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### Article abstract

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# Black Barbadians in Canada: A Growing Migration, 1966–1990

DAVID R. QUINTYNE

## Abstract

*Canada is considered a multiracial nation. An important part of its multiracial composition traces back to the 1960s and early 1970s, with changes to immigration regulations and the implementation of its multicultural policy. Interwoven in this multiracial mosaic called Canada is the Black person, whose presence in Canada dates back to the seventeenth century. Yet Black people in Canada are usually treated as newcomers. Among them were Black Barbadians. They came for various reasons, particularly the restructuring of Canada's immigration policy in the 1960s. Prior to the 1960s, Canada's immigration policy was restrictive, especially toward Black and Asian people, with Black people seldom meeting the criteria to gain entry to the country. This paper explores two key reasons that motivated Black Barbadians to migrate to Canada in increased numbers from the mid-1960s to 1990. Specifically, it argues that fundamental changes in the 1960s to Canada's discriminatory immigration policies and the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program were integral in motivating Black Barbadians to choose to migrate.*

## Résumé

*Le Canada est considéré comme une nation multiraciale. Une part importante de sa composition multiraciale remonte aux années 1960 et au début des années 1970, avec les changements apportés à la réglementation en matière d'immigration et la mise en œuvre de sa politique multiculturelle. Dans cette mosaïque multiraciale qu'est le Canada, il y a la personne noire, dont la présence au Canada remonte au dix-septième siècle. Pourtant, les Noire.s au Canada sont généralement traité.e.s comme des nouveaux/elles arrivant.e.s. Parmi eux, les Barbadien.ne.s noir.e.s. Ils/elles sont venu.e.s pour diverses raisons, en particulier la restructuration de la politique d'immigration du Canada dans les années 1960. Avant les années 1960, la politique d'immigration du Canada était restrictive, en particulier à l'égard des Noire.s et des Asiatiques, les Noire.s remplissant rarement les critères d'entrée dans le pays. Cet article examine les deux raisons principales qui ont poussé les Barbadien.ne.s noir.e.s à émigrer en plus grand nombre au Canada entre le milieu des années 1960 et 1990. Plus*

*précisément, il affirme que les changements fondamentaux apportés dans les années 1960 aux politiques d'immigration discriminatoires du Canada et au programme des travailleurs/euses agricoles saisonniers/nières ont joué un rôle déterminant dans la motivation des Barbadien.ne.s noir.e.s à choisir d'émigrer.*

Prior to the 1960s, the watershed decade for Black West Indian migration to Canada, Canadian officials had begun to implement regulatory changes to the country's restrictive immigration policies. These changes started shortly after the end of World War II with the readmission of Chinese nationals in 1947, the admission of Polish war veterans in the early part of that year, and the admission of Displaced Persons (including Jews) from Europe in 1948.<sup>1</sup> It was during the 1950s that Canada's difficulty in satisfying its demand for suitable domestic servants became quite chronic. The country's attempts to recruit workers from traditional European countries became challenging because European governments started to offer better work incentives to dissuade domestic workers from leaving.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, many of the Europeans who came to Canada as domestics used the recruitment process as a stepping stone to more lucrative employment in the country. When the opportunity arose, they absconded from the domestic servant program. Due to the difficulties of recruiting and retaining domestic workers from Europe, Canada was compelled in 1955 "to make an exception" to its long-standing discriminatory immigration policy of excluding people of African descent from entering the country.<sup>3</sup>

In June 1955, Canada implemented the second Caribbean domestic servant scheme on an experimental basis, beginning with a quota of 100 women, of which 25 were from Barbados and 75 from Jamaica,<sup>4</sup> and by 1959 over 500 women from across the Anglophone Caribbean participated in the scheme.<sup>5</sup> The scheme mainly recruited Black Caribbean women because, as Michele Johnson posits, western societies had always associated Black womanhood with "personal/domestic service, and expectations of servility," particularly in the Americas.<sup>6</sup> The special "experimental" arrangement of allowing Black people to incrementally enter Canada under the Caribbean domestic servant scheme, culminated from years of political wranglings between the Canadian and West Indian governments, with the Canadian government constantly "rejecting the very notion of a domestic scheme...."<sup>7</sup> A decade after its implementation, the Caribbean domestic servant scheme was terminated on 1 January 1968.<sup>8</sup>

The termination of the domestic servant scheme was caused, according to historian Ciprian Bolah, by the Immigration Regulations of 1 October 1967,<sup>9</sup> which ushered in the era of the Points System allowing people to immigrate to Canada based on their skills and other stipulated criteria rather than their skin colour.<sup>10</sup> However, though the Points System was monumental in opening the door for more Black people to enter Canada, the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program was likewise instrumental in channelling Black people from Barbados and the wider Anglophone Caribbean to migrate to Canada. The Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program, which started one year before the points system, permitted West Indian (predominately Black) men to live and work in Canada temporarily. Barbadians participated in the Farm Workers' Program approximately one year after its implementation since Barbados, utilizing bilateral discussions with Canada, helped its citizens find work on Canadian farms. An example of such discussions occurred in 1954, when the Barbadian colonial government sent representatives to Canada and Washington, DC, to negotiate for Barbadians to work temporarily in Canada's agricultural sector. Though bilateral discussions mattered, only when Canada decided it needed more workers did those interactions have a considerable impact. The agency of Black Barbadian migrant workers was quite evident since they willingly participated in this initiative and chose to work abroad to elevate their families' and their own socio-economic status.

