

Locating Diaspora: Afro-Caribbean Narratives of Migration and Settlement in Toronto, 1914–1929

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Article abstract

This article examines the experiences of Afro-Caribbeans in Toronto in the early twentieth century. It identifies and analyzes the practices and processes of diaspora at the local level and considers ways in which discourses of community, nation, and race travelled between sites and across borders. In so doing, it investigates the ways in which immigrant identities were constituted, contested, and reformulated in the tension between local experience and diasporic consciousness. As well, it evaluates how borders shaped the contours of trans-local and transnational communities. By extrapolating from individual histories, this article identifies several key features, institutions, processes, and practices that defined the Afro-Caribbean experience in Toronto and informed local engagements with global black and West Indian diasporas. These factors include encounters with discrimination, employment patterns, social relations, and organizations like Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association. By "locating diaspora" in Toronto, this article elucidates the intersection and ongoing dialectics between the local and the global, and illustrates the significance of borders in shaping migration networks and constituting diasporic communities.

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This article examines the experiences of Afro-Caribbeans in Toronto in the early twentieth century. It identifies and analyzes the practices and processes of diaspora at the local level and considers ways in which discourses of community, nation, and race travelled between sites and across borders. In so doing, it investigates the ways in which immigrant identities were constituted, contested, and reformulated in the tension between local experience and diasporic consciousness. As well, it evaluates how borders shaped the contours of trans-local and transnational communities. By extrapolating from individual histories, this article identifies several key features, institutions, processes, and practices that defined the Afro-Caribbean experience in Toronto and informed local engagements with global black and West Indian diasporas. These factors include encounters with discrimination, employment patterns, social relations, and organizations like Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association. By "locating diaspora" in Toronto, this article elucidates the intersection and ongoing dialectics between the local and the global, and illustrates the significance of borders in shaping migration networks and constituting diasporic communities.

Cet article considère l'expérience afro-caribéenne à Toronto au début du vingtième siècle. L'analyse se concentre sur l'identification des processus de création de la diaspora ainsi que ses pratiques afin d'étudier la circulation de discours communautaires, nationaux et raciaux entre différents sites et à travers les frontières. L'éclairage de la tension entre l'expérience locale et la conscience de l'appartenance à la diaspora permet d'enquêter sur la manière dont les identités migrantes sont constituées, contestées et re-formulées. Se faisant, l'analyse évalue l'influence de différentes frontières (nationale, culturelle, sociale) sur la constitution d'identités trans-locales et transnationales. Construit à partir de récits individuels, cet article identifie les principaux traits, institutions, processus et pratiques qui définissent l'expérience afro-caribéenne à Toronto et qui informent les relations de cette communauté locale avec les diasporas noires et caribéennes mondiales. Les facteurs clés de la construction identitaire sont, entre autres, l'expérience de la discrimination, le marché du travail, la sociabilité, ainsi que des organismes comme l'Universal Negro Improvement Association de Marcus Garvey. Cet article s'inscrit pleinement dans une dialectique entre le global et le local. Il « localise la diaspora », afin de démontrer l'importance de différentes frontières dans la création de réseaux migrants et la construction identitaire au sein de la diaspora.

The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity; we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of near and far, of the side-by-side, of the disperse.¹

—Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 1986

So would I live in rich imperial growth, / Touching the surface and the depth of things, / Instinctively responsive unto both, / Tasting the sweets of being and the stings, / Sensing the subtle spell of changing forms, / Like a strong tree against a thousand storms.²

—Claude McKay, "Like a Strong Tree," 1925

In 1914, just before his sixteenth birthday, Harry Gairey set out for Canada from his home in Cuba with two male friends in search of adventure. His emigration "wasn't a matter of a better life," Gairey recalled, "because as it was, I was living a fairly good life." Born in Jamaica in 1898, Gairey and his newly remarried mother had moved to Cuba in the early 1900s after his father's death. In Cuba, young Gairey got his first job in a sugar mill, earning about one dollar for each twelve-hour shift that he worked. After a year or two in the mill, he grew restless and yearned to see more of the world. Enlisting a couple of close friends, he expectantly departed for North America. Leaving Ensenada de Mora, Gairey and his companions took a boat to Santiago; from there, they took a train to Antilla, then a ship to New York. In New York City, they boarded the train that would take them into Toronto, where Gairey would resettle permanently.³

Gairey didn't say why he chose Canada as his ultimate destination; perhaps he had not intended to stay. However, his impressions of the United States and its racial antagonisms, oppression, and violent conflagrations give some indication of why he continued north into Canada. His decision to cross the border is also revealing about popular (mis) conceptions of Canada as a racially inclusive country of relative tolerance vis-à-vis the United States. Indeed, many West Indians "had left or by-passed the United States . . . simply to avoid racism which was regarded as an especially American affliction."⁴ During a brief stopover in New York City in 1914, where the men transferred from sea to rail transportation, Gairey's friends chose to explore the city but, as he put it, "I didn't move, because I'd heard about the States, how they kill people, black people in particular."⁵ Gairey was keen to get to Toronto, largely, it appears, because he assumed that there he would face a less virulent form of racism and discrimination than in the United States, or perhaps

even avoid it entirely.⁶ At that time, Toronto was growing rapidly, with developing industries that offered at least the potential for opportunity among newly arriving immigrants. Whatever his reasons for choosing Canada, Gairey would find circumstances in Toronto to be remarkably different from those he had left behind in the Caribbean.

Gairey arrived in Toronto in August, and went directly to a boarding house run by an African-American woman and her Bermudian husband. Finding the rooms all occupied, the three young men instead secured lodging at another house run by a Jamaican woman, Mrs. Renwick, and her husband. The men quickly encountered racial discrimination when they began their search for employment, discovering that in Toronto they would be denied work on the basis of their skin colour. When Gairey applied for a job as a cigar maker on Front Street, he was told the employer had “no job for coloured people.” He was also denied a position “on one of the boats” for the same reason. Finally, Gairey was hired to work for the railroads, one of the few positions available to black people in Toronto at the time. “I never turned anywhere else,” Gairey recalled. “Never bothered, because I knew I was blocked everywhere I went; it was no use to butt my head against a stone wall. I’d have a railroad job and I’d make the best of it.”⁷

Gairey’s migration experience and the circumstances of his resettlement in Toronto echo those of other anglophone West Indians who left their island-homelands in the 1910s and 1920s. Unlike Gairey, who attributed his emigration to adolescent yearnings, many of them were drawn north in search of work and the chance to improve their positions and provide for their families. While Gairey passed only through New York on his way to Toronto, others took more circuitous routes through Central America and the Caribbean, the United States, Canada, and England. Indeed, mobility was a central feature of the lives of many Afro-Caribbean immigrants who, during and after the First World War, secured work contracts, followed friends and family, or sought new experiences and opportunities outside of the Caribbean. Dudley Marshall, born in Barbados in 1895, immigrated first to Sydney, Nova Scotia, in 1913 to work in the coal mines. While a number of his friends and co-workers followed established networks south to the United States, Marshall took the road less travelled and re-settled in Toronto in the spring of 1916.⁸ Claire Clarke’s father Henry followed a similar route, leaving his family behind in Barbados in the mid-1910s to work in the mines in Nova Scotia. In 1921, he sent for his wife and two daughters and resettled in Toronto, where he found work with Dominion Foundries (later Canada Iron).⁹ Donald Moore saved his money by “raking and scraping” in Barbados, and left for the United States in May 1912. He lived in New York, Montreal, and Halifax before settling permanently in Toronto.¹⁰ Daniel Braithwaite was born in Sydney, Nova Scotia, in 1919 to Barbadian parents who had also left the Caribbean for the promise of work and a better life. In 1927, he too would settle in Toronto.¹¹

Prior to the onset of the Great Depression in 1929, Afro-Caribbeans were migrating in large numbers to American cities. In New York, a thriving West Indian community formed the epicentre of black nationalism and catapulted the “New Negro” voices of the Harlem Renaissance to national and global stages. The West Indian immigrant enclaves that characterized New York City neighbourhoods were largely absent from Toronto until mid-century, yet the two cities were intimately connected through diaspora.¹² In the early 1920s, West Indians arriving from

Halifax, Montreal, New York, Central and South America, and directly from the Caribbean found a small but growing black population in Toronto (West Indian, African, American, and Canadian). In 1921, there were 4,270 West Indians in Canada, 1,778 of whom lived in Ontario.¹³ With the majority moving to urban centres, the level of black urbanization rose to 11 per cent above the national average.¹⁴ Demographic patterns for Afro-Caribbeans in Canada during this period paralleled those of black Canadians, increasing numbers of whom were resettling in Canadian cities.¹⁵ The 1921 figures indicate that there were 1,236 black people living in Toronto, a city of just over half a million total inhabitants.¹⁶ Ten years later, the 1931 census reported that West Indians comprised 7.5 per cent of the black population in Canada; Canadians and Americans made up 79.6 per cent and 11.4 percent, respectively.¹⁷ While these numbers had grown significantly since the dawn of the twentieth century, the black population in Toronto would not exceed 3,000 until the mid-1960s, when the impediments to immigration were repealed and the gates were opened to previously restricted groups.¹⁸ Despite their relatively modest numbers, the arrival of Afro-Caribbeans to the area did not go unnoticed. As historian Keith Henry suggests, by 1919 “the West Indian presence in Toronto was unmistakable.”¹⁹ Many of those who did settle permanently in Toronto remained actively engaged in the Caribbean and black diasporas in North America. This makes 1920s Toronto a particularly interesting place to study the black immigrant experience, for with a population much smaller than that of New York, Afro-Caribbeans in Toronto faced unique conditions that forced them to come to terms with their new environment, communities, and identifications in ways that were different from those elsewhere in the diaspora. Still, through trans-local and transnational networks, immigrants engaged the diaspora and participated in a global community beyond the physical borders of the city and nation.²⁰

