

“Salt and potatoes in Canada were better than pound-cake and chickens in the United States:” Commemorating Black Canadians in Public History

by

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of

The University of Manitoba

in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Sociology

University of Manitoba

Winnipeg

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Acknowledgements

I want to express my gratitude to all those who provided me with the possibility to complete this research project. Foremost, I would like to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to Dr. Andrew Woolford, my advisor, for the continuous support throughout my academic career. His enthusiasm, patience, and kindness helped me prevail throughout the research and writing of this thesis. I count myself lucky as I could not have imagined having a better advisor and mentor. I am forever in his debt for the immeasurable support provided throughout the years. Besides my advisor, I would like to thank the rest of my thesis committee: Dr. Sonia Bookman and Dr. Adam Muller, for their insightful comments, questions and suggestions.

My sincere thanks to supporting staff of the Department of Sociology and Criminology, Margaret Currie, Dianne Bulback and Donna Alexiuk for their continual assistance and encouragement. Special thanks to Margaret for all the kindness she showed me during my time with the Department. Also, I want to thank the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and the Manitoba Graduate Scholarship for providing the funding for my thesis.

Finally, thank you to my extraordinary family. You guys have gone above and beyond for me. I am truly the luckiest person in the world to have you guys on my side. Dr. Maya Angelou is right in her belief that love from your family sustains you.

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Abstract

Ashley (2005) notes that Canadian museums are important public spaces where Canadian culture and heritage are represented and authenticated. The study of museums and exhibits provides insights into issues of identity, race, representation and expression of Canadian history. The thesis uses critical race theory (CRT) framework and critical discourse analysis (CDA) to analyze instances of exhibits on Black Canadian history. The two exhibits are the Parks Canada and the Department of Canadian Heritage's *ON THE ROAD NORTH - Black Canada and Journey to Freedom* and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights' *Escape from Oppression*. Using CRT and CDA, the thesis tries to appreciate the discrepancies and similarities between the two exhibits to understand how the history of Black Canadians in the exhibits altogether reveals a national tale of integration and unification, especially with the Underground Railroad narratives present in both exhibits.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

On February 3, 2017, *Maclean's* published an article online about refugees “making a dangerous trek north to Canada to escape a harsh new U.S. regime—risking life and limb” (Markusoff, 2017). The article reported about refugee claimants who crossed the Canadian-American border following the election of Donald Trump in the United States. What initially caught my interest was the headline, “The new underground railroad.” I was intrigued by the historical imagery evoked by the headline. Notwithstanding the article’s headline, the author referenced the idea of the Underground Railroad only once and nowhere does the article refer to the “old” Underground Railroad. Markusoff (2017) wrote that the new underground railroad is “what [the refugees’] Canadian supporters call the new underground railroad—a largely informal and hush-hush network of word-of-mouth advisers, drivers and reportedly some smugglers.”

Upon reading the above sentence alongside the article’s headline, several questions arose. For instance, the article does not explain why the informal network was called the new Underground Railroad by its Canadian supporters. Did the “old” Underground Railroad also consist of a secretive, informal system? Furthermore, what is suggested by a magazine alluding to a similar historical event that is not explicitly defined? For example, what are the similarities between the current network and the historical Underground Railroad that may have led to this comparison? More crucially, how do Canadians perceive the history of the Underground Railroad and what is gained in linking its history to current refugee claimants crossing the Canadian-American border?

From this, I became attentive to other media reports on border crossings by refugees evoking Canada’s history of the Underground Railroad because the *Maclean's* headline and reporting were not unique. To demonstrate, *Montreal Gazette* and *The National Observer* also

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reported on refugees crossing at an unmanned border post in Hemmingford, Quebec with headlines such as “The new underground railroad leads to Hemmingford” and “A terminus in the new underground railroad” respectively (Solyom, 2017; Nuttall, 2017). Does the notion of refugees “making a dangerous trek north to Canada to escape a harsh new U.S. regime- risking life and limb” (Markusoff, 2017) perform important work in the formation of Canadian identity? Afua Cooper (2007) argues,

In the story of North American slavery, we associate Canada with “freedom” or “refuge” because during the nineteenth century especially between 1830 and 1860, the period known as the Underground Railroad era, thousands of American runaway slaves escaped to and found refuge in the British territories to the north. Therefore, the image of Canada as “freedom’s land” has lodged itself in the national psyche and become part of our national identity (p. 69).

The current border crossing by refugees is beyond the scope of my proposed research. Still, headlines discussing asylum seekers crossing into Canada from the United States are instances of how the history of Underground Railroad is central to our national identity.

Interestingly, the parallel Jason Markusoff drew between enslaved people crossing the border and undocumented immigrants also caught the attention of Stephen Henderson, the host of *Detroit Today*. On March 17, 2017, Henderson invited Markusoff on the show to address his reporting and the similarities the reporter drew with the Underground Railroad in the reporting. In the following extract, Henderson and Markusoff consider the similarities between the ‘new’ Underground Railroad and the ‘old’ Underground Railroad:

Henderson: I'm slow to sort of the parallel here or hesitant to the parallel here, just given the historical significance of the Underground Railroad. But tell me why you are

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comfortable making that comparison here to what is going on with people going from the United States to Canada?

Markusoff: I understand the sensitivity about that parallel. And I should say it's not one I claim that I invented. Some of the refugee lawyers I spoke to in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and some of their welcoming agencies who are helping these refugees were making the parallel. In Canada, it has a certain connotation. It's something that's, you know, sort of given a heroic note in Canada where we were people who were helping those that did not feel safe in the States. (*Detroit Today*, 2017).

In the above excerpt, Henderson echoes the trepidation I also felt throughout the *Maclean's* article and the comparison the article drew upon. However, Markusoff's response highlights the ways in which the history of the Underground Railroad performs important work in the formation of Canadian identity, especially in relation to the United States. First, Markusoff observes that the parallel between the two networks is a discourse drawn from active participants (the refugee lawyers in Winnipeg, Manitoba and welcoming agencies) of the 'new' Underground Railroad. Second, the parallel is drawn because the history of the Underground Railroad has become part of the Canadian state identity. In the above quote, Canadian people are defined as heroes who continuously help those in the States who have not felt safe. Next, Markusoff provides listeners with another example of Canada as a safe haven for refugees:

There is another historic parallel. Another time this was used in the 80s. There was the overground railroad where El Salvadorans and Guatemalans, yeah, were coming across in the 80s. And they were- they couldn't seek refugee status in many cases in America. So, there were safe houses and the sanctuary movement to help bring them to Canada. So there is- there is that- there is that- that parallel. (Henderson, 2017).

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Markusoff also assesses the similarities and differences between the informal mechanisms of the systems of networks:

And as you said, this is though- this is an informal network. These- these- it may be as simple as some taxi drivers from a Greyhound bus in Plattsburgh, New York, a few kilometers to the border, or some taxi drivers in Grand Forks, North Dakota, helping out there, people who find out about these networks through social media. Social media is the new- can be the new network of gossip and be road maps of getting people to Canada. This is- these are the new systems of railroading. You know in the same way in the 19th century, there were no rails; here, it all takes different forms. And, in some cases, it's very different, even from place to place getting across the border into Canada. (Henderson, 2017).

Similarly, when talking about the dominant narrative about the Underground Railroad and its future usability, McKittrick (2007) points out

The history of benevolence, highlighted by ongoing celebrations of the Underground Railroad in Canada and the United States conceals and/or skews colonial practices, Aboriginal genocides and struggles, and Canada's implication in transatlantic slavery, racism, and racial intolerance (p. 99).

I examine how the history of Black Canadians in our national narrative (as well as its silences) is implicated within the concealment of Canada's history of slavery and racism. Case in point, the title of this proposal "Salt and potatoes in Canada were better than pound-cake and chickens in the United States," was extracted from a more extended quotation from Reverend Alexander Hemsley, displayed in the Canadian Museum for Human Rights' multi-media presentation exhibit on The Underground Railroad. The museum's choice to incorporate Alexander

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Hemsley's statement, a former slave in Maryland and resident of St. Catherine's, is revealing considering the longer account in Benjamin Drew's *The Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada*. Hemsley makes up his mind:

That salt and potatoes in Canada, were better than pound-cake and chickens in a state of suspense and anxiety in the United States. Now I am a regular Britisher. My American blood has been scourged out of me. I have lost my American tastes. I am an enemy to tyranny (Drew, 1856, p.39).

I am not contesting Hemsley's claims and narrative as a former slave. However, I am attentive to the implications presented in the exhibit about the lives of formerly enslaved people in Canada when compared to the United States. Clarke (2005) believes that Hemsley's assertion marks the impact of Canadian spaces on former slaves from the United States. Which nation is linked with oppression, and which nation is associated with liberation? What roles are assigned to different countries under discussion?

The thesis examines how the Canadian state authorities and agencies depict and articulate Black history. The overarching questions of the thesis can be further broken down into the following research goals:

1. To examine the instances of the commemoration of Black history in Canada by state authorities in public history;
2. To identify a theoretical framework to critically examine state depictions of Black Canadian history pointing to the conditions and contexts of presence (and absence);
3. To appreciate how the history of Black Canadians is used and misused to generate national narratives of immigration, multiculturalism, and unity.