This paper, therefore, explores how the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program and, importantly, changes to Canada's discriminatory immigration policy facilitated the increase in Black Barbadian migration to the country from the mid-1960s to 1990. It argues that these two factors were collectively integral in persuading more Black Barbadians to migrate because, prior to these factors, there were very few opportunities and incentives for Black people to migrate to Canada. Black West Indian migration scholar Christopher Taylor contends that the agency of Black Barbadians, governmental initiatives, and other push factors greatly influenced Black Barbadian migration.<sup>11</sup> This paper adds that Barbados–Canada bilateral discussions on migrant workers initiated opportunities to enter Canada, the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program, and changes to Canada's racist immigration policy. If such opportunities were not initiated, Black Barbadians would not have been able to come to Canada in greater numbers from the mid-1960s because of the country's historic

anti-Black stance. Moreover, it differs from the standard approach to Caribbean migration to Canada, which examines this topic from a macro-regional perspective, thus overlooking each island's cultural and socio-economic peculiarities. This article, however, embraces such peculiarities, as it demonstrates how policy changes and a program's implementation in Canada — such as the introduction of the 1967 Points System and the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program initiated partly because West Indian governments lobbied for it — provided the impetus for Black people from Barbados to migrate in greater numbers to Canada in the hope of a better life. This article first argues that a theoretical framework is necessary to illustrate how racism historically underpinned Canada's immigration policies and its interactions with non-white, particularly Black, people. Second, it contends that changes to Canada's immigration policy in the 1960s were integral for non-white persons to gain easier entry to Canada. Third, it posits that such policy changes resulted in more Black Barbadians migrating to Canada. Finally, it argues that the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program incentivized Black Barbadians to migrate because it allowed them to earn a living.

Barrington Walker contends that the law only theoretically gave Black people equal rights and opportunities to succeed in Canada. The same law did not penalize anti-Black or any form of racism. Instead, it legitimized discrimination against Black people by failing to hold perpetrators of racially motivated crimes accountable for their actions.<sup>12</sup> Sunera Thobani reveals how certain human beings have come to be “constituted as [special kinds of] Canadian nationals [or exalted subjects]” and deemed to be more Canadian or more important than others because of their race, certain characteristics, and historical claims to Canada. She argues that the traits which these “exalted” Canadians exhumed were not innate. Still, the results of socio-political campaigns promoted “the concept” of an ideal Canadian.<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile, Philomena Essed asserts that racism, in addition to being accepted as an ideological and structural construct, should be seen as a process “routinely created and reinforced” through daily practices.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, this racism marginalized Black people, reinforced their Otherness and, as Thobani so succinctly states, collectively ascribed their failings but individually assigned their successes.<sup>15</sup> Truly a process of racism, which viewed Black peoples' Canadian citizenship as a work in progress because the quasi-citizenship status under which they functioned was a creation of their somatic Blackness. Indeed, a Blackness

that labelled Black people as inferior and placed them at the bottom of society.<sup>16</sup>

Racist perceptions of Black people fashioned Canada's immigration policies, and those who gained entry routinely contended with anti-Black racism. Black migrants were subjugated to either arduous manual, servility, or baseline caregiving jobs, agricultural, domestic, and "unattractive" nursing work, and such occurred because of their ascribed inferiority.<sup>17</sup> It should not be surprising that Black West Indian men were recruited for Canadian farms since such work was physically intensive. Black West Indian women worked in the home or caregiving facilities because such was deemed "women's work."<sup>18</sup> Despite mainstream Canada's anti-Black racism, the narrative of Black West Indian migrants should not be interpreted as "mere objects" of racism. They fought back against racism through the formation of organizations like the Negro Citizenship Association (NCA), which lobbied the government to end Canada's anti-Black immigration policy and give Black West Indians the same rights and privileges as white Commonwealth subjects who were virtually afforded unfettered entrance into the country.<sup>19</sup>

### 1960s Changes to Canada's Immigration Policy

Prior to the 1960s, Canada's immigration policy was restrictive toward non-white people. The Immigration Act of 1910 and its 1919 amendment, along with the Orders-in-Council of 1911 and 1923, placed stringent entry requirements on Black and other non-white peoples to keep them from entering Canada.<sup>20</sup> Such blatant discrimination, especially against Black people, continued for many years despite changes to Canada's immigration policy after the Second World War. Black people were still not welcomed in the country. Commenting on Canada's immigration officials' anti-Black bias, particularly against Black West Indians, Donald Avery argues that Canada's immigration system had a long history of racism toward non-white Caribbean people. He highlighted that in 1952, the immigration minister contended that non-white persons could not succeed in Canada because the colour of their skin kept them from being competitive. Also in 1958, the director of immigration asserted that Canada had a "long standing practice to deal favourably with the white race from the British West Indies..." whereas it tenaciously restricted the immigration of non-white persons from the region.<sup>21</sup> Based on such negativity toward

potential Black immigrants, Avery concludes that migration between the Caribbean and Canada was unattainable unless Canada's racist immigration policy was amended.<sup>22</sup>

Rapid decolonization occurring in the Caribbean and elsewhere, and newly independent nations' criticisms of developed nations for embracing equality abroad but not at home, pressured John Diefenbaker's Progressive Conservative government to consider amending Canada's racist immigration policies.<sup>23</sup> Even before these occurrences, the NCA, under the leadership of Donald Moore and Bromley Armstrong, lobbied the Canadian government to amend its anti-Black immigration policy and permit Black West Indians to enter the country in greater numbers.<sup>24</sup> Such amendments began in 1962 when Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Ellen Fairclough tabled new and, arguably, progressive immigration regulations in the House of Commons. Those regulations intended to curtail the number of unskilled migrant labourers coming to Canada while increasing the number of skilled labourers and eradicating race-based discrimination. The initial step of those regulatory changes was to revise the "non-sponsored class of immigrants" so that race and nationality would no longer be the factors used by Canada's immigration policy to determine a person's eligibility to enter the country. This immigration reform would be ground-breaking. In principle, it meant that for the first time in its history, Canadian immigration policy would cease to discriminate against a person based on race and country. Henceforth, there were no longer any stipulations for the "preferred countries" of immigrants. Instead, individuals were to be admitted to Canada based on their education, skills, training, or special qualifications that would likely assist them in successfully resettling in Canada.<sup>25</sup>