In the following pages, this essay explores the relationship (indeed, tension) between the local and the diasporic in the constitution of Caribbean immigrant identities. It considers anglophone West Indians who settled in Toronto in the early twentieth century, evaluating their local experiences as well as their relationships to the Caribbean and black diasporas in North America. At the centre of this analysis are the handful of people cited above, whose narratives shed light on how immigrant identities and identifications were made, contested, and reformulated in the tension between diasporic consciousness and local experience. While each story is in some respects unique, these migration narratives reflect broader transnational migration patterns and the formations of West Indian and black diasporas in North America. In the 1910s and 1920s, Afro-Caribbeans migrated in increasing numbers to New York, Nova Scotia, Montreal, and Toronto, often moving back and forth from the Caribbean and between U.S. and Canadian cities.²¹ Within these transnational diasporic networks, localities became prominent factors in the formulation of identity as immigrants encountered new ideas, discourses, and knowledge systems in their respective cities. This study of Toronto’s Afro-Caribbean immigrant population addresses the ways in which “the local” and “the global” might be analyzed and “understood as cultural categories implicated in the production” of identity.²² It considers the local resonances of global diasporic processes and practices, and identifies how borders shaped the contours of transnational communities.²³

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As part of a larger project on the Caribbean diaspora in North American cities, this preliminary study of Toronto's early-twentieth-century Caribbean immigrants demonstrates how a diasporic approach that is sensitive to the interplay between the local and transnational sheds new light on the processes and practices of migration and diaspora. Indeed, as Jacqueline Brown writes in her study of the geographies of race in Liverpool, "the very histories that produced a 'global' Black world . . . find themselves reverberating in a space ideologically defined as 'local.'"²⁴ By situating individual narratives within broader historical processes, this article identifies and evaluates the ways in which immigrants responded to local circumstances *through* which they participated in the production and expression of a global community. In so doing, it grounds the traditionally abstracted diasporic process in lived experience and individual consciousness. This essay employs diaspora not only as a condition or position, but also as a process and set of practices, paying particular attention to the ways in which discourses of community, nation, and race travel between sites and across borders.²⁵ Particularly crucial here is Brent Edwards's notion of *décalage* and the articulation by which gaps and discrepancies between groups are negotiated and bridged.²⁶ The process of diaspora locates territorially unbound or geographically diffused cultures and groups in a manner that amalgamates and reconciles myriad local experiences with shared group identifications. By focusing on Afro-Caribbeans in Toronto, this study considers the factors, practices, and processes that informed local engagements with diasporic community. These factors include encounters with discrimination, employment, social relations, community leaders, and organizations like Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association, through which individuals achieved unity amid difference and negotiated discrepancies and dissonances. The process of diaspora, as mediated through the local, was defined "not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity."²⁷

By identifying Toronto as an important site in early-twentieth-century Afro-Caribbean migration networks, this study inserts Canada into conceptions of the West Indian diaspora in North America and the "black Atlantic," and in the global black (inter)nationalist movements after the Second World War. Canada has been largely absent from historiographical discussions of the West Indian and black diasporas in this period, overshadowed in large part by a dominant American discourse that has been the singular explanatory paradigm for race in North America and arguably throughout the Atlantic world. In many contexts, "black" has erroneously come to be equated exclusively with "African American," thereby downplaying or erasing entirely intra-racial difference. Louis Chude-Sokei rightly argues that non-African American blacks "find their cultural distinctiveness and their differential colonial histories and racial orientations marginalized and erased by the African American zeal to articulate a race-based solidarity in their own specific terms and according to their own cultural priorities."²⁸ The U.S. framework, however, cannot be so easily transported and indiscriminately applied. As Rinaldo Walcott asserts, conversations about blackness in Canada have been hindered by the proximity to and influence of the United States on Canada and by the "dominance and impact of American cultural production on Canada."²⁹ Often overlooked are the ways in which varying local and national circumstances contribute to differing formations and conceptions of racial and diasporic identity.³⁰

This project aims to correct that oversight, elucidating how varying local, national, and imperial contexts provided different sets of referents and identifications through which migrants continuously reconstruct their relationship to the diaspora.

Ultimately, this research seeks to address the "vertigo of intrdiasporic communication" and the attendant cultural and geographic differences as well as commonalities.³¹ It heeds Walcott's call that "those who make diasporic claims of understanding and intimacy need to pay attention to the specific concerns of various groups within a given nation while making their transnational argument."³² While there is much in common between the West Indian immigrant experiences in the United States and Canada, important differences must be taken into account. As individual Afro-Caribbean immigrants in early-twentieth-century Toronto were continuously negotiating identifications in and through the diaspora, they were also entrenched in local (and indeed, trans-local) lives. By extrapolating from individual histories, we can identify several key features, institutions, and patterns that defined the West Indian experience in Toronto in this era while simultaneously promoting an uneasy internationalism. These individuals operated at the intersection of the local, the national, and the global, navigating a complex dialectic between the circumstances and demands of local environments and a diasporic community always in process.

Anglophone West Indians were compelled to migrate through the Caribbean and Latin America and on to their respective North American destinations. The move to Canada could "be attributed to economics and politics" and "the yearnings for a higher standard of living and political freedom."³³ One Jamaican woman recalled a conversation with her mother in the 1920s, who told her that they were leaving their Caribbean home because "dem money grow pon tree in Canada."³⁴ Barbadians Dudley Marshall and Henry Clarke were among the many who left their island homelands around the time of the First World War (often without their families) under contract to work in the coal mines in Sydney, Nova Scotia.³⁵ From there, many followed established migration networks to Montreal, Toronto, and New York City. Marshall, who immigrated to Sydney in 1913, was joined by his son in Toronto in 1916.³⁶ Clarke, who in his mid-twenties left his family behind temporarily in Barbados, spent several years in Sydney before sending for his family from Toronto in 1921, when Claire was only eight years old.³⁷ Daniel Braithwaite was born in Sydney in 1919 to parents who had immigrated from Jamaica. He moved to Toronto in 1927.³⁸ While many saw emigration as a temporary sojourn abroad, not everyone returned home. Donald Moore recalled, "It is the dream of every Barbadian, upon leaving the island as an emigrant, that he return within three years, well shod and with enough money to take up the life of a gentleman." After moving around between North American cities, Moore would spend the remainder of his life in Toronto, not even returning to visit Barbados until nearly a half-century after he had left. He reflected decades later that the emigrant Barbadian "might stretch his absence to four or five years at the very most, but forty-four years?"³⁹ By the 1920s, these individuals, and numerous others like them, had decided upon permanent settlement in Toronto, the site of a small but growing black population composed of Afro-Caribbeans, Afro-Americans, and Afro-Canadians.

The first site at which Afro-Caribbeans encountered the Canadian state was at the border, often not the most inviting or welcoming of

places. Austin Clarke later recalled, "Discrimination against black West Indian immigrants starts before they ever get to Canada."⁴⁰ From the 1890s, immigration officials in Canada "operated under instructions from Ottawa to do all they could to discourage blacks from entering Canada."⁴¹ In the early twentieth century, immigration policy further empowered officials at the border to discriminate against and turn away "undesirable" arrivals, again without officially identifying or formally targeting any specific group. However, a series of acts stipulated a vague and subjective set of standards and variables by which a Canadian border official might refuse entry. The Immigration Act of 1906 "prohibited the landing on Canadian soil of the 'feeble-minded,' the 'destitute,' 'paupers,' 'beggars,' and 'anyone likely to become a public charge.'"⁴² This 1906 act was a product of a very public ethnocentrism and xenophobia endemic among Canadian politicians at the time.⁴³ Four years later, the federal government took the restrictions a step further and empowered the governor-in-council to prohibit entry to "any race deemed unsuitable to the climate or requirements of Canada, or of immigrants of any specified class, occupation or character."⁴⁴ In 1911, the minister of the interior "interpreted this to mean that the 'negro race' could be banned because of climatic unsuitability."⁴⁵ The Liberal government prepared an order-in-council that same year, which, had it been passed, would have prohibited black immigration for one year.⁴⁶ By 1912, the Great Northern Railroad refused to issue tickets to black people coming as either visitors or immigrants.⁴⁷ The successive acts of 1906 and 1910 and their subsequent interpretation and enforcement not only enabled a more selective admittance practice, but also discouraged, dissuaded, and discriminated against the perceived intrusion of racialized groups such as Afro-Caribbeans. Indeed, Canada "accepted as absolute truths international stereotypes about blacks" and acted upon them to maintain what was understood to be the racial integrity of the nation.⁴⁸ The privileging of "white" immigrants at the Canadian border would largely go unchanged until the 1960s.

