforementioned article drew an explicit link between Jim Crow in Alabama and the position of Indigenous people in Saskatchewan. Gzowski's piece drew attention to Canadian racism, yet historian Scott Rutherford also

⁹⁹ Heidi Bohaker and Franca Iacovetta, "Making Aboriginal People 'Immigrants Too': A Comparison of Citizenship Programs for Newcomers and Indigenous Peoples in Postwar Canada, 1940-1960s," *Canadian Historical Review* 90, no. 3 (September 2009): 454.

¹⁰⁰ J.R. Miller, "Human Rights for Some: First Nations Rights in Twentieth-Century Canada," in *Taking Liberties: A History of Human Rights in Canada*, eds. David Goutor and Stephen Heathorn (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2013), 250.

¹⁰¹ "We have bigotry all right – but no Alabamas," *Maclean's*, 17 April 1965.

¹⁰² Miller, "Human Rights for Some," 234.

describes its simultaneous implication that “the citizens of North Battleford still could be saved because they were a ‘gentle friendly people.’”¹⁰³

Some published pieces emphasized Canada’s broader differences from the United States with a light-hearted tone. One article reflected on the American curling team’s recent world championship victory. While expressing disappointment with Canada’s loss, the author explained that he was

not about to declare the country a disaster area... While there’s no substitute for victory – at home or abroad – somehow I can’t get worked into a lather about Canada losing a curling game or a hockey contest. At least not as long as they’re marching for Civil Rights in Selma and dropping bombs on school children in Viet Nam. I think we’ll survive these two crushing blows to our dignity and morale.¹⁰⁴

While clearly intended as a joke, this comment is illustrative. Its offhanded nature suggests just how commonplace it was to see Canada as comparatively enlightened in the realm of human rights. Similarly, a brief article in the *Stouffville Sun-Tribune* described a summer day at a beach northeast of Toronto. The piece related a scene in which “kiddies of both races mingled together in the water, all enjoying the same privileges and not caring that the colour of their skin was different... Governor [George] Wallace could have taken a lesson from it.”¹⁰⁵ This passing reference to Alabama’s segregationist governor speaks to the normalcy with which the Canada-United States comparison was viewed and made. It is worth noting, moreover, that discrimination at recreational facilities like beaches remained a target for rights activists in Ontario in this period.

¹⁰³ Scott Rutherford, *Canada’s Other Red Scare: Rights, Decolonization, and Indigenous Political Protest in the Global Sixties*, Ph.D. Diss.: Queen’s University, 2011, 56.

¹⁰⁴ Don Blanchard, “Lacrosse, or Jacks, Anyone?,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, 20 March 1965.

¹⁰⁵ “Roamin’ Around,” *Stouffville Sun-Tribune*, 8 July 1965.

Leigh Raiford's assessment of photography and the civil rights movement can help us understand why coverage of the American movement did not always translate to enhanced awareness of, or concern about, racism in Canada. By capturing vivid evidence of morally righteous protestors calmly and peacefully confronting violent racism, Raiford argues, movement photography made it relatively straightforward for observers on both sides of the border to support nonviolent protests against such blatant prejudice. These photographs, depicting students sitting at segregated lunch counters or fire hoses turned on nonviolent anti-segregation protestors, documented obvious and tangible injustices. But Raiford also identifies a crucial limit to the usefulness of such photographs for activists in contexts where racism was prevalent, but perhaps less violent or immediately obvious. "How does one engage in anti-racist struggle," Raiford asks, "in a 'color-blind' era when racism 'looks' so different?"¹⁰⁶ In the United States, this challenge grew increasingly evident after new federal civil and voting rights laws in 1964 and 1965 ushered in an ostensibly "colour-blind" period.

Many Canadians viewed their country as "colour-blind," or as Backhouse puts it, "raceless."¹⁰⁷ This notion was, of course, grounded in myth. But racism did, to use Raiford's terminology, "look different" in Canada than it did in the American South.¹⁰⁸ Discriminatory practices remained common in Canada in the 1950s and 1960s, but the law generally did not support them explicitly. Racism was rarely defended, moreover, through outright violence, and certainly never on the scale of a Birmingham or Selma. As

¹⁰⁶ Raiford, *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare*, 6.

¹⁰⁷ Constance Backhouse, *Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 13.

¹⁰⁸ Raiford, *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare*, 6.

Raiford explains, this type of prejudice was less easily captured in the media than was the dramatic imagery stemming from the civil rights movement. Ta-Nehisi Coates' analysis of the difference between blatant racism and "elegant racism" is instructive. "[E]legant racism" is not clearly articulated through openly racist language, but its impact is nonetheless profound, especially in realms like housing and employment. The decision to not rent to, sell to, or hire racialized minorities is often couched in egalitarian language, not outright racism. As Coates explains, therefore, "elegant racism" is "invisible, supple, and enduring," and consequently, "hard to detect, hard to prove, and hard to prosecute."¹⁰⁹ Though Coates deals with contemporary American issues, his discussion also offers an apt description of racism in Canada in the 1950s and 1960s, by which point anti-discrimination laws were on the books in several provinces. Racism continued to restrict the opportunities of racialized minorities, but it was difficult to expose because, as Evelyn Kallen puts it, it had "gone 'into the closet.'"¹¹⁰ In this context, many Canadians interpreted the civil rights movement in the American South, with its more obvious examples of racism, as inapplicable to Canadian issues and situations.

The issue of minstrel shows reveals the persistence of Canada's sanctimonious imagination in the midst of the American civil rights movement. Two minstrelsy debates in Ontario, both during well-publicized protest periods in the civil rights movement, illustrate a fundamental tension. In some instances, the backdrop of American issues lent legitimacy to anti-minstrel show arguments. For other observers, the American example

¹⁰⁹ Ta-Nehisi Coates, "This Town Needs a Better Class of Racist," *The Atlantic*, 1 May 2014, accessed May 2014, <<http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/05/This-Town-Needs-A-Better-Class-Of-Racist/361443/>>

¹¹⁰ Evelyn Kallen, *Ethnicity and Human Rights in Canada*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2003), 214.

accentuated precisely why Canada was justified in its attitude of moral superiority. According to this latter view, minstrel shows were simply not a significant problem, particularly when contrasted with concurrent events south of the border.

In 1956, Daniel and Donna Hill wrote a letter to their local newspaper in Newmarket denouncing the common use of minstrel shows in public forums.¹¹¹ As the Hills explained, “[t]hese black face acts portray Negroes as carefree, lazy, singing clowns, with rhythm in their souls and no brains in their heads. The attitude is thus established that all Negroes are lazy, carefree, dumb – actually sub-human.”¹¹² The letter was published in the midst of both the Montgomery Bus Boycott and increasingly violent segregationist resistance to school integration in the South. Lest the timing be lost on their readers, the Hills made this point clear: “how untimely is the picture of a happy, carefree Negro, at a time when great racial tensions in the United States’ South have made him a really tragic figure!” The Hills then celebrated their local region’s “proud tradition” as a settlement destination for fugitive slaves on the Underground Railroad, and expressed confidence that “these same humanitarian feelings continue today.”¹¹³ This simple line represented a subtle challenge to the newspaper’s readers that they stay true to this heritage by taking a stand on a contemporary problem. Their argument won the day in the newspaper’s editorial office; an editorial printed in the same edition referenced international issues as justification for a stand against minstrelsy. “[W]e are not in a

¹¹¹ Daniel and Donna Hill were involved in broader anti-discrimination efforts in Canada. Dr. Daniel G. Hill would go on to become the first commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

¹¹² Daniel G. Hill and Donna M. Hill, “About Minstrel Shows,” *Newmarket Era*, 29 March 1956.

¹¹³ Daniel G. Hill and Donna M. Hill, “About Minstrel Shows,” *Newmarket Era*, 29 March 1956.

world,” the piece warned, “where we can live in an isolated society that has no relationship to other parts of the world.”¹¹⁴

Other reactions to the minstrelsy issue were decidedly mixed. One resident called it a “tempest in a teapot” and argued minstrel shows were about humour and entertainment rather than prejudice. “I am convinced,” the letter continued, “that the vast majority of Ontarians are free from the narrow and un-Christian weakness of racial hatred or even racial ridicule.” The letter proceeded to contradict this point by highlighting the supposedly distinct “racial” traits that made minstrelsy so popular:

we are ready to admit that our Negro fellow citizens are the natural possessors of certain physical and spiritual powers which we, who are white folk, might well covet. The Negro has a better physique than we. The voice of the Negro has a tone which the white most certainly cannot match. There is a depth of spirituality about the Negro spirituals, in spite of their simpleness of composition, which we cannot possibly fail to recognize.¹¹⁵

The Hills replied that the letter employed “stereotypes... generalizations nowhere substantiated by anthropological, sociological or psychological literature.”¹¹⁶ Another letter writer found the Hills’ argument more persuasive. She had helped organize similar events in the past, and felt they were fundamentally about entertainment not race. “A minstrel show is a popular entertainment,” the writer argued, which “draws a large crowd because everyone knows the form it will take – simple, popular songs and plenty of fun.” However, she also accepted that “[p]erhaps those of us who do not belong to a minority group which has suffered very great injustice and oppression, cannot fully realize the pain which any fancied ridicule can cause.” She expressed interest in continued dialogue

¹¹⁴ “Editor’s Notebook,” *Newmarket Era*, 29 March 1956.

¹¹⁵ A. Walter Fosbury, “Our Readers Write,” *Newmarket Era*, 12 April 1956.

¹¹⁶ Daniel and Donna Hill, “Our Readers Write,” *Newmarket Era*, 19 April 1956.

around the issue and concluded, “[i]f we have been thoughtless we are sorry. We shall continue to seriously consider this whole matter.”¹¹⁷ In this instance, the Hills’ thoughtful case against minstrelsy, argued against the backdrop of Jim Crow in the American South, made some headway.

Another debate around minstrel shows unfolded in late 1963 and early 1964 in southwestern Ontario. In 1964 George F. McCurdy led a protest in Amherstburg, Ontario against a “blackface” performance by a student in the local high school’s Christmas show. McCurdy submitted a complaint to the school board that was signed, with only one exception, by “[e]very adult Coloured citizen and student in the Secondary school system.”¹¹⁸ The brief presented a forceful argument about both the immediate and long-term consequences of minstrel shows, and suggested concrete steps to prevent similar incidents in the future. “Our children,” the brief stated, “will not sit in the midst of an auditorium full of their cheering, laughing, applauding classmates while the objectionable stereotype of their race is being perpetuated.”¹¹⁹

McCurdy used the comparative tactic with the United States in his argument against minstrel performances in schools. In a *Windsor Star* article, he compared the issue in Amherstburg with a recent controversy in Philadelphia. Prior to a 1964 Philadelphia parade, the NAACP won a court ruling preventing participants from marching in blackface. According to McCurdy, the two cases dealt with the same problem of offensive stereotyping. The only difference between Windsor and Philadelphia was “we

¹¹⁷ Margaret Arkinstall, “Our Readers Write,” *Newmarket Era*, 5 April 1956.

¹¹⁸ AO, Records of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, RG 76-3, B270363, George F. McCurdy to Dr. Daniel Hill, 13 January 1964.

¹¹⁹ AO, Records of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, RG 76-3, B270363, Brief “Blackface” Pantomime Performance at Christmas Assembly to Amherstburg School Board, 20 December 1963.

look to negotiate the problem with men of reason here, but in Philadelphia, in the absence of men of reason, it was necessary to say that they would lay their bodies before the parade.”¹²⁰ By highlighting the supposed “reasonableness” of Ontario’s citizens compared with Americans, McCurdy played on the attitude of moral superiority in Canada. He posed a subtle challenge to his fellow citizens: if Canada wanted to maintain its reputation as the more tolerant country, it ought to condemn minstrelsy.

In spite of these arguments, several respondents to the Amherstburg school case argued minstrel shows were merely entertainment, and thus not offensive. As in the Newmarket case, the Amherstburg debate coincided with several visible and relevant international events. At various points 1963 was dominated by news from Birmingham and the March on Washington, and African Canadian activists were careful to remind their audience of this context as they advocated change. Yet several commentators remained unconvinced that minstrel shows were grounded in racism. They charged African Canadians with being too sensitive, and refused to accept the parallels activists noted between Canada and international anti-racist efforts. In response to African Canadian critiques of the school minstrel performance, the principal countered, “several staff members whom I have consulted felt that they saw nothing objectionable in the number.”¹²¹ Similarly, an analysis of the incident in the *Windsor Star* argued the student “was innocent of any attempt to demean anyone.”¹²² According to one letter to the editor,

¹²⁰ AO, Records of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, RG 76-3, B270363, George F. McCurdy, “Response to ‘Now, what about this,’” *Windsor Star*, 23 January 1964.

¹²¹ AO, Records of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, RG 76-3, B270363, Brief “Blackface” Pantomime Performance at Christmas Assembly to Amherstburg School Board, 20 December 1963.

¹²² AO, Records of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, RG 76-3, B270363, John Lindblad, “Now, what about this,” *Windsor Star*, 20 January 1964.

minstrel shows were meant as humour and entertainment. “Intentional or not,” the letter said, “Mr. George F. McCurdy and those who registered recent complaints protesting blackface as entertainment would segregate the Negro race from the rest of humanity, for there is no race that has not been satirized in proses or plays of one kind or another.”¹²³ In the midst of desegregation struggles in the United States, the use of the term “segregation” held particular significance. It can be read as an effort to defend minstrel shows according to the perceived logic of the civil rights movement. By claiming, through a skewed understanding of the movement’s intentions, that ending minstrelsy would “segregate” some people by prohibiting certain types of “humour,” this argument borrowed language from the civil rights movement to defend a prejudicial status quo. It also ignored the movement’s broader aim of undermining racism in its varied forms.

These examples offer a mere sampling of similar responses. Reactions of this nature to campaigns against minstrel shows shared common themes: they failed to mention that the history of minstrelsy was deeply rooted in slavery and oppression; there were no attempts to grasp what it might have felt like for an African Canadian to witness a minstrel show (particularly for a young person in school); and they did not think minstrelsy was in any way connected to other experiences with prejudice, whether in Canada or elsewhere in the world. In fact, responses to minstrel debates occasionally denied such linkages explicitly. An opinion piece in the *Sarnia Observer* accused African Canadians of “over sensitivity” which would serve only to “obscure the main issues of the

¹²³ AO, Records of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, RG 76-3, B270363, Ray Gangner, “Blackface Entertainment No Slur,” *Windsor Star*, 13 February 1964.

Negroes' fight – which is for political, economic and social equality.”¹²⁴ While acknowledging that racialized minorities perhaps had some causes over which to “fight,” the message was clear: minstrel shows were not among them. Even this type of minimal acknowledgement of racism in Canada was rare, and often qualified. The same editorial deflected attention away from Canada with the comment that “Negro citizens all over this continent are concerned about their image, and we don't blame them. There are a great many people who think of them as shiftless, lazy, lacking ambition. In some parts of the South they are considered to be sub-human.”¹²⁵ In this instance, racism was associated with a specific location far removed from Canada. Not only was there no recognition that minstrel shows were tied to a broader reality of racism, the only acknowledgement of racism disassociated it from local issues.

Such criticisms displayed a lack of concern about the on-going reality and impacts of prejudice. Indeed, cursory remarks about the injustice of discrimination aside, none of the responses seemed concerned about its wider existence in Canada. The denial that minstrelsy was racist can, by extension, be interpreted as a denial that racism was an ongoing problem in Canada at all. These commentators failed to grasp the significance of what historian Thomas C. Holt calls the “everydayness” of racism, in which “race is reproduced via the marking of the racial Other.” Common images and practices, Holt explains, whether in the form of minstrelsy or a box of Aunt Jemima brand pancakes, are ways “that racist ideas and practices are naturalized, made self-evident, and thus

¹²⁴ AO, Records of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, RG 76-3, B270363, “Over Sensitivity: Negroes Have Rights but Also Responsibilities,” *Sarnia Observer*, 25 January 1964.

¹²⁵ AO, Records of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, RG 76-3, B270363, “Over Sensitivity: Negroes Have Rights but Also Responsibilities,” *Sarnia Observer*, 25 January 1964.

seemingly beyond audible challenge.”¹²⁶ A minstrel show at a high school was not a harmless or unique incident, but part of a pattern of representations “reinforcing black stereotypes and institutionalizing racist ideas and images for generations to come.”¹²⁷ For this very reason, African Canadians had protested minstrel shows and other negative representations of blacks in popular culture since the 19th century.¹²⁸ Yet many white observers of minstrelsy in Canada did not interpret the shows as signifiers of, or contributors to, longstanding or systemic racism. Here was the sanctimonious imagination at work. Newspaper stories and opinion pieces ignored or even derided the African Canadian argument that minstrel shows were deeply connected to the larger reality of racism. Minstrel shows were not indicative of a broader problem, according to this logic, because many Canadians continued to reject the underlying premise that such a problem existed in the first place.

Similar examples abound wherein Canadians failed to recognize (or expressed comfort with) the proliferation and significance of prejudice in their local environment, in the midst of conspicuous international anti-racist movements. Two articles that appeared in the same 1956 edition of the *Toronto Star* illustrate this point. One of the articles, an editorial on the Montgomery Bus Boycott, surmised that Canadians might be surprised “that people can be prosecuted, and possibly jailed, for refusing to ride on a bus.” This,

¹²⁶ Thomas C. Holt, “Marking: Race, Race-making, and the Writing of History,” *American Historical Review* 100, no. 1 (February 1995): 7, 14-18.

¹²⁷ Holt, “Marking: Race, Race-making, and the Writing of History,” 16.

¹²⁸ Karolyn Smardz Frost, “Communities of Resistance: African Canadians and African Americans in Antebellum Toronto,” *Ontario History* 99, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 54; Adrienne Shadd, *The Journey from Tollgate to Parkway: African Canadians in Hamilton* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2010), introduction, chapter 4, e-book edition; Greg Marquis, “A War Within a War: Canadian Reactions to D. W. Griffith’s *The Birth of a Nation*,” *Histoire sociale/Social History* 47, no. 94 (June 2014): 421-442.

the editorial explained, was the situation in Montgomery, Alabama. The piece celebrated the nonviolent African American protest against segregated buses, and expressed hope that “[t]he Montgomery boycott might serve as a model for passive resistance throughout the South...”¹²⁹ Another article in the same edition addressed Canadian attitudes towards immigration. It reported on a study’s findings that, “41 per cent of those polled are dissatisfied with the immigration policy – most of them because they think it is too aggressive. Only one per cent said they were dissatisfied because ‘Canada should have more immigration.’”¹³⁰ These two articles embodied an important tension between the trend of Canadians criticizing racism elsewhere, while ignoring or upholding its persistence at home.

In an interesting and troubling twist, one of the South’s most vocal racists made this very point during a 1964 visit to British Columbia. Alabama Governor George Wallace defended his state’s virulent racism in a speech at the University of Victoria. “If your laws were not so strict in Canada and you could have immigration of Negro people here,” Wallace told an audience of more than 700,

you might really understand more about the problem. It’s easy to tell people how to handle the problem when you don’t have it yourself. You might change it by a movement to do away with your immigration laws. You might wind up with half your population Negro and could do a lot of liberal talking about it then.¹³¹

It was an old, familiar, and illegitimate tactic for defenders of thoroughly racist regimes.

Wallace sought to deflect attention away from his state’s racist policies by arguing that

¹²⁹ “The Weapon of Love,” *Toronto Star*, 25 February 1956.

¹³⁰ “Too Many Immigrants?” *Toronto Star*, 25 February 1956.

¹³¹ NARA, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, Soc 14-1, Box 3250, Airgram from AmConsul Vancouver to Department of State, Speech by George Wallace, Governor of Alabama, 22 January 1964.

his critics were not as different from him as they might think. James E. Folsom responded in the same manner to a British journalist who asked him about the situation in Alabama, when he was the state's governor eight years previous: "lay off that. It's not one twentieth, no, one fiftieth, as bad as in the Dominion, the British Dominion of South Africa."¹³² When British journalists asked about school integration in Little Rock, Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus was quick to draw a parallel with recent white riots against black residents in Nottingham, England: "[w]hat about that shindy in Nottingham?"¹³³ It was undoubtedly a cynical dodge, and his comments did nothing to reduce the significance of Wallace's blatantly racist practices. Yet in a perverse way, Wallace tapped into something about the nature of prejudice in Canada. As the *Toronto Star* immigration poll suggests, a significant number of Canadians wanted their country to restrict immigration to those deemed "suitable," a notion long grounded in racism.