The second step of those regulatory immigration changes consisted of widening the class of "eligible relatives" who could be sponsored by Canadians for resettlement regardless of their country or age. In this area, Kelley and Trebilcock argue that the officials only took a "half-step" in implementing the change to the family sponsorship initiative. This lack of full implementation occurred because of race-based xenophobic fears over a flood of non-European relatives arriving in Canada. Such fears led the government to institute a clause in the modified immigration regulations that still discriminated on the grounds of nationality and race. Therefore, the clause reinforced that "whereas any [category of] Canadian could sponsor his or her parent, grandparent, spouse, or unmarried child under the



age of twenty-one...., only Canadians from preferred nations could sponsor children over the age of twenty-one, married children, siblings and their corresponding families, and unmarried orphaned nieces and nephews under the age of twenty-one.”<sup>26</sup>

After the regulatory changes in 1962, a White Paper on Immigration Policy was commissioned in 1966 by Jean Marchand, the minister of manpower and immigration,<sup>27</sup> which likewise focused on admitting into Canada independent, educated, highly skilled and trained immigrants, irrespective of colour, race or religion. Although this White Paper reaffirmed the importance of immigration to Canada’s economic growth, it opposed the idea of mass immigration, believing that Canada’s “national economic growth” would be assisted by creating a larger domestic market for locally produced items.<sup>28</sup> The White Paper created a great debate in Parliament and the media, which led the government to review its policy proposal. Consequently, the “Norms of Assessment” points system or simply the Points System, was introduced in 1967, which accomplished the same immigration reforms that the White Paper proposed, but in a more direct manner.<sup>29</sup>

Unlike the 1962 regulations, which allowed immigration officers wide discretionary latitude when interpreting and applying the regulatory criteria to potential immigrants, the 1967 Points System provided explicit standardized guidelines for selecting immigrants, thereby greatly curtailing the discretionary powers of immigration officers. The media welcomed this new policy since it vehemently criticized the White Paper for overemphasizing skilled labour to the detriment of other criteria for entry into Canada. Furthermore, in keeping with its objective to eradicate overt racist immigration policies, the government also amended the Assisted Passage Loan Scheme, which was formed to financially assist urgently required immigrants who could not afford to pay their passage to Canada.<sup>30</sup> From its inception in the 1950s, the Scheme only assisted Europeans to immigrate to Canada, but the amendment allowed its extension to non-white Caribbean immigrants, starting in 1966.<sup>31</sup> Beginning in 1967, loans were disbursed at a higher interest rate to non-white potential immigrants and only those with skills that Canada greatly needed.<sup>32</sup> Based on the preceding immigration reforms, ethnicity, race, or nationality would no longer decide who should be allowed to enter Canada. And henceforth, Black Barbadians and other Black people were eligible to enter Canada, as they were now to be assessed according to the same criteria used for Europeans and others.



Effects of Policy Changes on Black Barbadian Migration

The result of such changes was an increase in Black Barbadian migration to Canada since a major barrier was removed, especially with the introduction of the 1967 Points System. As Table 1 shows, the number of predominately Black Barbadians who migrated to Canada increased significantly starting in the mid-1960s.<sup>33</sup> Of the 1,006 and 1,364 Barbadians granted citizenship in 1975 and 1978 respectively, the majority migrated to Canada from 1966-1975. Before this period, very few Black Barbadians had entered the country.<sup>34</sup> From 1976 to 1990, there was a decline in Black Barbadians who migrated and were granted Canadian citizenship.<sup>35</sup> Though this period witnessed a downward trend in migration from Barbados to Canada, it was still a significant increase compared to earlier decades.

Table 1. Year and Number of Barbadians Granted Canadian Citizenship and Year of Arrival

Year Canadian citizenship granted to Barbadians	Number of Barbadians granted Canadian citizenship	Period new citizens arrived in Canada
1975	1006	781 arrived, 1966–70
		154 arrived, 1961–65
1978	1364	456 arrived, 1966–70
		744 arrived, 1971–75
		72 arrived, 1961–65
		59 arrived, 1976–78
1990	293	58 arrived, 1979–83
		133 arrived, 1984–88
		3 arrived 1989–90

Source: Data compiled from: Statistics Canada, *Canadian Citizenship Statistics, 1963–75*, April 1977, 16; Statistics Canada, *Canadian Citizenship Statistics, 1976–78*, October 1979, 20; Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada, *Canadian Citizenship Statistics, 1990*, n.d., 14–15.

Despite liberalized policies, Black people in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s would contend that Canada’s policies were still biased

against them. Barbadian migrant farm workers - semi or unskilled workers - were invited to work under some of the most arduous conditions. Unlike the Displaced Persons and Europeans who previously laboured in the same sector, they had little opportunity to permanently stay in Canada because of their contractual arrangement.<sup>36</sup> From the perspective of Black people, little changed besides formal policy. Nevertheless, despite the vexing issue of inequitable treatment by the Canadian immigration system, the migration of Black Barbadians increased noticeably between 1966 and 1975.

### Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program

The opportunity to secure employment as a migrant worker was the other factor contributing to Black Barbadians travelling to Canada in greater numbers within the first ten years of the island's independence in 1966 and beyond. Although their contracts only permitted temporary immigration, Barbadian migrant workers nevertheless opted to relocate because they saw it as a means to enhance their economic and social status and that of their families, given the high unemployment on the island. In the 1960s, unemployment in Barbados continued to be critically high, and the Barbadian government sought to rectify this for fear of the social problems that could be created. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, colonial governments wrestled with high unemployment on the island and encouraged, even facilitated, migration to mitigate the issue.<sup>37</sup> Fears of social problems due to unbridled unemployment materialized in the 1930s as unrest rocked Barbados and other British territories in the region.<sup>38</sup>

By the late 1960s, high unemployment in Barbados was exacerbated by the termination of the Canadian Caribbean domestic worker scheme on 1 January 1968.<sup>39</sup> The Barbadian government contacted the Canadian government and requested that the migrant worker's program be expanded and diversified so that more Black Barbadians could access jobs. Jobs in Britain were difficult to obtain since entry to the country was virtually closed to Black West Indians after the passage of the Commonwealth Immigrants Acts in 1962 and 1968.<sup>40</sup> Lyndon Johnson's administration's elimination of the Caribbean H2 program for most crops and the unsavoury working conditions for sugar cane workers in Florida dissuaded the Barbadian government from approaching the United States about expanding employment opportunities for Barbadians.<sup>41</sup>

Attempts to secure jobs in Canada for Barbadians did not abate. On 4 October 1974, Barbados' minister of housing, lands, labour and national insurance, Philip Greaves, and Canada's minister of manpower and immigration, Robert Andras, met in Ottawa to discuss employment opportunities in Canada for Barbadians. Mr. Greaves inquired whether the farm workers' program could expand beyond Ontario to create more employment opportunities to which Mr. Andras expressed uncertainty about any policy that prohibited the program's expansion.<sup>42</sup> He suggested that other employment opportunities for Barbadian workers may exist in forestry (which paid \$50–80 per day) and mining. However, Mr. Andras told Mr. Greaves that forestry conditions were "particularly difficult." Thus, people needed to be mentally and physically prepared to work. Mr. Greaves also inquired whether Barbadian nurses and hospitality workers could find employment in Canada in their respective fields, emphasizing that he recently found out that a hotel in Toronto had vacancies for over eighty maids. He also asked if the Canadian government would object to Barbados exploring employment opportunities for Barbadians in the hospitality arena. In response, Mr. Andras indicated that Canada would not object, but the onus would rest with Barbados to "take the initiative in this matter." Regarding Barbadian nurses finding nursing employment, he stated they should be "considered as candidates for landed immigrant status" because of the "nature of their work."<sup>43</sup> Due to Mr. Andras's remarks, Mr. Greaves likely left that meeting with the impression that Barbadians could secure employment in Canada, at least in nursing, hospitality, forestry, and mining.

Mr. Andras subsequently wrote Mr. Greaves, addressing his inquiries in greater detail. However, what he told Mr. Greaves in person, somewhat differed from the Canadian government's stance on foreigners' employment in such sectors. In a November 1974 letter, Mr. Andras informed Mr. Greaves that provincial and territorial authorities regulated the nursing profession and established the educational requirements. Therefore, those applying to work as registered nurses would need to have their qualifications assessed by the relevant provincial regulatory authority. Once deemed qualified, the prospective nurse would be "dealt with" as a professional nurse by immigration officials upon arrival. But those who did not meet the criteria for nursing certification and required additional training, could be credentialed as "nursing assistants for immigration purposes."<sup>44</sup> This practice of allowing Black West Indian nurses in particular

to function as nursing assistants was Canada's strategy of deskilling these women to meet its need for cheap labour, especially in hospitals that specialized in areas such as psychiatry, which whites avoided.<sup>45</sup> Mr. Andras failed, however, to inform Mr. Greaves that Canadian officials had already communicated to him that, generally, it was "found that nurses from Barbados [did] not have the academic background and/or depth of professional training required for full acceptance by the Nurses' Associations in most provinces."<sup>46</sup> Arguably, this piece of information was intentionally omitted from his letter to Mr. Greaves because he did not want to offend his Barbadian counterpart by letting him know that Canada only wanted foreign healthcare professionals to work in the semi-skilled areas of its healthcare sector since these Barbadian nurses, which Canadian nursing standards deemed unqualified, could still fill vacancies that whites refused to fill.

Regarding the hospitality sector, Mr. Andras told Mr. Greaves, "This Department has no specific program for the recruitment abroad of workers in hospitality-related occupations. Nevertheless, there has been a modest movement of experienced workers connected with Canadian hotel interests in the West Indies."<sup>47</sup> Mr. Andras told Mr. Greaves that it would be difficult for Barbadians to find employment in Canada's hospitality sector until a mechanism was put in place to recruit them. Approximately two years before the two met, Canada began to issue employment visas for migrant workers to temporary work in January 1973, which was done to satisfy Canadian employers' need for cheap labour. By the end of that year, over 80,000 visas were issued, with many going to Caribbean and Mexican workers.<sup>48</sup> In February 1975, "The Green Paper on Immigration Policy" was tabled in the House of Commons to address Canada's "national manpower problems," especially in some occupational fields. Volume one of the four-volume report argued that there was a great need for industrious immigrants willing to stay in semi-skilled or unskilled jobs, especially if those jobs were in remote areas and consisted of unappealing work conditions and low wages. In essence, immigrant workers were required to fill posts that Canadians were unwilling to fill, and they laboured, as this paper suggested, under arduous conditions in most, if not in all, cases because they signed up for unattractive work and low pay.<sup>49</sup>

Canadian employers, particularly in the agricultural sector, required labourers. They eventually looked to Barbados and the wider English-speaking Caribbean to meet their demands because they could

not fill vacancies with Canadians, who were virtually uninterested in such manual jobs. On the contrary, there was no appetite for recruiting professionals from the Caribbean, particularly for the medical profession, since medical organizations in Canada were in opposition because they felt that these professionals did not meet Canada's medical standards.<sup>50</sup> Initially, getting permission from the government to recruit West Indian labourers was difficult, but persistent lobbying by Caribbean governments and Canadian farmers eventually did lead to such a program. From 1947, the British Colonial Office had been petitioning Canada to receive West Indian farm labour, and such petitioning was followed by "similar overtures" made by the colonial governments of Jamaica, in 1952 and Barbados, in 1954.<sup>51</sup> In 1947, as the British Colonial Office lobbied on the Commonwealth Caribbean's behalf, Mr Guy Perrin, the labour commissioner of Barbados, likewise agitated for Barbadian migrant farm workers to work on Canadian farms. In a letter addressed to Canada's minister of labour, Mr. Perrin outlined how the Manpower Commission applauded the efforts of the 11,075 agricultural labourers sent from Barbados to the United States in the recent past, and he hoped that a "similar arrangement" could be made with Canada for seasonal Barbadian agricultural workers to work on Canadian farms. Despite the efforts of West Indian leaders like Mr. Perrin, Canadian officials remained resolute in not accepting West Indian migrant farm workers.<sup>52</sup>