Despite an immigration policy and practice generally unfavourable to peoples of African descent, significant numbers of Afro-Caribbeans did manage to cross the border into Canada. While from 1900 to 1909 only 374 West Indians were recorded entering Canada, that number had risen precipitously in the 1910s to 1,133. Those numbers declined again in the 1920s, and would remain relatively low until after the Second World War.⁴⁹ In part, the admittance of West Indians was facilitated by a Crown policy that exempted people from restriction who went to Canada as domestics or railway workers.⁵⁰ Like Dudley Marshall and Henry Clarke, West Indians contracted to work in the Nova Scotian mines also gained entry into Canada. This was a particularly frequent occurrence during the First World War, when labourers were needed to support accelerated wartime production and economic growth. Others were sponsored by relatives already living in Canada, as was the case of Violet Blackman, who joined her cousin in Toronto and immediately went to work as a nursemaid. To get to Canada, Blackman explained years later, "You had to have someone sponsor you, even if you were paying your own way, which I did."⁵¹ Austin Clarke reflected, "The only black people freely admitted to Canada as landed immigrants [were] a limited number of women, who must accept the undignified classification of domestic servants, plus a few persons hand-picked by Canadian authorities because they [had] professions or special skills needed by Canada."⁵² Migrants from the British West Indies who

were refused entry into Canada protested on the basis that they were British nationals moving within imperial networks from one country to another. They learned, however, that Canada, the United States, and Britain were each racially cast in ways that excluded peoples of African descent from full and unconditional acceptance into national and local communities. Because labourers were needed to meet the demands of industrial production, they were reluctantly admitted into Canada.⁵³ As Gairey, Marshall, Clarke, and others would learn, race would play an increasingly salient—and often limiting—role in their integration into and experiences in Toronto, restricting their search for employment, their social relations, and indeed all aspects of their lives. Encountering new racial discourses and confronting discrimination, they found their immigrant identifications and identities remade in myriad ways in the process of migration and resettlement, often in forms that would profoundly affect their relationships to one another and the broader diaspora through North America and the Atlantic world.

In terms of physical space and settlement patterns, West Indians faced exclusion and discrimination but did not find the same rigid spatial segregation in Toronto that characterized many U.S. cities in the early twentieth century.⁵⁴ Though the social centre of Toronto's black communities was concentrated downtown in the College Street and Spadina Avenue area, residences were scattered more broadly across the city in an area bordered by Bloor Street on the north, the waterfront on the south, and Lansdowne and Sherbourne in the west and east, respectively.⁵⁵ While black immigrants did indeed encounter racial boundaries in early-twentieth-century Toronto, "overt violence was rare, public racism rarely systematic, and the challenge and menace of a racist ideology articulated by powerful political interests were . . . less explicit."⁵⁶ This may have been in part the result of the relatively small numbers of Afro-Caribbeans and Afro-Canadians in Toronto at the time. Upon her arrival from Jamaica in 1920, Violet Blackman was immediately struck by the modest black presence in the city. "Coloured people" were "a novelty," she recalls. "Oh, it was altogether different."⁵⁷ Harry Gairey made a similar observation of Toronto in 1914, noting, "There weren't many blacks here at the time."⁵⁸ Claire Clarke remembered, "You could find any black person you were looking for if you went to College and Spadina and asked . . . People knew where everybody else could be found, you know."⁵⁹ Clarke believed that Canada did not have the same virulent race problems as did its southern neighbour because it "didn't have that many people to deal with. And they could just brush [us] aside . . . We weren't a problem to Canada. We were here, but we didn't make our presence known practically . . . In the States it was a little different."⁶⁰

Still, and perhaps contrary to their expectations, Afro-Caribbeans were subjected to marginalization and discrimination in Toronto on the basis of ascribed racial identities. From their initial searches for housing, black immigrants were confronted by a racial order that severely restricted their options. According to Clarke, "English people" were reluctant to rent living space to newly arrived West Indians in the city. Instead, she and her family found that Jewish residents were among the few that would offer them accommodations. "So we've come along with that attachment [to] Jewish people . . . We've had that bond with them for a long time in Canada."⁶¹ Her first home in Toronto was above a furniture store on Queen Street, where she, her sister, and her parents lived until

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her father bought a house several blocks to the north on Robinson Street. Blackman too found that “the most that you could get a room or anything to rent from was the Jews. You couldn’t get from any other nationalities to rent as a black person from but the Jews . . . They were people that were persecuted too.”⁶² Donald Moore echoed similar sentiments, noting how “the West Indian newcomer, especially a man, would be lucky to secure rooms or flats in the attics or upper floors of Jewish householders” in Toronto.⁶³ “You know,” Clarke reflected years later, “Canada speaks of its no discrimination . . . but they don’t ask the right people.”⁶⁴ Moore agreed, reflecting on how his “real education” had begun when he encountered racial discrimination in both U.S. and Canadian cities. “Until then,” he added, “I had not given much thought to being born black or white, Gentile or Jew.”⁶⁵ Stanley Grizzle recalled being subjected to name-calling and identified by such terms as “nigger, darky, coon, coloured or negro.” Worst of all, he explained, was to be labelled “black” because “it had connotations of being colonials, powerlessness, weakness, [and] evil.”⁶⁶

As in areas of the United States, patterns and practices of segregation delineated the physical boundaries of race in schools, restaurants, theatres, and hotels in Toronto and throughout Canada.⁶⁷ In 1924, an Ontario court empowered proprietors to restrict access according to colour, a case that “proved that racial discrimination was not” illegal. Instead, “agents of discrimination would, in fact, be protected by Canadian law.”⁶⁸ In many ways, the racial discourse in Canada was similar to that of the U.S. in the early twentieth century in that each subscribed to the bifurcation of race into oppositional and mutually exclusive categories of colour. “Black” served as a superficially homogenizing category that essentialized race and fuelled discrimination against an eclectic population of people from Toronto to Kingston, Sydney to Bridgetown. Peoples of African descent were “often treated as a homogenous group in Canadian society,” and skin colour was “assumed to override all attributes of their human individuality.”⁶⁹ Discrimination might not always have been explicitly violent or rigidly uniform, but it was frequently encountered nevertheless as Afro-Caribbean immigrants came face-to-face with an unfamiliar racial order in Toronto.

Such discrimination also pervaded employment and severely limited job options for Afro-Caribbeans and Afro-Canadians alike. Segregation in employment was “the most obvious feature of Canadian discrimination.”⁷⁰ “We had a terrific time for the blacks to get any place in the city,” Dudley Marshall explained. “You could have a university degree, and the only job you could get here was on the railroad.”⁷¹ Grizzle shared a similar experience, explaining that service jobs were among those few available to blacks in the city. Hotels, for example, hired black men to work the shoeshine stands, while black women were charged with cleaning the washrooms. “While walking through the city looking for work,” Grizzle recalled, “I was often advised to go down to the railways and was told ‘They are hiring your people.’ As under-employed or unemployed black men we provided the railway companies with a willing pool of cheap labour.”⁷² Violet Blackman worked as a domestic for years because that was the only work she could get. “You couldn’t get office work and factory and hospital work and things like that,” she remembered. “They would not give you the job on account of the colour of your skin.”⁷³ Indeed, employment opportunities for blacks were severely restricted, leaving men to work as labourers, janitors, waiters,

barbers, and railway porters, while women “found themselves trapped in job ghettos with even less chance of upward mobility.”⁷⁴

While racial hierarchies of Toronto subjected Afro-Caribbeans to a homogenizing blackness that downplayed (if not erased) ethnic and national distinctions, blacks in Toronto were not nearly so unified. The parameters of the city’s black communities were framed by differences of ethnicity, religion, politics, employment, and nationalism—distinctions deeply rooted in and reflective of the historical legacy of British colonialism in the western hemisphere. The process of diaspora became a project of reconciling myriad claims on race, nation, and community through “the often uneasy encounters of peoples of African descent with each other.”⁷⁵ Newly arriving West Indians continued to express a sense of inter-island competition while also banding together vis-à-vis other black groups. Initially eschewing labels of “Canadian,” “American,” and “coloured,” black immigrants from the Caribbean self-identified foremost as “West Indians.”⁷⁶ Claire Clark remembered, “Afro-Canadians weren’t very fond of Barbadians. They always called us monkey-chasers, things like that . . . We were [seen as] usurpers coming in . . . They had a picture of us like monkeys in a tree. But I guess that was from ignorance; they didn’t know the history of the island.”⁷⁷ As a result, her family tended to associate mainly with other West Indians in Toronto in the early years. Harry Gairey identified a sort of nativism among Afro-Canadians who excluded incoming West Indians as foreigners. “Jamaicans were coming in and these people [black Canadians] were here and thought that this was their country, which it was. They were born here and we were foreigners coming in . . . At first there was a marked difference between the people involved.”⁷⁸ Immigrants also maintained distinct island-based identifications and allegiances, encouraging a sort of rivalry among Caribbean peoples in Toronto and undermining any easy assumptions of solidarity, even among West Indians. “The people from Jamaica,” Clarke reflects, “were always proud of their status,” while Barbadians were from “a real British Isle. You were from Barbados, you stuck your chest out.”⁷⁹ Over time, however, the West Indians “made themselves known to each other. Maybe it’s the island upbringing or something. They all came to Canada to improve their lot, to better themselves. I guess the Canadian looks at them with their strange ways [and] their strange way of dressing.”⁸⁰ Gradually, however, the shared experience with discrimination and imposed racialization facilitated a diasporic identification with blackness among Afro-Caribbeans in Toronto. In part, this also signalled the process of “becoming Canadian.” This is not to say that one community was traded for another; indeed, individuals over time maintained multiple and overlapping identifications as immigrants, as West Indians and British nationals, as blacks, and as Canadians.