Of course many Canadians did not support the tactics and goals of the civil rights movement at all because they sympathized with the defenders of Jim Crow. A piece about Little Rock in the *Kingsville Reporter* illustrates this perspective:

The problem of integrating white and colored pupils in American schools is not so easy of solution as many Canadians think. It is all very well for us who are not involved in that problem to assume a holier-than-thou attitude towards the white people of Little Rock and other parts of the Southern States where the colored population in some instances is as large as if not larger than the white. If we in Canada were in the same position we would be no more in favor of racial integration than the white people of the South are.¹³⁴

¹³² "Vacher's Report on Race Riots Confirmed by Letter from Alabama," *Stouffville Tribune*, 23 February 1956.

¹³³ Quoted in Tuck, "Malcolm X's Visit to Oxford University," 97.

¹³⁴ Lewis Milligan, "Racial Integration," *Kingsville Reporter*, 31 October 1957.

Some commentators on the United States civil rights movement actively justified the system. One Stouffville, Ontario minister did so in the midst of the Selma protests in 1965. According to a report in the local newspaper, the minister

stated that Canadians cannot imagine the problems faced by the white southerner, and have no business interfering in them. He contended that the average American negro is little different from those who live in the heart of Africa and mentioned the terrible slum conditions in the deep south as proof of this. 'They live like swine', he said, and 'the white people living in the south are just like us, and if we were living there, and had their problems, we would behave in much the same way that they do.'¹³⁵

Several readers wrote to the newspaper following this report in disagreement with the minister's comments.¹³⁶ The evidence is nevertheless clear that such explicitly racist perspectives were far from unique. During the Selma protests in Toronto, a *Toronto Telegram* article reported on the varied responses to the Canadian protestors. While some passers-by were supportive, others expressed opposition. The article described a car, "full of greasy-haired teen agers [that] drove by, its occupants yelling, 'Nigger lovers.'"¹³⁷ Also in March 1965, several audience members criticized the guest speaker at a church who had visited Selma in support of the movement. According to one individual in attendance, "[i]f Gov. Wallace says no marches, they should obey the law. The sheriffs have the right to enforce the law... If they don't obey, they can't complain about getting clobbered on the head..." Another person at the same event posited, "everyone here would be (prejudiced) if someone in their family came home with a black woman or black

¹³⁵ "Shouldn't Interfere in Southern Race Problem Says Anglican Rector," *Stouffville Sun-Tribune*, 1 April 1965.

¹³⁶ Opposition to this view was expressed in an editorial, "Pulpit Message Arouses Concern," *Stouffville Sun-Tribune*, 8 April 1965 and letters to the editor: Donald W. Hope, "In The Editor's Mail," *Stouffville Sun-Tribune*, 8 April 1965; Bernard Smith, "In The Editor's Mail," *Stouffville Sun-Tribune*, 8 April 1965.

¹³⁷ LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 755, "Sit-In Students Dragged Away," *Toronto Telegram*, 11 March 1965.

man.”¹³⁸ Later that year, a Canadian woman wrote to the governor of Mississippi after watching a television report on Paul Saltzman’s work with SNCC in Mississippi. The letter stated that, should Saltzman return to Mississippi the following year, the governor ought to “DEPORT him.” After criticizing Canadians who participated in American civil rights activism, the letter complained that the media did not show “the OTHER SIDE of the C.R. problem...” It concluded, “I have just read a shocking book and if one bit of it is true, the U.S. is certainly in for a time of great regression due to the take-over by the negro.”¹³⁹

It should come as no surprise that many Canadians held these views about the American civil rights movement, given that profoundly racist practices continued in Canada. George F. McCurdy spoke about the prevalence of racism in Windsor, noting in 1966 that even with fair accommodations legislation in place, African Canadians were still denied access to exclusive golf and social clubs. He cited as evidence a sample membership form for one club which required the applicant to sign off on this statement: “I hereby certify that I am of sound mind and body, being a member of the Caucasian, white race, and not married to one of any other race, and a believer in a Supreme Being.”¹⁴⁰ Given this example, it is safe to conclude that many Canadians had no interest

¹³⁸ LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 755, “Only 500 at SNCC Rally: Lack of Support Alarms Group,” *Toronto Telegram*, 21 March 1965.

¹³⁹ Mississippi Archives, Mississippi Sovereignty Commission Files Online, SCR ID # 99-100-0-276-1-1-1, R.G. Longmoore to Governor Johnson, 28 September 1965.

¹⁴⁰ AO, Records of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, RG 76-3, B270378, “Race relations committee needed,” *Windsor Star*, 29 November 1966.

in learning lessons from the civil rights movement because they held more sympathy with the defenders of Jim Crow than with those challenging the racist status quo.¹⁴¹

Even for Canadians who did express support for the civil rights movement, such sympathy was often tenuous. Canadian support for the movement was shaky because press coverage generally indicated that overall the United States was making steady progress towards equality. With tangible measures in place against outright discrimination, public support waned by the mid-1960s. The general public believed that what needed accomplishing in this realm had been accomplished. American government officials emphasized the theme of “progress” throughout the 1950s and early 1960s to mitigate embarrassment over the contradiction of preaching freedom and democracy abroad while African Americans were denied basic rights at home. According to Mary Dudziak, the American federal government dealt with their Cold War discomfort around violent domestic racism by framing events like Little Rock and Birmingham as “a story of progress, a story of the triumph of good over evil, a story of U.S. moral superiority.”¹⁴² The Department of State countered international criticism by asserting that while problematic, the situation in the South was on the upswing. The federal government was ultimately quite successful in this messaging campaign.¹⁴³ According to Bodroghkozy, national news programs “wanted to tell a story of progress through moderation and the legislative and legal process.”¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ A similar situation existed in Britain, where calls to limit immigration grew more common as the only way to avoid “Racial problems” such as those in the United States. See Sewell, “British Responses to Martin Luther King, Jr.,” 200.

¹⁴² Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 13.

¹⁴³ Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 239-241.

¹⁴⁴ Bodroghkozy, *Equal Time: Television and the Civil Rights Movement*, 6.

As a *Maclean's* editorial on Little Rock illustrates, mainstream reporting in Canada picked up this narrative of progress. While condemning events in Arkansas, the editorial argued this “is not a story of how the Negro is being held down so much as it is a story of how the Negro is being helped up... The forces of repression and reaction are on the defensive...”¹⁴⁵ This message was evident when media commentators called on rights activists to be patient in their demands for change. A *Halifax Chronicle-Herald* editorial supported integration, while also warning that segregation’s end ought to

be carried out through a gradual process... Desegregation laws cannot be enforced by a stroke of the pen any more than laws against sin or the policy of de-colonization of the British Empire. These are things which must be accompanied by public support and public support comes only through a long period of education, of an instilling of the proper recognition of the problem and the readiness to do what is just and decent.¹⁴⁶

The message was clear: change was inevitable, and therefore need not be rushed. The newspaper offered a similar assessment of the Birmingham campaign. Though critical of violent segregationists and approving of the general goals of the protestors, an editorial felt the protestors should show more patience. It described events in Birmingham as “doubly tragic because they could have been avoided if the whites had shown more reason and the Negroes more restraint.”¹⁴⁷ Because positive change was already underway, this piece suggested, protests that were too dramatic or forceful were unnecessary. Martin Luther King, Jr. responded to this all-too-common criticism in his now famous “Letter From a Birmingham Jail.” “For years now,” King wrote, “I have

¹⁴⁵ NARA, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, 811.411/4-1456, Box 4158, Canadian Editorial Comment on Racial Tensions in the United States, Foreign Service Dispatch from Embassy Ottawa, 6 November 1957.

¹⁴⁶ “The Sensible Way,” *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, 17 September 1957.

¹⁴⁷ “Trying Hour,” *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, 10 May 1963.

heard the word ‘Wait!’ It rings in the ear of every Negro with piercing familiarity. This ‘Wait’ has almost always meant ‘Never.’... We have waited for more than 340 years for our constitutional and God given rights.”¹⁴⁸

The *Winnipeg Free Press* expressed faith in the inevitability of progress in an editorial on the March on Washington. Though celebrative of the peaceful march, the newspaper also argued that Canadians ought not to interfere with the internal matters of another country, particularly an issue already in the process of resolution:

there are hopeful signs everywhere that the collective conscience of the American people is being awakened... Ultimately the United States will solve its problem – of that there can be no doubt – and the best thing foreigners can do in the meantime is to withhold judgment.¹⁴⁹

In an article on the three civil rights workers murdered in Mississippi, the *Calgary Albertan* assured its readers, meanwhile, that the big picture was nonetheless of progress: “On its past record, considering the melting pot of a vast humanity over which it rules, the complexities of federal versus state laws, U.S. jurisprudence has acquitted itself well, at times nobly. And as sound law should, while grinding slowly it grinds exceedingly fine.”¹⁵⁰ This assessment proved overly optimistic, while the comment about law moving slowly turned out to be a gross understatement. The state of Mississippi did not press murder charges in the case, and the accused were ultimately convicted federally on a lesser sentence for which they served a mere few years. One of the murderers was finally convicted more than forty years later. A 1965 *Globe and Mail* editorial on Selma painted

¹⁴⁸ KCDA, Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter From Birmingham City Jail,” 1 May 1963.

¹⁴⁹ “The Washington March,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, 29 August 1963.

¹⁵⁰ NARA, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, Box 3062, Info: All Consular Posts in Canada; USIS Toronto Amembassy London Cinclant Polad, Airgram from Amembassy Ottawa, 21 December 1964.

a similarly positive portrait of the situation: “[t]he record shows steady gains for the standards of freedom and justice. Civil rights demonstrators are regularly humiliated and injured; a few have been murdered. But invariably their cause has prospered.”¹⁵¹ This style of oft-repeated optimism has been effectively summarized by Spencer as “the celebratory positivism, rooted in the simplistic belief in a redeemable South, a liberal North, and a responsive federal government, that guided mainstream media coverage.”¹⁵²

Perhaps nowhere was this celebration of progress more evident than in reactions to the 1965 *Voting Rights Act*. In response to national and international condemnation of events of Selma, President Lyndon Johnson delivered a speech on March 15, 1965 to denounce the violent suppression of nonviolent protestors and throw his support behind strong federal voting rights legislation. Johnson’s speech, Lentz and Gower note, “helped blunt adverse foreign views.”¹⁵³ Indeed, many Canadian observers felt the president had effectively responded to all the legitimate demands of African American rights activists. A *Globe and Mail* piece criticized voting rights protestors in Selma for continuing their demonstrations after Johnson’s speech:

many seem to have lost sight of the fact that President Johnson has been way ahead of the Negro leaders themselves. The legislation proposed by the President is of infinitely greater consequence than the *Civil Rights Act* passed by Congress last year... From all indications, it appears that the back of Southern resistance was broken last year... Under these circumstances, it remains unclear why Negro leaders such as Dr. King feel it necessary to impose even greater pressure on Congress than was applied over the civil rights legislation of last year.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ “They Shall Overcome,” *Globe and Mail*, 11 March 1965.

¹⁵² Robyn Ceanne Spencer, “Review of Selma: The City and the Symbol,” *Journal of American History* 90, no. 3 (December 2003): 1138.

¹⁵³ Lentz and Gower, *The Opinions of Mankind*, 196.

¹⁵⁴ Bruce MacDonald, “Negro protests obscure Johnson’s firm initiative,” *Globe and Mail*, 19 March 1965.

The University of British Columbia's student newspaper directed a similar critique towards protesters. "We don't see the value in picketing the U.S. consul," the editorial argued, "especially after president Johnson's speech in congress the other day."¹⁵⁵ Some students explained the decline of a SNCC club at the University of Western Ontario with reference to this attitude: "The passage of civil rights legislation was the goal of many Snick workers. So, when it became law, they felt their work was done."¹⁵⁶

Faith in America's progress and redemption was, many observers believed, vindicated with passage of the *Civil Rights Act* in 1964 and the *Voting Rights Act* in 1965. Popular support for SNCC was already waning by early 1965.¹⁵⁷ The new legislation accelerated that process, and this shift in public perception is critical to understanding the rapid dissipation of support for civil rights goals following 1965 in both the United States and Canada. As McGuire puts it, "a growing belief that the Voting Rights Act completed African Americans' campaign for civil rights made it easy for many Americans to ignore ongoing struggles for dignity and justice in the South as the sweltering summer of 1965 gave way to the crisp days of fall."¹⁵⁸ Following significant achievements that year, African American rights activists continued to emphasize persistent injustices, from lack of access to education, jobs, and housing to fundamental economic inequalities. These efforts complemented enduring fights against persistent on-the-ground Jim Crow practices, despite the new federal legislation. They gained particular prominence through

¹⁵⁵ "Press Dress," *The Ubyyssey*, 19 March 1965.

¹⁵⁶ LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 754, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, University of Western Ontario, "SNCC," *The Gazette*, 7 October 1966.

¹⁵⁷ Hogan, *Many Minds, One Heart*, 4.

¹⁵⁸ Danielle L. McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance – A New History of the Civil Rights Movement from Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 189.

advocacy of Black Power. Emerging in the second half of the 1960s, Black Power was the rallying cry of a movement that, while never rigidly defined, encompassed aspects of black nationalism, community and cultural pride, calls for more economic autonomy and control, and a greater sense of urgency and militancy in attaining these goals.¹⁵⁹ Recent historical scholarship has challenged the false dichotomy that earlier works on the period established between the nonviolent civil rights movement in the 1950s and early 1960s and the emergence of Black Power and greater militancy in the decade's second half. As Timothy Tyson puts it, "the 'civil rights movement' and the 'Black Power movement' emerged from the same soil, confronted the same predicaments, and reflected the same quest for African American freedom."¹⁶⁰ Similarly, David C. Carter argues that African American rights activists in the 1950s and early 1960s focused on highly tangible aims like gaining the right to unsegregated services and the right to vote. Those same activists, however, were also concerned with economic inequalities, or what Carter terms "the 'politics of resources.'"¹⁶¹ While substantial overlap and blurring of rhetoric and tactics actually existed, however, the contemporary mainstream media differentiated starkly between the two movements.

From its earliest expressions during the modern civil rights movement, there was far greater support in Canada for nonviolent tactics than those reflecting an ethos of Black Power. This paralleled coverage in the United States, where Carter notes, "[t]elevision

¹⁵⁹ Thomas Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, Inc., 2008), 337-338, 355.

¹⁶⁰ Timothy Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 3.

¹⁶¹ David C. Carter, *The Music Has Gone Out of the Movement: Civil Rights and the Johnson Administration, 1965-1968* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 11.

had furthered the goals of the southern-based civil rights movement up through the Selma campaign in 1965; in the three years that followed, it would increasingly fuel white backlash with its coverage of urban rioting.”¹⁶² Schwartz’s assessment of CBC reporting on American activism contrasts the positive language employed in coverage of non-violent activists with the negative rhetoric reserved for discussions of Black Power.¹⁶³ An assessment of a 1967 CBC Newsmagazine program about the so-called “long hot summer” of riots in several American cities bears out this conclusion. At the outset of the show, the host bluntly summarized its viewpoint: “nonviolence is no longer the major weapon of the civil rights struggle in the United States. Violence is now the dominant weapon. It amounts to black insurrection.” Noting that “[a]lmost 100 people have been killed in the riots or insurrections this year,” the host continued, “[t]he way many negro leaders are talking it may well be thousands in a short time.” The “twin mottos” of the riots, according to the show, were “burn, baby, burn” and “kill whitey.”¹⁶⁴ The host directly correlated the new rhetorical emphasis on Black Power with the emergence of riots. While the assessment included some contextualization of poverty and marginalization, this type of reporting implied that advocates of Black Power caused the riots directly, rather than suggesting they emerged from on-the-ground social conditions.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Carter, *The Music Has Gone Out of the Movement*, 26.

¹⁶³ Mallory Schwartz, “Like ‘Us’ or ‘Them’?” 130-131, 134.

¹⁶⁴ CBC Newsmagazine, *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Digital Archives* video, 28:09, 31 July 1967, accessed 2 April 2013, <<http://www.cbc.ca/archives/categories/politics/rights-freedoms/general-2/the-rise-of-violence-in-the-us-civil-rights-movement.html>>

¹⁶⁵ For a discussion of the “on-the-ground” causes of riots, see Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North*, 326-334.

Canadian reporting on African American activism in the mid-1960s was defined by the overlapping celebration around the *Voting Rights Act* as the culmination of America's progressive march towards racial enlightenment with criticism of Black Power. This attitude mirrored mainstream views in the United States, which held that the civil rights movement had attained its goals and should therefore come to an end.¹⁶⁶ This narrative was meaningful in shaping how Canadians viewed the civil rights movement; it also profoundly influenced discourse around human rights in Canada itself. With passage of the *Civil Rights Act* and *Voting Rights Act* south of the border, Canada and the United States were on a relatively similar footing in terms of the legal status of racial discrimination. While the specific content of legislation barring discrimination in both countries was obviously distinct, the fundamental principle prohibiting outright discrimination based on race was relatively consistent. In neither country, however, did legal prohibitions against discrimination ensure actual equality on the ground. In the United States, some African American activists had recognized long ago that a much broader movement of human rights, not just civil rights, would be required to address many of the fundamental inequalities in American society. According to historian Carol Anderson, a faction of the NAACP had advocated for a broad platform of human rights – including but not limited to defeating Jim Crow *and* ensuring equity in employment, housing, educational, and economic opportunity – immediately following World War II. The rise of the Cold War quashed this ambitious platform because the government

¹⁶⁶ Carter, *The Music Has Gone Out of the Movement*, 245; Sewell describes a similar pattern in British coverage, where “[t]he sympathetic consensus frayed over the prospects for integration beyond the eradication of Jim Crow.” See Sewell, “British Responses to Martin Luther King, Jr.,” 195.

increasingly associated issues like economic inequality with communism and therefore deemed them “un-American.” As a result, Anderson argues, the NAACP and other nationally prominent civil rights leaders and organizations narrowed their focus to civil rights issues. The fight against segregation in public facilities, services, accommodations, and the voting booth could more straightforwardly (relatively speaking) be portrayed and promoted as in line with the American creed of liberal democracy than could a much broader platform of social change and equal economic opportunity.¹⁶⁷ It was no surprise to many African American activists, therefore, that civil and voting rights legislation, while undoubtedly transformative, failed to address many pressing problems in which race and class intersected, such as prolific poverty and ghettoization.

Similar issues around economic inequality also continued to plague racialized minorities in Canada. Legislation in several provinces prohibited discrimination in various realms of life by the mid-1960s and human rights commissions offered remedies in some instances, but equal opportunity in employment, housing, and general economic advancement continued to lag behind these legislative achievements. Enforcement of anti-discrimination laws, moreover, was frequently weak.¹⁶⁸ NSAACP president H.A.J. Wedderburn observed, for example, that Nova Scotia’s anti-discrimination laws “seem to be, at present, more often violated than obeyed. This is because of ignorance of the law

¹⁶⁷ Carol Anderson, *Eyes off the Prize: The United Nations and the African American Struggle for Human Rights, 1944-1955* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

¹⁶⁸ Sugrue notes an equivalent challenge in the U.S. North, where “Grassroots activists... quickly learned that state laws were not self-enforcing. It often took parental pressure to break down the barriers of segregation.” Thomas Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York, Random House, Inc., 2008), 178; For a discussion of weak enforcement of Canadian anti-discrimination legislation, see Calliste, “The Struggle for Employment Equity by Blacks on American and Canadian Railroads,” 303: “Another FEP [Fair Employment Practices] Act weakness was the small penalty for violation. It is questionable whether it could have acted as a deterrent. These weaknesses were compounded by the lack of enforcement of the law.”

by both employers and employees, and because of the government's failure to prosecute any violators of these acts to date."¹⁶⁹ Walker has recently argued that some African Canadian rights activists in Nova Scotia began, in the latter half of the sixties, to focus on prejudice as an endemic, systemic problem rather than a problem expressed only by a few individuals. As he puts it, "[t]he legislative reforms of the 1950s and 1960s had not saved Africville from destruction, and had created no jobs, schools, or homes for African Canadians in Nova Scotia."¹⁷⁰

In his work on social movements in Canada, Clément distinguishes civil and political rights from economic, social and cultural rights. Civil and political, or "negative rights" are defined by a focus on freedom *from* discrimination, while the category of economic, social and cultural rights fall under "positive rights," which include the right to things like housing and economic opportunity.¹⁷¹ Clément describes a "rights revolution" in Canada in this period that was driven by grassroots activism, gained momentum in the decades following World War II, and led to the enshrinement of protections for civil and political rights in legislation.¹⁷² By contrast, however, activists and governments largely shunned positive rights with the result that, Clément argues, "Canada's rights revolution, for all its impressive achievements, faced immense obstacles. The achievements of the

¹⁶⁹ PANS, Fred R MacKinnon fonds, 1992-718, v. 2, H.A.J. Wedderburn, "Human Rights in Nova Scotia Today," n.d.

¹⁷⁰ James W. St. G. Walker, "Decoding the Rights Revolution: Lessons from the Canadian Experience," in *Taking Liberties: A History of Human Rights in Canada*, eds. David Goutor and Stephen Heathorn (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2013), 46.