In 1954, Barbadian officials tried to persuade their Canadian counterparts to accept temporary agricultural labourers from the island. On 1 June 1954, the House of Assembly in Barbados passed a resolution authorizing the governor to lead a delegation to Canada to discuss with the government the possibility of Barbadians temporarily migrating to work on Canadian farms. The House of Assembly's resolution was passed on to the Canadian minister of national health and welfare, then to the minister of labour, and finally, to the minister of citizenship and immigration. One month later, on 13 July, the Acting Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, in a letter to the minister of labour, strongly opposed temporary workers coming from Barbados unless it was an absolute necessity for them to come because such workers may refuse to return home at the end of their contracts.<sup>53</sup>

In August 1954, Barbados's minister of labour and the labour commissioner visited the Canadian Embassy in Washington, DC, and conversed with Canada's labour attaché, Mr. Pat Conroy. The Barbadian delegates disclosed to Mr. Conroy that the island was encountering

a problem with a growing excess of agricultural and domestic labour, and they hoped that Canada could help by accepting some of those workers. Mr. Conroy categorically told the Barbadian delegates that there was no general labour shortage in Canada's agricultural industry. By an interprovincial relocation of labour throughout the year, Canada could meet the seasonal labour demands of farmers. Mr. Conroy then informed the Barbadians of how the mechanization of the agriculture industry had been reducing the need for manual labourers, so no Barbadian migrant workers were needed in Canada. Indeed, mechanization reduced the reliance on human labour. However, Mr. Conroy was only partially truthful because in the United States, where automation was expanding, Black West Indians were still recruited for Florida's sugarcane fields. Like Canada, locals (in the United States' case, Black Americans) were unwilling to work in the fields, and they (Black Americans) were unwilling due to the chronic abuse and low pay.<sup>54</sup> Canada's lack of interest in Barbados's petition for its citizens to work temporarily on Canadian farms was based on Black people not being welcomed in Canada. In a 10 August 1954 letter to Mr. Conroy, a Canadian official argued that Canada's immigration policy did not encourage or provide the opportunity for Black West Indians to immigrate to Canada.<sup>55</sup>

Requests to accommodate West Indian farm workers did not come from West Indian interests alone but from Canadian stakeholders. In October 1952, the Department of Agriculture in Saskatchewan petitioned the Canadian government to admit seasonal West Indian farm workers. The petition, signed by L. J. Hutchison, director of the Farm Labour Division, and addressed to a director in the Canadian Department of Labour, articulated that Saskatchewan's farmers' demand for seasonal workers could be adequately appeased with West Indian labourers since those labourers would be "strictly agricultural" workers, which would result in them not defecting to the industrial sector, unlike some of their European predecessors. Similarly, in 1957, the newly established South-Western Ontario Field Crops Association and the Canada and Dominion Sugar Company Limited petitioned Canadian officials to allow West Indian agricultural labourers to come to Canada to work on their farms.<sup>56</sup>

The administrative secretary of the Ontario Field Crops Association and Dominion Sugar organization sent correspondence to the same director in the Department of Labour, conveying to him the organization's desire to have at its disposal a reliable "source of labour"

on an annual, long-term basis. To support its desire for foreign workers, the Association argued that there should be a reliable and available supply of labour for Canadian farmers. And that West Indian labourers should be the preferred choice because selecting and maintaining control over them would be easier than with other nationalities. Ontario Field Crops Association and Dominion Sugar's administrative secretary implored the Canadian government to implement a system for recruiting labourers from the English-speaking Caribbean.<sup>57</sup>

Throughout the 1960s, British West Indian officials made several requests to admit labourers from the territories into Canada. For example, in March 1960, a request from St. Kitts, Nevis, and Anguilla, was made to the Minister of Immigration, E. H. Fairclough, for citizens from these countries to be allowed into Canada as temporary workers. Similarly, the Jamaican government asked the Canadian government to allow Jamaican farm workers into Canada. Therefore, after several years of lobbying, on 31 March 1966, the Canadian government finally agreed to allow West Indian farm workers into Canada on a temporary, seasonal basis.<sup>58</sup> The West Indian migrant farm labour scheme started as a pilot, and based on the May 1966 negotiations between Canada and Jamaica, Jamaica became the first beneficiary country of the pilot program, with 263 Jamaicans being recruited to work on Canadian farms.<sup>59</sup> In March 1967, the program was extended to Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago.<sup>60</sup>

The inclusion of Barbadian workers in the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program occurred approximately six months after the island's independence on 30 November 1966, and those Barbadian workers viewed the migratory work exercise as an opportunity to improve the socio-economic status of their families and themselves. On 7 February 1975, Canada's assistant deputy minister of immigration, Jean W. Edmonds, sent his superior, A. E. Gotlieb, the deputy minister, a letter that gave a negative assessment of Barbados's socio-economic conditions; he also outlined the possible solutions required to remedy those conditions. He stated that the island's population of over 250,000 inhabitants and land size of 166 square miles made it "one of the most densely populated countries in the world." The island, continued Edmonds, had 1,400 residents per square mile, which tripled the density of Trinidad, and quadrupled that of Jamaica. He further asserted that the high birth rate exacerbated Barbados's issue of a high population density, and the accelerated population growth threatened the "economic output and employment policies" of the island and the