Identifications with Britain added an additional layer to the complexity of interactions among different black communities in Canada, and distinguished the Afro-Caribbean population. Empire offered the “material conditions for black solidarities to emerge across nation, language, gender, and even class.”⁸¹ Donald Moore recited the “once proud boast” of the West Indian: “With head held high, as he smote his breast, he proclaimed to the world, ‘I am a British subject, respected by all I meet!’”⁸² While connections to Britain served to as an element of unification in the Afro-Caribbean diaspora, imperial identifications complicated notions of a singular black diasporic community. Clarke recalled

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an incident in which one of her schoolmates made claims to Canada on the basis of a British identification. The young black Canadian girl, Clarke explained, recited a poem that declared, "I was born in Canada under the British flag," a claim to her inclusion as much as to the exclusion of others. Clarke, however, saw things differently, arguing, "Doesn't she realize that we were born in Barbados under the British flag too? But you know, this was Canada, and they looked down on people from the islands."⁸³ As a result of unfamiliarity as much as a mutual suspicion, Afro-Canadians and West Indians maintained their distance from one another, at least initially. Increasingly, however, the boundaries of community would be recast in light of local circumstances and experiences in Toronto.

These ethnic and national fragmentations illustrate the parameters of black consciousness in the early twentieth century. It was through migration and diaspora that the reconstituted category of blackness unified—albeit tenuously—an otherwise eclectic population facing a shared experience of discrimination in North America. Encountering local barriers to settlement and incorporation, West Indian immigrants gradually forged connections with Afro-Canadians, Afro-Americans, and others of Caribbean descent in the making of a black diaspora. As scholars Ken Alexander and Avis Glaze rightly suggest, "Feelings of shared experience prompted black Canadians to identify with their American brethren, the dispossessed in the West Indies, and liberation movements in Africa."⁸⁴ As indicated above, there were multiple diasporas at work among West Indians in Toronto, linking them to other British nationals, Caribbeans, and peoples of African descent in North America and around the world.

For West Indians in Toronto, businesses and churches provided some of the most prominent community leaders. Local entrepreneurs and spiritual leaders galvanized and solidified the immigrant population while also functioning as important links to the Caribbean and black diasporas. A professional class including lawyers and doctors, many of whom received formal training in the Caribbean, were also empowered as community leaders. Not only did they serve more pragmatic needs, they also functioned as social ambassadors and socializing organs through which people came together and built communities. At Donald Moore's Occidental Cleaning Store on Spadina Avenue in Toronto, Afro-Caribbean immigrants, many of whom were railroad porters, would gather on Sunday afternoons to "chew the rag." In the back room of the store, christened the "Boiler Room," these "brothers of the skin" eventually formed the West Indian Progressive Association, a social club where political issues were foremost on the agenda.⁸⁵ Most ubiquitous among the businesses were grocers who catered specifically to the displaced West Indian community in Toronto. Jamaican-born Mike "Coffee" Williams was among the most well known. Williams quit the railroad and went into the grocery business, opening a popular shop on Queen Street west of Spadina Avenue that offered imported goods to a largely Afro-Caribbean clientele in the city.⁸⁶ Violet Blackman explained that Williams was "clever enough to know that the West Indians still like to have their West Indian food. And how he did it I would never know, but he used to get in West Indian food . . . That was the first grocery store—where coloured is concerned—that I can remember."⁸⁷

A number of West Indians opened up barbershops on and around the Queen Street and Spadina Avenue area in the 1920s, while others plied

trades in the neighbourhood. Arthur King, an immigrant from Trinidad, started the West Indies Trading Association of Canada, dedicated to importing produce and other foodstuffs from the Caribbean. Harry Gairey was among those who joined the association, which was linked to the Universal Negro Improvement Association.⁸⁸ Additionally, the Commonwealth Co-operative Buying Club, a community collective credit initiative begun by West Indians and out of which grew the Toronto United Negro Association, "tried to combine West Indian, 'Canadian,' and 'American' groups within a single organization."⁸⁹ Another organization, the Home Service Association, was particularly active from the late 1910s as a black community service centre of sorts, engaged in social work, recreation, and educational programs. Professionals trained in their Caribbean homelands could sometimes transfer those skills to their new environments. Clarke remembers that was one thing distinguishing West Indians from Afro-Canadians, for the immigrants were prominent among the black professionals in Toronto.⁹⁰ Lawyer B. J. Spencer Pitt, who later ran the local UNIA, was among the most influential and well known, as was Dr. White, a physician who practised in an office on Bathurst Street just north of Queen Street. Because of the relatively modest number of West Indians in Toronto, particularly during the early years of settlement, many of the professionals catered to various black communities, including Afro-Canadians. Thus, such individuals were instrumental in the process and practice of diaspora while simultaneously building a more unified local black community in response to circumstances in Toronto.

Churches also reflected divisions within and between black communities as well as instances of overlap and unification among them. Ministers and preachers were regarded as community leaders in part because "at that time the people didn't feel welcome in the majority of white churches."⁹¹ Among those churches with black or racially integrated congregations in Canada were the Anglican Church, the United Church, and the Baptist Church. Each tended to attract congregations on the basis of racial, ethnic, national, and imperial identifications. Their memberships in many ways reflected the diversity of Canada's urban population in the early twentieth century. For example, the Anglican Church drew those people "mostly of Loyalist and West Indian background," while the Baptist Church was the most popular among blacks generally. As well, the African Orthodox Church, an offshoot of Methodism, was founded by West Indian George A. McGuire, but found "its principal strength in the West Indies, East Africa, and New York."⁹² The African Methodist Episcopal and Baptist churches, of which there were many in Canada, were "outposts of American organizations" that brought ministers in from the United States to lead the congregations.⁹³ Claire Clarke, who was christened Anglican while still a child in Barbados, switched to the Methodist Church with her family upon their arrival in Canada. It was not until years later that Clarke returned to the Anglican Church, where she would remain the rest of her life. Though the First Baptist Church she attended at the corner of Edwards and University was led by American ministers, the congregation was composed of "a mixture of Canadians and West Indians."⁹⁴

It was within these sacred spaces that ethnic—and occasionally racial—divisions were softened (though not altogether dissolved) as individuals of various origins collectively subscribed to a particular religious philosophy, practice, and community. Often, these congregations

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came to reflect the changing Canadian ethnic and racial landscapes and served as forums for the negotiation of past and present. Clarke, for one, found a spiritual home in a rather diverse congregation that for her reflected the Canadian urban immigrant experience. The church was a forum within which ethnic, racial, and national identifications were reconciled as immigrant populations came to terms with their new environments and remapped the contours of local community. They served as places where different diasporic spaces intersected: ethnic, racial, national, and imperial. As Donald Moore recalled, no one could “deny the work and influence of [Reverend Cecil] Stewart and the part the Afro Community Church played in the progress of a fuller life in Toronto as he struggled to bring the ‘Herring Choker’ of Eastern Canada and the ‘Monkey Chaser’ of the West Indies together as our Canadian cousins looked on and smiled.”⁹⁵ Within the physical structure occurred a dialogue between the past—in the form of traditions, customs, and familiarity—and the challenges and peculiarities of the present. Truly, religious congregations reflected the myriad—and simultaneous—identifications among Toronto’s black population, as connections to and claims upon Canada, North America, the West Indies, and Britain were made, contested, and negotiated within the respective congregations. The First Baptist Church served as a quintessential example of this phenomenon, as Canadians, Americans, West Indians, and British nationals came to worship together, while at the same time maintaining complex, and not always complementary, allegiances and identifications.⁹⁶

As noted above, Afro-Caribbean immigrants found that employment opportunities for blacks were “much more scarce” in Canada than in the United States, and jobs for which they were eligible generally did not pay well.⁹⁷ For many black immigrant men, railroad portering offered one of the most desirable jobs because of the stability and status it offered.⁹⁸ In their searches for employment, individuals like Stanley Grizzle and Dudley Marshall discovered that the railroad was the “only permanent” job available to them.⁹⁹ Canadian railway companies had begun hiring black men as porters in the later nineteenth century as transcontinental tracks linked east to west and new routes connected north to south.¹⁰⁰ Donald Moore left New York City for Montreal in the spring of 1913, where he had received the promise of a job as a sleeping car porter with the Canadian Pacific Railway. His first assignment as a porter took him from Montreal to Winnipeg, then on to Toronto. Once in Toronto, he knew he was home. “Here, I thought, is the place for me. Toronto must be a great place in which to live. Here to the left of me is food for the body, on the right of me is food for the soul, and beyond is fun for relaxing.”¹⁰¹ As black porters were assigned to work on routes between Canada and the United States, “the porter’s position became increasingly identified with black skin.”¹⁰² As early as the 1880s, black railwaymen in Canada “held a virtual monopoly over sleeping car service.”¹⁰³ While Montreal became “a magnet for would-be porters” from the United States, the West Indies, and eastern Canada, communities of porters also developed across Canada’s urban landscape, in cities like Toronto, Windsor, Winnipeg, Calgary, and Vancouver.¹⁰⁴ By the 1920s, the railroads were a main draw for West Indian immigrants as well as Afro-Canadian and Afro-American men settling in Toronto.