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These goals are addressed in the following six chapters. Chapter 2 provides a literature review and the theoretical framework for the objectives. It includes a look at the previous literature on the memorialization of Blackness in Canada, critical race theory (CRT) as a theoretical framework, gaps in the literature and implications of the research. Chapter 3 reviews my methodology, including identification of data sources, data collection, and Critical Discourse Analysis. Chapters 4 and 5 offer analysis of my two primary sources, *On the Road North - Black Canada and Journey to Freedom (OTRN)* and *Escape from Oppression: The Underground Railroad*. Chapter 6 discusses the results of Chapters 4 and 5, with a focus on assessing the materials using CRT. In addition, it addresses the research questions asked in this chapter about Black history in Canada. Chapter 7 concludes with thoughts on the potential and limitations of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In “Unsilencing the Past: Memorializing Four Hundred Years of African Canadian History,” Afua Cooper (2007) surveys various memorialization efforts related to Black Canadian history. She maintains the memorialization process can transpire in two ways. The first means of memorialization is through public history, which includes museums, monuments, historic sites, exhibits, and websites. The second is through academic history involving scholarly research, writing, publishing, and teaching. These two means are not mutually exclusive but rather form a reciprocal process. For example, Cooper argues (2007) that exhibits displayed in museums are dependent upon scholarly research conducted within an academic framework. In the following section, I examine the intersection between public history through museum exhibits on Black experience and the research informing the exhibits.

Into the Heart of Africa was exhibited at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto from November 1989 until August 1990. It was a highly controversial exhibition of approximately 375 African artefacts that elicited disapproval and protest from Black Canadians regarding its portrayal of Africans. Missionaries and their families were also offended by their representation in the exhibit. Jeanne Cannizzo (1991), the curator, says, “the title signaled that the exhibition was dealing with the past, with journeys, interaction, and the disjunction between Canadian images and African realities” (p. 151-152). In other words, the exhibit was intended to critique the imperialist ideology of the Canadians who acquired these artifacts. To achieve the curatorial goals, Butler (1999) points out that Cannizzo presented the voices of soldiers and missionaries using quotation marks to denote uncertain terms such as “barbarous customs” and “the unknown continent.” Similarly, Cannizzo (1991) argues that the wall text panel associated with illustrations ensured “that the museum is not appropriating the black voice, while the second half

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of the exhibition demonstrated that African cultural life and historical experience were not being reduced to a codicil of imperial history” (p. 159). However, critics argued the exhibition failed to adequately deal with the disjunction between Canadian images and African realities. Schildkrout (1991) and Henry et al., (1995) suggest that if the exhibition aimed to serve as a forum for dialogue, it should have allowed for African responses to the voices of soldiers and missionaries to challenge the stereotypes apparent in their words reproduced. Instead, voices resisting colonial conquest, especially African expressions, were absent from the exhibition (Butler, 1999).

Ashley (2011) argues that the ROM exhibit “was not specifically about Canadian history, but quickly came to be read as an episode in African-Canadian exclusion” (p. 186). First, Black Canadians were excluded due to inadequate community consultation before the opening of the exhibit. Toronto is a city with numerous Black/African Canadian communities and individuals whose expertise could have been used by the museum to contextualize the intent of the exhibition to provide feedback on the potential reception from various audience groups. For example, Cannizzo (1991) says the exhibition intended to examine disconnections between Canadian images and African realities. In this analysis of Canadian images, who is defined as Canadian, and who were the intended audience? As Marlene Nourbese Philip (1991) enquires,

Which Canadians did the ROM have in mind? European or African Canadians? Or was the ROM perhaps defining "Canadian" as someone of European heritage. This exhibit was, however, also about African history and African Canadians, some of whom have been here for a few centuries. African Canadians know the history of colonialism in a painfully intimate way and often live its implications and repercussions every day of their lives in this country (p. 105).

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Into the Heart of Africa is remembered for its failure in community consultation since the Black community in Toronto was only invited to approve the exhibit after it was completed. Black Canadians were neither active participants in developing the exhibit nor the imagined audience for the display (Butler, 2013; Henry et al., 1995; Mackey, 1995). Mackey (1995) contends that although Black Canadians were discounted as the implicit ideal audience, they were asked to provide feedback on the brochure for the exhibit.

Second, ROM's reaction to the Coalition for the Truth about Africa (CFTA), an ad hoc coalition formed by sixteen Black groups, demonstrates how *Into the Heart of Africa* is an episode of Black Canadian exclusion. The coalition picketed outside of the museum, starting in March 1990, especially on Saturdays. CFTA's demands included ROM dismantle and close the exhibition, apologize for cultural racism and appropriation, seek approval for future exhibitions planned by the museum concerning Africa or Black people, change hiring practices to increase the number of Black consultants, and include Black people on the ROM's Board of Directors. The ROM disagreed with dismantling the exhibition and did not offer an apology. However, the museum agreed with demands relating to consulting and increasing representation in the institution (Butler, 1999; Henry, Matthis & Taylor, 1995). Despite the exhibit's intent to critically examine notions of truth and question the authority of the museum as an institution, ROM officials reasserted their expertise as authoritative truth holders when challenged by the protesters. Instead of implementing a more self-reflexive assessment, the ROM was more concerned with the management and containment of the protesters, both physically and in the media (Henry et al., 1995; Mackey 1995; Butler, 1999). Mackey (1995) points out that throughout the controversy, the museum and its officials clung tightly to the concept of historical accuracy and scholarly expertise. For example, Young, the director of ROM during the time, was

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quoted saying, “no one point of view outside the curatorial expertise can determine what the exhibit should be” (quoted in Mackey, 1995, p. 18). By denying the coalition’s right to challenge the exhibition, defining who can determine the content of the exhibit, the museum failed to practice reflexive museology. As Philip (1991) argues, “The African Canadian demonstrators and other objectors outside the museum were, in fact, an integral and indispensable part of the cultural text inside the museum that Cannizzo and the ROM expressed interest in reading” (p. 105). Schildkrout (1991) adds that for the ROM to achieve its stated intent, the exhibition would have benefited from an explanation of colonialism, which would provide historical background and its effect on Africa alongside African resistance to colonialism. The consequences from the *Into the Heart of Africa* controversy changed the way Black Canadians were depicted in future exhibitions (Kephalas, 2016; Ashley, 2005).

For example, the planning process around *The Underground Railroad: Next Stop Freedom (UGRR)*, highlighting the urban experience of the former Black slaves who escaped to Canada, and produced by Parks Canada in collaboration with the Ontario Black History Society and the ROM, reflects a deliberate choice to utilize community consultation following the *Into the Heart of Africa* controversy. Despite this key difference, two parallels can be drawn between the exhibits. First, just as *Into the Heart of Africa* was ROM’s first exhibit on Africans, *The Underground Railroad* was Parks Canada’s first exhibition on Black History (Ashley, 2011; Butler, 1999). Second, the exhibit was housed and displayed at the Royal Ontario Museum from April 2002 to 2003, then relocated to Black Creek Pioneer Village from 2003 until 2006 when it was permanently installed at the Oakville Museum at Erchless Estate in Oakville, Ontario. Kephalas (2016) notes that what differentiates the two exhibits is that the ROM and the government agency passed the power of representation to the community depicted in the project.

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For example, the travelling format of the exhibit allowed it to be displayed at various venues, such as the Buxton Museum in North Buxton and the North American Black Historical Museum in Amherstburg, two critical stops of the Underground Railroad. Second, the invitation of Black Canadians as one of the primary stakeholders to sit on the committee guiding the exhibit's development was a direct consequence of *Into the Heart of Africa*. Ashley (2011) argues that this collaboration enabled a negotiation of power, resulting in a significant public exhibit that was symbolically meaningful for the group depicted. It was not controlled by the state agency nor was it an official state interpretation of the event. The original exhibit is a multi-media presentation interpreting the story of the Underground Railroad and its effect on the city of Toronto (Ricketts, 2009; Ashley, 2005; Ashley, 2011; Smardz Frost, 2007).

Ashley (2011), in her case study of the exhibit, provides examples of how Black Canadians were involved in the development of the exhibit. The committee collaborated in designing the exhibit's narrative and in deciding upon the site to host the exhibit. Similarly, the content of the exhibit allowed for power sharing between the committee and the state agency. Parks Canada had little to no claim of in-house expertise on the history of the Underground Railroad. Consequently, Black Canadian historians were hired for historical and original research. Unlike *Into the Heart of Africa*, Black Canadians and their lived experiences and knowledge were understood to be integral to the commemoration of the national event that the state was interested in celebrating. As well, the committee pushed for a specific storytelling method that used a first-person narrative through a multimedia approach called 'object theatre' rather than placing artifacts alongside graphics and panel displays as is the norm for ROM exhibits (Ashley, 2005; Ashley, 2007).