Caribbean in general. He concluded that a birth control program and immigration were measures to be used to help remedy Barbados's negative socio-economic outlook, for:

The central problem of economic development in these areas is to overcome the limitations posed by an unfavourable ratio of population to natural resources. A partial solution to the problem is immigration and in the past, population pressure has been relieved by the movements to other areas and particularly to Britain until 1961. A birth control program has been undertaken by Barbados but for some time to come the answer to the country's unemployment problem will be found in immigration.<sup>61</sup>

Mr. Edmonds then recounted the various avenues of employment Canada made available to Barbadians and other West Indians because of amendments to its immigration policies over time.<sup>62</sup> In essence, he painted a picture of a benevolent Canada that changed its restrictive, anti-Black immigration laws to assist an overpopulated, high unemployment Barbados and the wider region. However, Mr. Edmonds appears to have forgotten that it was the pressure from Canadian farmers and lobbying of West Indian governments that motivated the Canadian government to admit seasonal farm workers from the Caribbean, not Canada's desire to assist these overburdened countries. Likewise, even the Caribbean domestic worker program, instituted approximately ten years before the farm workers project, came about because upper- and middle-class Canadian families desired household helpers. Canadian authorities looked to the Caribbean for these workers because it was virtually impossible to source them locally or from Europe.

Even though permission was granted to admit West Indian farm workers, Canadian officials ensured that the transition process of the farm workers to Canada was still arduous. Ciprian Bolah contends that unlike the Caribbean domestic scheme, where the Canadian government paid all the upfront expenses to West Indian governments and domestics, the opposite occurred with the farm labour program since the employers paid the upfront costs. Bolah argues this was done not to "decrease the expenses of the farm workers, but to make the scheme as expensive as possible, thus severely reducing the number of [Black West Indian] foreign workers that would be recruited."<sup>63</sup>

Canadian officials seemed to desire the labour of Black Barbadians and West Indians but not their permanent presence in Canada. If

successive Canadian governments of that era wanted to assist Barbados with its overpopulation and high unemployment, they would have amended the farm worker's program to include a path to permanent residency. This notion of a path to Canadian permanent residency was not unrealistic since Canada had ample land for Barbadian migrant workers to settle on and ample farm work for these migrant workers to do. However, from the inception of the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program, Canadian authorities were not interested in allowing such workers to reside permanently in Canada. This was revealed in October 1966 when a request for Canadian permanent residency was made in the House of Commons on behalf of several Jamaican workers employed by a Canadian cannery. In response to that request, John Monroe, parliamentary secretary to the minister of manpower and immigration, contended that the migrant worker program was approved as a "special experiment to relieve a shortage of seasonal harvest labour in Ontario" and that "it was made clear to the government of Jamaica that the workers must return at the end of their contract and they could not use this as a means to gain immigration status."<sup>64</sup> Mr. Monroe, however, informed the Canadian government that if the workers were desirous of becoming immigrants, once they met the admissibility criteria, they would be admitted in the standard manner.<sup>65</sup> Therefore, Barbadian and all West Indian farm workers, who were predominately Black men, were being reminded of their race and place in Canada and the impact that it would have on the length of time allowed in the country. Indeed, their labour, which contributed to Canada's development, particularly in the agricultural sector, was most welcome. Still, they should never assume that their labour meant freedom to become part of the Canadian citizenry. Canadians were fearful of the Black male.<sup>66</sup> The path to citizenship was still reserved for those who could seamlessly absorb into Canada's vertical mosaic.

Table 2 provides an inconclusive record of Black Barbadians who migrated to Canada as seasonal agricultural workers between 1970 and 1990. It shows that migration was over one thousand workers annually on four occasions. Of note, Mr. Edmonds, in his February 1975 letter to Mr. Gotlieb, indicated that the island was undergoing a difficult economic time, and it should not be surprising that in 1975, over 1,000 Barbadians migrated as farm workers.

Table 2. Black Barbadians Agricultural Migration to Canada, 1970–1990.

Year of migration	Number of migrants
1970	307
1971	285
1973	743
1975	1068
1976	823
1977	745
1978	692
1979	716
1980	951
1981	858
1982	755
1983	553
1984	532
1985	547
1986	493
1987	582
1988	1108
1989	1101
1990	1018

Source: Barbados Department of Labour, *Annual Report 1970*, n.d., 12, 33; *Annual Report 1971*, n.d., 39; *Annual Report 1973*, n.d., 36; *Annual Report 1974*, n.d., 48; *Annual Report 1976*, n.d., 9; *Annual Report 1978*, n.d., 11; *Annual Report 1979*, n.d., 10; *Annual Report 1980*, n.d., 9; *Annual Report 1981*, n.d., 11, 41; *Annual Report 1982*, n.d., 41; *Annual Report 1983*, n.d., 41–42; *Annual Report 1984*, n.d., 44–45; *Annual Report 1985*, n.d., 46; *Annual Report 1986*, n.d., 12; *Annual Report 1987*, n.d., 12; *Annual Report 1988*, n.d., 9; *Annual Report 1989*, n.d., 13; *Annual Report 1990*, n.d., 14.