Among the individual histories presented here, all speak of the high regard in which railroad porters were held in their respective communities.

Porters, Grizzle explained, “were well respected and looked up to by many in the community because they had steady employment.” They were the “aristocrats” and the “most eligible bachelors” within Toronto’s black communities.¹⁰⁵ Clarke had much the same impression of the porters, noting how “they were the elite” and considered “the top class in the city,” because “at least they had a paycheque coming in regularly.”¹⁰⁶ Indeed, black railroad porters “appeared prosperous. They were always dressed up and travelled back and forth across the country and to the United States, visiting regularly places most blacks could not dream of seeing.”¹⁰⁷ Still, the job came with its own disadvantages. Though portering was widely respected in the black community, “it was, on balance, a demeaning job” because “the price paid in emotional terms was high.”¹⁰⁸ As Clarke explained, railroad patrons “treated those porters . . . not nicely . . . Called them ‘boy’ and stuff . . . My father would have swatted somebody . . . [so] he stayed working in the foundries.”¹⁰⁹ The availability of porter jobs not only enabled the movement of black immigrants and Canadians into cities, but it also drew African Americans across the border into Canada. People from the United States “used to come over . . . to work” on the railroads, Clarke remembered.¹¹⁰ This process was facilitated by the active recruitment of American railway workers by Canadian companies, which, while partly a solution to perceived labour shortages, was also an attempt to “keep out unions and displace troublesome and potentially expensive labour.”¹¹¹ By crossing the northern border, black railwaymen from the United States “affirmed that African Americans included Canada in their vision of a Great Migration.”¹¹² Some stayed and married, contributing to the transnational character of an increasingly cosmopolitan Toronto. The movement occurred in both directions though, as blacks in Canada went south to larger U.S. cities like New York. Canadian corporations also recruited in the Caribbean, “appealing to the notion of Empire” while “downplaying Canada’s hostility towards black migrants.”¹¹³ The border was thus defined by a relative permeability and transnational exchange between Afro-Canadians, Afro-Americans, and Afro-Caribbeans in North American cities.

No one personified that transnational exchange in North America better than the porters, who moved regularly between cities and across borders in the execution of their duties. Based in the urban centres of Montreal, Toronto, and New York, porters physically linked disparate communities of resettled immigrants, thereby creating and maintaining a distinctly North American diaspora. In this way, “news spread fast” and “black communities were connected.”¹¹⁴ Though Stanley Grizzle was too young at the time to work on the railroads, he got a job as a teenager waxing floors for Mr. Staples, a CNR porter. “Mr. Staples went on runs to Chicago quite frequently,” he recalled, “and he would pick up African-American newspapers like the *Chicago Defender* and the *Pittsburgh Courier*.” Upon his return, Mr. Staples arranged for Grizzle to deliver those newspapers to black families in Toronto.¹¹⁵ As a young woman, Claire Clarke was particularly fond of the poetry of Langston Hughes and Lawrence Dunbar. Like others, she relied on the porters for access to these materials. “Those books were not available in Canada,” she explained. “They had to come in through the States.”¹¹⁶ The black railroad porters would bring them back, in addition to other black newspapers like Marcus Garvey’s *Negro World*. In this way, black Canadians and West Indians stayed connected to the diaspora through the material exchange of news and information, texts that endeavoured

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to “document the ‘fact’ of blackness itself” and “frame race as an object of knowledge production.”¹¹⁷ In such a manner, these material exchanges also gradually—and conditionally—universalized a discourse of blackness throughout North America, instrumental in the forging of black nationalism and black consciousness movements of the 1920s.¹¹⁸

An institution central to the making of a black diasporic consciousness in Toronto and throughout North America was Marcus Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association. The UNIA was instrumental in forging a black consciousness and mobilizing people through the West Indian and black diasporas around collective identifications with race rooted in an African homeland. Founded in Jamaica in 1914 and relocated to Harlem in 1916, the UNIA advanced the notion of equality for black people through economic, political, and cultural independence.¹¹⁹ The association was in many ways a product of diaspora and the migration of peoples of African descent throughout the Atlantic world. While it was imagined and theorized as a global movement, the UNIA took root and gained momentum among blacks in North America, in many ways as a response to a racial discourse that collectively “othered” and essentialized black people of varying ethnicities, nationalities, and socio-cultural backgrounds. Experiences with discrimination thus promoted both localism and internationalism, mobilizing similarly racialized peoples within cities and between them through trans-local and transnational North American diasporic networks. Diasporic blackness, rooted in Africa and routed through the global dispersion of peoples, provided a means of preservation, resistance, and mobilization against local encounters with racial oppression. The UNIA became a “voice of protest” for black peoples in the early twentieth century.¹²⁰

Between 1919 and 1923, UNIA chapters were established in all major Canadian urban centres with substantial black populations and were particularly active in Montreal, Sydney and Cape Breton (Nova Scotia), and Toronto, where West Indian immigrant populations formed its core membership. The UNIA formally arrived in Toronto in 1919 as “a well-conceived vehicle for fears, hopes and ambitions that had already crystallized.”¹²¹ To Harry Gairey, a “humble black fellow in the street,” Garvey gave “a real bit of hope. He said get brains, get learning, go to school, learn.”¹²² Gairey was among the twenty-one founding members of the Toronto chapter. He joined the UNIA because he “felt it was something useful. It was very active in the twenties and thirties helping blacks deal with their problems.”¹²³ Donald Moore was also active in the earliest years of the UNIA in Toronto, serving as the association’s secretary. In Toronto, he recalled, “Garvey’s philosophy was like ‘balm to Gilead’ to the heart and soul of the boys of the ‘Boiler Room.’”¹²⁴ Dudley Marshall remembered getting involved in the early 1920s, when he was “so interested in the Garvey movement” that he “just couldn’t help but devoting some of [his] time to that.”¹²⁵ For Marshall, the UNIA newspaper, the *Negro World*, was particularly instrumental in recruiting new members and exposing people to Garvey’s vision. “I says, that’s a wonderful paper . . . That’s the first time that I heard a Negro—a black man—that would come forth and speak out, so friendly for the rights of his people.”¹²⁶ Daniel Braithwaite grew up in the movement and became an active member as soon as he was old enough. He explained the UNIA’s appeal, describing how the association worked on behalf of “the improvement of people of African descent, no matter where they are from, to better their condition . . . because at that time the black people

were more or less at the bottom rung of the social ladder, economically, politically, and you name it because the walls of discrimination and prejudice were very high.”¹²⁷ Like Braithwaite, many expressed hope and confidence in the ability of the UNIA to combat discrimination and improve the circumstances of black people in Toronto and around the world.

The black unity and independence envisioned by Garvey and the UNIA resulted in a local emphasis on economic and political initiatives. In the 1920s and 1930s, the association was “very active . . . helping blacks deal with their problems,” including those of employment, housing, finances, and encounters with racism and discrimination.¹²⁸ In addition to holding formal associational meetings and events, the UNIA hall housed the Toronto United Negro Credit Union as well as the Toronto United Negro Association, both of which sought to ameliorate the effects of discrimination and provide opportunities for black success and achievement in the city. Additionally, the hall was used as a meeting place for a railroad porters club, out of which came some of the unionization efforts of the 1920s and 1930s. Speakers would also appear regularly at the hall, including Marcus Garvey himself. Daniel Braithwaite remembered seeing Garvey speak on a couple of occasions, and found him to be a “very dynamic” and “tremendous” person. “You know he had authority and he looked [like] a leader . . . He was serious looking [and] serious minded.”¹²⁹ Claire Clarke was particularly impressed by Garvey as well, noting how he “told us who we were. He made us believe that we came from Ethiopia, the land of our fathers.” Ultimately, she concluded, Garvey provided something “that held the people together as a group. They were not isolated.”¹³⁰ Indeed, through the UNIA, local populations found common ground and were connected to others throughout the diaspora.