¹⁷¹ Dominique Clément, "'Rights Without the Sword are but Mere Words': The Limits of Canada's Rights Revolution," in *A History of Human Rights in Canada*, ed. Janet Miron (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2009), 44-45.

¹⁷² Clément, "Rights Without the Sword," 43.

human rights movement were ultimately overshadowed by a culture of rights that was individualistic, liberal, and concerned primarily with civil and political rights.”¹⁷³

In this way, Canadians were notably consistent in their willingness to support protections for certain types of rights but not others in their own country, and in their observations and assessments of the United States. In both cases, negative rights received more support than positive rights. Just as fewer Canadian media reports employed supportive language about African American activists following 1965, they also looked with increasing scepticism upon intensifying Canadian anti-racist activism in the latter half of the decade. Anti-discrimination organizing efforts achieved notable success in the 1950s and 1960s at bringing about state level prohibitions on outright discrimination in several Canadian provinces. Just as in the United States, these advancements did not guarantee tangible equality in all realms of life. Not every province passed anti-discrimination legislation, and where it did exist, such laws were far from a panacea for the underlying inequalities that continued to exist. A New Brunswick Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NBAACP) report submitted in 1969 to the municipal government of Saint John illustrates this point. The report dealt with the widespread socio-economic struggles of African Canadians in that city. “The grievous truth,” according to the report, “is that you have been oblivious of the grievances and the burdens of prejudice and discrimination on the black community of Saint John.”¹⁷⁴ An October 1969 conference of African Canadian advocacy organizations delineated pervasive

¹⁷³ Clément, “Rights Without the Sword,” 56.

¹⁷⁴ LAC, Dorothy Wills fonds, MG 31 H 179, Box 9, Report to the Mayor and City Council Corporation of the City of Saint John by the New Brunswick Association for the Advancement of Coloured People, 19 August 1969.

challenges facing racialized minorities in the realms of both negative and positive rights. The conference, which sparked the formation of the National Black Coalition (NBC), featured workshop topics ranging from “A strategy for improving the economic status of black Canadians,” and “Relations between government agencies and blacks,” to “Black unity: the role of history, culture and communications,” and “Black youth in Canada.”¹⁷⁵

The NBC was one of many new African Canadian advocacy organizations that emerged at the end of the 1960s, a period of renewed anti-racist activism in Canada. Representing distinct visions for the way forward, African Canadians in Nova Scotia in this period organized both the Black United Front (BUF) and the African Canadian Liberation Movement (ACLM). BUF sought solutions through government advocacy, while the ACLM reflected similar ideological goals as the Black Panther Party (BPP) in the United States.¹⁷⁶ Meanwhile, one of the most widely publicized moments of anti-racist advocacy in this period was a protest at Sir George Williams University (SGWU) in Montreal against a professor accused of racism. The protest climaxed with the occupation and eventually the destruction of a computer lab on campus.¹⁷⁷

These new and more visible organizations and efforts were widely met with bewilderment and censure. Many observers reacted as though these organizations, and their seemingly more radical tone, had emerged from nowhere. In his analysis of the

¹⁷⁵ LAC, Dorothy Wills fonds, MG 31 V 4, “A Report on the Canadian Conference of Black Organizations,” *Umoja 1*, no. 1, 30 October 1969.

¹⁷⁶ James W. St. G. Walker, “Black Confrontation in Sixties Halifax,” in *Debating Dissent: Canada and the Sixties*, eds. Lara Campbell, Dominique Clément, and Gregory S. Kealey (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 187-188.

¹⁷⁷ Marcel Martel, “Riot at Sir George Williams: Giving Meaning to Student Dissent,” in *Debating Dissent: Canada and the Sixties*, eds. Lara Campbell, Dominique Clément, and Gregory S. Kealey (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 97-114.

Congress of Black Writers, a 1968 conference in Montreal attended by activists from around the world, David Austin observes that “[m]any in the media in Canada appeared to be stunned by the tone” of the event.¹⁷⁸ This sense of surprise was frequently expressed in a rather roundabout way. For example, authorities interpreted the development of new activist efforts in Canada towards decade’s end as the result of “outsider” influence. They were surprised that such organizations would emerge in their country where, they still believed, tolerance reigned. The logical conclusion, therefore, was that non-Canadians must be responsible for the emergence of new organizing approaches, since they could not conceive of a reason for them to arise independently from within Canadian society. A Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) brief on the ACLM, for example, described the organization as “an attempt by the U.S. Black Panther Party to organize a ‘vanguard’ group in the area.”¹⁷⁹ In a letter to the Department of Manpower and Immigration, a senior RCMP officer warned, “that should a large number of militant black nationalists gain admission to Canada, they would eventually form a definite problem.”¹⁸⁰ The Mounties, Steve Hewitt explains, were concerned that American radicals would push Canadians in the same subversive direction that they were supposedly already pursuing in their own country.¹⁸¹ O’wram has likewise noted a prevailing “fear that American

¹⁷⁸ David Austin, “All Roads Led to Montreal: Black Power, The Caribbean, and the Black Radical Tradition in Canada,” *Journal of African American History* 92, no. 4 (Fall 2007): 526.

¹⁷⁹ LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, Box 119, v. 2976, ATIP # AH-2001-170, Afro-Canadian Liberation Movement (ACLM), 25 October 1972.

¹⁸⁰ Royal Commission of Inquiry into Certain Activities of the RCMP McDonald Commission, *Second Report: Freedom and Security under the Law*, 23 January 1981, 502.

¹⁸¹ Steve Hewitt, *Spying 101: The RCMP’s Secret Activities at Canadian Universities, 1917-1997* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 151-152.

extremism was moving north of the border.”¹⁸² Media responses commonly implied that American activists were behind Canadian organizations. A *Globe and Mail* article about the state of “race relations” in Halifax noted that following former SNCC leader Stokely Carmichael’s visit, “rumours spread of a Black Panther ‘invasion.’”¹⁸³ In the same article, Rocky Jones related that he was “used to the hysterical exaggeration in the local press.”¹⁸⁴ The *Ottawa Citizen* used similarly provocative language, reporting that “[a] wave of fear shot through both the black and white community” with the 1968 visit of two American BPP members to Halifax.¹⁸⁵ Just as support for civil rights and Black Power activism declined in the United States in this period, therefore, so too was there a diminished parallel support for, and an increase in suspicion of, related efforts in Canada.

Conclusion

These responses suggest the limits of Canadian self-reflection in the midst of African American activism in the United States. This chapter has identified instances wherein Canadians, prompted by debates about racism in the United States, questioned the legitimacy of their sanctimonious attitude. Yet sympathy for the American efforts, tentative as it was, largely evaporated with the advent of civil and voting rights legislation by mid-decade. Any pressure the American example contributed to Canadian changes evaporated with it. Thus, as Canadian activists mobilized new organizations and efforts for broader and bolder human rights reforms in Canada in the late 1960s, there was a

¹⁸² Owrain, *Born at the Right Time*, 289.

¹⁸³ “In the Panthers’ Wake,” *Globe and Mail*, 15 February 1969.

¹⁸⁴ “In the Panthers’ Wake,” *Globe and Mail*, 15 February 1969.

¹⁸⁵ LAC, Records of CSIS, RG 146, v. 120, Nick Fillmore, “Black Power Finally Reaches Nova Scotia’s Negro Minority,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 18 December 1968.

distinct lack of popular support, and frequently a tone of panic in response. Many Canadians failed to understand the local causes of, and need for, these efforts to challenge racism. In this way, shifting views in Canada of the American civil rights movement offers a useful litmus test for responses to human rights activism in Canada. Just as whatever sympathy there was for the American movement largely dissipated following new legislation in 1964 and 1965, it also faded around similar reforms efforts in Canada. Pressures the prominent American movement had at one time generated for Canadians to deal with their own examples of injustice receded alongside sympathy and support for African American activism in the United States beyond 1965.

There was no singular, cohesive response in Canada to civil rights activism south of the border. Reactions, of course, were varied. Some observers simply expressed support for desegregation, while others took specific measures to demonstrate support, for example by sending money or engaging in rights activism. Meanwhile, many others were indifferent, critical, or fundamentally opposed to anti-discrimination protestors. Nonetheless, across these disparate responses emerges a consistent thread. This chapter's consideration of mainstream media coverage and resultant public dialogue illustrates that the African American civil rights movement was at once a distinctly national, and transnational process. It emerged out of local and national circumstances, but also drew upon and influenced events around the world. As dialogue and debate raged over the place of discrimination and rights south of the border and around the world, those same topics grew increasingly important in Canada as well. For some Canadians, the African American civil rights movement provided pressure and motivation to look more closely

at, and seek redress for, prejudice in Canada. While many Canadians were sympathetic, several factors worked against overly enthusiastic popular support. Dramatic images of racist violence reinforced the notion that this was a distinctively American issue, and the related perspective that any matters in Canada, which might have appeared similar, were actually insignificant and unimportant by comparison.

This assessment might seem contradictory, but as with many topics in history, this is not a simple story. The American civil rights movement generated an occasionally confusing mixture of troubled self-reflection and assured self-confidence in Canada. There is meaning and significance to be found in this muddle. As the next chapter demonstrates, international anti-racist pressures, seized upon by Canadian activists, led to some policy changes. Yet the sanctimonious imagination simultaneously curtailed the scope of change. Just as the civil rights movement helps to explain the consolidation of a legislative system of human rights protections in Canada, so too does it help explain the significant limitations constraining that system.

CHAPTER 4:
Politics, Public Policy, and
Transnational Human Rights Organizing in Canada

In the midst of intensive local and global anti-racist activism, and its associated media coverage, the government of Ontario established the first full time human rights commission in Canada. Set up in 1961, the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) had a mandate to enforce the new *Ontario Human Rights Code* and to educate Ontario's residents on its provisions and requirements. The OHRC's first full time commissioner, Dr. Daniel G. Hill, sustained close personal connections with anti-discrimination activists and organizations across the province and country. As a novel and relatively small body, the OHRC was also a site of cross-border exchanges with American commissions, some of which had already been operational for several years. The OHRC wrote to several American states to request copies of laws on their book that addressed discrimination, and sent copies of the recently passed *Ontario Human Rights Code* in return. The aim was to build a library of laws and materials from different jurisdictions on the subject of human rights legislation for quick reference.¹

North American human rights commissions also exchanged best practices and ideas at the annual Conference of Commissions for Human Rights. One of the scheduled events at the 1963 conference in Pittsburgh, which OHRC staff attended, was the "Martin Luther King Banquet."² King was scheduled to speak at the event, but the integration campaign in Birmingham, Alabama precluded his attendance. Andrew Young, a

¹ Archives of Ontario (hereafter AO), Records of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, RG 76-3, B270369, General Mailing, U.S. Attorney-Generals, 26 February 1965.

² AO, Records of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, RG 76-3, B270354, Advance Registration Blank for the 1963 Conference of Commissions for Human Rights, 20 March 1963.

colleague of King's at the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), spoke instead. The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* paraphrased Young that Birmingham was "a symbol of the rise of the American Negro and a warning across the land that every city must face up to the racial problem or face an eruption."³ According to the article, the Birmingham campaign and civil rights movement were popular conversation topics at the conference.

Young's warnings stemming from Birmingham, and global struggles for human rights more broadly, were clearly on the OHRC radar throughout its first decade. In a public pamphlet describing the organization's purpose, aims, and powers, a section entitled "The Mood of the Times" explained,

[i]n Ontario we are engaged in an endeavor which is not isolated from developments beyond the borders either of our province or of our nation. This is the age when the rights of all men regardless of their race, creed, colour, nationality, ancestry or place of origin, are being treated with a concern and a consideration never before known on so large a scale. On many fronts, the battle against prejudice and discrimination is being fought and won. The newspaper headlines constantly bear witness to this.⁴

The pamphlet closed by highlighting global progress in the fight against injustice, citing African and Asian decolonization, American civil rights, and the United Nations as examples. It noted that Ontario could "be justifiably proud of our vigorous and forward-looking program of human rights." The pamphlet warned in conclusion, however, that the province "must not rest on our laurels and become complacent. Much yet remains to be

³ Alvin Rosensweet, "Birmingham, Ala., Called a Symbol Of Rise of Negro," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 23 May 1963.

⁴ Ontario Jewish Archives (hereafter OJA), Canadian Jewish Congress, JCRC fonds 17, series 5, box 10, "Human Rights in Ontario," 13-15.

done.”⁵ Commissioner Hill offered a similar caution when speaking at a Toronto memorial to Martin Luther King, Jr. after his assassination:

His death is a direct and serious challenge to all Canadians who are actively engaged in securing human rights for the many members of our multi-ethnic, multi-racial and multi-lingual nation. Those of us across this land who are entrusted with administering federal and provincial human rights legislation will forever be haunted by the memory of Martin Luther King, if we compromise in Canada – in the human rights struggle – and if we fail to see the overwhelming significance of his life for Canadian Indians, black men and Asians who still suffer discrimination and who have not yet been accorded the full benefits of our society.⁶

The OHRC’s attention to global human rights concerns suggests an understanding among government officials in Canada that domestic human rights practices were increasingly under a worldwide microscope. It is essential to understand the arrival of new Canadian human rights laws and enforcement mechanisms in the 1950s and 1960s as interconnected with local and global movements.

Widespread awareness of the African American civil rights movement in Canada, combined with strategic activist references to the American situation, helped establish an environment favourable to new or strengthened state measures against discrimination in Ontario and Nova Scotia. Recalling the passage into law of new human rights protections, Lincoln M. Alexander, the first African Canadian Member of Parliament (MP), identifies the civil rights movement as a factor “helping to sensitize people to the impact of racial prejudice...”⁷ James W. St. G. Walker has examined the arrival of new human rights legislation in this period in Canada, which introduced varying degrees of protection

⁵ OJA, Canadian Jewish Congress, JCRC fonds 17, series 5, box 10, “Human Rights in Ontario,” 13-15.

⁶ AO, Records of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, RG 76-3, B270392, Statement Given at Memorial Service for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. By Daniel G. Hill, 9 April 1968.

⁷ Lincoln M. Alexander, *“Go to school, you’re a little black boy”*: *The Honourable Lincoln M. Alexander, a Memoir* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2006), 93.

against discrimination. He describes the “legislative momentum” towards new anti-discrimination protections, and argues that “[p]ublic policy was clearly committed to the path of egalitarianism.”⁸ As this chapter emphasizes, the backdrop and strategic use of American civil rights examples by Canadian activists played an important role in this process.

Previous chapters have examined homegrown Canadian protests, which were supplemented by, but did not result solely from, the American example. Similarly, the American context did not *cause* the legislative changes taking place in Canada in this period. Canadian lawmakers at municipal, provincial, and federal levels were not reflexively inspired by imagery from civil rights protests in places like Birmingham and Selma to make changes at home. To the contrary, news stemming from the African American movement could sometimes reinforce the sanctimonious imagination, and the related belief that Canadians did not need to take bold action because they were already sufficiently far ahead of their American neighbours. In his discussion of legislative change in this period, Walker reminds us that while the international context is important, it “should not be exaggerated, for although it did promise a new receptivity to minority concerns, it did not guarantee specific measures to correct them.”⁹

Changes in ideas and policies around prejudice and discrimination in Canada did not happen on their own; they were not the result of an inevitable, progressive march towards greater tolerance and acceptance. The passage of time did not naturally lend itself

⁸ James W. St.G. Walker, “Race,” *Rights and the Law in the Supreme Court of Canada: Historical Case Studies* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1997), 326-328.

⁹ James W. St.G. Walker, “The ‘Jewish Phase’ in the Movement for Racial Equality in Canada,” *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 34, no. 1 (2002): 6.

to these changes. Rather, specific, targeted, and effective activist strategies forced the state to act in the midst of frequently reluctant, and sometimes downright hostile, societies. This was the case in the American South, where persistent sit-ins, boycotts, and protests forcibly brought about change to overt Jim Crow practices. There was nothing inevitable about the impact of the civil rights movement; it was the result of individual and collective will. The same was true in Canada, where activists gathered irrefutable evidence of discrimination's existence and damaging effects on individuals and communities, and tenaciously pressed for remedies. As human rights activist Bromley Armstrong has put it, "[o]ur human and civil rights agenda required an unrelenting attitude on the part of those of us who were committed to righting such wrongs..."¹⁰ Global human rights movements were significant in Canada because activists talked about, highlighted, and made use of them for their own purposes. The influence of international matters like the civil rights movement should not be inflated as a singular cause, but in the hands of seasoned rights activists, it proved a useful tool.¹¹ Canadian rights activists in the 1950s and 1960s highlighted American protests as a means of generating support for their own efforts. They used the civil rights movement's long media shadow to draw attention, generate discussion, suggest parallels, and promote solutions to related Canadian issues.

¹⁰ Bromley L. Armstrong with Sheldon Taylor, *Bromley: Tireless Champion for Just Causes* (Pickering, ON: Vitabu Publications, 2000), 80.

¹¹ See Rosanna L. Langer, *Defining Rights and Wrongs: Bureaucracy, Human Rights, and Public Accountability* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007), 3, for a discussion of activism by the Jewish Labour Committee, Canadian Jewish Congress, National Unity Association, and similar organizations: "This social activism, along with an evolving international consciousness about the importance of human rights, led to the establishment of the public administration of anti-discrimination legislation."

Canadian rights activists experienced a measure of success pressing lawmakers to heed some of their demands. The civil rights movement backdrop was not the only influence on these changes, but at a time when sit-ins, boycotts, protests, and marches earned extensive coverage in daily newspapers and on the evening news, it was a familiar conversation piece and powerful pressure point. Paradoxically, however, this context functioned at the same moment as a limiting factor. Canadian politicians continued interpreting American events through the lens of the sanctimonious imagination. While some lessons could be learned from the American experience, state officials at municipal, provincial, and federal levels perceived only limited relevance to Canada in American issues, because they viewed their country as comparatively enlightened. Pressure to substantiate this perspective led to some changes and improvements, but hindered more fundamental and transformative actions.

It bears noting that the American civil rights movement was far from the only relevant international influence on Canada in this period. Bromley Armstrong has observed the impact of decolonization movements on Canada's exclusionary immigration policies, for example, which he notes became harder to justify when "[i]n Africa, the Caribbean, and elsewhere colonized people were starting to throw off their yokes of oppression."¹² Ross Lambertson argues that rights discourse became more common in postwar Canada with new developments at the international level, namely the United Nations (UN) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).¹³ These

¹² Armstrong, *Bromley: Tireless Champion for Just Causes*, 109.

¹³ Ross Lambertson, *Repression and Resistance: Canadian Human Rights Activists, 1930-1960* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 5.

developments contributed to a shift in Canada away from the tradition of unwritten “British liberties,” towards legislated human rights protections similar in philosophy to those international documents.¹⁴ Widespread coverage and interest in the American civil rights movement was a crucial piece of these wide-ranging global influences.

The Canadian State, the Cold War, and the Civil Rights Movement

In recent years, American history scholars have highlighted an important relationship between the Cold War and civil rights activism in the United States. As noted in Mary Dudziak’s work, there was a fundamental Cold War tension between systemic Jim Crow racism and the American government’s claim to leadership in the free world. “How could American democracy be a beacon during the Cold War, and a model for those struggling against Soviet oppression,” Dudziak asks, “if the United States itself practiced brutal discrimination against minorities within its own borders?”¹⁵ African American civil rights workers were quick to expose this hypocrisy by demanding that their country make changes to its domestic situation, or suffer the foreign policy consequences through a crisis of legitimacy.

With its position squarely in the Western camp of the Cold War, the Canadian government also worried over domestic issues in the United States compromising its Cold War position.¹⁶ As Lentz and Gower observe, western critiques of President Eisenhower’s hesitating response to the Little Rock school integration crisis were rooted in fear that

¹⁴ Lambertson, *Repression and Resistance*, 16-18.

¹⁵ Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 3.

¹⁶ For a detailed examination of Canadian foreign policy and the Cold War, see Robert Bothwell, *Alliance and Illusion: Canada and the World, 1945-1984* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007).

events in Arkansas would serve the interests of the Soviet Union. A *Maclean's* editorial made this precise point, worrying that Little Rock would cause harm not just to the American image abroad, but to the entire West.¹⁷ Hazen Argue, then a Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) MP, raised a similar argument in the midst of the Jimmy Wilson case. “[I]t would be an international calamity,” Argue warned “if the leaders of the communist world were given this ready-made club with which to continue their nefarious and troublesome course in the world.”¹⁸ Prime Minister John Diefenbaker expressed similar anxieties when justifying the *Canadian Bill of Rights* in 1960. The new legislation, he proposed, “will declare the principle that every individual, whatever his colour, race or religion, shall be free from discrimination and will have guaranteed equality under the law. This is so important today, for wherever discrimination exists in the world there you have a seed-bed for Communism.”¹⁹

Canadian activists were also quick to grasp the potential leveraging opportunity of the Cold War. “[I]n the cold war period countries like Canada’s Achilles’ heel,” Bromley Armstrong reflects, “was race relations.”²⁰ The *Canadian Negro* newspaper and various African Canadian anti-discrimination activists in Toronto raised this point when jointly pressing the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) on its hiring practices. Responding to a controversy over whether the TTC would hire black streetcar drivers, a TTC manager provided further evidence of discriminatory practices by using a racist term in a television

¹⁷ Richard Lentz and Karla K. Gower, *The Opinions of Mankind: Racial Issues, Press, and Propaganda in the Cold War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2010), 100.