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Based on the work undertaken by stakeholders, the exhibit represents more a dialogue between community members and the state agency than the authoritative work of a museum. The public was not necessarily fully aware of the dialogue involved in the creation of the exhibit. Nonetheless, there is a consensus in the literature that the project reflects the positive outcomes of community consultation (Ashley, 2005; Kephalas, 2016; Smardz Frost, 2007; Ricketts, 2009). However, Mygind, Hällman & Bentsen (2015) argue that the negation of institutional power in comparison to collaborative community consultation is overstated. For example, they point out that the final product did not encapsulate the lengthy discussions about the participants' varying perspectives on their heritage. Instead, the final account presented in the exhibit corresponds to Parks Canada's original intent to present a unified chronicle of Canada as a site of refuge, immigration and freedom for Black Canadians (Ashley, 2011; Ashley, 2005; Mygind et al., 2015). Similarly, while Ashley (2011) highlights the collaborative nature of the exhibit, she does acknowledge the disjuncture between the agency's intent and the Black Canadian producers' wishes in the final product

A clearly stated objective on the part of the consultative committee was to dispel myths regarding the Underground Railroad but in my reading, here was a performance of "safe" Black culture that minimized or placed in the distant past negative overtones, situated within an underlying governmental theme of Canada as a welcoming land for refugees and immigrants (p. 15).

As this section reveals, Parks Canada's *The Underground Railroad: Next Stop Freedom* (UGRR) has been examined at length in the literature. However, not much is said in the literature about *On the Road North: Black Canada and the Journey to Freedom*, the traveling exhibit, created in 2008 by Parks Canada and the Multiculturalism Branch of the Department of

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Canadian Heritage for Black History Month. This gap in the literature about *On the Road North* needs to be addressed for two reasons. First, a comparison could be made between the two exhibits to appreciate the similarities and differences between the two shows. For example, does the object theatre performance of *UGRR* allow the audience to have a more empathetic and authentic experience or does the panel exhibition of *On the Road North* allow for the reading of diverse Black experiences? Second, such an analysis could help us appreciate the degree to which Parks Canada as a state agency allows different cultural communities to renegotiate, redefine, and represent their identity in its role of “recounting the history of our land and our people - the stories of Canada” (Parks Canada).

The underlying theme of Canada as a refuge for Black Canadians is also captured by examining which Black experiences received recognition and commemoration from the state. Cooper (2007) finds that the majority of federally recognized Black experiences are sited in Ontario during the 19th century, before the American Civil War, and are usually linked to the Underground Railroad. Thomas’s (1996) analysis of commemorative plaques funded by the Ontario Heritage Foundation of the Ontario Ministry of Culture and Tourism shows similar results. He finds the provincial government’s plaque programme is plagued by its failure to memorialize Black Canadian experiences beyond the American Civil War. Although the Ontario government has moved beyond self-congratulatory history in comparison to the United States, the inability to celebrate and note Black experiences post-Civil War embodies yet another episode of exclusion for Black Canadians.

Similarly, Kheraj (2003) maps the various ways that the Buxton Settlement, the second largest Black Canadian national historic site in Canada, has been commemorated locally in 1950, regionally in 1965, and nationally in 1999. The Buxton Settlement, also known as the Elgin

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Settlement, was one of four organized black settlements established in Canada. In his analysis of the text in the plaques at the site, Kheraj (2003) reads the local and regional commemorations as evoking Canada and Ontario as a haven for refugees, especially slaves, in comparison to the United States. However, the text inscribed in the national memorial is not any more critical than past commemorations and is correspondingly more coherent in its attempt to integrate Black Canadian experiences into the collective national narrative of multiculturalism. The most recent memorialization of the Buxton Settlement characterizes the site as an illustration of Canada's history of immigration and tolerance. At the same time, this account omits the problematic racial suppositions held by its white founder and the opposition of white residents to the black settlement of Buxton.

In sum, what are the implications of the selective commemoration of Black Canadian experiences that highlight some aspects of the past while omitting and excluding other components? What does it say when the history of North American slavery and resistance remembered and celebrated in Canada predominantly features the United States? What is at stake if we leave specific narratives of nationhood unchallenged? In his book, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995) reminds us "power is constitutive of the story" (p. 28) and for history, "power begins at the source" (p. 29). As such, Cooper traces the source of Black history to white pride (2007), as she argues, "Black history has less to do with Black people and more with White pride. If a Black history narrative makes Whites feel good, it can surface; if not, it is suppressed or buried" (p. 8).

In this section, several academic projects that highlight suppressed or buried narratives have been discussed. A considerable number of these accounts relate to Canada's history of slavery (Cooper, 2007; Cooper, 2007; Kheraj, 2003; Thomas, 1996). Commemoration can also

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occur in the form of geographic recognition. For example, Yeoman (2004) discusses the campaign for official state recognition of a slave burial ground in St. Armand, Quebec, locally and orally known as “N---r Rock,”¹ which is believed to harbour the graves of a Loyalist officer’s slaves. Currently, the Black Coalition of Quebec is campaigning for the site to be formally acknowledged as a historical site, which was one of the 11 places chosen by the Quebec government to strip of the n-word from its name (Lowrie, 2016) The renaming points to narratives of erasures and what McKittrick (2002) refers to as re-memorializing black geography into black-less spaces. For instance, the renaming of N---o Creek Road in Holland Township, Ontario to Moggie Road, the name of a 19th-century white settler, in 1996 is understood by Walcott (2001), McKittrick (2002), and Harrow and Snarr (2012) as an episode of Black erasure. The renaming is a choice to erase Black presence and instead commemorate a white settler. McKittrick, during her interview with Hudson (2013), argues that erasure of N---o Creek Road is an erasure of a meaningful racialized archive.

Returning to the selective memorialization of Black Canadian experiences, which tends to emphasize certain aspects of the past while exhibiting willful forgetfulness of others, the question arises: Why does memorialization through public history largely feature the United States as a site of slavery and Canada as a site of resistance against slavery? Whose stories are being told in these narratives? Involved in these questions is the relationship between race, power, and representation in society. Critical race theory is a theoretical framework concerned with interrogating the relationship between race, power and racism.

¹ Although I argue and believe that renaming of these sites is an erasure of Black presence, I do not feel comfortable using hateful words, nor is it my place to reclaim words laden with the consequences of historical racialization and dehumanization of Black people. Instead, I believe the renaming should have considered names of Black Canadians as alternatives to the names of white settlers.

Theoretical framework: Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Critical race theory began in the mid-1970s with the work of Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman. It has roots in critical legal studies, critical feminism, and continental and political philosophy, including the works of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Frederick Douglas, Sojourner Truth, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Black Power movement. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (2012, p. 7-10) list the following key premises of CRT:

1. Racism is ordinary. Racism is regular because it has an endemic nature to it. This pervasiveness feature makes it difficult to address. As a result, CRT scholars are skeptical of “colour-blind” approaches to ensuring equality and equity.
2. The feature of interest convergence challenges attempts to fight racism on a societal level. Interest convergence, also known as material determinism, indicates that racial equality and equity occur when they coincide with the needs and interests of the dominant group (Milner IV, 2008).
3. Race and racism are products of social construction. Racial categories or racialization signify historically contextualized classifications that have real consequences.
4. Research following the CRT framework should be intersectional and anti-essentialist. The concept of intersectionality refers to how various overlapping social identities (for example, race, religion, gender, sexuality, class etc.,) contribute to individual experiences of social structure (Crenshaw, 1991). Anti-essentialism is best understood by examining essentialism. Essentialists views “the experience of being a member of the group under discussion is a stable one, one with a clear meaning, a meaning constant through time, space, and different historical, social, political, and personal context” (Grillo, 1995 p. 20).

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5. Voices of people of colour should be centred in the examination of racism as people of colour have lived experience and knowledge about race and racism.

Furthermore, Canadian CRT scholarly work consists primarily of legal studies such as Alyward's *Canadian Critical Race Theory, Racism and the Law* (1999). However, in the recent decade, CRT scholarly works have examined various themes. For example, James (2012) incorporates critical race theory and cultural analysis to understand the social construction of male Black Canadian youths through discourse of "at risk students." Likewise, Barbara McNeil (2011) also uses CRT to deconstruct the notions of rationality and race neutrality in a university setting. She examines the ways in which race and space interconnect in the establishing her identity as a Black professor teaching mainly White students. Similarly, the basic tenets of critical race theory hold considerable potential as a framework for interrogating how Black history and Black experiences are represented within the narratives of Canada.

To illustrate the strength of the framework, one can analyze ROM's *Into the Heart of Africa* using a CRT framework. For instance, the failure of Jeanna Cannizzo's attempt at institutional critique at the ROM can be illuminated by the first tenet. Cannizzo (1991) did not extend her critique of the imperialist ideology of the Canadians who had acquired these artifacts. An argument could have been made that the ROM was complicit in imperialist ideology due to its collection of African artefacts. The museum is not immune to the pervasive nature of imperialism. Similarly, instances of interest convergence can be identified during two occurrences. The hiring of black scholars and the post-development consultation with the prominent Black leaders in Toronto can be read as cases of interest convergence. The museum consulted with the Black community post exhibit development, which resulted in a change to the

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text in the program brochure. However, the invitation to the consultation was also extended to get the leaders to help promote the exhibit.