While the UNIA provided peoples of African descent with a political language and instrument of unification and mobilization, it also offered a forum for more social exchanges, equally important in the forging, recasting, and assertion of community and kinship in Canadian urban centres. In Toronto, the UNIA hall served as the centre for Afro-Caribbean social and political activities. The hall “was more or less the centre of activities . . . for the black community for a good many years . . . Anything concerning gatherings they would have there.”¹³¹ When he was only five years old, Daniel Braithwaite began going regularly to the hall with his parents to hear poems recited and songs sung. As a young boy, he was involved with the association’s Negro Youth Club, which held dances and put on plays and programs every Sunday afternoon.¹³² Clarke explained that the UNIA provided “an outlet for your family” through regular programs and events. When mothers and fathers wanted to attend garden parties or dances, the children “were towed along” with them. “There was no need for babysitters. You carried the children along with you . . . The kids enjoyed themselves dancing around the floor.”¹³³ The association’s weekly programs included the recitation of popular poems or excerpts from texts. On Sundays, children were asked to recite things with “black content” in front of the assembled audience. “There was a bit of a rivalry,” Clarke recalled, “who could get up and recite these things [about] Africa . . . It was very interesting [and] good for the children.”¹³⁴ When he became involved in the UNIA, Stanley Grizzle also participated in programs at the UNIA, where he would “recite the works of Paul Laurence Dunbar and James

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Weldon Johnson.¹³⁵ Through these readings and performances at the hall, the association was instrumental in articulating a racial diaspora between local populations.¹³⁶

The UNIA also frequently held picnics in and around Toronto, which were popular affairs among the city's black communities. "Anybody that was black in Toronto was going to the picnic," Clarke remembered. "They were fun times. You got a new dress and all fancied up. And everybody cooked all this food and ate half of it. They called it the Big Picnic. 'Are you going to the Big Picnic?' That was the thing . . . The Big Picnic was a day that you met people that you hadn't seen all year."¹³⁷ Smaller UNIA garden parties were also frequent events in Toronto, held in the 1920s at a rented-out Italian store on Queen Street. At another store on Bathurst Street, a "great worker for the UNIA" would hold garden parties where he would put on plays and provide West Indian food for those in attendance.¹³⁸ At other times, larger events would draw people from other Canadian and U.S. cities. An annual gathering in August at Grimsby Beach, for example, was advertised through churches and drew as many as 1,500 people from Montreal, Detroit, Buffalo, Niagara Falls, and New York City.¹³⁹ "It was like a reunion," Braithwaite remembered. "We all met with . . . our American counterparts . . . and we used to have baseball games with them. [It was] lots of fun."¹⁴⁰ In the 1930s, the UNIA "managed to scrape some money" together to get access to a boat, where they held dances. "The boat was full of people . . . sometimes just as many from the States as from here." He estimated there were as many as two thousand people at these dances, all having "a grand time."¹⁴¹ Indeed, social functions such as these brought people together within and between cities and forged a collective sense of a people linked through a shared African ancestry and facing a common racialization and discrimination in North American cities.

At a time in which identity was rooted in and articulated through the language of nation-states, the UNIA forged a brand of nationalism that attempted to unify diasporic peoples in North America and around the world.¹⁴² In so doing, it gave marginalized people of the black diaspora "an important avenue for making sense of the self beyond the confines of the nation," particularly when the nation was racially exclusionary, as were both Canada and the United States.¹⁴³ Africa served as a physical location for de-territorialized blacks, many of whom found themselves marginalized and relegated to positions of perpetual foreign-ness and inferiority in North America. The *idea* of Africa espoused through the UNIA "gave people something to hang on to, [and] gave them a sort of identity."¹⁴⁴ Garvey offered blacks a position from which to mobilize and engage the world in a language of nations and nationalisms, and in so doing imparted a sense of pride among many. To Harry Gairey, the UNIA "gave you incentive and taught you to love your black skin, to appreciate it, and be proud to be black."¹⁴⁵ Claire Clarke explained that the Garvey movement compelled people to "get up and do something" for themselves. "You have a country. Africa's your country. Lay claim to Africa's heritage." Garvey, she asserted, "resented the fact that blacks were homeless people. North American blacks didn't have anything to call their own. He wanted to give racial pride."¹⁴⁶ Thus, the articulation of blackness and one's participation and pride in black nationalism were contingent upon notions of place (rooted-ness) and space (routed-ness). Of course, one's position in—and relationship to—time also complicated diasporic imaginings, particularly of Africa. The black

diaspora was contingent upon a homeland, rooted in a collective past, to find order in and make sense out of the present. Clarke often mused about how tenuous that connection was to Africa and what sort of relationship she—and others throughout the diaspora—might have had to the continent. Still, the *idea* of Africa was central to expressions of black nationalism and the mobilization of dispersed people throughout the diaspora.

Though the UNIA espoused the notion of a unified diaspora and the amelioration of oppression and discrimination, its appeal and membership base was drawn largely from West Indians. There were only somewhat tenuous connections to the Afro-Canadian community. Claire Clarke remembered that few Canadians were involved in the UNIA. In Toronto, she recalled, "we were not only isolated from the white people, but also from the black Canadian people."¹⁴⁷ Clarke believed that Afro-Canadians eschewed the UNIA in large part because they were hesitant to embrace an Africinity that might undermine their claims to being Canadian. "The Canadians did not favour it. They didn't want to hear anything about Africa in the beginning," she remarked. "They weren't interested in Marcus Garvey or any of his thoughts . . . They were proud of being Canadians."¹⁴⁸ Historian Robin Winks has argued that the UNIA movement in Canada was "blunted from the outset" because Garvey's insistence on "racial purity," the "pseudo-religious overtones" of the association, and the "secular preachings" of the African Orthodox Church were "uncongenial" to many Canadians, as was Garvey's claim that "Negroes were only sojourners in Canada."¹⁴⁹ As well, Garvey's "back-to-Africa gospel" was "never widely attractive" to black Canadians, an issue that problematizes intra-racial relations and reveals something about the limits of a unified black consciousness in an era of diasporic political mobilizations.¹⁵⁰ Nevertheless, Garvey's philosophy "undoubtedly . . . had an influence on black Canadian thinking . . . Canadian blacks used their new consciousness to stay and fight for a proper place in society."¹⁵¹ Interestingly, African Americans seemed much more sympathetic to the UNIA movement than did black Canadians—a point that prompts further questions about the peculiar national experiences that informed and delimited black communities in early-twentieth-century North America. "Whenever we had a difficulty," Clarke recalled, "it was the American blacks that would be siding with the West Indian blacks in Canada."¹⁵² This suggests as much about Garvey's message as it does about the local populations who received it; perhaps it spoke more effectively to the U.S. black experience than that of Afro-Canadians. Suffice to say, myriad factors informed one's relationship to the diaspora, and specific local, national, and imperial identifications had much to do with forging and shaping the contours of the black diaspora.

By endeavouring to unite black people around the world, Garvey's UNIA exposed fault lines within and between local communities and marked the limits of a singular black racial consciousness in the 1920s and 1930s. Though Garvey did "much to further the goal of self-definition" for blacks in Canada, some argue that he ultimately failed to provide a unifying message.¹⁵³ Garvey himself asserted, "The evil of internal divisions is wrecking our very existence as a people. And if we do not seriously and quickly move in the direction of a readjustment, it simply means that our doom becomes imminently conclusive."¹⁵⁴ Black diasporic consciousness came up against local and national identities in

ways not easily reconcilable for Toronto's black populations. Intra-racial relations and tensions illustrate varying and often contested claims on what it meant to be "black" and to be "Canadian"; in essence, at stake were the very terms of inclusion and exclusion among West Indians and Afro-Canadians in Toronto. Yet choosing one did not necessarily obviate the other. Individuals lived with multiple, overlapping identifications that evade easy explanation or simplification, and indicate the complexities and multiplicities of individual lives and experiences. Over time, Afro-Caribbeans assumed and amalgamated multiple identifications through migration and the process of diaspora. In addition to island-based identifications, immigrants in North America formed "West Indian" and "Afro-Caribbean" communities and networks, and, through local engagement with Afro-Canadians and transnational exchanges with African Americans, came to identify with a broader black diaspora. Despite its shortcomings, the UNIA played a significant role in this process of diasporic community in Toronto and throughout North America.

Foucault's description of the modern epoch of space cited at the outset of this paper provides a fitting depiction of Afro-Caribbean immigrants' lives in the early twentieth century. Indeed, like other migrants around the world, West Indians in diaspora lived in an "epoch of simultaneity," of "juxtaposition," of "near and far," of "the side-by-side," and of "the disperse."¹⁵⁵ They internalized and expressed multiple overlapping and intersecting identifications, including those to island homelands, to the Caribbean broadly conceived, to Britain, and, through the process of diaspora, to a blackness rooted in Africa and routed through North American cities. Increasingly, they and their children also came to identify as Canadian. The circumstances these immigrants encountered in Toronto fostered new conceptions of community, built upon tenuous and intermittent identifications with other West Indians and with black Canadians and Americans. In Toronto, as elsewhere in distinct ways, the "cultural logics of localness and place profoundly shaped racial identity and community formation."¹⁵⁶ Encounters with racial discrimination prompted a reconstitution of self and community; paradoxically, the marginalization, discrimination, and exclusion of black immigrants facilitated the simultaneous processes of becoming Canadian while also engaging multiple de-territorialized diasporas. In a way, the very means of exclusion were parlayed into reconstituted communities of inclusion, with contested claims upon the city, the nation, and the position of blacks globally. Afro-Caribbean identities and identifications were constructed, contested, and remade in the tension between diasporic consciousness and local experience, each of which informed the other.