¹⁸ House of Commons, 23 August 1958 (Hazen Argue).

¹⁹ John Diefenbaker, “Address on the Nation’s Business,” 30 June 1960, accessed 17 September 2013, <<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/2/4/h4-4052-e.html>>

²⁰ Armstrong, *Bromley: Tireless Champion for Just Causes*, 74.

interview. Stanley Grizzle of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP) responded to the incident, and to the broader employment issue, with reference to the Cold War:

The members of our organization feel that, in view of the present world-wide struggle for the allegiance of the peoples of the world to the various types of government; and, since the major portion of the globe's populace is made up of humans of color, you can ill-afford to continue to use derogatory terms such as the one used by you...²¹

Relentless pressure on the part of the BSCP and the *Canadian Negro* newspaper eventually forced a change. The newspaper announced a few months later that the TTC had hired four African Canadian men to drive streetcars in Toronto.²²

While this development was the direct result of local pressure and advocacy by the BSCP and its allies, it is also helpful to consider the way these local pressures were entwined with related international concerns. As Mathieu observes, Grizzle and the BSCP had a "keen understanding of global Cold War racial politics."²³ Dr. Alvin D. Loving, a professor at the University of Michigan, emphasized a related point in a speech he delivered before about 300 attendees at a Canadian Negro Women's Association (CNWA) event in 1958. Reminding his audience of the Cold War's relevance to domestic anti-discrimination efforts, he argued that if the West wanted to influence Communist countries, they ought to "practice what they preach" by demonstrating true democracy at home.²⁴ A submission from various allied organizations to the Ontario government demanding that fair accommodations legislation prohibit discrimination in housing likewise invoked the Cold War. It warned,

²¹ "TTC Denies Charges 'Will Hire Negroes,'" *Canadian Negro* 1, no. 4 (November 1953).

²² "Race Makes Gain Back on TTC Job," *Canadian Negro* 2, no. 2 (March 1954).

²³ Sarah-Jane Mathieu, *North of the Color Line: Migration and Black Resistance in Canada, 1870-1955* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 215.

²⁴ "West is Urged to Set Example in Democracy," *Globe and Mail*, 17 March 1958.

[t]oday we find ourselves engaged in a life and death struggle with totalitarian Communism. This struggle is steadily shifting from the military to the ideological arena. The number of our bombs in [*sic*] beginning to take second place to the depth of our beliefs. We who believe in democracy, we who are committed to the preservation and perpetuation of free institutions, must be very sensitive to every opportunity to strengthen our social order. This deputation submits that if the Ontario Government accepts our proposal, it would be adding immeasurably to the ideological artillery of the free world.²⁵

Ontario's Human Rights Framework

In the same period as the BSCP's advocacy vis-a-vis the TTC, the battle for desegregation was underway in Dresden, Ontario. The interactions between Dresden activists and the Ontario government tell a story of connectedness between the local with the international, by virtue of both the Cold War and the emerging civil rights movement. Just as recent literature has highlighted the importance of connections between the African American civil rights movement and the Cold War, so too were these international reference points important aspects of the provincial government's responses to Dresden. As Chapter 1 notes, rights activists and African Canadian newspapers made frequent references to embarrassing events in the United States when advocating new or improved laws in their own country. Activists also reminded government officials of the international context when lobbying the government for change. A detailed brief, which the Association for Civil Liberties submitted to the Ontario government alongside allied organizations in support of legislation banning discrimination in public accommodations, invoked the Cold War:

²⁵ Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC), Stanley Grizzle fonds, R12294 v. 20, Submissions re: Racial Discrimination in Apartment Buildings and Multiple Dwelling Units, 1960-1961?.

In this critical era, the freedom-loving nations of the world are striving to demonstrate the values of democracy as a way of life. The rest of the world hears our words, and measures them against our deeds. It is indeed tragic that they should find us in any way deficient. But where deficiencies exist in a democracy, there exists also the means of correction.²⁶

Ultimately, the protests, public relations efforts, and deputations compelled Premier Leslie Frost to introduce the *Fair Accommodations Practices Act* in 1954. The law required businesses offering services to the public to serve customers regardless of “race” or religion. As Walker notes, this action resulted less from concern with evidence of widespread discrimination than from anxiety that a spotlight on discrimination was damaging in light of the Cold War.²⁷ “Appeals have been made to the government by leaders in church and civil affairs, the Association for Civil Liberties, and many others to remedy this situation,” Frost explained when he introduced the bill to the legislature. These appeals could “be distorted, particularly outside of our country, into overshadowing the great principles our people have long accepted and have almost generally put into operation.”²⁸ While debating the legislation, another Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) raised a similar argument in its favour:

As our statesmen go to other countries of the world, seeking to lay the foundation for a better era and a better way of life, there will be no better argument they can use than the right to say that in Canada we have removed racial discrimination, that our people are equal no matter what race they come from or what creed they profess.²⁹

²⁶ LAC, Stanley Grizzle fonds, R12294 v. 20, Association for Civil Liberties brief, 5 February 1954.

²⁷ Walker, “The ‘Jewish Phase,’ in the Movement for Racial Equality in Canada,” 16; Relatedly, William A. Schabas argues that Canada’s reluctant support for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights resulted less from sincere commitment to its principles than from sensitivity to Cold War political and diplomatic pressures. See William A. Schabas, “Canada and the Adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” *McGill Law Journal* 43 (1998): 435.

²⁸ Ontario Legislature, 29 March 1954 (L. Frost).

²⁹ Ontario Legislature, 1 April 1954 (F.R. Oliver).

The tactic of comparing Canadian discrimination with unflattering international examples helped push a reluctant Ontario government to accept a more robust human rights policy landscape. International comparisons regularly factored in debates over bolstering the province's *Fair Accommodations Practices Act* in 1958 and 1961, the new *Ontario Human Rights Code* in 1962, and subsequent amendments to the code throughout the decade.³⁰ The comparative tactic was particularly effective because it rested upon what R. Brian Howe labels "value-practice discrepancies."³¹ By leveraging the Cold War and suggesting uncomplimentary parallels with their American neighbours, rights activists highlighted a gap between the purported Canadian *value* of equality with the on-the-ground *practice* of discrimination.³² Most significantly, this tactic shows that it was not simply the *existence* of an international context of anti-racist advocacy that led to changes in Canada. Rather, it was the successful *leveraging* of that context by Canadian activists that made the difference. As examples below illustrate, the comparative tactic ensured the international context was on the mind of policy makers as they grappled with the need for new anti-discrimination measures.

References to international matters were not always explicit. The evidence suggests, however, that media coverage and activist allusions to international circumstances (whether implicit or explicit in nature) informed discourse and debates around human rights policy in Ontario in the 1950s and 1960s. Ontario Premier John Robarts' comments in the legislature during Brotherhood Week in 1962, around the same

³⁰ Robert Brian Howe and David Johnson, *Restraining Equality: Human Rights Commissions in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 9.

³¹ R. Brian Howe, "The Evolution of Human Rights Policy in Ontario," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 24, no. 4 (December 1991): 786.

³² Howe, "The Evolution of Human Rights Policy in Ontario," 786-7.

time that *Ontario Human Rights Code* debates were taking place, illustrate this point.

First initiated by the Canadian Council of Christians and Jews, annual Brotherhood Week activities focused on education in and promotion of tolerance and equality. In Robarts' view,

while there is every indication of a more widespread acceptance and practice of that spirit [of brotherhood] around the world, there still exist attitudes and actions which are destructive of elementary justice. I would not suggest that these things are rampant in Canada but I would never dismiss them as manifestations peculiar only to some other part of the world.³³

Robarts' reference to the international backdrop in his comments was vague, and did not draw specific attention to the situation in the United States or other international issues like decolonization or the UDHR. Nevertheless, his comments suggest awareness that challenges to discrimination the world over had a bearing on related matters in Ontario. The interplay of the civil rights movement and the Cold War were tacitly evident in other MPP comments while debating the *Ontario Human Rights Code* that same week. "Our system of government is so greatly opposed to that of the Russian system, we emphasize the individual," MPP James B. Trotter argued, in explaining his support for the proposed law. He continued, "[t]hat is why we can join together in agreeing that no one should be discriminated against because of their race, their creed, their nationality, colour or ancestry."³⁴

In other instances, allusions to international examples, and their meaning for Ontario, were more conspicuous. When Premier Frost introduced amendments to the *Fair Accommodations Practices Act* in 1961 to prohibit discrimination in some apartment

³³ Ontario Legislature, 20 February 1962 (J.G. Robarts).

³⁴ Ontario Legislature, 22 February 1962 (J. Trotter).

rentals and create the Ontario Anti-Discrimination Commission (later the Ontario Human Rights Commission, or OHRC), he did so with specific reference to recent global events:

in the realm of human rights today, the conscience of our people is deeply stirred. This is very evident from reading the newspapers of these days and times; we are no longer living in a little world of our own. What happens elsewhere is of deep concern, and our people have turned this concern to themselves, looking at themselves; it is here in my opinion that the great gain has been made. It is evident in the unanimity with which this bill has been received by hon. members and by the press and by the people of this province...³⁵

Frost alluded to an array of relevant international circumstances that received heavy media play in this period, including the civil rights movement and decolonization in Africa. In regards to the latter issue, Frost made specific reference to Harold Macmillan's "winds of change" speech, in which the British Prime Minister articulated acceptance of decolonization. University of Toronto Professor Albert Rose's 1962 report on discrimination in Ontario also suggests that international circumstances informed human rights policy in Ontario. Rose's report detailed examples of discrimination in employment, accommodations, and other realms of life, in spite of existing anti-discrimination legislation. Emphasizing the need for stronger laws and enforcement, Rose warned "[s]ome employers hold views concerning Negroes which seem to be verbatim recitals of racist materials emanating from the 'Deep South' or the Canadian oil country."³⁶ This comparison would have been particularly evocative at a time when negative media coverage of American segregationists had grown common. Rose, moreover, was an influential academic with the ear of policy makers. An editorial

³⁵ Ontario Legislature, 1 March 1961 (L. Frost).

³⁶ Hyman Solomon, "Ontario sets policy for human decency new 'Rights' code will bar discrimination," *Toronto Star*, 15 June 1962.

supporting the new OHRC in the *Globe and Mail* cited Rose's study as evidence of "[t]he need for progress in the field of human rights."³⁷

MPPs with the opposition Liberal Party and New Democratic Party (NDP) also referenced the international climate across multiple pushes to strengthen anti-discrimination measures. The government introduced an amendment to the fair accommodations law that prohibited discrimination in housing rentals for the first time in 1958. The amendment, however, only prohibited discrimination in buildings of six or more units. This policy was immediately controversial, with several opposition MPPs pressing the government to extend the ban on discrimination to smaller buildings with fewer units. Liberal MPP John Wintermeyer advocated this change in 1961:

I do not think it behooves us as Canadians to look south at the American states and be critical of their doings, or to look to Europe and be critical of what is happening there.... Our opportunity is to give leadership and real leadership, and the only way we are going to do it is to tie again our colours to the mast in unmistakable fashion. If we believe, as we say we believe, in no discrimination, then I suggest that there is no need for any arbitrary limitations on the number of units in the legislation whatsoever.³⁸

Ontarians had little reason to feel self-satisfied, Wintermeyer suggested, so long as discrimination in rentals of any size was legally permissible. A few weeks later, MPP Andrew Thompson demanded to know, "[w]hat is the matter with this timorous government? Pusillanimous vacillations describes this policy." Thompson was aware of several apartments in his electoral riding with fewer than six units, he explained, and he warned that discrimination in them was just as troublesome as it was in larger buildings. International students frequently looked for rentals in the smaller buildings, making it

³⁷ "Law and Prejudice," *Globe and Mail*, 18 June 1962.

³⁸ Ontario Legislature, 1 March 1961 (J. Wintermeyer).

“paramount, particularly with the tensions in the world today, that in Ontario young people coming here do not face discrimination in the places where they are going to live.”³⁹ In the midst of the Cold War, Thompson advised, Ontario could not risk alienating international students whose experiences with discrimination in the West could have Cold War ramifications upon their returns to their respective countries of origin.

Policies did not change immediately, but these critiques reveal the extent to which events in the United States and around the world were on the radar of policy makers in Ontario. The government eventually did introduce a new apartment rental policy in 1965. An amendment to the *Ontario Human Rights Code* that year prohibited discrimination in buildings of three or more units. Coincidentally, the second reading debate overlapped with the Selma sympathy protests. The sit-in at the American consulate in Toronto took place just a few blocks south of Queen’s Park, and the widely covered events were on the minds of MPPs as they debated the state of human rights protections in Ontario. While supportive of the bill, Liberal MPP Leonard Braithwaite did not think it went far enough. “I cannot understand,” Braithwaite stated, “why the government does not remove, once and for all, various areas and loopholes in our society, which allow discrimination in any form to exist.” Braithwaite was concerned that discrimination was still permitted in rental properties of fewer than three units. He also flagged a loophole in the law’s employment provisions, which exempted employers with a staff of less than five from its reach. By

³⁹ Ontario Legislature, 15 March 1961 (A.E.J. Thompson).

encoding these limitations, Braithwaite argued, the legislation was actually permitting and protecting discrimination in certain circumstances.⁴⁰

Taking up this critique, NDP leader Donald C. MacDonald argued that although Ontario had much to be proud of in its history,

we have now moved into a stage in world history when the conscience of mankind has been aroused to a point in which any continued affront to individual rights and human dignity, and half measures which because the other half is ignored in effect legalizes discrimination, has become intolerable.

MacDonald, who participated in a Selma sympathy march in Toronto, contended that “in the wake of events that are taking place today in that historic march from Selma to the capital of Alabama, and of the protests of Canadians in this country,” it was time to take more aggressive steps in the fight against discrimination.⁴¹ Another NDP MPP, Fred Young, also referenced Selma during the debate:

Today, in the south, part of this struggle is seen between Selma and Montgomery, where human beings are demanding certain fundamental rights in that land, rights which have been given here as far as the vote is concerned – but rights which we are still holding as not quite valid in the legislation here before us. Mr. Speaker, I say to this House today that we are enunciating in this bill a principle which is wrong. This bill is admitting that discrimination should exist in this respect. It is wrong, and this House should wipe out that wrong today as we vote on this second reading.⁴²

Despite these arguments and the backdrop against which members of the opposition levelled them, the government passed the law with its three-unit rental rule. The nature of parliamentary government in Canada, wherein opposition parties hold minimal power to sway majority governments, helps explain the opposition’s inability to bring about their

⁴⁰ Ontario Legislature, 22 March 1965 (L. Braithwaite).

⁴¹ Ontario Legislature, 22 March 1965 (D. MacDonald).

⁴² Ontario Legislature, 22 March 1965 (F. Young).

desired amendments to the law.⁴³ The law that did pass, moreover, was in keeping with the government's longstanding refusal to implement a blanket prohibition on discrimination across rental properties as a matter of personal freedom. When the same issue had been the subject of debate a few years earlier, Minister of Labour William K. Warrender defended the right of individuals to discriminate in certain instances. He argued that in dwellings of three units or less, a family "should have the right to say whether or not there is going to be someone in there whom they do not want or whom they want in place of someone else. This is not a straight case of discrimination, it is respecting the rights of individuals..."⁴⁴ Warrender's argument reflected the persistent belief that the state should not impede on the ability of individuals to discriminate in certain instances or situations.⁴⁵ It is evidence of what Jennifer Tunnicliffe calls the Canadian state's "limited vision of rights" at the time.⁴⁶ While not persuasive to the extent certain opposition MPPs hoped, however, the civil rights movement clearly played a role in justifying the new anti-discrimination measures, limited though they were, which the government gradually adopted over the course of this period.

It is important to caution that this is not a story of consistent and steady improvements towards some pinnacle of equality. The expansion of Ontario's human

⁴³ Miriam Smith explains that in a Westminster style parliament a governing party holding a majority of seats does not need votes from opposition politicians to move their agenda forward. As a result, "[f]or MPs in the opposition parties, it is unlikely that they would be able to garner support to bring a bill forward successfully in the legislature unless the leadership of the governing party decides to support the bill." See Miriam Smith, *A Civil Society?: Collective Actors in Canadian Political Life* (Peterborough: Broadview Press Ltd., 2005) 83.

⁴⁴ Ontario Legislature, 27 February 1962 (W.K. Warrender).

⁴⁵ Walker, "Race," *Rights and the Law*, 161.

⁴⁶ Jennifer Tunnicliffe, "A Limited Vision: Canadian Participation in the Adoption of the International Covenants," in *Taking Liberties: A History of Human Rights in Canada*, eds. David Goutor and Stephen Heathorn (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2013), 172.

rights framework was not a rapid process. As Howe notes, human rights activists in this period used an “an incrementalist strategy” which targeted specific, measurable, achievable, and non-revolutionary changes. This process is evident in the preceding discussion of anti-discrimination rules for apartment rentals. “Step by step,” Howe observes, “separate fair practices laws were enacted, and these led to the creation of the code and a commission to oversee it.”⁴⁷ Anti-discrimination laws targeted individual acts, as opposed to wider systemic inequalities. In the midst of both the Cold War and increasingly well-publicized activism in the United States, a civic and political culture emerged that was accepting of certain new protective measures. Yet as the second half of this chapter illustrates, the scope for new rights protections was relatively narrow. There were important constraints on press and public support for the American civil rights movement in Canada. This limited support was matched with an equally restricted understanding among policy makers of the need for more fundamental examinations of discrimination in Canada.

Nova Scotia’s Human Rights Framework

The civil rights movement’s influence on public policy operated in similar ways in Nova Scotia. Steady local activist pressure bore some results in the form of anti-discrimination legislation in the 1950s and 1960s. Nova Scotia’s fair employment legislation was introduced in 1953, while its fair accommodations measures became law by decade’s end. Following these new pieces of legislation, the province established the

⁴⁷ Howe, *Restraining Equality*, 11.

Interdepartmental Committee on Human Rights (ICHR) in 1962, whose specific aim was to improve the social position of African Canadians in the province.⁴⁸ The provincial government's decision to establish such a committee marked an acknowledgement, if limited, that there were inequalities in the province tied to "race," and acquiescence that the provincial government had a role to play in addressing those inequalities. ICHR meeting minutes note Premier Robert Stanfield's motivation in establishing the new committee: "it was his view that this was the appropriate time to initiate some concrete and substantial action towards improving the lot of the Negro in Nova Scotia."⁴⁹

These state-level developments can only be understood in relation to the local grassroots efforts of individuals like Carrie Best and her *Clarion* newspaper, and organizations like the Nova Scotia Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NSAACP), working to expose Jim Crow practices in the province. Indeed, specific state measures resulted primarily from the tireless work of individuals who had personal experience with prejudice. Donald Oliver, for example, recalls being asked to leave a Halifax pool hall as a young law student, where he had been playing pool with a fellow student who was white. He and the other law student subsequently looked into the legal situation pertaining to this incident, and found "there was no human rights act, there was no *Fair Accommodations Practices Act*, there were no others... So we started advocating immediately to get a *Fair Accommodations Practices Act* so that a person like me who was black could not be barred from going to a place to which the public was customarily

⁴⁸ Public Archives of Nova Scotia (hereafter PANS), Fred R MacKinnon fonds, 1992-718, v.1, Terms of Reference for the Interdepartmental Committee on Human Rights, 14 November 1962.

⁴⁹ PANS, Fred R MacKinnon fonds, 1992-718, v.1, Minutes of a Meeting of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Human Rights, 19 August 1964.

invited.” Oliver and others engaged in research, letter writing, meetings, and lobbying for a fair accommodations law.⁵⁰

The NSAACP also played a role in advocating for this type of measure in the province. In 1954 the NSAACP and a few likeminded organizations sponsored a report by William Cooper of the Hampton Institute, a historically African American university located in Virginia. The report offered an assessment of the place of African Canadians in the province, and of the particular challenges they faced. The Cooper Report articulated and substantiated inequalities in education, housing, employment, and other realms of life, and thereby helped justify the need for legislated anti-discrimination measures.⁵¹ Following such pressures, the provincial legislature enacted the law, which Donald Oliver also played a role drafting, in 1959.