Barbadian migrant farm workers to Canada were motivated to improve their and their families' quality of life. Regardless of their

challenges, these migrant labourers sent some of their earnings back to Barbados. Regarding remittances, Mark Figueroa explores two motives that influenced the flow of remittances back to home countries: altruism and self-interest. And though it may have been typical for these motives to dictate the flow of funds, it is also possible for remitters to have a “combination of motives or motives that might be seen as mixed or lying between the two extremes of pure altruism and pure self-interest” that determined why money was remitted.<sup>67</sup> Regarding a purely altruistic motive, money was sent to assist family, friends, members of the community, or special causes in the home country. The pure altruistic motive, however, did not stop the remitter from sending money home to meet their personal needs.<sup>68</sup>

The importance of remittances to home countries should therefore not be underestimated, especially in the case of Barbados. In Barbados’s case, the lure of finding employment during a period of high unemployment on the island, and hence, being able to send back money to help family, friends, and themselves, motivated some Black Barbadians to migrate to Canada. Canada and the United States were seen as the two countries of economic hope for these migrants, and it should not be surprising that both countries were the source of 80% of the remittances to the region.<sup>69</sup> For as far back as the late nineteenth century, Barbadian authorities proposed that “every facility” be established for migrants to send back money to help offset the cost of their government sponsorship to Canada.<sup>70</sup> In the case of twentieth-century Black migrant farm workers, the scene from the United States shows that a fixed percent of gross earnings was mandatorily sent back to government-controlled accounts, which gave the authorities access to “hard currency.” This money was also used to incentivize workers to leave the United States and return home after the season since it would be forfeited if they did not.<sup>71</sup>

Some benefits that remittances brought to Barbados and other countries in the region included a reduction of poverty among poorer households since such households were more likely to receive remittances than middle-income families. Remittances also generated fiscal revenue for West Indian governments, increasing “consumption smoothing” and “support to financial stability.”<sup>72</sup> Regarding Barbados, C. A. Smith, and A. E. Gotlieb wrote in December 1973 and October 1974, expressing how important emigration and remittances were to Barbados’s socio-economic well-being. Mr. Smith, writing to the under-secretary of state in Ottawa, stated that immigration

from Barbados's perspective brought "relief from unemployment" on the island and a mechanism for gaining foreign exchange earnings through remittances sent back by migrants.<sup>73</sup>

Mr. Gotlieb, writing to the minister of manpower and immigration, Robert Andras, also said that immigration from Barbados was viewed as easing "chronic unemployment" and earning foreign exchange from remittances.<sup>74</sup> Even though both officials wrote just a year apart to different audiences, their sentiments highlighted the importance of emigration and remittances to Barbados's economy. They confirmed that Black Barbadians were willing to migrate and work on Canadian farms because there was virtually no opportunity on the island to improve their socio-economic status. Migration, therefore, was seemingly the only option left for those Barbadian migrants to achieve some sense of socio-economic mobility.

## Conclusion

Among those viewed as newcomers to Canada were Black Barbadians who migrated in greater numbers from the mid-1960s to 1990. But their migration would not have been possible had Canada not changed its anti-Black, restrictive immigration policies forged from racist perceptions of Black and other non-white peoples. Changes to Canada's immigration policies began in 1962 with the tabling of new and progressive immigration regulations in the House of Commons, which in part aimed to eradicate the racist criteria used for granting entry. The introduction of the 1967 Points System continued that change. Unlike the 1962 regulations that allowed immigration officers to use their discretion when interpreting and applying entry requirements widely, the Points System provided explicit standardized guidelines for selecting immigrants, thereby greatly restricting the discretionary powers of immigration officers. The effects were noticeable. More Black Barbadians choose to migrate to Canada than before because a major barrier was removed.

Black Barbadians also migrated to Canada because of the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program, which offered socio-economic mobility. Barbadian and Canadian officials held bilateral discussions on Barbadians obtaining employment in Canada as migrant farm workers to help ease the island's chronic high unemployment. In 1947 and 1954, Barbados reached out to Canada, hoping for an agreement on Barbadian migrant farm workers, but to no avail. The 1947 attempt

was outright rejected when the Canadian representative declared that Barbadian migrant farm workers were unnecessary. It was not until the mid-1960s that those discussions had much impact because Canada needed more workers. As a result, Black Barbadian men were permitted to enter Canada as migrant farm workers in 1967, the same year that the Points System was implemented.

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## Endnotes

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- 2 Ciprian Bolah, “Excellent Workers but Wrong Skin Colour: Canada’s Reluctance to Admit Caribbean People as Domestic and Farm Labourers” (MA thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 2014), 25–28, <https://harvest.usask.ca/>.
- 3 Bolah, “Excellent Workers,” 25–28.
- 4 Michele A. Johnson, “...not likely to do well or be an asset to the country”: Canadian Restrictions on Black Female Caribbean Domestic Workers, 1910 – 1955,” in *Unsettling the Great White North: Black Canadian History*, ed. Michele A. Johnson and Funke Aladejebi (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022), 299–300, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00722011.2022.2148055>.
- 5 Robin Winks, *The Blacks in Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1971), 440. Winks also points out that Caribbean domestics, like their European predecessors, viewed the scheme as a steppingstone to better employment and self-improvement.

- 6 Johnson, "...not likely to do well," 288.
- 7 Johnson, 300.
- 8 Bolah, "Excellent Workers," 53.
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- 11 For more on Christopher Taylor's views concerning the roles of Black Barbadian autonomy, the Barbadian government initiatives, and other push factors that contributed to Black Barbadian migration, see *Flyin Fish in the Great White North: The Autonomous Migration of Black Barbadians* (Halifax: Fernwood Press, 2016), chap. 3.
- 12 Barrington Walker, *Race on Trial: Black Defendants in Ontario's Criminal Courts, 1858–1958* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 3.
- 13 Sunera Thobani, *Exalted Subjects: Studies in the Making of Race and Nation in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 4–7.
- 14 Philomena Essed, "Everyday Racism: A New Approach to the Story of Racism," in *Race Critical Theories*, ed. Philomena Essed and David Theo Goldberg (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 177–78, 185, 190.
- 15 Thobani, *Exalted Subjects*, 6.
- 16 Cecil Foster, prologue to *Blackness and Modernity: The Colour of Humanity and the Quest for Freedom* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), xxii–xxiii.
- 17 For more on this "unattractive" nursing work, see Agnes Calliste's, "Women of 'Exceptional Merit': Immigration of Caribbean Nurses to Canada," *Canadian Journal of Women and Law* 6, no. 1 (June 1993): 95, <https://heinonline-org.proxy.queensu.ca/>; and Carieta Thomas and Naomi Lightman's, "'Island Girls': Caribbean Women Care Workers in Canada," *Canadian Ethnic Studies Journal* 54, no. 1 (Spring 2022): 31–34, <https://go-gale-com.proxy.queensu.ca/>.
- 18 Thomas and Lightman, "Island Girls," 31; Angés Calliste, "Race, Gender and Canadian Immigration Policy: Blacks from the Caribbean, 1900–1932," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 28, no. 4 (Winter 1993–1994): 142–144, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/673870/summary>. These articles suggested and highlighted that rigorous manual labour was considered men's work, while domestic and care giving were deemed "women's work."
- 19 Donald Moore, *Don Moore: An Autobiography*, (Toronto: Williams-Wallace Publishers Inc., 1985), 105; Sheldon Taylor, *Bromley: Tireless Champion for Just Causes, Memoirs of Bromley L. Armstrong*, (Pickering, ON: Vitabu Publishing, 2000), 110–11.
- 20 Johnson, "...not likely to do well," 281–83, 290–93.
- 21 Avery, *Reluctant Host*, 204.