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Notes

1. Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (Spring 1986): 22.
2. Claude McKay, *Complete Poems*, ed. William J. Maxwell (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 209.
3. Harry Gairey, *A Black Man's Toronto, 1914–1980: The Reminiscences of Harry Gairey*, ed. Donna Hill (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1981). Though Gairey did not identify an economic imperative in his decision to leave Jamaica, many were emigrating from the region during this period in search of work, or already under contract with an employer. The railway companies, for example, actively recruited workers from the United States and the West Indies, as did the mining companies of Sydney and Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.
4. Keith Henry, *Black Politics in Toronto since World War I* (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1981), 23.
5. Gairey, *Black Man's Toronto*.
6. Henry added that many of these West Indians who chose to settle in Canada rather than the United States also did so because of "an assumption of Canadian adherence to what were regarded as especially British ideals." Henry, *Black Politics in Toronto*, 23.
7. Gairey, *Black Man's Toronto*.
8. Dudley Marshall, interview, 19 July 1978, Multicultural History Society of Ontario (hereafter MHSO).
9. Claire Clarke, interview with the author, 14 January 2008.
10. Donald Moore, *Don Moore: An Autobiography* (Toronto: Williams-Wallace, 1985).
11. Daniel Braithwaite, interview, 17 August 1978, MHSO.
12. The 1921 Census reports that of the black people in Ontario, 5,556 were Canadian-born and 1,079 were from the United States. For more information on post-Second World War Caribbean immigration, see Frances Henry, *The Caribbean Diaspora in Toronto: Learning to Live with Racism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994); and Sheldon Eric Alistair Taylor, "'Darkening the Complexion of Canadian Society': Black Activism, Policy-Making and Black Immigration from the Caribbean to Canada, 1940s–1960s" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1994).
13. James W. St. G. Walker, *The West Indians in Canada* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1984).
14. Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History*. 2nd ed. (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 334.
15. According to Ken Alexander and Avis Glaze, "Job opportunities, the emergence of the KKK in small towns, city excitement, and the growth of black pride movements brought blacks from rural areas to Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver." Ken Alexander and Avis Glaze, *Towards Freedom: The African-Canadian Experience* (Toronto: Umbrella, 1996), 130.
16. Daniel Hill, "Negroes in Toronto: A Sociological Study of a Minority Group" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1960). The 1921 census reports the black population in Canada to be 18,291, of whom 7,220 lived in Ontario.
17. *Census of Canada, 1931*, cited in Hill, "Negroes in Toronto," 46.
18. These statistics are somewhat contested and the reliability of the census records questionable, but suffice it to say the total number of 'black' people in the city remained a small percentage of the overall population until mid-century.
19. Henry, *Black Politics in Toronto*, 3.
20. Historian Robin Winks identifies the problems in depending on census records to get accurate information on the black immigration and composition of Canadian cities:

At no time was the national census clear as to what was meant by "Negro." When such a category was given as one of twenty-eight or

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more permissible areas of "national origin" in the census returns, there was no Negro nation; and since respondents were asked to name their own national origin, many Negroes appeared under "African" and "West Indies," while the American-born of fair skin in all probability listed what the questioners—after all—asked for but did not have in mind, by claiming the United States. For "origin" was not related to birthplace by the Canadian census so much as to ethnic background . . . Ultimately, "Negro" was dropped as a national origin, while being retained in questions relating to ethnic origin." (Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 485)

Additionally problematic, the 1921 census contained an "unspecified" category in its figures on principal origins, which included a wide range of groups from Middle Easterners and Pacific Islanders to Southeast Asians and Jamaicans. Thus, it is not always clear who was recorded under which categories in the census records.

21. Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 334.
22. Jacqueline Nassy Brown, *Dropping Anchor, Setting Sail: Geographies of Race in Black Liverpool* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 6. See also Paul Gilroy, "There ain't no black in the Union Jack": *The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (London: Hutchinson, 1987).
23. Robin Cohen identifies diasporas as "positioned somewhere between nation-states and 'travelling cultures' in that they involve dwelling in a nation-state in a physical sense, but travelling in an astral or spiritual sense that falls outside the nation-state's space/time zone." This tension is evident in the effort to locate diaspora among Afro-Caribbean immigrants in Toronto. Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 135–136, 251. See also Atsuko Matsuoka and John Sorenson, *Ghosts and Shadows: Construction of Identity and Community in an African Diaspora* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).
24. Brown, *Dropping Anchor, Setting Sail*, 6.
25. Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003). See also Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *Colonial Discourse & Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, 223–237 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993); Paul Gilroy, *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture beyond the Color Line* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2000); James Clifford, "Diasporas," in *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, 244–278 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, "Beyond 'Culture': Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference," *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (February 1992): 6–23.
26. Edwards, *Practice of Diaspora*, 13–15.
27. Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 235.
28. Louis Chude-Sokei, *The Last "Darky": Bert Williams, Black-on-Black Minstrelsy, and the African Diaspora* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).
29. Rinaldo Walcott, *Black Like Who? Writing Black Canada* (Toronto: Insomniac, 33).
30. See George Elliot Clarke, "Must All Blackness Be American? Locating Canada in Borden's 'Tightrope Time,' or Nationalizing Gilroy's *Black Atlantic*," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 28, no. 3 (1996): 56–71.
31. Edwards, *Practice of Diaspora*, 212.
32. Walcott, *Black Like Who?* 37–38.
33. Joseph Mensah, *Black Canadians: History, Experiences, Social Conditions* (Halifax, NS: Fernwood, 2002), 67.
34. Stanley George S. Grizzle, "Blacks in Toronto," *Papers on the Black Community* (Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Culture and Recreation, September 1976), 21–17.
35. These migration patterns are discussed in Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 433. See also Elizabeth Beaton, "An African-American Community in Cape Breton, 1901–1904," *Acadiensis* 24 (Spring 1995): 65–97; and Bridglal Pachai, *Beneath the Clouds of the Promised Land: The Survival of Nova Scotia's Blacks* (Halifax: Black Educators Association of Nova Scotia, 1987).
36. Marshall, interview.
37. Claire Clark, interview with the author, 14 January 2008.
38. Braithwaite, interview.
39. Moore, *Don Moore*, 191.
40. Austin C. Clarke, "A Black Man Talks about Race Prejudice in White Canada," *Maclean's Magazine*, 20 April 1963, cited in Richard Laskin, ed., *Social Problems: A Canadian Profile* (New York: McGraw-Hill Canada, 1964), 147–152. In later years, the Negro Citizenship Association was particularly active in the campaign to reverse discriminatory border controls. See Moore, *Don Moore: An Autobiography*.
41. James W. St. G. Walker, *Identity: The Black Experience in Canada* (Toronto: Ontario Educational Communications Authority / Gage, 1979), 31.
42. Mensah, *Black Canadians*, 69.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid. See also Angus McLaren, *Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada, 1885–1945* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990).
45. James W. St. G. Walker, *A History of Blacks in Canada* (Ottawa: Ministry of Supply and Services Canada, 1980), 94.
46. James W. St. G. Walker, *Racial Discrimination in Canada: The Black Experience*. Canadian Historical Association Historical Booklet No. 41 (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1985).
47. Wilson A. Head, *Adaptation of Immigrants: Perceptions of Ethnic and Racial Discrimination* (Toronto: York University, 1981), 27.
48. Ken Alexander and Avis Glaze, *Towards Freedom: The African-Canadian Experience* (Toronto: Umbrella, 1996), 112.
49. Walker, *West Indians in Canada*.
50. As Sarah-Jane Mathieu explains, direct recruitment of workers from the West Indies was prohibited by Canadian law through the Alien Labour Act (1897 and 1906). Still, Canadian railway companies "carried on their recruitment of African American and West Indian workers, continually displaying blatant disregard for federal immigration and labour laws." She concludes that between 1916 and 1945, the Canadian Pacific Railway "obtained speedy approval for the importation of foreign black railwaymen." While this met the demand for labourers, it also exacerbated anxieties and xenophobic sentiments concerning the effects of a growing black population in Canada. Mathieu, "North of the Colour Line: Sleeping Car Porters and the Battle against Jim Crow on Canadian Rails, 1880–1920," *Labour / Le Travail* 47 (Spring 2001): 9–41.
51. Violet Blackman, interview, 15 January 1979, MHSO. For more on the experiences of black women, see Dionne Brand, ed., *No Burden to Carry: Narratives of Black Working Women in Ontario, 1920s–1950s* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1991).
52. Clarke, "A Black Man Talks."
53. Donald Avery offers an insightful discussion on the relationship between immigration policy during this period and the often adversarial demands of the wider capitalist labour market. Avery, *Dangerous Foreigners: European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada, 1896–1932* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979).
54. Mensah, *Black Canadians*, 82. See also Hill, "Negroes in Toronto"; and Taylor, "Darkening the Complexion of Canadian Society," both of which detail settlement patterns in Toronto.
55. Hill, "Negroes in Toronto"; Moore, *Don Moore*.