The influence of grassroots activism on the provincial government, in combination with international matters, was further illustrated shortly after the establishment of the ICHR. Committee members received copies of W.P. Oliver’s *News Bulletin*, which supported his anti-discrimination and adult education work. A leader in the NSAACP, Oliver had personal connections with American civil rights organizations and advocates, including at the NAACP.⁵² Minister of Public Welfare W.S. Kennedy Jones wrote to Oliver in late 1962, informing him that “[t]here are a number of items in

⁵⁰ Interview with Donald Oliver by Rosanne Waters, 14 January 2014.

⁵¹ Colin A. Thomson, *Born With A Call: A Biography of Dr. William Pearly Oliver, C.M.* (Dartmouth: Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia, 1986), 80.

⁵² Interview with Donald Oliver by Rosanne Waters, 14 January 2014; “Subtle Discrimination Practiced in Nova Scotia,” *Norfolk New Journal and Guide*, 25 June 1949; “Nova Scotian Studies Nation,” *Atlanta Daily World*, 3 July 1949.

this News Bulletin which will be of particular interest to the new Committee...”⁵³ The ICHR would later help organize a conference on human rights for the province, under the chairmanship of NSAACP president H.A.J. Wedderburn, and alongside representatives from B’nai Brith and other labour, religious, and civic organizations. Martin Luther King, Jr. was invited as the keynote speaker, but was unable to attend.⁵⁴ The province may have been reluctant and slow to act, but as these examples illustrate, activists worked hard to provide the government with substantive evidence of the need for legislated anti-discrimination measures and strong enforcement practices.

The evidence suggests that the anti-discrimination activist strategy of tying local demands to international events was effective. Specifically, this approach helped prompt influential policy actors in Nova Scotia, including academics and members of the government, to cast greater attention to these parallels and to consider their implications. Dalhousie University’s Institute of Public Affairs released a widely publicized document, the “Report on the Condition of Negroes in Halifax City,” the same year as the creation of the ICHR. The report wasted no time highlighting the influence of international affairs on its recommendations. The foreword described

a period of new and determined racial aspiration throughout the world, and of self-examination and action in democratic countries, especially in the United States, upon minority problems. All these changes are bringing into sharper focus the problems of the Negroes of Nova Scotia, which can no longer be denied, doubted, or minimized.⁵⁵

⁵³ PANS, Fred R MacKinnon fonds, 1992-718, v.1, W.S. Kennedy Jones to Rev. W.P. Oliver, 15 November 1962.

⁵⁴ PANS, Fred R MacKinnon fonds, 1992-718, v.2, Minutes of a Meeting of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Human Rights, 22 October 1964.

⁵⁵ *The Condition of the Negroes of Halifax City, Nova Scotia* (Halifax: Institute of Public Affairs, Dalhousie University, 1962), ii.

The authors reiterated this point in the first few lines of the report: “[w]orld-wide concern about racial problems – in the American South, newly emergent nations of Africa and Asia, in the Union of South Africa, and even in England – makes a study of the condition of Halifax Negroes of more than local interest.”⁵⁶ The Institute of Public Affairs’ report suggests the combined implications of international coverage and local pressure around rights activism on policy makers. It is useful to think of the report’s commentary in light of Frager and Patrias’ discussion of the “discovery of prejudice and discrimination,” in the postwar period.⁵⁷ As Frager and Patrias make clear, there was no “discovery” for racialized and marginalized populations, who had extensive experience with prejudice. Mainstream Canadian journalists, politicians, and public figures, by contrast, did commence paying closer attention to these issues.⁵⁸ In Nova Scotia, this resulted from local activism combined with effective leveraging of the international framework.

The Dalhousie report received broad consideration and, as a result, contributed to the shift towards new state measures. An editorial about the report, which supported its calls to address inequalities in Halifax, built on the comparison with the American situation. “At a time when Mississippi dominates the headlines and the air waves,” the editorial stated, “Nova Scotians might well do a little soul searching on their own. There are Nova Scotian Negroes living hardly better than the cotton pickers of the still

⁵⁶ *The Condition of the Negroes of Halifax City, Nova Scotia* (Halifax: Institute of Public Affairs, Dalhousie University, 1962), 1.

⁵⁷ Ruth Frager and Carmela Patrias, “‘This is Our Country, These are Our Rights’: Minorities and the Origins of Ontario’s Human Rights Campaigns,” *Canadian Historical Review* 82, no. 1 (March 2001): 1.

⁵⁸ Frager and Patrias, “‘This is Our Country, These Are Our Rights,’” 1.

segregated states of the American South.”⁵⁹ A similar view appeared in the letters to the editor section of the *Halifax Chronicle-Herald* a few weeks after the publication of the Dalhousie report. One letter addressed recent charges of landlords discriminating against black Dalhousie University students. The letter writer suggested Dalhousie require that landlords wishing to post rental advertisements on campus commit to a non-discrimination policy. “This would not only improve the local situation,” the letter writer suggested, but

it would leave a better taste of Canada in the mouths of many of the Africans and Asians with whom this country will have to deal in years to come. We should keep in our minds that the president of at least one African country which is no friend of the West has made no secret the bitterness over the prejudice he encountered as a student in the United States. Could we offer him any better?⁶⁰

This letter illustrates the overlapping influences of international anti-racist efforts, the Cold War, and local concerns around prejudice. Another newspaper piece similarly bound the local to the international. Lauding the formation of the ICHR, the article noted its timeliness in light of the recently released Dalhousie report. Referring to the segregationist rioting that had engulfed the University of Mississippi following James Meredith’s integration of the school, the article argued that “[h]ad the tragic events of Oxford, Mississippi, not occurred, the topic would have been sufficiently ‘live’ in Nova Scotia to make any news of government action all the more appropriate and relevant.”⁶¹

The local causes for the committee’s formation, this piece suggested, were clear and

⁵⁹ PANS, Fred R MacKinnon fonds, 1992-718, v. 1, “Editorial – This is our Problem!” [press clipping, no newspaper listed], n.d.

⁶⁰ “On Grounds of Color,” *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, 29 October 1962.

⁶¹ PANS, Fred R MacKinnon fonds, 1992-718, v. 1, “A Timely Deed,” [press clipping, no newspaper listed], 23 October 1962.

substantial enough on their own to help stimulate change, while events in Mississippi that same year lent it still greater importance.

The cumulative impacts of these local and international connections were evident in the nascent operations of the ICHR. The committee's top bureaucrat raised this point in a speech to the NSAACP. F.R. MacKinnon quoted Premier Stanfield in the speech as saying,

Nova Scotia has the largest Negro population of any Province in Canada... World wide concern about racial problems, not only of the Negro, but of other colored races, has focused public interest on the economic and social condition of many of our Negro population in Nova Scotia. It is good that we should be concerned about discrimination against colored persons wherever this occurs in other parts of the world, but it is even more urgent that we should be aware of injustices if they affect colored persons in our own province."⁶²

MacKinnon emphasized this point again later in his speech, first by citing the influence of the UN and UDHR, and then by acknowledging "that most of us see this facet of Human Rights as of tremendous importance. We start therefore where we are and not with the problems of some far away place but with those near at hand."⁶³ These comments reinforce the point that international anti-discrimination activism received substantial attention in this period, which in turn helped amplify attention to local circumstances. Indeed, local activists in Nova Scotia ensured that politicians were aware of international events and grasped their implications. In a *News Bulletin* in April 1963, in the midst of the Birmingham campaign, Rev. W.P. Oliver wrote,

⁶² PANS, Fred R MacKinnon fonds, 1992-718, v. 1, Address Given by F.R. MacKinnon to the NSAACP, 19 January 1963.

⁶³ PANS, Fred R MacKinnon fonds, 1992-718, v. 1, Address Given by F.R. MacKinnon to the NSAACP, 19 January 1963.

we have been reading of the determination on the part of Negroes in the 'Deep South' to have their names registered on the voting list... We have watched with great apprehension as the policemen with their fierce K-9 dogs drive back all Negroes who are courageous enough to attempt registration. It is encouraging to us, who believe in the democratic way of life, to witness the courage and aggressiveness of these people as they follow their leaders in their great struggle to obtain their human rights.⁶⁴

The ICHR was on the mailing list for Oliver's newsletter, and its members were thereby made aware of the inspiration local anti-discrimination activists drew from international parallels. They were no doubt also aware of the undesirable international press attention Birmingham and similar campaigns had attracted to racial discrimination.⁶⁵ If nothing else, they were reluctant to see comparable attention cast on their province.

The repercussions of these international events were again evident when ICHR member W.S. Kennedy Jones spoke at an NSAACP conference. "In many parts of the world today," the Minister of Public Welfare stated, "your race is engaged in a struggle for freedom." The Minister's speech illustrated the power of the sanctimonious imagination, however, when he juxtaposed this international context with his perception of the local situation: "I think that we can say that here in this Province there was not a violent struggle and a large measure of freedom was achieved quite sometime ago..." With this qualification, Kennedy Jones continued, "[t]he next step is opportunity and you seek now opportunity to learn more, to live better, to secure better employment, to own

⁶⁴ PANS, Fred R MacKinnon fonds, 1992-718, v. 3, News Bulletin, Adult Education Division (W.P. Oliver), April 1963.

⁶⁵ See for example "Demonstrators hauled in," *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, 3 May 1963, 3; "Children march off to jail," *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, May 7, 1963, 1; "Police Use Fire Hoses, Dogs To Disperse Crowd," *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, 8 May 1963, 1.

your own homes, to do more for yourselves, your children and those around you.”⁶⁶ The speech went on to discuss “self-help” as the necessary approach to achieving these things. He acknowledged a limited role for the state in the process, explaining “[y]ou must continue to do more for yourselves and more must be done for you.”⁶⁷ The minister’s remarks display the conflicting influences of international anti-racist activism upon Canada. His comments combined acknowledgement that it was an era wherein racial prejudice had lost favour, with a contented view that unlike “over there,” the province had already undertaken sufficient measures at home.

This conflicting perspective was particularly acute and evident when the provincial government faced direct criticism over its anti-discrimination record. The ICHR proved quite sensitive to comparisons between discrimination in Nova Scotia with the situation in the United States. This sensitivity fed two divergent responses: defensiveness, and some new measures. A case in point is the ICHR’s response to a 1963 investigative magazine article about local discrimination.⁶⁸ Entitled “The Maritimes’ Race Problems” and published in the United Church’s national magazine, the article quoted NSAACP president H.A.J. Wedderburn about the position of African Canadians in the province and offered concrete examples of discrimination in various aspects of daily life. It also highlighted complaints over lax enforcement of the province’s human rights legislation, which prohibited discrimination in employment and accommodations.

⁶⁶ PANS, Fred R MacKinnon fonds, 1992-718, v. 1, Address by W.S. Kennedy Jones to the NSAACP, 18 May 1963.

⁶⁷ PANS, Fred R MacKinnon fonds, 1992-718, v. 1, Address by W.S. Kennedy Jones to the NSAACP, 18 May 1963.

⁶⁸ PANS, Fred R MacKinnon fonds, 1992-718, v. 1, E. L. Homewood, “The Maritimes’ Race Problems,” *United Church Observer*, 1 December 1963.

The ICHR was upset with the article, believing the government deserved more credit for the fact that such a committee had been established at all. A letter to the author from the ICHR's top bureaucrat took issue with "its pessimistic tone," called the piece "inaccurate and unfair," and disputed the assertion that the government was not effectively enforcing its own human rights laws.⁶⁹ This response implies sensitivity over the suggestion that conditions in Nova Scotia were not entirely distinct from situations elsewhere in the world. The committee responded defensively by arguing they *were* taking appropriate steps to deal with discrimination. Though defensive, the ICHR's reaction also hints at the pressure the government felt, particularly when uncomplimentary international parallels were raised, to implement some concrete measures that would more clearly distinguish their province.

The ICHR's main policy move was a scholarship program it initiated for African Canadian students.⁷⁰ Though a limited measure, it was far from a sure thing when first proposed in the committee, and H.A.J. Wedderburn praised its implementation.⁷¹ When the provincial legislature debated a consolidated human rights law in March 1963, moreover, the politicians who spoke were largely supportive of the new measures.⁷² In the midst of local and global anti-racist action, these developments show that it was no

⁶⁹ PANS, Fred R MacKinnon fonds, 1992-718, v. 1, F.R. MacKinnon to E.L. Homewood, 27 December 1963.

⁷⁰ James W. St. G. Walker, "Black Confrontation in Sixties Halifax," in *Debating Dissent: Canada and the Sixties*, eds. Lara Campbell, Dominique Clément, and Gregory S. Kealey (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 179; PANS, Fred R. MacKinnon fonds, 1992-718, v. 2, Proposed Program for Human Rights, n.d.

⁷¹ Walker, "Black Confrontation in Sixties Halifax," 179.

⁷² PANS, Fred R MacKinnon fonds, 1992-718, v. 1, Debate on Bill 53 – Human Rights, 14 March 1963.

longer fashionable to oppose legislation that offered fair employment and accommodations enforcement mechanisms and mandated anti-discrimination education.

Limits to Canadian Policy Impacts

While sometimes useful to anti-racist activists in Canada, the civil rights movement was not always a helpful reference point, nor did it always set the stage for the public policy changes activists sought. There were three key factors limiting the American civil rights movement's effect on Canadian public policy at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels. First, many political actors continued to hold profoundly prejudiced views, and were therefore unsympathetic to the American comparison as a catalyst for anti-discrimination measures in Canada. Second, policy makers sometimes drew on the language of the American civil rights movement superficially, inappropriately, and ultimately to the detriment of anti-discrimination efforts. Finally, there remained in many quarters a concern about going 'too far' in supporting the demands of activists. This concern was connected to the sanctimonious imagination and the associated notion that fundamental changes were unnecessary.

The first limiting factor was that many Canadian politicians, like many Canadians in general, continued to hold fundamentally prejudiced views. They were no more inclined to support stronger anti-discrimination measures in their own country than they were encouraging of the integrationist goals of civil rights workers south of the border. This racism was on display at Queen's Park in early March 1965 when Leonard Braithwaite, the first African Canadian legislator in Canada, stood to address the

seemingly innocuous issue of ice-cream truck regulation in Ontario. During his speech, an MPP heckled “Vanilla or chocolate?” A second MPP followed with another racist heckle: “What about watermelons?”⁷³ According to a front page *Globe and Mail* report, it was unclear who uttered the heckles, but “[b]oth comments seemed to come from the Government benches to the left of the Speaker.” “Mr. Braithwaite did not reply to them,” the *Globe* article continued, “and few persons except those in the immediate vicinity heard them.”⁷⁴ This level of open hostility and racism in the seat of government was considered troubling enough to earn a place on the *Globe and Mail*’s front page. While this media attention suggests a generally unfavourable view of the heckles, the very fact that such words could be uttered in a public forum, within the halls of the provincial legislature, was telling. This incident certainly provided a counterpoint to the oft-repeated view that Canadians were always more “polite” than others in their prejudices. That these MPPs felt comfortable voicing such comments in a public setting also begs the question of how much further they might have gone in private (for example in caucus or cabinet meetings where human rights measures were discussed). This example indicates that not all elected representatives were on-board with the changes taking place in Ontario with new human rights legislation and a permanent, full-time human rights commission and commissioner.

Further evidence of prejudice at the highest levels of the Canadian state is found in the federal government’s response to African American military servicemen posted to Canada following World War II. The American military routinely stationed troops at

⁷³ “MPPs Deride Negro,” *Globe and Mail*, 2 March 1965.

⁷⁴ “MPPs Deride Negro,” *Globe and Mail*, 2 March 1965.

strategically important Canadian bases throughout the Cold War. In 1948, meanwhile, President Harry Truman announced the end of segregation in the American military. At various points over the following decade, the United States government requested permission to station either still-segregated or newly integrated units in Canada. Along the way, they encountered complications. They made one such request in 1948, to station African American engineering troops at four Canadian bases. The Canadian government approved the plan for two bases, but regarding the other two,

[t]he Embassy was also asked to say that there is reluctance in Ottawa to see coloured troops used in Canada; that use of such troops in Quebec was particularly likely to be misconstrued; that presumably Washington could appreciate the importance of a matter of this kind in relation to our general defence arrangements with them; and that surely the U.S. Forces could find 140 white troops for the Chimo work.⁷⁵

The memorandum also worried that stationing black troops in certain locales would “create prejudice in Canada against U.S. activities.”⁷⁶ In other words, they believed that Canadians would reject the broader premise of American troops being stationed in Canada if those troops were black. This issue arose repeatedly as segregation in the American military came to an end. A 1950 memorandum addressed the question of posting an integrated unit to a Newfoundland base. It explained that the government’s hesitations over the matter stemmed from “the fact that U.S. coloured troops introduced venereal disease in the Northwest Territories and Yukon during the war” and because “the Government has feared misunderstandings on the part of the provinces.” Following desegregation in the American military, the memorandum continued, some African

⁷⁵ LAC, Department of External Affairs fonds, RG 25 3328, Memorandum for the Chairman, Canadian Section, P.J.B.D., 3 October 1949.

⁷⁶ LAC, Department of External Affairs fonds, RG 25 3328, Memorandum for the Chairman, Canadian Section, P.J.B.D., 3 October 1949.

American troops were posted as part of an integrated unit in Newfoundland, where “while they are apparently not particularly happy about the situation, they have, understandably, not found it desirable to raise any objections.”⁷⁷ The memorandum noted that even if there was a desire to discuss the matter of “mixed units” in Cabinet before giving approval to the American government, “[i]t is difficult to see how one can object to the use of mixed units for mutually agreed purposes in Canada without creating bad publicity for Canada in the United States.”⁷⁸ The matter remained controversial in 1952, with yet another request from the Americans regarding integrated troops at Canadian radar bases. A Department of External Affairs letter to Canada’s Ambassador to the United States explained, in reference to the political optics of the situation, “we would not wish to demonstrate any opposition to the abandonment of segregation in the US Armed Forces.” Rather, the government “informed the U.S. Embassy, orally, that we are willing to have a limited number of integrated units, containing a relatively small proportion of negro personnel,” with ten per cent offered as a guideline.⁷⁹ Cabinet discussed and approved this recommendation.⁸⁰ The Canadian government was clearly aware that publicity around their decision might not play well, given that openly racist policies were the

⁷⁷ LAC, Department of External Affairs fonds, RG 25 3328, Memorandum for Mr. Heeney, 25 August 1950.

⁷⁸ LAC, Department of External Affairs fonds, RG 25 3328, Memorandum for Mr. Heeney, 25 August 1950.

⁷⁹ LAC, Department of External Affairs fonds, RG 25 3328, The Secretary of State for External Affairs to the Canadian Ambassador, Washington, D.C., re Employment in Canada of U.S. Negro Troops, 4 December 1952.

⁸⁰ LAC, RG2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5-a, v. 2651, Cabinet Conclusions, Admission of United States troops including negro personnel, 28 November 1952, accessed February 2013, <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/conclusions/001039-119.01-e.php?&sisn_id_nbr=12442&page_sequence_nbr=1&interval=20&&PHPSESSID=meuh8paline35gaiqc6fs ggqs2>

subject of growing international censure at the time. It therefore pressed ahead quietly with placing limits on African American soldiers in Canada. In doing so, members of the federal government revealed their prejudices, particularly through the belief that some soldiers were more likely to spread disease than others. They also hid behind the common excuse that they were not prejudiced *themselves*, but were worried about how *others* might react. This was similar to the many business owners who justified their segregationist practices with the claim that while *they* were not prejudiced, serving everyone would mean losing white clients who were prejudiced. Whatever the excuse (and no matter how weak and transparent), the end result was the same – outright discrimination.

The second factor that shaped and limited the civil rights movement's implications for Canadian public policy was that comparisons with the situation in the United States were sometimes applied in ways that negatively impacted racialized minorities. Comparisons with the situation south of the border did not always serve the interests of Canadian anti-racist activists and efforts. The destruction of Africville, an African Canadian community in Halifax, offers a case study in this phenomenon. This example illustrates how simplified comparisons with the American situation could leave marginalized populations in a worse position. In the mid-1960s, the City of Halifax ordered the levelling of Africville, an African Canadian community dating back to the early nineteenth century.⁸¹ This decision was made during an era in North American urban planning when “slum” clearance was viewed favourably as a means of beginning

⁸¹ Jennifer Nelson, *Razing Africville: A Geography of Racism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 11-12.

anew in so-called blighted neighbourhoods.⁸² Africville attracted attention in this period as one such space to be cleared in favour of more ‘modern’ uses. As Jennifer Nelson explains, the residents of Africville were understood, by various officials who offered their assessments of the community, “as distinctly Other, as infantile, directionless, and unable to rationally participate in the planning of its future.”⁸³ Meanwhile, Nelson reminds us, the city ignored its own culpability in having failed to meet the community’s most basic needs over the years, including clean water, sewage, and garbage provisions, all the while placing a prison, hospital for communicable diseases, and dump close by.⁸⁴

The backdrop of African American protests against segregation in the United States played a role in informing the city’s decision to destroy Africville and relocate its residents elsewhere. Rather than considering the movement’s messages of grassroots organizing and community empowerment, however, officials utilized a limited reading of its emphasis on integration as justification for their plans. In his report to the City of Halifax on Africville, University of Toronto professor Albert Rose recommended that Africville “be expropriated and cleared,” with residents moved elsewhere. The report asked the question, as one of its chief concerns about Africville, “[c]an a minority group be permitted to reconstitute itself as a segregated community at a time in our history, at a

⁸² John Sewell, *The Shape of the City: Toronto Struggles With Modern Planning* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 66; Sean Purdy, “‘Ripped off’ By the System: Housing Policy, Poverty, and Territorial Stigmatization in Regent Park Housing Project, 1951-1991,” *Labour/Le Travail* 52 (Fall 2003): 55.