Next, Cannizzo's (1991) curatorial approach to the exhibit was intended to point out the racialization of Africans. In her use of quotation marks to denote questionable terms for Africans, the curator demonstrates how racialization can be understood as a historically contextualized form of classification. However, she fails to adequately address how the historical racialization presented throughout the museum affects Black and African Canadians in the present. Likewise, the theme of intersectionality and anti-essentialism was demonstrated in how the museum reacted to the protesters. The media and the museum both reduced the diversity of the protesters. The protesters were categorized to be a few extremists in opposition to the majority of Black Canadians, who were held to be happy with the exhibit. And finally, *Into the Heart of Africa* failed to centre the voices of people of colour. Instead, the exhibit centred the views of the soldiers and missionaries while Africans were not provided with the opportunity to counter those representations. Likewise, protesters' voices were delegitimized. The exhibit could have drawn parallels between contemporary issues raised by the protesters and the history portrayed in the exhibit. Failure to centre the voices of the protesters and Africans resulted in an exhibit that seemed to celebrate colonial and imperialist ideology, despite its intentions to do the opposite.

In the above example of using critical discourse analysis, I am not suggesting that a gap exists in the analyses of Butler (1999), Mackey (1995), and others in their review of *Into the Heart of Africa*. Instead, I am suggesting that critical race theory as a framework for examining representations of minorities can strengthen such analyses, especially when probing depictions of visible minorities. Commemorations are instances of representation where stories are told. So, a

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close reading of these stories is essential when undertaking works meant to deconstruct race and the politics of racism, mapping how modern and historical formations of racial hierarchies are implicated in discourses presented through public history commemoration. As Leonardo (2013) notes, within CRT, stories “constitute the known through a narrative structure that the knower, often a representative of the master race, validates through majoritarian storylines replete with assumptions about progress, civilization, sense and self-worth” (p. 603). Consequently, a critical race theory framework will inform themes guiding my critical discourse analysis, as discussed in the next section.

Gaps in the Literature

First, there is a lack of scholarly work speaking to the 2008 collaborative exhibit project between Parks Canada Agency and Canada Heritage called *On the Road North: Black Canada and the Journey to Freedom*. The exhibit presents an unexplored occasion for scholars to consider how narratives of Canada were negotiated by the two state agencies and representatives from the Black Community. Furthermore, the absence of academic writing on the exhibit implies that the strengths and weaknesses of the exhibit have not been reflected upon, which is critical because the exhibit is still travelling and being presented throughout Canada. For example, the exhibit was displayed at the Manitoba Legislative Building during the 2018 Black History Month (CTV Winnipeg, 2018).

Second, Black Canadian history shown throughout the Canadian Museum for Human Rights has not been sufficiently addressed in the literature. The museum is an “idea museum” with the intent to encourage reflection on human rights (CMHR, 2015). The museum and the material within it are relatively new. Much of the literature engages with the museum’s work on genocide (Hankivisky & Dhamoon, 2013; Perreault, 2017; Opotow, 2015). However, addressing

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and critically engaging with the material in the museum concerning Black Canadians allows for a greater appreciation for how representation is made and articulated in the Canada. It is particularly essential to examine the CMHR because the museum is not a place of artifacts. Instead, the museum serves as “a centre of learning where people from around the world can engage in discussion and commit to taking action against hate and oppression” (CMHR, 2018). As a place of learning, the institution should be interrogated for discussions generated by the museum about Black Canadian history, citizenship, slavery, and narratives of oppression faced by Black Canadians.

Implications

Aside from addressing the identified gaps in the literature, my research also has significance considering contemporary Canadian needs. For example, findings from the United Nations’ Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent (2017) found

Canada’s history of enslavement, racial segregation and marginalization has had a deleterious impact on people of African descent [...] History informs anti-Black racism and racial stereotypes that are so deeply entrenched in institutions, policies and practices, that its institutional and systemic forms are either functionally normalized or rendered invisible, especially to the dominant group (p. 7).

My thesis is an attempt to comprehend how state commemorations endeavour to challenge anti-Black racism through institutions of public history. My findings address how efforts to improve representations of Black Canadians can move toward more reflexive narratives of Canadian history.

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In sum, my research will survey various forms of state commemoration of Black Canadian history through critical race theory. My analysis considers the basic themes identified by CRT. I examined data sources, keeping in mind the following:

- To what degree do instances of memorialization address the implications of Canada's history of slavery?
- Is the commemoration an example of interest convergence? How does this commemoration meet with the needs of the dominant group?
- Although race and racism are products of social construction, racialization has consequences. To what extent does the method of remembrance address the effects of the racialization of Black Canadians?

Chapter 3: Methods

Data Collection

In this thesis, I examine various cultural texts and documents, including government documents, websites, museum exhibits, and videos. To conduct this research, I identified two government sources for data collection. These sources are the partnership between Canadian Heritage and Parks Canada Agency and a national museum.

Canada Heritage

My first source is *On the Road North - Black Canada and Journey to Freedom*, a travelling exhibit created for the 2008 Black History Month by the Parks Canada Agency and Department of Canadian Heritage's Multiculturalism Branch. The multimedia exhibit examines people, places, and events, including the Underground Railroad relating to the end of slavery in Canada. The year also marked the 175th anniversary of The Slavery Abolition Act of 1833, which ended slavery throughout British colonies, including Canada (Canada, 2008). Two forms of the exhibit currently exist. I analyzed the virtual online exhibit displayed on The Virtual Museum website.

National Museums

National museums of Canada refer to the national system of museums as crown corporations established by the 1990 *Museum Acts*. The museum system includes Ingenium, which oversees the Canada Agriculture and Food Museum alongside the Canada Aviation and Space Museum and the Canada Science and Technology Museum, Canadian Museum of History, Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, Canadian Museum for Human Rights, Canadian War Museum, and National Gallery of Canada. I focused on materials available at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

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Canadian Museum for Human Rights

The Canadian Museum for Human Rights (CMHR) is the first national museum built since 1967 and the first national museum outside of Ottawa, Canada's capital. The CMHR is mandated "to explore the subjects of human rights, with special but not exclusive reference to Canada in order to enhance the public's understanding of human rights to promote respect for others and to encourage reflection and dialogue" (CMHR, 2015). As per CMHR's mission statement, the museum, alongside other national museums, contributes to the collective national memory. The museum features ten core galleries built around various human rights themes. The ten core galleries include "What are Human Rights," "Canadian Journeys," "Protecting Rights in Canada," "Examining the Holocaust," "Turning Points for Humanity," "Breaking the Silence," "Actions Count," "Rights Today," and "Inspiring Changes" (CMHR, 2018). I chose to examine Canadian Journeys. According to the CMHR website, "Canadian Journeys" is the largest core gallery in the museum. The gallery intends to be reflective of Canadian human rights victories and mishaps. I examined *Escape from Oppression: The Underground Railroad* as my data source from the exhibition.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is located at the intersection of discourse studies, feminist post-structuralism and critical linguistics (Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui and Joseph, 2005). Its roots in critical linguistics means that analysis using CDA goes outside the description of discourse. Instead, CDA examines how and why certain discourses are produced (Teo, 2000). Van Dijk (2001) describes CDA as "a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context" (p. 352). Within Van

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Dijk's (2001) statement, the usefulness of CDA to study the representation of Black Canadians in government institutions is highlighted. As stated above, CDA is concerned with ideologies along with power implicated in discourses. Scholars using CDA are engaged in ways to demystify ideologies and power through the systematic examination of semiotic data in various forms, such as written, spoken or visual.

Using critical discourse analysis as a methodology for a critical race theory project allows one to address "the ideological underpinnings of race research" (Leonardo, 2013, p. 600). Narrativity is a feature central to both critical race theory and critical discourse analysis, specifically because both CRT and CDA are attentive to power relations embedded and implicated within narratives. For example, Delgado and Stefancic (2012) point out the need for centring voices of people of colour and their lived experiences. The centring of racialized voices enables counterstorytelling resisting "majoritarian" stories. Majoritarian stories, or master narratives, are "the bundle of presuppositions, received wisdoms, and shared cultural understandings persons in the dominant group bring to discussions of race" (p. Delgado & Stefancic, 1993, p. 462). The master narrative affects how we perceive and understand the world. At the same time, master narratives also exclude other possible perceptions of the world, leading us to consider the current social arrangements as natural and fair (Delgado, 1995). The master narrative's power arises from the fact that master narratives are presented as neutral, ensuring protection from critique or challenges, thereby reproducing existing social inequalities without being challenged (Delgado, 1989). As a result, CRT theorists offer counterstorytelling or counter-narratives as emancipatory tools (Delgado, 1989; Delgado & Stefancic, 1993; Bell, 2003).