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56. Henry, *Black Politics in Toronto*, 8.
57. Blackman, interview.
58. Gairey, *A Black Man's Toronto*.
59. Clarke, interview.
60. Claire Clarke, interview with the author, 30 May 2008.
61. Ibid.
62. Blackman, interview.
63. Moore, *Don Moore*, 32.
64. Claire Clarke, interview with the author, 9 August 2008.
65. Moore, *Don Moore*, 23.
66. Grizzle, "Blacks in Toronto."
67. Mensah, *Black Canadians*, 50.
68. Alexander and Glaze, *Towards Freedom*, 143.
69. Mensah, *Black Canadians*, 40. Tiffany Patterson and Robin Kelley assert that a "shared, ongoing history of displacement, suffering, adaptation, or resistance may be as important as the projection of a single origin" in the making of diaspora. Shared experiences of discrimination certainly fostered intra-racial co-operation and the coalescence of a black diaspora in North America. See Patterson and Kelley, "Unfinished Migrations: Reflections on the African Diaspora and the Making of the Modern World," *African Studies Review*, 43, no. 1 (April 2000): 20.
70. Walker, *Racial Discrimination in Canada*, 15. Black women in this period typically found jobs as domestics, men worked primarily for the railroads or in service or industrial labour.
71. Marshall, interview.
72. Stanley George S. Grizzle, *My Name's Not George: The Story of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in Canada* (Toronto: Umbrella, 1998), 36.
73. Blackman, interview. Addie Aylestock echoed Blackman, recalling how "there weren't many opportunities for Black girls, in those days anyways . . . When I first came to Toronto all the girls were working domestic. And then when the war came, there were some that were working at ammunition factories, and the men were working on the railroads or on the boats." Brand, *No Burden to Carry*, 56, 74.
74. Alexander and Glaze, *Towards Freedom*, 136.
75. Edwards, *Practice of Diaspora*, 5.
76. Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 334.
77. Claire Clarke, interview with the author, 27 October 2008. Intra-racial antagonisms were also exacerbated by the fear that the presence of other black groups might somehow diminish or undermine Afro-Canadian successes and positions in the city during this time.
78. Gairey, *Black Man's Toronto*.
79. Clarke, interview, 27 October 2008.
80. Clarke, interview, 14 January 2008.
81. Michelle Stephens, *Black Empire: The Masculine Global Imaginary of Caribbean Intellectuals in the United States, 1914–1962* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 5.
82. Moore, *Don Moore*, 89.
83. Clarke, interview, 14 January 2008.
84. Alexander and Glaze, *Towards Freedom*, 172.
85. Moore, *Don Moore*, 32.
86. Braithwaite, interview; Claire Clarke, interview with the author, 20 February 2008; Gairey, *Black Man's Toronto*.
87. Blackman, interview.
88. Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 414.
89. Ibid., 417.
90. Claire Clarke, interview with the author, 17 February 2009.
91. Gairey, *Black Man's Toronto*.
92. Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 341, 354. The African Orthodox Church was affiliated with Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association.
93. Clarke, interview, 30 May 2008.
94. Ibid. The City of Toronto Directory (1921) provides listings of active churches and their ministers in Toronto, reel 77, City of Toronto Archives.
95. Moore, *Don Moore*, 59.
96. The consequences of church membership were of course also social, economic, and political, as churches functioned as important places for community events, business meetings, and political organizing. As community centres, churches would hold plays, pageants, athletic competitions, dinners, etc.
97. Clarke, interview, 20 February 2008.
98. In Stanley Grizzle's words, "Portering became the only stable employment available" to black men. "No matter what the educational level, a black man ended up on the railroad as a sleeping car porter." Grizzle, *My Name's Not George*, 26.
99. Marshall, interview; Stanley Grizzle, interview with the author, 24 August 2009.
100. Alexander and Glaze, *Towards Freedom*, 133; Grizzle, *My Name's Not George*, 26. Sarah-Jane Mathieu notes how the main Canadian railroad companies initially drew black railway workers from Halifax, Montreal, and Toronto. Later, they turned to the Southern United States and the West Indies in their search for more black workers. As early as the 1880s, "Black railwaymen in Canada held a virtual monopoly over sleeping car service." Mathieu, "North of the Colour Line." See also Agnes Calliste, "Sleeping Car Porters in Canada: An Ethnically Submerged Split Labour Market," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 19, no. 1 (1987): 1–20.
101. Moore, *Don Moore*, 28.
102. Walker, *History of Blacks in Canada*, 68. Agnes Calliste also notes how "the word porter had become synonymous with black." Calliste, "Sleeping Car Porters in Canada," 2.
103. Mathieu, "North of the Colour Line."
104. Alexander and Glaze, *Towards Freedom*, 133.
105. Grizzle, *My Name's Not George*, 36.
106. Clarke, interview, 20 February 2008.
107. Calliste, "Sleeping Car Porters in Canada," 4.
108. Alexander and Glaze, *Towards Freedom*, 133. For more on discrimination on the railways and at the border, as well as unionization efforts among black railwaymen, see Mathieu, "North of the Colour Line."
109. Clarke, interview, 20 February 2008.
110. Clarke, interview, 17 February 2009.
111. Calliste, "Sleeping Car Porters in Canada," 4.
112. Mathieu, "North of the Colour Line." Mathieu describes how "the CPR boldly recruited foreign black railroaders, provided for their transportation, and paid their border taxes if it insured an uninterrupted flow of workers. Between 1916 and 1919 alone, the Canadian Pacific Railway imported more than 500 African American sleeping car porters under this scheme." See also Eric Arnesen, *Brotherhoods of Color: Black Railroad Workers and the Struggle for Equality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).
113. Mathieu, "North of the Colour Line."

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114. Alexander and Glaze, *Towards Freedom*, 133. Alexander and Glaze also cite Nelson George, who describes how "rail porters in the U.S. were instrumental in spreading black news and culture throughout the land." George, *The Death of Rhythm and Blues* (New York: Penguin, 1988).
115. Grizzle, *My Name's Not George*, 36.
116. Clarke, interview, 30 May 2008.
117. Edwards, *Practice of Diaspora*, 8. This print/periodical culture, Edwards adds, "attempts to intervene in conditions of great suffering and social upheaval" and "strains to be 'actively equal' to the exigencies of crisis and advocacy."
118. Another dimension of the black diaspora was developed and articulated through class-based mobilizations like the Porters' Mutual Benefit Association (founded in 1915) and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (founded in 1925). These organizations recognized common economic grievances informed in part by racial discrimination, and acted on behalf of black working-class interests for Americans, Canadians, and West Indians. With some success, they mobilized transnationally, thereby facilitating the process of black working-class diasporic identifications. On the other hand, labour organizers also faced national hurdles in Canada and the United States, and opposition that rendered political borders salient and at times formidable. See, for example, Arnesen, *Brotherhoods of Color*; Calliste, "Sleeping Car Porters in Canada"; Grizzle, *My Name's Not George*; Head, *Adaptation of Immigrants*; Mathieu, "North of the Colour Line"; Winks, *History of Blacks in Canada*.
119. Alexander and Glaze, *Towards Freedom*, 130.
120. Ibid.
121. Henry, *Black Politics in Toronto*, 22.
122. Gairey, *Black Man's Toronto*.
123. Ibid.
124. Moore, *Don Moore*, 33.
125. Marshall, interview.
126. Ibid.
127. Daniel Braithwaite, interview, 23 September 1981, MHSO.
128. Gairey, *Black Man's Toronto*.
129. Braithwaite, interview, 17 August 1978.
130. Clarke, interview, 14 January 2008.
131. Braithwaite, interview, 23 September 1981.
132. Ibid.
133. Clarke, interview, 14 January 2008, 20 February 2008.
134. Clarke, interview, 14 January 2008, 30 May 2008.
135. Grizzle, *My Name's Not George*, 34.
136. Here again, this idea of articulation is borrowed from Edwards, who emphasizes the importance of articulating an "archive" in the sense of a "generative system . . . that governs the possibilities, forms, appearance, and regularity of particular statements, objects, and practices." Edwards, *Practice of Diaspora*, 7.
137. Clarke, interview, 20 February 2008.
138. Blackman, interview.
139. Gairey, *Black Man's Toronto*.
140. Braithwaite, interview, 17 August 1978.
141. Ibid.
142. Michelle Stephens argues that blackness in this period "was an imaginary burdened by the national." Black sovereignty "emerged very much in the face of and in opposition to new formations of empire following from World War I and manifested in the nation-state structures of the League of Nations." Stephens, *Black Empire*, 5; Brent Edwards adds that in the interwar period, "Discourses about black *national* autonomy . . . played a formative role in the formulation of black *internationalist* initiatives." Edwards, *Practice of Diaspora*, 10.
143. Walcott, *Black Like Who?* 137.
144. Clarke, interview, 27 October 2008.
145. Gairey, *Black Man's Toronto*.
146. Clarke, interview, 20 February 2008. In 1912 Claude McKay wrote a poem about Jamaica entitled "My Native Land, My Home," which addresses this notion of black homelessness. It reads in part, "Although dem call we 'no-land race,' I know we home is here . . . My land I won't feget." Nine years later, in a poem entitled "Enslaved," McKay wrote, "My heart grows sick with hate, becomes as lead, for this my race that has no home on earth." McKay, *Complete Poems*, 57, 167. Historian Michelle Stephens interrogates the historical roots of this idea of homelessness, arguing that Caribbean immigrants "had no easily identifiable national homelands, arriving in America from diverse island colonies whose only bond was, at best, their shared history of colonialism and European exploitation." This sense of homelessness was exacerbated by two "acts of displacement" for Caribbeans: the Middle Passage from Africa and the journey from colony to North America. Stephens, *Black Empire*.
147. Clarke, interview, 14 January 2008.
148. Clarke, interview with the author, 14 January 2008, 30 May 2008.
149. Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 415–416.
150. Ibid.
151. Walker, *History of Blacks in Canada*, 124.
152. Clarke, interview, 20 February 2008.
153. Alexander and Glaze, *Towards Freedom*, 133.
154. Marshall, interview.
155. Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 16.
156. Brown, *Dropping Anchor, Setting Sail*, 31.