⁸³ Nelson, *Razing Africville*, 54; such views had tangible impacts on marginalized populations. Sean Purdy makes this point in his discussion of the impacts of broad societal stigmatization on public housing residents in Toronto’s Regent Park. As Purdy explains, “[s]tigmatizing renderings by external observers were not free-floating ideological representations but real reflections and shapers of spatial and social divisions with concrete economic and social consequences for tenants.” See Purdy, “‘Ripped off’ By the System,” 50.

⁸⁴ Nelson, *Razing Africville*, 12-13.

time in the social history of western industrialized urban nations, when segregation either de jure (in law) or de facto (in fact) is almost everywhere condemned?”⁸⁵ By asking this question, the report likened the existence of Africville to the forcibly separate lunch-counters, water fountains, and other businesses and services that were the subject of widespread protest in the United States South. While Africville certainly reflected systemic inequalities and segregated housing, however, it was also a long-standing community and home. Nelson argues that “Rose, like other white ‘experts,’ was of the opinion that segregated housing was unthinkable, and discouraged Africville members of the HHRAC [Halifax Human Rights Advisory Committee] from pursuing federal or provincial funding to rebuild the community.”⁸⁶ As she further explains, “by appropriating civil rights discourse and appealing to the views of many liberals who embraced it, Rose positioned any impetus to save Africville as primitive and racist.”⁸⁷ Similarly, Tina Loo observes that as a segregated neighbourhood, Africville represented “the kind of deep-seated racism that was increasingly under attack in the North America of the late 1950s and the early to mid-1960s.”⁸⁸

In this instance, the comparison with anti-segregation activism in the United States was far from apt. In fact, there were many good reasons for citizens of Africville to oppose the top-down decision to destroy their community, particularly because the

⁸⁵ Halifax Regional Municipality Archives, Dr. Albert Rose, “Report of a Visit to Halifax with a Particular Respect to Africville,” 12 December 1963, accessed April 2013, <<http://halifax.ca/archives/AfricvilleSources.html>>

⁸⁶ Jennifer J. Nelson, “The Operation of Whiteness and Forgetting in Africville: A Geography of Racism,” Ph.D. Diss.: University of Toronto, 2001, 167.

⁸⁷ Nelson, *Razing Africville*, 88.

⁸⁸ Tina Loo, “Africville and the Dynamics of State Power in Postwar Canada,” *Acadiensis* 39, no. 2 (Summer/Autumn 2010).

process relied on minimal consultation with the residents themselves and was marked by paternalism, while compensation (offered only to some residents) was insufficient.⁸⁹ Moreover, the African American civil rights movement fought against Jim Crow segregation, but also challenged the underlying racist assumptions about “racial” differences upon which Jim Crow rested. As the widely respected civil rights leader Ella Baker put it at SNCC’s founding conference, lunch-counter sit-ins and related protests were “concerned with something much bigger than a hamburger or even a giant-sized Coke... the Negro and white students, North and South, are seeking to rid America of the scourge of racial segregation and discrimination – not only at lunch counters, but in every aspect of life.”⁹⁰ The top-down destruction of Africville and the marginalization of its residents reflected and reinforced deeper, underlying prejudices. As Nelson notes, the process was grounded in a racialized interpretation of the space that associated it with “pathology to justify intensive regulation and the need for discipline of black communities.”⁹¹ De facto segregation was practiced at the time in businesses, services, employment, and housing across the province. The decision to remove a community with little attention to the interests of its residents and inadequate compensation echoed, rather than subverted, the very thinking at the heart of segregation.

A second example of misappropriated integrationist language from the civil rights movement to Canadian public policy, this time at the federal level, was the Pierre Trudeau government’s ill-advised 1969 proposal, the White Paper on Indian Policy. The

⁸⁹ Nelson, *Razing Africville*, 13.

⁹⁰ Ella Baker, “Bigger Than a Hamburger,” *The Southern Patriot*, May 1960, accessed April 2013, <<http://www.crmvet.org/docs/sncc2.htm>>

⁹¹ Nelson, *Razing Africville*, 56.

federal government had introduced several reforms to the *Indian Act*, which regulated its relationship with Indigenous peoples, throughout the two previous decades.⁹² By the mid-1960s, Myra Rutherdale and Jim Miller explain, the Canadian government “was casting about for a new policy formulation to regulate relations.”⁹³ Out of this emerged the White Paper. While the government ultimately rescinded the policy in the face of strong opposition from Indigenous peoples, it is worth examining as an example of how international rights discourse impacted thinking on Canadian public policy. The White Paper proposed to fundamentally alter the government’s relationship with Indigenous peoples by getting rid of the *Indian Act* and the Department of Indian Affairs. Specifically, it favoured eliminating any distinction in the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the government from other Canadians by doing away with “Indian status” and ending the reservation system.

Explaining what prompted this proposed policy, Bryan Palmer argues it was “driven by liberal acquisitive individualism.”⁹⁴ Doing away with the reservation system would certainly have served that purpose. As Robert C. Vipond notes, a core component

⁹² These reforms had not fundamentally changed the government’s approach. As Shewell notes, the federal government shifted its focus in the post-World War II period towards incorporating social science ‘expertise’ into its policies toward Indigenous peoples. While the focus on social science research marked a shift in the state’s approach, the underlying goal remained assimilation, in keeping with the federal government’s longstanding aim. See Hugh Shewell, “‘What Makes the Indian Tick?’ The Influence of Social Sciences on Canada’s Indian Policy, 1947-1964,” *Histoire sociale/Social history* 34, no. 67 (2001): 133-167. As Mosby has recently illustrated, experimentation around nutrition had serious negative consequences on Indigenous peoples in this period, and especially on children in residential schools, including maintaining poor nutrition and denying dental care. See Ian Mosby, “Administering Colonial Science: Nutrition Research and Human Biomedical Experimentation in Aboriginal Communities and Residential Schools, 1942-1952,” *Histoire sociale/Social History* 46, no. 91 (May 2013): 145-172.

⁹³ Myra Rutherdale and Jim Miller, “‘It’s Our Country’: First Nations’ Participation in the Indian Pavilion at Expo 67,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 17, no. 2 (2006): 154.

⁹⁴ Bryan Palmer, “‘Indians of All Tribes’: The Birth of Red Power,” in *Debating Dissent: Canada and the Sixties*, eds. Lara Campbell, Dominique Clément, and Gregory S. Kealey (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 200.

of Pierre Trudeau's vision for Canada was a liberal emphasis on protecting and promoting the rights of the individual.⁹⁵ Miller similarly interprets the White Paper as "an emphatic statement of individualist thinking..."⁹⁶ The Trudeau government viewed the federal government's distinctive relationship with Indigenous peoples, grounded in treaties and administered through the Department of Indian Affairs, as inimical to this focus on individual rights.⁹⁷ Trudeau articulated his emphasis on individual rights in a 1968 speech at the Liberal Party's Leadership Convention. "For many years, I have been fighting for the triumph of reason over passion in politics, for the protection of the individual freedoms against the tyranny of the group, and for a just distribution of our national wealth," Trudeau told those in attendance during his address.⁹⁸ Coming just two days after Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination, the *Winnipeg Free Press* reported that Trudeau decried that "millions remained in poverty, ignorance, sickness and hunger." "The tragic events that began Thursday night with the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King and which have degenerated to today into strife and arson, hate and murder," Trudeau continued, "are a tragic reminder of that reality."⁹⁹ The speech emphasized Trudeau's focus on individual rights as the best means of overcoming this wide array of

⁹⁵ Robert C. Vipond, "Citizenship and the Charter of Rights: The Two Sides of Pierre Trudeau," *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 14 (Fall 1996): 181.

⁹⁶ J.R. Miller, "Human Rights for Some: First Nations Rights in Twentieth-Century Canada," in *Taking Liberties: A History of Human Rights in Canada*, eds. David Goutor and Stephen Heathorn (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2013), 250.

⁹⁷ A similar focus is evident in the United States government's approach to Indigenous people in this period. As Shreve notes, a "civic nationalist" ideology following World War II emphasized integration, and "[i]ntegration into the body politic and the greater American nation meant doing away with difference, including separate tribal affiliations." See Bradley G. Shreve, *Red Power Rising: The National Indian Youth Council and the Origins of Native Activism* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011), chapter 1, e-book edition.

⁹⁸ "Just Society Seen," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 6 April 1968.

⁹⁹ "Just Society Seen," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 6 April 1968.

issues. As Alan C. Cairns explains, the White Paper's "basic philosophy was that the system of separate treatment and administration held Indians back... The remedy was 'equality,' essentially an undifferentiated citizenship."¹⁰⁰

While not the dominant factor behind the White Paper, the backdrop of the civil rights movement held relevance. In his dissertation on Indigenous political activism, Scott Rutherford argues that key differences were easily obscured in comparisons between Indigenous people in Canada and African Americans fighting segregation in the United States. One important difference Rutherford identifies was that among Indigenous activists in Canada, "the demands of protestors were not only rooted in the language of rights but also in the language of anti-colonialism."¹⁰¹ This made sense for, as Vipond explains, "[m]ost Aboriginal leaders were not principally interested in vindicating individual rights or "belonging" to Canada as Trudeau understood that term... the goal was not integration, much less assimilation... their goal was, and remains, to develop genuine self-government within Canada."¹⁰² The federal government's discussion in the White Paper of granting the same "rights" of Canadian citizenship that others held was justifiably viewed with scepticism within Indigenous communities. They were well aware of the government's past tactics of assimilation through voluntary or involuntary enfranchisement, wherein one's Indian Status was lost in exchange for the vote and individual ownership of land parcelled out from their former reserves.¹⁰³ As Miller notes,

¹⁰⁰ Alan C. Cairns, *Citizens Plus: Aboriginal Peoples and the Canadian State* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2000), 51.

¹⁰¹ Scott Rutherford, *Canada's Other Red Scare: Rights, Decolonization, and Indigenous Political Protest in the Global Sixties*, Ph.D. Diss.: Queen's University, 2011, 26.

¹⁰² Vipond, "Citizenship and the Charter of Rights," 187.

¹⁰³ Miller, "Human Rights for Some," 235-236.

“many First Nations did not consider themselves citizens, potential or actual. Rather, in many cases, they thought of themselves as simply Cree or Haida, or generally First Nations.”¹⁰⁴

Harold Cardinal, leader of the Indian Association of Alberta and a key figure in the new National Indian Brotherhood, explained his critique of the *Indian Act* in his influential response to the White Paper, *The Unjust Society*:

We do not want the *Indian Act* retained because it is a good piece of legislation. It isn't. It is discriminatory from start to finish. But it is a lever in our hands and an embarrassment to the government, as it should be. No just society and no society with even pretensions to being just can long tolerate such a piece of legislation, but we would rather continue to live in bondage under the inequitable *Indian Act* than surrender our sacred rights.¹⁰⁵

As Thomas King has put it more recently, “[w]hatever the problems were with the Indian Act and with the Department of Indian Affairs, Native people were sure that giving up their land and their treaty rights was not the answer.”¹⁰⁶ The federal government ignored these important differences in a period when the mainstream media regularly reported on the civil rights movement and its emphasis on integration. As Palmer observes, there was a “growing belief that Canada’s ‘Indian problem’ was the equivalent of the racial conflict and civil rights activism in the United States.”¹⁰⁷ When the federal government introduced the White Paper in 1969, Cairns suggests, it “fed on the American civil rights movement, and broader international trends.”¹⁰⁸ Trudeau’s government tabled the policy in the midst of a highly publicized movement emphasizing the immorality of segregation

¹⁰⁴ Miller, “Human Rights for Some,” 247.

¹⁰⁵ Harold Cardinal, *The Unjust Society* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre Ltd., 1969, 1999), 119.

¹⁰⁶ Thomas King, *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2012), 73.

¹⁰⁷ Palmer, “‘Indians of All Tribes’: The Birth of Red Power,” 200.

¹⁰⁸ Cairns, *Citizens Plus*, 53.

by “race,” and stressing equality through integration as the only option for a democratic society. “The American example next door,” Cairns notes, “seemed to suggest that the integration/assimilation of the black population was the almost unchallenged objective of progressive forces...”¹⁰⁹ While the text of the White Paper did not explicitly reference a parallel to events in the United States, it is logical to conclude that this prominent backdrop held some level of influence.

The *Hawthorne Report*, undertaken and published in the mid-1960s as an examination of the social, political, economic, and educational lives of Indigenous people, suggests awareness among policy makers of this comparison. The report detailed the extensive inequalities Indigenous peoples in Canada faced in every aspect of their lives, including poverty, poor housing, lack of health care, and the residential school system.¹¹⁰ In its discussions of widespread and systemic injustices, the report made a few references to the civil rights movement and other international circumstances. In a section on the comparative lack of government services for Indigenous peoples, the report explained that “race” was no longer an acceptable marker of such disparities in societal services and benefits. “The ending of imperialism in Africa, the struggles of the American Negro for equality of treatment, and the propaganda necessities of the Cold War” the report asserted, “have all contributed to this new climate of opinion to which governments are responding.”¹¹¹ Another section addressed a recent shift away from minimal attention

¹⁰⁹ Cairns, *Citizens Plus*, 61.

¹¹⁰ Brian Palmer, *Canada's 1960s: The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 390.

¹¹¹ A Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada: Economic, Political, Educational Needs and Policies, Part 1, (Hawthorn Report, October 1966), 208.

and towards a “growth in parliamentary and public interest in Indian administration.”¹¹²

The report cited changes in the Canadian government’s structure and size, as it took on a more active role in society through the welfare state, to explain this perceived shift. The report also highlighted external pressures:

It is striking, for example, how frequently parallels are drawn between the position of Indians and the struggle of American Negroes for full participant rights in American society, the apartheid policies of the South African government, or the general developmental needs of the emerging nations... Particular changes in Canadian attitudes are simply local aspects of global developments in race relations which affect the internal politics of all states which possess non-White minorities who have not gained full social, economic, and political equality with their fellow citizens. The interest in alleviating the conditions of Indians and improving their socio-economic status are thus reflections of factors operating on a world scale rather than the results of any specifically Canadian developments. The interdependence of internal and external factors in race relations is noted when public reports of de facto exclusion of Negroes from the franchise in Alabama lead to increased enquiries of the Indian Affairs Branch with respect to Indians and the franchise.¹¹³

Inequalities delineated explicitly by “race,” the report noted, were no longer acceptable in the United States, Canada, or elsewhere. The report did not, however, recommend the assimilationist position put forth a few years later in the White Paper. One of the *Hawthorn Report*’s key recommendations had been to consider Indigenous peoples “citizens plus.” This concept posited that not only should the above injustices be addressed, but they should be confronted in a way that acknowledged and respected the distinct cultures of Indigenous peoples.¹¹⁴ Cairns describes the White Paper as a repudiation of the *Hawthorne Report*, which had “rejected assimilation and the

¹¹² A Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada: Economic, Political, Educational Needs and Policies, Part 1, (Hawthorn Report, October 1966), 361.

¹¹³ A Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada: Economic, Political, Educational Needs and Policies, Part 1, (Hawthorn Report, October 1966), 362.

¹¹⁴ Palmer, *Canada’s 1960s*, 391.

disappearance of separate Indian status as a goal” in favour of “a permanent positive recognition, labeled ‘citizens plus.’”¹¹⁵ The government rejected the Hawthorne Report’s recommended “citizens plus” approach because it contradicted the government’s overarching emphasis on the individual and related “Liberal notions of equality.”¹¹⁶

Instead, the Trudeau government embarked with its White Paper on “an accelerated policy of assimilation.”¹¹⁷ The government’s aforementioned focus on liberal individualism influenced the report’s emphasis on doing away with status and the *Indian Act*. As the document put it, “[t]he policies proposed recognize the simple reality that the separate legal status of Indians and the policies which have flowed from it have kept the Indian people apart from and behind other Canadians.” The government couched its justification for the elimination of status in the anti-discrimination rhetoric that was common in this period: “This Government believes in equality. It believes that all men and women have equal rights. It is determined that all shall be treated fairly and that no one shall be shut out of Canadian life, and especially that no one shall be shut out because of his race.” The proposed new approach, according to the White Paper, “rests upon the fundamental right of Indian people to full and equal participation in the cultural, social, economic and political life of Canada. To argue against this right is to argue for discrimination, isolation and separation.”¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Cairns, *Citizens Plus*, 52.

¹¹⁶ Laurie Meijer Drees, *The Indian Association of Alberta: A History of Political Action* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2002), 166.

¹¹⁷ Cairns, *Citizens Plus*, 12.

¹¹⁸ Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy (The White Paper, 1969), accessed June 2013, <<http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100010189/1100100010191#chp2>>

These arguments were superficially tied to the rhetorical focus on equal treatment and integration activism in the civil rights movement. In this instance, however, opposition emerged among Indigenous peoples over a deceptive emphasis on “equal rights,” which actually amounted to an argument for assimilation. As Harold Cardinal explained, the White Paper “uses the word *discrimination* to appeal to the social conscience of Canadians and to minimize argument against its argument.”¹¹⁹ “In attempting to remove all constitutional protections for Indians,” Cardinal continued,

the government is attempting to eliminate unilaterally, once and for all, its obligations under the treaties as understood by Indians. Its clever and diabolical reference to discrimination constitutes an attempt by the government to sneak through the thoroughly illegal and immoral abrogation of Indian rights. Canadians who are not aware of the legal and moral implications of the government’s policy are put in the difficult position of appearing to argue for discrimination if they oppose the government’s position.¹²⁰

The White Paper also represented a typically paternalistic, top-down move that did not incorporate consultation with Indigenous peoples themselves.¹²¹ In *The Unjust Society*, Cardinal outlined the extensive problems with the “consultation” process (or lack thereof) the government embarked on in the late 1960s. “[I]t is quite obvious that during the exact period in which the government was theoretically pursuing consultation,” Cardinal explained, “federal officials, in isolation from the people they were supposed to be consulting, were plotting unilaterally a policy paper designed to alter the future of every Indian in Canada.”¹²² This approach to consultation was not unique to the White Paper. Indigenous people at various consultations with policy makers throughout the

¹¹⁹ Cardinal, *The Unjust Society*, 114-115.

¹²⁰ Cardinal, *The Unjust Society*, 115.

¹²¹ Cairns, *Citizens Plus*, 52.

¹²² Cardinal, *The Unjust Society*, 108.

postwar period, Bohaker and Iacovetta note, “focused on treaty rights and obligations while non-Aboriginal government officials and church and voluntary groups recommended ‘integration.’”¹²³ In their response to the White Paper, the Indian Chiefs of Alberta forcefully challenged the government’s claim that the policy resulted from fair consultation:

... what Indians asked for land ownership that would result in Provincial taxation of our reserves? What Indians asked that the Canadian Constitution be changed to remove any reference to Indians or Indian lands? What Indians asked that Treaties be brought to an end? What group asked for a Commissioner whose purview would exclude half of the Indian population in Canada? The answer is no Treaty Indians asked for any of these things and yet through his concept of ‘consultation,’ the Minister said that his White Paper was in response to things said by Indians. We felt that with this concept of consultation held by the Minister and his department, that if we met with them to discuss the contents of his White Paper without being fully prepared, that even if we just talked about the weather, he would turn around and tell Parliament and the Canadian public that we accepted his White Paper.¹²⁴

The top-down imposition of a policy that disregarded Indigenous perspectives belied the government’s claim that the White Paper was about equality. Similar to the Africville example, this was a case of a superficial emphasis on equality and anti-discrimination, which in reality reinforced inequality and discrimination. At the heart of the White Paper proposal was a focus on assimilation, a longstanding policy based on an assumption of cultural inferiority. The lack of consultation, meanwhile, further reinforced the paternalistic and prejudiced assumption that Indigenous peoples were incapable of sitting at the table with the government. The White Paper made use of the egalitarian, anti-

¹²³ Heidi Bohaker and Franca Iacovetta, “Making Aboriginal People ‘Immigrants Too’: A Comparison of Citizenship Programs for Newcomers and Indigenous Peoples in Postwar Canada, 1940s-1960s,” *Canadian Historical Review* 90, no. 3 (September 2009): 457.