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Similarly, critical discourse analysis consists of research interested in how language and discourse are utilized in realizing social goals and understanding the extent to which their use affects social maintenance and adjustment (Bloor & Bloor, 2007). Gilgun, Valandra and Sharma (2009) note the benefit of using CRT and CDA together to examine how race and racism operate in families and social work practice. The authors propose CDA and CRT are natural fits because “CRT provides a broad view of issues related to race and power, while CDA involves close textual analysis that integrates individual actions with cultural themes and practices related to power but not specifically to race” (Gilgun et al., 2009). An example of the natural fit between CRT and CDA is demonstrated through Aleshire’s (2014) case study on the state of Arizona’s 2010 elimination of Mexican American Studies. The use of a CDA methodology for research framed by CRT strengthens the author’s analysis of the program participants’ narratives. The use of CDA as a methodological tool helped uncover the evidence of master and counter-narratives proposed by CRT. Moreover, the author argues CDA as a methodology allows researchers to move beyond the dichotomy of the master narrative and counter-narrative to uncover a range of discourses within which other forms of narratives are present. Aleshire (2014) suggests a CDA methodology addresses the weakness of CRT literature concerning the CRT movement’s failure to precisely state what constructs are present in the master narrative and counter-narratives.

I apply Norman Fairclough’s CDA Framework because Fairclough (1989) regards language as a form of social practice. Language, as a form of social practice holds several implications. First, language is a part of society and not external to society. Second, language is a social process and not fixed. Third, comprising of the first two implications, language is a process socially conditioned and affected by other parts of society. It is important to note that Fairclough (1989) regards discourse as the complete process of social interaction while text, a

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product, is just a part of the process. Consequently, language as a form of social practice means that analysis is “not just [limited] to analysing texts, nor just to analysing processes of production and interpretation, but to analysing the relationship between texts, processes, and their social conditions, both the immediate conditions of the situational context and the more remote conditions of institutional and social structures” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 26). Therefore, Fairclough’s (1989) framework contains three dimensions of discourses and three processes of analysis. The three dimensions of discourse as a communicative event include text (speech, written, visual image, or combination of these), discursive practice (involving production and consumption of texts), and discursive events as sociocultural practice (social analysis). The analysis framework for text and discourse includes description (text analysis), interpretation (the relationship between productive and interpretative processes), and explanation (social analysis).

During the descriptive stage (textual analysis), Fairclough (1989) proposes questions that can be asked about a text. The ten questions Fairclough (1989, p. 110-111) suggests are listed below.

Vocabulary

1. What experiential values do words have?
 - a. What classification schemes are drawn upon?
 - b. Are there words that are ideologically contested?
 - c. Is there rewording or overwording?
 - d. What ideologically significant meaning relations (synonymy, hyponymy, antonymy) are there between words?
2. What relational values do words have?
 - a. Are there euphemistic expressions?
 - b. Are there markedly formal or informal words?
3. What expressive values do words have?
4. What metaphors are used?

Grammar

5. What experiential values do grammatical features have?
 - a. What types of process and participant predominate?
 - b. Is the agency unclear?
 - c. Are processes what they seem?
 - d. Are nominalizations used?

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- e. Are sentences active or passive?
- f. Are sentences positive or negative?
- 6. What relational values do grammatical features have?
 - a. What modes (declarative, grammatical question, imperative) are used?
 - b. Are there important features of relational modality?
 - c. Are the pronouns we and you used, and if so, how?
- 7. What expressive values do grammatical features have?
 - a. Are there important features of expressive modality?
- 8. How are (simple) sentences linked together?
 - a. What logical connectors are used?
 - b. Are complex sentences characterized by coordination or/ subordination?
 - c. What means are used for referring inside and outside the text?

Textual Structures

- 9. What interactional conventions are used? Are there ways in which one participant controls the turns of others?
- 10. What larger-scale structures does the text have?

The above questions have been used successfully to analyze a small quantity of textual data. For example, Caldas-Coulthard (1996) uses the above framework to analyze newspaper articles.

Similarly, Krishnamurty (1996) also analyzes a small quantity of newspaper data with Fairclough's 10 questions. Atkins (2002) suggests:

Fairclough's list of questions seems capable of generating an astonishing amount of analysis and may be less suitable for larger quantities of text. Most writers that have based analysis on his model have addressed a reduced number of questions (p.5).

I realized during the data analysis process that my data source was not suitable for using all the questions identified above. While the list of questions would generate an incredible amount of analysis, I was more interested in the representation of social events to address my research question and objectives.

I decided to do my textual analysis according to the framework Fairclough (2003) identified in *Analyzing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*. More specifically, I chose to focus my textual analysis on questions he asks about the representation of social events. The questions Fairclough (2003, p. 193) suggests are listed below.

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What elements of represented social events are included or excluded, and which included elements are most salient?

How abstractly or concretely are social events represented?

How are processes represented? What are the predominant process types (material, mental, verbal, relational, existential)?

How are social actors represented (activated/passivated, personal/ impersonal, named/classified, specific/generic)?

Along with the above questions, I use the analytical framework for CDA presented by Fairclough (2003, p. 125), which guides researchers to:

1. Be attentive to a social problem containing a semiotic feature
2. Classify difficulties preventing the social problem from being tackled by analysis of:
 - a. the network of practices the social problem is situated within
 - b. identifying the relationship of texts to other elements within the network of practices
 - c. the discourse (the text itself) paying close attention to
 - i. structural analysis
 - ii. interactional analysis
 - iii. interdiscursive analysis
 - iv. linguistic and semiotic analysis
3. Understand whether the network of practices benefits from the presence of the social problem?
4. Highlight ways to tackle the obstacles,

5. Reflect critically on the analysis (1-4).

Researcher's Position

Continuing engagement with political practice is central to both CRT and CDA frameworks. As a result, researchers engaging with the two frameworks must be cognizant of how socio-political factors inspire their findings. CDA, as a critical methodology, is an important method to evaluate dominant discourses and promote change (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). Wodak (2001) underscores what entails the critical part of critical discourse analysis, which is “basically, ‘critical’ is to be understood as having distance to the data, embedding the data in the social, taking a political stance explicitly, and a focus on self-reflection as scholars doing research” (p. 3). Similarly, Lawrence, Matusda, Delgado, and Crenshaw (1993) argue that CRT theorists:

Embrace subjectivity of perspective and are avowedly political. [Their] work is both pragmatic and utopian, as [they] seek to respond to the immediate needs of the subordinated and oppressed even as [they] imagine a different world and offer different values. It is work that involves both action and reflection. (p. 3).

As a result, reflexivity is an essential feature of any critical research. Reflexivity asks for the researchers to come to “[the] realization that the investigators' own values, experiences and motives cannot be separated from the research process” (Gabriel, 2018, p. 146) As Fairclough (1992) states “what one sees in a text, what one regards as worth describing, and what one chooses to emphasize in a description, are all dependent on how one interprets a text” (p. 27).

As a non-Black scholar, I would like to situate myself and this research briefly. I immigrated to Canada from the United States in 2007 and finished the last two years of high school in Canada. As a result, most of my formative school years (primary education and

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secondary education) occurred in the United States. We learned about Canada specifically in Grade Six focusing on historical time periods of settlement and colonization. We were also taught about Canada as a major terminus in the Underground Railroad using the metaphor of the “North Star.” I have no recollection of learning about slavery and enslaved people in Canada. Instead, I conceptualized Canada to be the antithesis of the United States when it came to race relations. The United States became synonyms for slavery and segregation while Canada became synonyms for freedom and integration. My understanding of Canada went unchallenged up until the time I learned about Viola Desmond (and Africville) at the CMHR in 2015. I began to want to delineate the linkages between slavery and the current racialization of Black Canadians. To conclude, I situate this study in allyship to challenge the myths of Canadian nationhood and (re)presentations of Canadian benevolence.

Concluding Thoughts

To summarize, overall, the research uses a CDA methodology for the micro-linguistic analysis of texts identified previously to critically examine macrostructures such as Canada’s racial hierarchy and racism present in Canada. The next two chapters (Chapter 4 and Chapter 5) have data analysis for the two exhibits relating to text, images, and presentation. As well, these macrostructures will be interrogated using critical race theory in Chapter 6 to address the research questions.

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Chapter 4: On the Road North: Black Canada and the Journey to Freedom

Description of the Exhibit

On the Road North: Black Canada and the Journey to Freedom (OTRN), created by the Parks Canada Agency and the Multiculturalism Branch of the Department of Canadian Heritage, was originally a travelling exhibit for Black History Month in 2008 (Virtual Museum, 2008), which also marked the 175th anniversary of the British Imperial Act of 1833. The Act abolished slavery across the British colonies, including Canada. In Figure 1, five of the 10 panels of the exhibit are visible.