- 22 Avery, 204.
- 23 Robert Vineberg, "The Winds of Change: Ellen Fairclough and the Removal of Discriminatory Immigration Barriers," in *Reassessing the Rogue Tory: Canadian Foreign Relations in the Diefenbaker era*, ed. Janice Cavehill and Ryan M. Touhey (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2018), 193, <https://books-scholarsportal-info.proxy.queensu.ca/>.
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- 25 Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 332.
- 26 Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 332–33.
- 27 Kelley and Trebilcock, 353.
- 28 Avery, *Reluctant Host*, 179.
- 29 Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 358.
- 30 Kelley and Trebilcock, 360.
- 31 Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 360. These West Indians are presumed to be non-white because prior to its amendment, the Assisted Passage Loan Scheme was initiated to only assist European (white) migrants with their passage to Canada. Therefore, it can be assumed that the extension of the Scheme to include Caribbean immigrants, more than likely meant non-white Caribbean immigrants, because historically, non-whites did not have access same sums of finances as their white counterparts, and their entrance to Canada was also highly regulated and restricted.
- 32 Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 358–360.
- 33 Even though Statistics Canada, *Canadian Citizenship Statistics* does not categorize these Barbadians by race, the terms "predominately" and "Black" are used because Black people were/are numerically the dominant race on the island, hence, it is deduced that they were the likely source of the increased migration. More importantly, unlike their Black counterparts, white Barbadians were permitted into Canada with few, if any, immigration obstacles since Canada had a "long standing practice to deal favourably with the white race from the British West Indies...." (Avery, *Reluctant Host*, 204). They did not have to wait on immigration reforms to enter the country hence, they were unlikely the source of such an increase in migration. Last, Barbadians of South Asian descent were likewise unlikely responsible for such increases in migration since they were a very small demographic of the island's population.
- 34 According to Statistics Canada, *Canadian Citizenship Statistics*, 1976–78, which indicates that for the 35-year span, 1931–1965, of the 1,364 Bar-

- badians granted Canadian Citizenship in 1978, only 105 had migrated between 1931–1965.
- 35 See Statistics Canada, *Canadian Citizenship Statistics, 1976–78*, and years 1982 to 1990, for this trend.
- 36 Avery, *Reluctant Host*, 203.
- 37 Taylor, *Flyin Fish*, 142–45. Claudine Bonner, “Likely to become a public charge”: Examining Black Migration to Eastern Canada, 1900–1930,” in Johnson and Aladejebi, *Unsettling the Great White North*, 259–266.
- 38 F. K. Donnelly, “Clement Payne and the Barbados Riots of 1937,” *Labour History Review* 55, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 35–37, <https://web-s-ebscohost-com.proxy.queensu.ca/>; Adam Ewing, “Caribbean labour politics in the age of Garvey, 1918–1938,” *Race & Class* 55, no. 1 (2013): 35–37, <https://doi-org.proxy.queensu.ca/>.
- 39 Bolah, “Excellent Workers,” 53.
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- 43 LAC, RG 76, file 5850-3-555, Department of External Affairs, Ottawa, 15 October 1974.
- 44 LAC, RG 76, file 5850-3-555, The Honourable Philip Greaves, 7 November 1974.
- 45 Agnes Calliste, “Women of ‘Exceptional Merit,’” 95.
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- 48 Avery, *Reluctant Host*, 187.
- 49 Avery, 187–188.
- 50 Kelley, and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 317–18, 357–58.
- 51 James Braun, “Respectable Subjects: The Commonwealth Caribbean Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program in Postcolonial Context” (MA thesis, Carleton University, 2012), 65, <https://search-proquest-com.proxy.queensu.ca/>.
- 52 Bolah, “Excellent Workers,” 62.
- 53 Bolah, 63–64.
- 54 Terry McCoy, “The Ambiguities of U.S. Temporary Foreign Worker Policy,” *Population Research and Policy Review* 4, no. 1 (Feb. 1985): 35–39,

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- 55 Bolah, "Excellent Workers," 64–65.
  - 56 Bolah, 66.
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  - 59 Braun, "Respectable Subjects," 71.
  - 60 Bolah, "Excellent Workers," 80.
  - 61 LAC, RG 76, file 5850-3-555, M & I Representation in Barbados, 7 February 1975.
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  - 70 Taylor, *Flyin Fish*, 142. Taylor states it is unknown whether these migrants were Black or white but infers that they were white, since Canada virtually barred Black immigration until the mid-twentieth century.
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  - 72 Kimberly Beaton, et.al., "Migration and Remittances in Latin America and the Caribbean: Engines of Growth and Macroeconomic Stabilizers?" (Working Paper /17/144, Western Hemisphere Department, International Monetary Fund, 9 August 2017), <https://papers.ssrn.com/>.
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