¹²⁴ Indian Chiefs of Alberta, “Citizens Plus,” *Aboriginal Policy Studies* 1, no. 2 (2011): 190.

discrimination rhetoric of the period, but the rhetoric actually masked a policy that represented just the opposite.

Human Rights Policy and the Sanctimonious Imagination

The sanctimonious imagination is the final key factor that narrowed the civil rights movement's consequences for Canadian public policy. As we have seen throughout this dissertation, the common belief that Canada already compared well with its neighbour in matters of rights and equality presented both an opportunity and a limitation to those advocating change. This section illustrates its limiting effect on the scope and reach of human rights policy developments in the 1950s and 1960s. Various influential political and policy figures remained committed to the view that the Canadian state did not need to institute fundamental reforms because Canada was already a more tolerant and accepting place than the United States. Miriam Smith has elucidated how biases that are deeply established within governments can curtail the influence of interest and advocacy groups. She notes, for example, that "[u]ntil recently, the idea that Canadian society might be characterized by pervasive racism was not a subject of political debate. The issue of racism was simply ignored or denied by governments and powerful groups in the political system." As a result, "[p]olitical debate was biased against considerations of the problem of racism in Canadian society and of how public policies could be designed to address it."¹²⁵ The widespread notion that racism was not a significant issue in Canada

¹²⁵ Smith, *A Civil Society?*, 32-33.

contributed to a hesitating approach on the parts of the governments of Nova Scotia and Ontario towards human rights reforms.

An examination of the ICHR in Nova Scotia reveals the persistence of the sanctimonious imagination in the outlook of government officials. The sanctimonious imagination was evident from the earliest ICHR discussions about the new committee's mandate, purpose, and scope. At one meeting in November 1962, a committee member "expressed the view that we should not treat the Negro and his problems as separate entities without reference to the white population and other minority groups." The tacit implication of this comment was doubt over whether discrimination actually existed in the province. With reference to "so-called acts of discrimination such as refusal to admit Negroes to hotels," the committee member continued by suggesting "that such action on the part of the hotel proprietor might be fully justified not only in the case of a Negro but also in the case of a non-Negro whose behaviour or general manner might be considered undesirable."¹²⁶ A similar belief underlined Minister of Public Welfare W.S. Kennedy Jones' aforementioned speech to the NSAACP in May 1963. As noted, the minister acknowledged a role for the state in improving the position of African Canadians, but prioritized "self-help." "You must be ambitious for yourselves," Kennedy Jones stated, "you must teach your children to be ambitious. With this quality of ambition, with hard work, with good will within the entire Community much can, I am sure, be achieved in the advancement you deserve."¹²⁷ These comments suggested that nothing was

¹²⁶ PANS, Fred R MacKinnon fonds, 1992-718, v.1, Minutes of a Meeting of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Human Rights, 14 November 1962.

¹²⁷ PANS, Fred R MacKinnon fonds, 1992-718, v.1, Address by W.S. Kennedy Jones to the NSAACP, 18 May 1963.

fundamentally amiss in the treatment of racialized minorities. The main obstacle, rather, was ambition. By extension, the speech implied, there was only minimal need for state enforced corrective measures since discrimination was not a major issue.

A similar perspective was on display in a study the ICHR commissioned early in its existence to assess the position of African Canadians in Nova Scotia. The study surveyed communities across the province, and reported on the experiences of African Canadian residents in various realms of daily life, such as housing, employment, public services, community attitudes, and other issues. Reviewing the evidence, the study generally concluded that discrimination was not a significant problem. Even when the study observed and documented cases of discrimination, there was a marked unwillingness to assign blame or interpret it as a common or systemic issue. In Annapolis County, for example, the report stated there was “little obvious discrimination.”¹²⁸ A similar impression was presented for Cumberland County.¹²⁹ In Cape Breton, the report described “a very favourable attitude toward the Negro population, notwithstanding isolated cases of prejudice, for example, difficulty of outside students finding accommodation except in colored homes.”¹³⁰ The report from Digby County stated “[t]here does not seem to be much evidence of discrimination and some White officials are quite active in promoting good will. However, the Rev. Mr. Clayton was refused a position in the High School recently for which he was qualified and acceptable to School

¹²⁸ PANS, Fred R MacKinnon fonds, 1992-718, v.1, Survey of Negro Population of Annapolis County, 2 July 1963.

¹²⁹ PANS, Fred R MacKinnon fonds, 1992-718, v.1, Survey of Negro Population of Cumberland County, 9 July 1963.

¹³⁰ PANS, Fred R MacKinnon fonds, 1992-718, v.1, Survey of Negro Population of Cape Breton Island, 22 May 1963.

officials.”¹³¹ The study described a project in Antigonish County based out of St. Francis Xavier University, for which the project organizers had planned to purchase land and help develop new housing for African Canadian residents. The report acknowledged that local whites opposed this planned land use, but assigned their opposition to concerns over the prospect of falling land values, rather than outright prejudice. According to the report, “prejudice is not a governing factor and... people who might be motivated by such prejudice are in a very small ‘hard core’ minority.”¹³² Accrediting racism to a marginal portion of the white population was a theme throughout the reports. The Colchester County document, for example, made the following claim:

Truro generally seems to have a favourable attitude towards the Negro population. Many have worked for the Town for years and are highly regarded by Town officials. Employment is high generally and outward indications of prejudice at a minimum. The only obvious indication of discrimination is the tradition of no negroes in barber shops.¹³³

Segregation in barbershops, according to this view, was merely a “tradition,” not evidence of a more substantial problem. The study also assessed New Glasgow, where Carrie Best had already cited various examples of Jim Crow practices in *The Clarion*. The report observed “a certain amount of prejudice apparent in the New Glasgow area, slightly more so than in other areas visited so far,” particularly in the form of “unwritten” segregation rules in some businesses. It nevertheless arrived at the following conclusion:

¹³¹ PANS, Fred R MacKinnon fonds, 1992-718, v.1, Survey of Negro Population of Digby County, July 2 1963, PANS.

¹³² PANS, Fred R MacKinnon fonds, 1992-718, v.1, Survey of Negro Population of Antigonish County, 1 August 1963.

¹³³ PANS, Fred R MacKinnon fonds, 1992-718, v.1, Survey of Negro Population of Colchester County, 11 March 1963.

“[g]enerally the feeling between white and Negroes seems to be mutual respect where warranted as long as Negroes ‘keep their place.’”¹³⁴

Ironically, given the belief that Canada was more progressive than the United States in the realms of discrimination and rights protections, it was an American speaker in Halifax who criticized these reports as problematic and saw them for what they were – evidence of prejudice. James R. Dumpson, the first African American Commissioner of Welfare for New York City, was the keynote speaker at a 1963 International Human Rights Day event in the province. Dumpson acknowledged that it might appear “strange that an American social worker should accept an invitation to speak on human rights and minority groups in Canada.”¹³⁵ Yet he also identified various similarities between African Canadians in Nova Scotia and African Americans in New York, a situation with which he was more familiar. Based on this, Dumpson offered an apt assessment of the aforementioned report:

I wearily noted the recurring comment... that no prejudice was found so long as Negroes stay ‘in their places’ or areas... I have an uneasy feeling that as of now, Negroes are not an economic or competitive threat to white citizens and hence are accepted by some and maybe tolerated by many more... All is not well for Negroes or indeed for anyone or any group in a community just because hostility is not expressed or is not overt.”¹³⁶

For Canadians accustomed to looking critically at the track record of their American neighbours, this assessment might have come as a surprise. Yet Dumpson offered an

¹³⁴ PANS, Fred R MacKinnon fonds, 1992-718, v.1, Survey of Negro Population of Pictou County, n.d.

¹³⁵ PANS, Fred R MacKinnon fonds, 1992-718, v.1, “Emerging Horizons in Human Rights” address by James R. Dumpson, 10 December 1963.

¹³⁶ PANS, Fred R MacKinnon fonds, 1992-718, v.1, “Emerging Horizons in Human Rights” address by James R. Dumpson, 10 December 1963.

insightful critique of the attitude underlying the ICHR assessment. Picking up on the discussion of housing in places like Antigonish County, he observed that

[w]hile there may not be legal restrictions against Negroes living wherever they wish and can afford in Nova Scotia, I would suggest that examination be given to the observation that prejudice might become more active if Negroes attempted to move into your better neighborhoods.¹³⁷

Dumpson's comments certainly help explain the Committee's report for Guysboro, which claimed that "[g]enerally white residents seem to be favourably disposed, as long as Negroes stay in their own areas."¹³⁸

The implicit message of the committee's report was that discrimination was only a problem when explicitly codified in law. The American Jim Crow laws served as an obvious benchmark for such discrimination. Yet as Dumpson suggested in his speech, prejudice could also operate in different but still impactful ways. In 1966, for example, a Nova Scotia elementary school was accused of sending African Canadian children who lived in the town to a segregated school further away.¹³⁹ In that same year, at the 113th session of the African United Baptist Association (AUBA), Pearleen Oliver reminded those in attendance, "[t]here is a tremendous amount of Racial Discrimination going on yet. After 113 years the Association is still concerned with the problem of discrimination and segregation confronting us."¹⁴⁰ There were no laws requiring school segregation and other forms of discrimination, but in some parts of the province they continued as on-the-

¹³⁷ PANS, Fred R MacKinnon fonds, 1992-718, v.1, "Emerging Horizons in Human Rights" address by James R. Dumpson, 10 December 1963.

¹³⁸ PANS, Fred R MacKinnon fonds, 1992-718, v.1, Survey of Negro Population of Guysboro County, 6 August 1963.

¹³⁹ PANS, Fred R MacKinnon fonds, 1992-718, v.3, J. Henry MacNeil to George H. Matthews, 30 September 1966.

¹⁴⁰ Acadia University Archives (hereafter AUA), Minutes of the African United Baptist Association of Nova Scotia, 113th Session, 20 August 1966.

ground practices. The compilers of the ICHR reports witnessed first hand evidence of economic disparities, housing inequalities, and outright discrimination in business practices. These were some of the very issues anti-discrimination activists had been highlighting throughout this period. Even so, the ICHR report denied that prejudice was a significant underlying problem in their society. Indeed, the report repeatedly dismissed these cases as “isolated,” or assigned outright prejudice to a “minority” of the population.

This outlook had tangible consequences for the provincial government’s anti-discrimination measures. At an ICHR meeting in 1964, which covered issues like job opportunities for African Canadians, one of the questions for discussion was, “[i]s there racial prejudice as applied to the Negro? If so, what are its manifestations?”¹⁴¹ It is telling that even after the efforts of various human rights organizations, this question was still being asked. Indeed, the ICHR actions were relatively slow and limited throughout the 1960s. Their most significant accomplishment was setting up a bursary to support African Canadian students at the post-secondary level.¹⁴² Human rights activists had to continue pressing for the concrete enforcement of human rights laws throughout the 1960s, because they were otherwise too easily ignored.¹⁴³ It was not until 1967 that the province created a permanent Human Rights Commission as an enforcement body for anti-discrimination legislation. The persistence of the sanctimonious imagination helps explain why these developments occurred very gradually, and were only introduced as a result of continuous advocacy and lobbying efforts.

¹⁴¹ PANS, Fred R. MacKinnon fonds, 1992-718, v. 2, Minutes of a Meeting Held in the Department of Public Welfare to Discuss Human Rights and Other Related Matters, 2 September 1964.

¹⁴² Walker, “Black Confrontation in Sixties Halifax,” 179.

¹⁴³ Walker, “Black Confrontation in Sixties Halifax,” 178.

The sanctimonious imagination was also an important force within the Ontario government throughout this period. Frager and Patrias quote one Ontario government minister who in 1947 told Rabbi Abraham Feinberg, a prominent champion of human rights in Toronto, “these days, racial discrimination is to a great extent imaginary.”¹⁴⁴ Local MPP C.E. Janes’s staunch defense of Dresden in the midst of anti-segregation activism also reflected this attitude. According to Janes, the town did not deserve the negative attention cast upon it in light of segregationist practices in the late 1940s and 1950s. “[A]ny trouble which we have had in Dresden, one of the finest towns in Ontario, has been caused and agitated by someone like the hon. member for St. Andrew.” Janes was referring to Joseph Salsberg, a leader in the Communist Party of Canada who had a long record of challenging discrimination in Dresden and elsewhere in the province. Janes proceeded to blame visitors from Detroit for stirring up trouble in the town, claiming “[t]hey came to me and said they were going to organize gangs to smash windows in restaurants, and I advised them to go back to Detroit... It is not being caused by the coloured people in Dresden, because they are the finest people in the world. They are lovely people.” He further declared his confidence, with reference to the proposed fair accommodations legislation, “[t]here are two restaurants in Dresden which refuse to serve coloured people, but I know they will fall behind this. There was no barber shop into which they could enter, but that is because these agitators have been coming in and causing trouble.”¹⁴⁵ Janes was wrong about the willingness of restaurant owners to comply with the new law; it took sit-ins, publicity, lobbying, and the courts to finally

¹⁴⁴ Frager and Patrias, “This is Our Country, These are Our Rights,” 15.

¹⁴⁵ Ontario Legislature, 1 April 1954 (C.E. Janes).

make that happen. His reference to people coming to Dresden from Detroit, moreover, reflected the all-too-common defense that “outside agitators” were causing a problem that did not otherwise exist. Minister of Labour Daley made a similar argument the following year, when a reporter asked him what actions he would take in light of evidence that a restaurant in Dresden continued to refuse service based on colour, thereby defying the fair accommodations law. Daley replied he would do nothing, and in criticizing the anti-discrimination activists, expressed his suspicion that “[a] Communist group is using you to assist these Negroes!”¹⁴⁶ By suggesting African Canadians were unable to organize opposition to prejudice, both of these examples actually illustrate profound prejudice among government officials. The same viewpoint was commonly held in the United States, where Thomas Borstlemann notes those in power frequently “assumed that African Americans in the South were naturally docile and could be organized only by subversive and usually white outsiders (‘outside agitators’)...”¹⁴⁷ Janes and Daley also implied a belief that nothing was really wrong in Canada, particularly compared with the United States. Outside forces from Detroit must have stirred up trouble, according to this logic, because discrimination was not sufficiently prevalent in Canada to motivate opposition and protest on its own.

Daley raised a similar point in the 1958 legislative debates over amendments to fair accommodations legislation. While he supported the changes, which prohibited discrimination in apartment rentals with more than six units, the minister also reiterated

¹⁴⁶ AO, Alvin McCurdy fonds, MS 1166, Gordon Donaldson, “I Lived through Race Hatred in a Canadian Town,” *Liberty Magazine* (December 1955).

¹⁴⁷ Thomas Borstlemann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 112-113.

his view that discrimination in the province was minimal. Describing his role overseeing anti-discrimination legislation as the Minister of Labour, Daley argued “the number of cases of discrimination which are brought to the attention of the authorities in my department is very limited.” In fact, the paucity of cases resulted from the law’s very weakness, particularly in that it provided no protection from retaliation for plaintiffs against their employers. Daley went on to praise the conciliation process as a means of resolving complaints, asserting, “that almost without exception we have been successful, because it has been proved that when there is a case of discrimination, it is usually because the person accused of discrimination is unaware that he is doing anything contrary to the law, and it is very easy to fix these things up.”¹⁴⁸ This statement reflected the belief, similar to that enunciated in the Nova Scotia ICHR study, that discrimination in Ontario was at most a marginal issue.

Government representatives emphasized a similar point with each new piece of anti-discrimination legislation introduced. When speaking to the first fair accommodations law, for example, Premier Leslie Frost highlighted a supposedly unique history of tolerance in his province and country. This law, he said, followed

a line of policy which has been greatly developed in the last 10 years but which had its beginnings in the basic fact which made our country possible. Canada’s greatest contribution to the world has been the example of two great races working together and founding this country in partnership. Since those early days our land has become the home of peoples of various racial and religious origins and our pride has been that all are free men in a free country.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ Ontario Legislature, 26 March 1958 (C. Daley).

¹⁴⁹ Ontario Legislature, 29 March 1954 (L. Frost).

In introducing the legislation, Walker notes that Frost was “careful not to admit that racial boundaries actually existed in Ontario, explaining that an absence of protective legislation could be misinterpreted as *false* evidence of the existence of discrimination.”¹⁵⁰

With allusion to the *Ontario Human Rights Code* the government was preparing to introduce, the 1961 throne speech emphasized that “[i]t should be a matter of pride to every hon. member of this House that our province has been a leader in the campaign against racial and religious discrimination...”¹⁵¹ William Warrender, the new Minister of Labour, described Ontario as “the trail-blazer in Canada of this type of legislation” shortly thereafter.¹⁵² Upon introducing the Code for second reading early the following year, Warrender offered similar comments: “I think all parties in the House can feel proud of the fact that our province has pioneered in this field of legislation and that the bill before us today is a further and very important step in a development which began as long ago as 1944.”¹⁵³ Though these MPPs were correct that Ontario was the first Canadian province to introduce this type of legislation, it is significant to note their comparatively minimal references to the widespread discrimination that made such measures necessary in the first place.

Some of these celebratory comments did include the qualification that more work remained to be done. Indeed, such qualifications served as justification for the new measures being introduced. Yet the predominantly laudatory comments belied this point.

¹⁵⁰ James W. St. G. Walker, “Decoding the Rights Revolution: Lessons from the Canadian Experience,” in *Taking Liberties: A History of Human Rights in Canada*, eds. David Goutor and Stephen Heathorn (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2013), 45.

¹⁵¹ Ontario Legislature, 30 November 1961 (Speech from the Throne).

¹⁵² Ontario Legislature, 14 December 1961 (W.K. Warrender).

¹⁵³ Ontario Legislature, 22 February 1962 (W.K. Warrender).

By consistently emphasizing their province's leadership, political figures were simultaneously less likely to recognize the ongoing prevalence of discrimination and the need for constant attention to, and enforcement of, these laws. The prominent civil rights lawyer A. Alan Borovoy stressed this point in a brief to the provincial government, which outlined various shortcomings in the *Ontario Human Rights Code*. "Ontario is proud of its Human Rights Code," the brief noted, but "yesterday's achievements must never deflect us from tomorrow's possibilities. Although we have enjoyed success, we have also experienced failure."¹⁵⁴ While state officials expressed satisfaction with the new laws, rights activists and the OHRC's small staff worked to ensure the legislation had a ground-level impact. The Guardian Club in Windsor released survey data in 1963 revealing a 60 per cent discrimination rate in local apartment rentals.¹⁵⁵ In nearby Chatham, the Ontario Labor Committee for Human Rights and National Unity Association engaged in ongoing efforts to bring about compliance with anti-discrimination legislation at a local boating facility.¹⁵⁶ Volunteers ran test cases in 1964 to document prejudice in Toronto's apartment rental market.¹⁵⁷ Policy makers could have contentedly celebrated past-accomplishments and assumed their sufficiency, were it not for the victims of discrimination and allied activists who struggled to ensure that legal changes actually led to improvements in daily life.

These examples serve as important reminders that while policy-makers in Ontario acknowledged a need for some anti-discrimination measures, the burden fell to those

¹⁵⁴ AO, Records of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, RG 76-3, B270363, A. Alan Borovoy, *Plugging the Loopholes in the Ontario Human Rights Code*, n.d.

¹⁵⁵ "Canada Club Finds 60% of Landlords Practice Bias," *Chicago Defender*, 14 February 1963.

¹⁵⁶ Marvin Schiff, "Plan Complaints of Color Bar at Boat Club," *Globe and Mail*, 10 June 1963.

¹⁵⁷ "Mimico apartment refused to Negro, labor charges," *Toronto Star*, 13 June 1964.

facing discrimination to prove its continued existence. The notion that discrimination had already been addressed, and was therefore not a pressing concern, remained common among those in positions of power. The implications of this attitude on policy are evident in various cases at the municipal level. In his statement welcoming participants to Windsor's 1954 Emancipation Day celebration, Mayor Arthur J. Reaume wrote in a letter printed in the official program, "I am sure that you will find Windsor, as I have for many years found it, free of hatred and discrimination. We have no colour bars. You will find many of our most prominent citizens of the Negro race. These include civic leaders, professional men and outstanding business men."¹⁵⁸ The Guardian Club's evidence of widespread apartment rental discrimination suggested otherwise. So too would the cancellation of Emancipation Day festivities in 1967 and 1968. The cancellation resulted from the unfounded and prejudicial fears of municipal leaders that the 1967 riot in Detroit would spread across the border.¹⁵⁹ The mayors of nearby towns were similarly quick to deny charges of local discrimination. A speaker at a 1967 University of Windsor event had suggested that there were certain locales, such as Leamington and Kingsville, "where it would be very difficult for a Negro to live within the town limits." In Leamington, the mayor responded "[s]tatements of this kind are too absurd to warrant any kind of recognition," while Kingsville's mayor asserted "... [t]here's no racial discrimination in

¹⁵⁸ AO, Alvin McCurdy fonds, MS 1166, Letter from Arthur J. Reaume in Emancipation Day Programme, 21 July 1954.