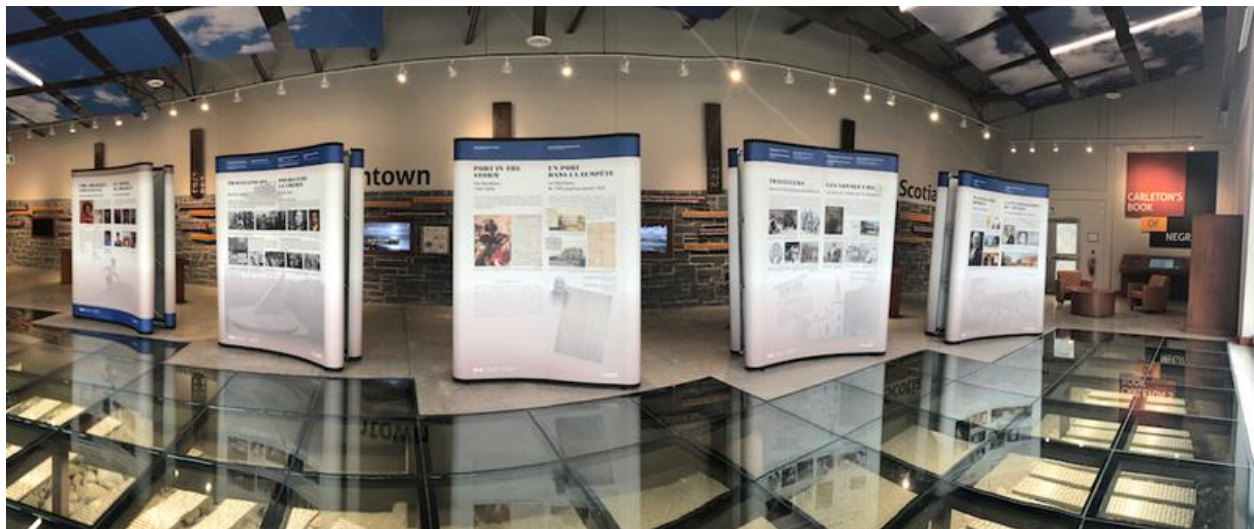


Figure 1. The layout of the traveling exhibit in panel format (Source: Shelburne County Coast Guard)

I used the online version of the exhibit available on the Virtual Museum of Canada website. The website describes itself as “the largest digital source of stories and experiences shared by Canada’s museums and heritage organizations” (Virtual Museum, 2019). Since 2014, Virtual Museum of Canada is managed by the Canadian Museum of History and the museum’s mandate is to “to enhance Canadians’ knowledge, understanding and appreciation of events, experiences,

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people and objects that reflect and have shaped Canada's history and identity" (*Canadian Museum of History Act*).

Exhibit Layout (Virtual)

In the "About" section, the publisher is listed as Government of Canada, Department of Canadian Heritage, Canadian Heritage Information Network. The creator attributed is The Parks Canada Agency. The exhibit was launched on February 5, 2008 and modified on May 29, 2008. The target age range for the material are students in Grade 6 and Grade 7. The exhibit falls under the subject category of social studies, Canadian history, and history.

Like the 10-panel physical exhibit, the virtual exhibit also has 10 main sections. The 10 sections of the virtual exhibit are²:

1. INTRODUCTION
2. MILESTONES- A Brief History of Slavery;
3. PORT IN THE STORM- The Maritimes, 1783-1820s;
4. CROSSING THE ATLANTIC- The Abolition Movement in Canada;
5. PLANNING THE JOURNEY- Canada's Abolitionists;
6. TRAVELLERS – Heroes of the Underground Railroad;
7. TO CANADA BY ANOTHER ROAD- North to British Columbia;
8. THROUGH A CRACK IN THE GATE- Land of Hope in the Canada's West;
9. TRAVELLING ON- The 20th Century;
10. THE JOURNEY CONTINUES- Onward into Tomorrow.

² The online version also has three learning activities for learners. The first activity is called "Showing the Flag." The second activity is called "Abolitionist Speechwriter." The third activity is called "Come One, Come All." Although, these learning activities are not the focus of my study, I will address the first two activities to understand what students (and learners) are asked to do in terms of the exhibit learning.

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For analysis, I will only be examining the first six sections of the exhibit. The content in these sections focus on the topic of interest.

All sections, except the Introduction, follow the same layout template. When one clicks on a link for a section, it takes the person to the beginning of the section. The page has different images, text, and other multi-media relevant to the topic at hand. Learning objectives are presented for each section, all beginning with the following language:

After reading, viewing and listening to media files in the Learning Object, students will be able to [describe, consider, identify, summarize aspects of the topic they looked at].

Finally, the Reference page lists the resources used throughout the website. Most of these resources are reports and agenda papers submitted to the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Fairclough (2003, p. 139) understands the representation of social events as recontextualization. When we recognize social events as recontextualization, we can ask certain questions during textual analysis. Fairclough (2003, p. 139) suggests a textual analysis to pay attention to instances of exclusion/inclusion, abstraction/generalization, arrangement, and additions in the text.

Presence

When we examine texts for instances of inclusion/exclusion, we are looking for presence (and absence) of elements of events in the text. The introduction of the exhibit provides cues for elements present throughout the text:

Slavery ended in Canada in 1833. The people, places and events that won that victory are remembered today in Canada's system of National Historic Persons, Sites and Events.

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The learning materials presented here are based on Canada's national historic designations. Their purpose is to introduce you to the heroic persons, the honored places and momentous events in Canada that helped to end slavery.

In terms of 'presence,' persons, events, and places are especially important in Parks Canada's representation of the event. Parks Canada has a system for how to represent the end of slavery in Canada. Parks Canada (2001a) does not consider this system of representation to be finite or complete. However, I believe the system of National Historic Sites of Canada implies that "the relation between types of activity, persons and places is made prominent" (Fairclough, 2003: 140). So, the elements represented in the text are selected according to an identified system.

The following extracts from the learning objectives demonstrate the prominence of events, places and people in the representation of the event. For instance, after learning about the history of slavery, students are asked to "identify persons who contributed to the Abolition Movement in Britain" and "summarize some events that led to the abolition of slavery." (*OTRN-MILESTONES*). Similarly, in the section about Underground Railroad activists, the learning objectives include students identifying "the heroic Blacks who sometimes had to take extreme measures, risked life, freedom and security to help other slaves escape to the North" (*OTRN, TRAVELLERS*). Likewise, the importance of places throughout the representation can be observed through the learning objectives. The learning objectives also involve the need for students to "identify some of the earliest churches established in Canada by the Black community" (*OTRN, TRAVELLERS*).

Representation of Slavery

From the beginning, *OTRN* as an exhibit (re)presents slavery abstractly and in a generalized way, though there is a decrease in the level of abstraction when certain countries and places (Canada and North America) are referenced. The introduction invokes visitors to:

Try to imagine. There was a time – in Canada as in much of the world – when it was legal for one person to own another. There was a time when a man, woman or child could be taken to market and sold, like a car or a sack of potatoes. Those who were owned – we call them “slaves” – worked not to support themselves, but their owners. Many were abused. Few learned to read and write. None could choose how and where to live their lives. Most slaves in North America were Africans or the descendants of Africans who had been kidnapped and sold into slavery (*OTRN*, INTRODUCTION).

Existential assumptions in the second and third sentences (triggered by ‘there’) include the assumptions that ownership of someone is currently not legal, and people are not commodities. The third sentence provides us with an abstract definition of slavery. The definition of a slave requires ownership of the person and their labour. There is some reduction of the level of abstraction of the definition of a slave when certain groups of people (‘Africans, or the descendants of Africans’) or processes (‘Africans who had been kidnapped and sold into slavery’) are referenced.

Social Actors

Fairclough (2003: 146) refers to two ways of representing social actors in texts. Social actors are represented either by naming or by classifying. These categories of representation can be either specific or generic. In contrast to *Escape from Oppression*, *OTRN* represents more social actors. I list the social actors named explicitly throughout the exhibit in Table 1. I also

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classify the individual social actors into ten general categories. The general categories can be traced back to the learning objective, which asks students (or learners) to identify persons who contributed to different events discussed in the text.

Table 1. Social Actors in *On the Road North* according to the learning objectives

S.N.	Categories of Social Actors	Names of Social Actors
1	British Abolitionists	John Newton, William Wilberforce, Colonel John Graves Simcoe, John Brown
2	Freedom Fighters and the American Revolution	Lord Dunsmore, Colonel Tye
3	Loyalist Immigrants	Loyalist Immigrants, Thomas Peters, Sierra Leone Community
4	Abolitionists in Canada	Colonel John Graves Simcoe, John Brown, Chatham Community
5	Refugees in Canada	Thornton and Lucie Blackthorn, John Anderson
6	Community Builders and Planners	Richard Preston, Reverend William King, Henry and Mary Bibb, Mary Ann Shadd
7	Underground Railroad Activists	Reverend John Rankin, Josiah Henson, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Harriet Tubman, Jarmian Logue, Black Churches (Salem Chapel British Methodist Episcopal Church, Nazrey Methodist Church, Sandwich
8	Immigrants in British Columbia*	Governor James Douglas, Jeremiah Nagle, Mifflin Gibbs, Victoria Pioneer Rifles, Roman Catholic Nuns
9	Immigrants (Pioneers) in West Canada*	John Ware and Mildred Lewis, The Government of Canada, J.D. Edwards, Mattie Hayes
10	20 th Century Black Canadians*	Seymour Tyler, No. 2 Construction Battalion, Black Railway Porters, Portia May White, Nathaniel Dett, The Africville Community, The City

*Excluded from textual analysis³

³ I have identified and listed all of the categories of social actors in the exhibit. However, only the first seven categories of social actors were related to the social events surrounding the Underground Railroad and slavery in Canada. Thus, rest of the analysis will focus on these actors.