¹⁵⁹ Herb Colling, *Turning Points: The Detroit Riot of 1967, A Canadian Perspective* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2003), 117-129.

Kingsville...”¹⁶⁰ While the legislative landscape underwent major changes in the 1950s and 1960s, perceptions that prejudice was minimal or non-existent remained widespread.

The persistence of the sanctimonious imagination, even as explicit examples of discrimination abounded, is significant. Public officials could have seized upon evidence of discrimination as opportunities for honest reflection and to pursue solutions. Reactions denying the existence of prejudice stymied such opportunities for self-reflection and action. As Carol Talbot eloquently explains in her memoir,

[o]ne of the crimes against our people here has been the underplaying of the problems we encounter merely because of our race, blotting them out so they sometimes fade even from our own memories – feeble threads, finding expression only as worn spots in the fabric of our existence, and misconstrued as shameful memories best forgotten.¹⁶¹

The persistence of the sanctimonious imagination also limited space for dissent.

Corresponding with satisfaction that Canada was sufficiently advanced in terms of rights protections was the view that rights activism was unnecessary by the latter half of the sixties. As a result, as Steve Hewitt notes, many state authorities looked upon anti-discrimination activists with suspicion.¹⁶² The Cold War heightened this critique. As noted, the Cold War in both the United States and Canada generated an opportunity for rights activists to pressure the state into action. It also functioned, however, as a limit on the scope of their activism. As Carol Anderson argues, mainstream African American rights activists largely eschewed issues like poverty, unequal housing, lack of employment, and health care, in favour of a fairly narrow platform of legal challenges to

¹⁶⁰ “Charges of Racial Prejudice are Levelled Against Area,” *The Leamington Post*, 2 March 1967.

¹⁶¹ Carol Talbot, *Growing up Black in Canada* (Toronto: Williams-Wallace Publishers Inc., 1984), 38.

¹⁶² See for example Steve Hewitt, *Spying 101: The RCMP's Secret Activities at Canadian Universities, 1917-1997* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).

segregation. Some members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) had at one time promoted a broader platform of issues, but according to Anderson,

[t]he struggle was ultimately destroyed... by the Cold War and the anti-Communist witch hunts, which compromised the integrity of the black leadership, twisted the definition of human rights into the hammer and sickle, and forced the NAACP to take its eyes off the prize of human rights.¹⁶³

Reginald Whitaker and Gary Marcuse describe the Cold War's similar consequences in Canada. "It is one of the tragedies of the Cold War in Canada," they argue, "that an indigenous, progressive politics was rendered so difficult by the false choices apparently imposed by the rigidities of the Cold War..."¹⁶⁴ As they explain, Canadian progressive forces, and indeed anyone criticizing the status quo, had to walk a very careful line between levelling criticism and avoiding the perception that they were supporting Canada's Cold War enemies.¹⁶⁵

This pressure helps explain some of the significant limitations on the protective human rights frameworks adopted in Ontario and Nova Scotia in this period. While important measures, Howe describes the "incrementalist approach" rights activists employed, wherein "the strategy was to pressure not for comprehensive change but for

¹⁶³ Carol Anderson, *Eyes off the Prize: The United Nations and the African American Struggle for Human Rights, 1944-1955* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 5.

¹⁶⁴ Reginald Whitaker and Gary Marcuse, *Cold War Canada: The Making of a National Insecurity State, 1945-1957* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), xi.

¹⁶⁵ Another example of the Cold War serving at times as a brake against human rights stands, and in other contexts as a factor favouring stronger measures, is Canada's postwar relationship with South Africa. Historical Commonwealth links with South Africa and Cold War strategic defense interests factored into the Canadian government's hesitation to criticize South Africa's Apartheid policies in the late 1940s and 1950s. Concern that its connections with South Africa would negatively impact its reputation among other newly independent African nations, whose Cold War loyalties were increasingly significant by the early 1960s, ultimately contributed to the Canadian government's stronger criticisms of Apartheid. See Peter Henshaw, "Canada and the 'South African Disputes' at the United Nations, 1946-1961," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 33, no. 1 (1999): 1-52.

specific laws – laws which were limited, clearly defined and reasonably attainable.”¹⁶⁶ As a result, human rights legislation remained limited in scope throughout the 1960s. Agnes Calliste’s assessment of a 1953 federal *Fair Employment Practices* law in Canada (which applied to employment under federal jurisdiction) relates equally to provincial measures. Such laws, she notes, “focused on individual cases of alleged discrimination and sought redress for the individuals affected rather than general improvement of conditions for members of the minority in question. As a result, the remedy was ineffective in dealing with endemic structural discrimination.”¹⁶⁷ As Tunnicliffe explains, it was not until amendments in the early 1980s that the language in Ontario’s legislation moved “away from the philosophy that human rights legislation should limit government interference into the lives of citizens towards a policy in which there was an obligation on government to create an environment free from discrimination.”¹⁶⁸

Similarly, Dominique Clément argues that Canadian activists most commonly focused on civil and political rights, rather than economic, social, and cultural rights.¹⁶⁹ Canada’s rights revolution, according to Clément, was limited by a widespread activist focus on “a minimalist approach to human rights,” which did not give equivalent consideration to broader questions related to the category of social and economic

¹⁶⁶ Howe, “Human Rights Policy in Ontario,” 791.

¹⁶⁷ Agnes Calliste, “The Struggle for Employment Equity by Blacks on American and Canadian Railroads,” *Journal of Black Studies* 25, no. 3 (January 1995): 303.

¹⁶⁸ Tunnicliffe, “‘Life Together’: Public Debates over Human Rights Legislation in Ontario,” 463.

¹⁶⁹ Clément, “‘Rights Without the Sword are but Mere Words’: The Limits of Canada’s Rights Revolution,” in *A History of Human Rights in Canada: Essential Issues*, ed. Janet Miron (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press Inc., 2009), 44.

rights.¹⁷⁰ The state-wielded pressure on activists described in this section helps explain this more limited focus, which was especially problematic because prejudices based on “race” so often overlapped with class. Social and economic issues contributed to profound inequalities in Canada, and this category of rights did gain greater prominence among some rights activists and organizations in the latter half of the 1960s. Yet the general public and political leaders had even less sympathy for their efforts than for those they considered less “radical,” like the right to rent an apartment.

Conclusion

It might appear contradictory to argue that the example of the civil rights movement in the United States at once helped support the consolidation of a legislative system of anti-discrimination protections in Canada, while simultaneously contributing to the limitations built into that very system. These seemingly divergent impacts co-existed. Contemporaneous events in the United States promoted an environment favourable to advancing some new anti-discrimination measures, but they also contributed to a sense of self-satisfaction that impeded more profound change. Understanding this period as a complex mixture of progress and constraint might appear unsatisfactory to those seeking a straightforward assessment, but it was not a simple situation. By the 1960s, after all, there was sufficient awareness of inequalities that the governments of Nova Scotia and Ontario had passed anti-discrimination laws and established government agencies to support them. Even so, in 1964 an ICHR meeting still felt the need to ask the fundamental

¹⁷⁰ Dominique Clément, *Canada's Rights Revolution: Social Movements and Social Change, 1937-82* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008), 12.

question of whether African Canadians were subjected to prejudice in the province at all.¹⁷¹ And in 1971, a journalist in Ontario still found it necessary to ask Pat McCurdy, anti-discrimination activist and president of the Black Heritage Club in Windsor, whether “she had ever experienced discrimination herself.” Perhaps more significant than the question was her response: “she just smiled and asked which time I wanted her to tell me about.”¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ PANS, Fred R. MacKinnon fonds, 1992-718, v. 2, Minutes of a Meeting Held in the Department of Public Welfare, Johnston Building to Discuss Human Rights and Other Related Matters, 2 September 1964.

¹⁷² AO, Alvin McCurdy fonds, MS 1166, Wayne Ferguson, “Discrimination in Windsor,” *Windsor Star*, 26 September 1971.

CONCLUSION

Canadian attitudes and practices around diversity and human rights shifted demonstrably in the decades following World War II. Before the war, outright racism was widely accepted and openly practiced, with little recourse available to those who encountered it in their daily lives. When the language of “rights” was used, it almost invariably signified an individual’s freedom to choose whom to serve or hire (or not to serve or hire) according to whatever prejudices one wished to employ. This view was transformed as a result of intensive and targeted activism (both in local contexts and around the world). During the 1950s and 1960s, rights discourse in Canada was increasingly formalized into laws that protected racialized minorities from discrimination in various settings and circumstances, including employment, housing, and access to publicly available businesses and services. In addition to human rights commissions empowered to enforce new understandings of what rights could be claimed and how, the federal government embraced a broader emphasis on diversity in the 1960s and 1970s. Most notably, formerly discriminatory immigration laws and practices were replaced with a points system that drew immigrants from Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and the government adopted multiculturalism as official policy.¹ Though important limits to inclusivity remained, Miron notes that this period saw Canada change from a “racist” to “inclusive” society.²

¹ Evelyn Kallen, *Ethnicity and Human Rights in Canada*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2003), 47.

² Janet Miron, “Introduction,” in *A History of Human Rights in Canada: Essential Issues*, ed. Janet Miron (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press Inc., 2009), 6; As discussed below, racialized minorities in Canada

Just how significant and impactful were these changes? Did these attitudinal shifts, as well as the accompanying legal measures, signify a “revolution” in Canada? Michael Ignatieff has classified the widespread emergence and embrace of these outlooks and policies as part of a “rights revolution,” through which “Canada has become one of the most distinctive rights cultures in the world.”³ Other scholars question the implications of these discursive and legislative changes for “on-the-ground” experiences. Dominique Clément asserts that while new human rights measures have been important, the activist and legislative focus on civil (rather than economic and social) rights has curtailed their tangible impacts on systemic inequalities.⁴ Barrington Walker warns against a “teleological” perspective that interprets recent Canadian history as a certain march towards full equality.⁵ There was nothing inevitable, these historians remind us, about Canada’s “rights revolution,” particularly as it concerns legislation and policy. While the new measures that have been implemented with the aim of promoting diversity and equality have undoubtedly improved the position of racialized minorities in Canada, credit for these transformations must rest with the grassroots efforts, often led by racialized minorities themselves, which steadily and consistently gathered evidence, protested, lobbied, and publicized experiences with discrimination.

continue to experience significant discrimination in housing, employment, interactions with law enforcement, and other realms of life. Changes in law have not always translated into changes in experience.

³ Michael Ignatieff, *The Rights Revolution* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 2000), 7

⁴ Dominique Clément, *Canada’s Rights Revolution: Social Movements and Social Change, 1937-82* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008), 12.

⁵ Barrington Walker, “Introduction: From a Property Right to Citizenship Rights – The African Canadian Legal Odyssey,” in *The African Canadian Legal Odyssey* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 35-36.

Contemporary evidence suggests, moreover, that while the Canadian state has adopted measures to curtail individual acts of discrimination and promote equal opportunity, systemic inequality grounded in racism remains a deeply ingrained and troubling reality.⁶ A significant factor in this is the popularity of a limited interpretation of human rights, with an emphasis on civil and political rights but lack of concern for how economic and social inequalities are linked to and exacerbated by “race”-based prejudices. Barrington Walker has observed the simultaneous achievement of human rights measures alongside persistent inequality: “Black Canadians would have to wait until the 1960s and 1970s – the era of civil rights, changes in immigration policy, and official multiculturalism – before they approached anything resembling true equality. And, of course, this is still very much an unfinished revolution.”⁷ By most measures, racialized minorities continue to encounter substantial obstacles to full participation in Canadian society. A 2011 report from the Centre for Policy Alternatives and Wellesley Institute offers extensive evidence that “a colour code is still at work in Canada’s labour market.”⁸ Inequalities in employment opportunities and income levels, exacerbated by the overlapping effects of race, class, and gender, contribute to the perseverance of what Barrington Walker aptly terms “racialized poverty.” “Black inequalities stubbornly persist in Canadian society,” Walker notes. “Even the more substantive legal freedoms and citizenship rights that Blacks enjoy now exist alongside pervasive systemic barriers to full

⁶ Kallen, *Ethnicity and Human Rights in Canada*, 214.

⁷ Barrington Walker, *Race on Trial: Black Defendants in Ontario’s Criminal Courts, 1858-1958* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 6.

⁸ Sheila Block and Grace-Edward Galabuzi, *Canada’s Colour Coded Labour Market: The Gap for Racialized Workers* (Ottawa and Toronto: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and The Wellesley Institute, 2011), 3.

citizenship and equality.”⁹ Discrimination in housing and employment endures in spite of laws prohibiting it, African Canadians and Indigenous peoples are subjected to racial profiling and are imprisoned at far higher rates than white Canadians, and hate crimes persist in disturbing numbers.¹⁰ James Walker has recently offered a useful way of thinking about Canada’s “rights revolution” in light of both its measurable successes, as well as these and other markers of its limitations. We ought to consider it, Walker posits, “as a continuing revolution.” Canada’s rights revolution, Walker continues, is “not a final product but a moment in an ongoing process.”¹¹

How do we explain the dissonance between contemporary rhetoric celebrating equality and diversity in Canada and lived experiences of systemic racism? Debates during the 1950s and 1960s around human rights in Canada, framed through both the international context of anti-racist activism and the sanctimonious imagination, offer useful insights on contemporary conditions. The tendency of Canadians to locate a sense of nationalism in comparisons with the United States, particularly with American racism, is central to this discussion. As various scholars note, this is a longstanding trend. In 19th century criminal trials with African Canadian defendants, Barrington Walker observes,

⁹ B. Walker, “Introduction: From a Property Right to Citizenship Rights,” 36.

¹⁰ James W. St. G. Walker, “Decoding the Rights Revolution: Lessons from the Canadian Experience,” *Taking Liberties: A History of Human Rights in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2013), 48; Akwasi Owusu-Bempah, “Analysis: Why we should worry about who we’re jailing,” *Toronto Star*, 1 March 2013; Allan Levine, “Canadians are tolerant... to a point,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, 9 October 2012; Les Perreault, “Racism’s long history in quiet East Coast towns,” *Globe and Mail*, 21 May 2010; Oliver Moore, “Burning cross ignites racial tension in Nova Scotia,” *Globe and Mail*, 24 February 2010; Frances Henry, *The Caribbean Diaspora in Toronto: Learning to Live with Racism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994); Sean Purdy, “‘Ripped off’ By the System: Housing Policy, Poverty, and Territorial Stigmatization in Regent Park Housing Project, 1951-1991,” *Labour/Le Travail* 52 (Fall 2003): 86.

¹¹ J. Walker, “Decoding the Rights Revolution,” 49.

the decisions of white legal representatives commonly reflected “a Canadian nation-building project.” Specifically, rulings emphasized certain themes:

the United States was a violent nation compared to Canada with its celerity of justice; (elite White) Canadians could control their passions and maintain their compassion towards (Black) Lawbreakers whereas south of the border they would be subject to lynch law; and hanging such lawbreakers was the provenance of the Canadian state, not a mob.¹²

The sanctimonious imagination played a particularly important role in discussions and debates around new Canadian human rights measures in the 1950s and 1960s. As this dissertation has revealed, organized efforts to promote human rights protections in Canada were very much part of a wider, indeed a global, environment of human rights discourse and anti-racist activism. There can be little doubt that relevant international issues and events had important implications for Canada. In some instances, this was the result of the transnational links specifically forged by activists, as connections with noted international figures and organizations could help bring attention and credibility to local causes. Such links provided an opportunity to simultaneously express concern and support for related movements elsewhere in the world, which many Canadian activists viewed as interconnected with their own efforts. Activists also referenced the international backdrop, and especially widely reported matters south of the border, when pressing issues in Canada. This allowed them to argue, whether implicitly or explicitly, that only tangible actions against racism would prevent Canada’s own public reckoning with the same embarrassing situations on display elsewhere. By coupling these arguments with meticulously gathered evidence of local discrimination, rights activists challenged

¹² B. Walker, *Race on Trial*, 46.

the foundation upon which the sanctimonious imagination was built, and challenged Canadians to live up to its (too often unrealized) ideals.

Though unsettled, the sanctimonious imagination was not unseated in this period. Rather, the international backdrop that offered an unprecedented opportunity to demand local human rights measures at once contributed to the restraints acting against those same measures. Whatever the problems in Canada, many observers concluded (while watching coverage of bloodied and murdered American civil rights protestors) that Canadian issues were surely insignificant compared with Alabama and Mississippi. This view only attained greater prominence and influence by the late 1960s, as a “new nationalism” built in response to fears over increasingly powerful American cultural and economic influences within Canada.¹³ As Stephen Azzi notes, “[f]or many Canadians, racial strife in the United States and that country’s involvement in the Vietnam War called American values into question...”¹⁴ The sanctimonious imagination was reinforced through the belief that Canada was, as Ryan Edwardson puts it, a “‘Peaceable Kingdom’... A prosperous society with a developing welfare state, Canada was to be a better America, a moral society of multiculturalism, understanding and peaceful solutions.”¹⁵

The sanctimonious imagination’s persistent influence acted as a convenient excuse to adopt relatively limited human rights protections, and to be satisfied with them

¹³ Ryan Edwardson, “‘Kicking Uncle Sam out of the Peaceable Kingdom’: English-Canadian ‘New Nationalism’ and Americanization,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 37, 4 (2003): 134; Stephen Azzi, *Walter Gordon and the Rise of Canadian Nationalism* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1999), 134.

¹⁴ Azzi, *Walter Gordon and the Rise of Canadian Nationalism*, 134.

¹⁵ Edwardson, “‘Kicking Uncle Sam out of the Peaceable Kingdom,’” 138.

even as inequalities (if of a more subtle variety than explicit Jim Crow laws) continued. The longstanding minimization of racism in Canada was challenged to an unprecedented degree in the 1950s and 1960s. Local activists offered tangible evidence of discrimination and leveraged international examples to draw enhanced attention and interest. While the new anti-discrimination measures they achieved suggest a wider recognition that racism was indeed present in Canada, its nature and depth went largely unexplored when interpreted through the concurrent global framework. This contradictory response helps explain the persistence of systemic inequalities in Canada, even alongside the implementation of human rights laws and official multiculturalism. If racism is conceived of as a relatively minor historical and contemporary issue in Canada, or a problem created by a few delinquent individuals rather than a more deeply imbued historical and contemporary reality, then only relatively minimal responses are considered necessary in response.

Canadian historians continue to challenge the popular notion that Canada does not have its own long and deep history of racism with which to grapple. Wider public recognition of this history would surely help provoke more robust public conversations about ongoing inequalities. As American historian David W. Blight has aptly observed, however, “[w]hat may seem relatively settled understandings among scholars, even in the midst of rich debate, rarely means that anything is settled in the broader world of social memory.”¹⁶ Most Canadians are undoubtedly more familiar with images and figures from the American civil rights movement than they are with Viola Desmond’s arrest for sitting

¹⁶ David W. Blight, *American Oracle: The Civil War in the Civil Rights Era* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), 3.

in the “wrong” section of a Nova Scotia theatre, Joseph Drummond’s sit-in at a New Brunswick barbershop, or Jean Daniels’ columns decrying racism in Canada, the United States, and around the world in the *Canadian Negro* newspaper. As this dissertation has illustrated, a small cadre of committed activists profoundly shaped public policy, discourse, attitudes, and the makeup of their country. Canadians today often identify traits like egalitarianism, diversity, and a commitment to human rights as key aspects of their national character. These principles exist to the extent that they do in contemporary Canada not because Canadians suddenly awakened after World War II to the horrors of racism. Rather, these ideas became and remain influential because committed activists, diverse though their outlooks, tactics, and goals sometimes were, engaged with and contributed to local, national, and global conversations around racism and human rights.

Without acknowledging the intensive and persistent activism a small number of Canadians undertook to achieve anti-discrimination measures in Canada, we imply that Canadian progress in the fields of diversity and human rights was a foregone conclusion. But by seeking to understand the historical context through which these new measures were achieved, as local struggles with deep linkages to related global movements, we can develop a better understanding of just how much work went into these notable achievements. Through acknowledging the significant and ongoing obstacles anti-racist activists faced in their efforts, moreover, we can understand Canada’s “rights revolution” not as a finished story, but as James Walker suggests, as an imperfect and continuing project.

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