British Abolitionists

One of the learning objectives asked students to “identify persons who contributed to the Abolition Movement in Britain” (*OTRN*, MILESTONE). The text introduces and represents abolitionists as Europeans in the following extract:

Some 200 years ago, Europeans started to wake to the horror and protest (*OTRN*, MILESTONE).

The European slave trade was the horror the Europeans are waking up to and protesting. The act of protesting slavery is attributed to Europeans. What was the reason behind the act of waking up and protesting the horror 200 years ago? The text answers:

New scientific discoveries, philosophies and religious movements changed how people thought in the 18th century. Many began to question the morality of slavery (*OTRN*, MILESTONE)

The abstract representation of abolition inextricably ties the Abolitionist Movement with the Age of Enlightenment. Abolitionists are represented abstractly and in a generalized way. The text does not provide concrete details about these new scientific discoveries, philosophies and religious movements and the places where they originated.

There is some reduction in the level of abstraction when the text references the campaign to end slavery in Britain, especially John Newton and William Wilberforce. The text in *OTRN* associates John Newton with two actions. First, Newton is one of the Europeans who woke up to the horror of slavery. Second, Newtown is instrumental in the Europeans waking up and protesting slavery. John Newton is linked with actions “that helped turn British people into the enemies of slavery” (*OTRN*, MILESTONES). There are two assumptions in the sentence about John Newton: value and existential assumptions. The value assumption is triggered using the

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verb “help” (e.g., “helped turn British people into the enemies of slavery”). The assumption is turning the British people against slavery is desirable (Fairclough, 2013: 56). The existential assumption is more significant than the value assumption in the sentence. Fairclough (2013:56) says existential assumptions speak to the author’s belief of what exists. Definite articles (“the enemies of slavery”) are markers of existential assumptions and points to assumed classification categories. So, in the text, British people are categorized as “the enemies of slavery,” and there are those classified as “collaborators of slavery.” The United States and Americans are introduced in the next paragraph as collaborators of slavery. For example, the United States is introduced in Henry Byam Martin’s watercolour painting under the heading “The land of the free and the home of the brave (Slave market, Charleston, S. Carolina)” (*OTRN*, MILESTONE).

Let us return to John Newton and how he helped turn the British into *the* enemies of slavery, which the text attributes to Newton’s writings of his life experience as a former slave captain. Newton “was not a bad man, but he saw and did terrible things. He carefully recorded the nightmare in a diary, which he later drew on to write about the slave trade” (*OTRN*, MILESTONE). In the first sentence, there is a contrastive semantic relation communicated by the conjunction (“but”) between the two clauses. Newton’s actions are hedged and embedded in euphemisms. First, Newton’s participation in slavery is redefined unclearly by the term “terrible things.” Second, his experience as a participant and witness is redefined as “the nightmare” that was “carefully recorded.” It is unclear who was living the nightmare. Was Newton a witness to the nightmare or providing testimony of his actions during the nightmare? Marcus Woods (2002) suggests, “an acknowledgement of Newton’s experience as a slave captain is a necessary prologue to a celebratory narrative of redemption which wipes that experience out” (p. 26). We

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can see the celebratory narrative of redemption in *OTRN*, as well. For example, “Amazing Grace,” a song composed by Newton, is included in the exhibit. In the first verse, Newton says:

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound

That saved a soul like me.

I once was lost but now am found,

Was blind, but now, I see.

The line “was blind, but now, I see” brings to mind to the assertion that “Europeans started to wake to the horror and protest” (*OTRN*, MILESTONE).

William Wilberforce is first introduced in relation to Newton. Wilberforce is represented in formal (‘Wilberforce’) and a semiformal manner (‘William Wilberforce’). There is also functionalization when Wilberforce is introduced as a Member of Parliament. Where social actors are classified as abolitionists, representation (‘public opinion’) is more generic. However, his representation as a social actor is more specific because certain actions are attributed to him, and he is realized as a pronoun. For example, Wilberforce “was the driving force behind the fight to end slavery in the British Empire” as “he took the fight to Parliament” (*OTRN*, MILESTONE).

Freedom Fighters and the American Revolution.

In this section, the experience of Black Loyalists during the American Revolution is introduced as an episode of British abolishment in the following extract:

The British began the long journey to freedom in North America when they offered Black slaves in the American colonies liberty in return for military service against rebels
(*OTRN*, INTRODUCTION).

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The British are credited and activated as the actor in the process (“began”) to realize the goal (“freedom in North America”). Black slaves are the beneficiary or affected by the British’s actions (“offered”). The event (“the long journey to freedom in North America”) is presented abstractedly. However, there is some reduction in the level of abstraction in the following passage when specific actors and actions are referenced:

The last thing Lord Dunsmore wanted, he said, was to declare war. But with American rebels firing on British ships, he had no choice. In a startling innovation, he included “Negroes” in his appeal for men. Dunsmore formed the Blacks into their own company, trained them and gave them uniforms embroidered with the words, “Freedom to Slaves” (*OTRN*, PORT).

In the above extract, there is an indirect reporting of Dunsmore’s words with the reporting clause (“he said”). Other voices (e.g. the Black soldiers who answered Dunsmore’s appeal) might have been included, but they are excluded. The narrative has been written based on Dunsmore’s account (Fairclough, 2003). For example, Dunsmore’s inclusion of Black men into the British army is described as a “startling innovation.” Some information about the regiment is included in the account, and some of it ascribed to Dunsmore through the narrative report of a speech act (“embroidered with words, ‘Freedom to Slaves’”). Furthermore, Black people are the beneficiaries of a British actor (“he included ‘Negroes’ in his appeal for men”). The same message is repeated in the following extract:

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When the Americans rebelled in 1775, Lord Dunsmore, the last British Governor of Virginia, called all loyal men – including Black slaves – to fight for the King (*OTRN*, *PORT*).⁴

Meanwhile, in the same section, the description of Colonel Tye provides a nuanced look at the agency of Black soldiers during the American Revolution:

During the American Revolution, one man was especially feared by the rebels. He was Colonel Tye, leader of the ferocious Black Brigade. He earned the rank of “colonel” not from the British, but from the men who fought beside him in an elite commando force.

Tye was among the 800 Blacks who responded to the Governor of Virginia’s call to arms in 1775 (*OTRN*, *PORT*).

Colonel Tye is first introduced in relation to the American rebels. Colonel Tye is represented in a formal (“Colonel”) and informal manner (“Tye”). There is also functionalization when Tye is identified as the leader of the ferocious Black Brigade. Where social actors are classified as soldiers responding to Dunsmore’s call, representation (“among the 800 Blacks”; “the former slaves marched to war”) is more generic. However, his representation as a social actor is more specific because certain actions are attributed to him (“the leader”), and he is realized as a pronoun. For example: “Colonel Tye survived to 1780, when he too died of his wounds” (*OTRN*, *PORT*).

Furthermore, Black people are also represented as actors with choices, limited as these choices may be. For example, one of the learning objectives invites students to “think about the

⁴ This section begins with close detail shot of *The Death of Major Peirson*, an oil painting by John Singleton Copley. The detail focuses on a member of the Ethiopian Regiment fighting Americans during the American Revolution. The image is significant enough to note because the virtual exhibit uses the detail shot twice (Introduction and the *PORT IN THE STORM*- The Maritimes, 1783-1820s). The detail is captioned: “The soldier depicted in this painting was a member of the Ethiopian Regiment, formed in 1775. Survivors from the regiment came to settle in Nova Scotia after the war” (*OTRN*, Introduction).

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choices slaves had to make – either to fight, flee or remain in slavery” (*OTRN*, PORT). The choices for enslaved people to fight is intertwined with the actions of the British, such as in the following extract:

The British promised slaves their freedom in return for their loyalty. Some slaves *joined* the army. Others *fled* to British-held cities, such as New York, where they *supported* the cause as civilians until the final defeat of the British. In 1783, as some 30,000 Loyalist refugees trailed wearily north, 3,550 former slaves *went* with them. These new arrivals *formed* the first free Black community in Canada [emphasis added] (*OTRN*, PORT).

Here, we also see the varied articulation of Black identities throughout the section (from slaves to former slaves to the first free Black Community in Canada).

Black Loyalist Immigrants

The extract below is useful to examine as a cue for how the text first presents Black Loyalists:

In 1783, as some 30,000 Loyalist refugees trailed wearily north, 3,550 former slaves went with them. These new arrivals formed the first free Black community in Canada (*OTRN*, PORT)

The main social actors included in this section are the Black Loyalists (“former slaves”) who formed the first free Black community in Canada. Those who are excluded are the slaves who came with the white Loyalists. These social actors are participants (“these new arrivals *formed* the first free Black community in Canada”). The existential assumption, assumptions about what exists, in the extract is prompted by the definitive article (‘the’) and the demonstrative pronoun (‘these’). Similarly, the subsequent extract demonstrates how these formerly enslaved persons are referred to throughout the text:

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Some 3,550 Black Loyalists – those who fought for or supported Britain during the American Revolution – came to the Nova Scotia as free men and women in 1783 and took up small parcels of land. After the War of 1812, another small influx of freed Blacks arrived from the United States (*OTRN*, *PORTAL*).

In the extract above, the social actors are referred to by their function (“those who fought or supported Britain during the American Revolution”). Furthermore, Black Loyalists also is a collective reference for social actors who arrived in Canada free from the United States. Black Loyalists in Canada are also represented through identities relating to migration to Canada. For instance, the formerly enslaved people also are provided with identities of immigrants, settlers, and Black Loyalists in the following extracts:

Example #1: Canada was not the happy ending the Loyalist immigrants wanted.

Example #2: More than 2,000 Black Loyalists came to southeastern Nova Scotia and started to build a town, which they called Birchtown.

Example #3: The settlers worked frantically to build log shanties.

Example #4: Still, the Black settlers were optimistic (*OTRN*, *PORT*).

The text begins by introducing elements of Black Loyalist experience abstractly with the assertion that “Canada was not the happy ending the Loyalist immigrants wanted” (*OTRN*, *PORT*). Although there is a reduction in the degree of abstraction when certain places (southeastern Nova Scotia and Birchtown) are referenced. Furthermore, Black Loyalists are realized as key participants during the process of building a town. As well, throughout the representation of their hardship in Nova Scotia, they are represented as affected participants:

In 1783, when the Black Loyalists landed at Roseway Harbour, they were given land a few miles from the Loyalist town at Shelburne...They were hungry and cold. The British

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had promised food, but with 30,000 white Loyalists at the head of the list, there was not enough to go around. Grants to white settlers also nibbled away at the land given to Black Loyalists. (*OTRN*, PORT)

One of the learning objectives for the section suggests learners to “consider the dilemma of whether to stay in a failing community or travel to an unknown destination in Africa.” The learning objective alerts the reader to how the Sierra Leone Company enterprise is comprised of two main social actors (British abolitionists and Birchtown residents) throughout the process. The text first presents the enterprise with the British abolitionists as the key participant:

In Britain, some well-meaning abolitionists came up with a plan to return former slaves to Africa. They called their enterprise the Sierra Leone Company, and they advertised widely for settlers (*OTRN*, PORT).

The social actors are classified generally as a noun category (“well-meaning abolitionists”) and realized as pronouns (“some,” “they”). As mentioned previously, they are realized as the Actor in the process of the Sierra Leone enterprise (for instance, “came up with a plan to return former slaves to Africa”). A closer examination of the advertisement for the settlement also establishes the Abolitionists and the Sierra Leone Company as actors in the settlement process. The advertisement reads:

The Sierra Leone Company, willing to receive into their Colony-such Free Blacks as are able to produce to their Agents, Lieutenant Clarkson, of His Majesty's Navy, and Mr. Lawrence Hartshorne, of Halifax, or either of them, satisfactory Testimonials of their Characters, (more particularly as to Honesty, Sobriety, and Industry) think it proper to notify, in an explicit manner, upon what Terms they will receive, at Sierra Leone, those who bring with them written Certificates of Approbation from either of the said Agents

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which Certificates they are hereby respectively authorized to grant or withhold at Discretion.

In the advertisement, the Directors of the enterprise are the agents of actions. They have the power to choose the recipients to benefit from their enterprise. The recipients need to produce evidence of desired traits (Honesty, Sobriety, and Industry).

As stated previously, even though the Sierra Leone enterprise was attributed to “well-meaning” abolitionists, the text provides a nuanced picture of how the Birchtown community “consider[ed] the dilemma of whether to stay in a failing community or travel to an unknown destination in Africa” (*OTRN*, *PORT*). In the beginning, the event is represented with less abstraction in the following description:

The year was 1790. Thomas Peters of Birchtown stood on the deck of a ship and watched the coast of Nova Scotia disappear in the distance. He had a mission. Peters was on his way to England with orders to contact the directors of the Sierra Leone Company and say to them: “The Black people of Nova Scotia want to go home” (*OTRN*, *PORT*).

Aspects in the description, such as the specific year (1790), the naming of the actor (Thomas Peters) and categories of people (“The Black people of Nova Scotia”), and the mission make the representation specific. However, the degree of abstraction increases when examining the essentialist language used to describe the sense of nostalgia enslaved people felt towards Africa:

Somewhere in their blood, their music and in a dozen half-forgotten languages, American slaves – even illiterate, third- or fourth-generation slaves – had always remembered Africa [...] To many Canadian Blacks, Africa seemed to offer a possible future (*OTRN*, *PORT*).

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In the two quotations, Blackness in America is defined through the language of enslavement (“American slaves,” “third- or fourth-generation slaves”) while Blackness in Canada is defined through communal categories (“of Birchtown,” “the Black people of Nova Scotia,” “Canadian Blacks”). Finally, the narrative on the decision to leave or stay lessens the extent of abstraction when representing the decision. The text provides a specific number (1,196), the proportion of the town (half from Birchtown), the year (1791) and the consequence of the departure (“the settlement was much weakened”).

Finally, numerous categories of Blackness are seen throughout the section. These various categories identified in the text are Black people as loyal men, former slaves, Black Loyalists, freed Blacks, Loyalist immigrants, settlers, Black settlers, Blacks, freed slaves, the Black people of Nova Scotia, American slaves, the Black community of Nova Scotia, African colonists. However, as Sierra Leone demonstrates, the category of “Free Black” came with stipulations. For example, the advertisement says, “that every Free Black (upon producing such a Certificate) shall have a Grant of not less than Twenty Acres of Land for himself” (*OTRN- PORT*).

Canadian Abolitionists

One of the learning objectives in the sections required students to “identify persons who promoted the abolition of slavery.” In this section, enslaved people are beneficiaries of legal abolition acts accomplished at the hands of mostly non-Black Canadian actors. For example, throughout the section, Colonel John Graves Simcoe, the Governor of Upper Canada, was the main actor credited with abolishing slavery in Canada because “Simcoe’s law helped turn Canada into a haven both for escaped slaves and for abolitionists at work” (*OTRN, CROSSING*). The text associates Simcoe with two actions. First, Simcoe’s legislative action establishes

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Canada's identity as a refuge for formerly enslaved people. Second, it establishes Canada as a prominent location for the abolition movement to flourish:

Most of the early inhabitants of Upper Canada were Loyalist refugees from the former American colonies. Many had brought slaves with them into Canada. With free workers in short supply in the wilderness colony, they were prepared to fight tooth and nail to keep their valuable slave labour. Fortunately, Simcoe was a deal-maker (*OTRN*, CROSSING)

Slavery is shown to be a continuation of American colonies. First, in the text, the slave owners in Upper Canada are identified to be refugees from the former American colonies. Consequently, Simcoe's battle to limit slavery concerns mainly the Loyalists' slaves. Equally notable is what is missing in the representation of the legal fight: slave labour that belonged to Canadians who were not identified as Loyalists.

A certain theme emerges in the description of Upper Canada through the language of colonialism. Upper Canada is described through Simcoe's arrival:

Example #1: In 1791, John Graves Simcoe became the first Lieutenant-Governor of a new British colony to the west of Quebec.

Example #2: The colony was sparsely inhabited by Aboriginal peoples and small pockets of British Empire Loyalists (*OTRN*, CROSSING).

The second example marks the first and last mention of Indigenous people throughout the text. Simultaneously, there is also a certain existential assumption that is triggered here by markers of a definitive article ("the colony"). Upper Canada is assumed to be a desirable extension of the British settler colonial project, and it is left unchallenged. Similarly, the text also describes the geographical nature of the colony, which needs to be managed:

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Example #1: As Simcoe and his wife made the slow journey by boat across Lake Ontario to the wilderness capital of Newark (Niagara-on-the-Lake), he was full of ambitious plans.

Example #2: With free workers in short supply in the wilderness colony, they were prepared to fight tooth and nail to keep their valuable slave labour (*OTRN, CROSSING*).

Furthermore, learners are invited to “explain some reasons why Loyalists who had brought slaves to Canada were unwilling to free them” in the learning objectives. Management of the wilderness colony is provided as one of the possible reasons. The narrative intertwines the desired expansion of the British settler colonial project in Upper Canada with the need for slave labour. As a result:

Simcoe worked out a compromise. The assembly passed a new law that – while it did not outlaw slavery – made the import of new slaves illegal and freed the children of all slaves at age 25. (*OTRN, CROSSING*)

The act reinforced three ideas. First, current slaves in Upper Canada would continue as slaves. Second, there was a ban on the act of introducing new slaves. Last, children of current enslaved people would gain freedom at the age of 25. Cooper (2013) observes “foreign slaves would be immediately freed upon reaching the soil of Upper Canada” while “Upper Canadian slaves who were hoping to be freed by Simcoe’s bill had to look for their freedom elsewhere” (p. 300).

Refugees in Canada

The narrative of Lucie and Thornton Blackburn returns agency to Black people with the following statement:

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Detroit was in an uproar in 1833, and the free Black community took to the streets. A young couple who had lived among them for two years had been arrested as fugitive slaves (*OTRN, CROSSING*).

The events are represented with a degree of abstraction. For example, the learning objective asks students to “compare and contrast Canadian and American laws regarding slavery between the 1790s and 1860s.” However, there are no mentions of the American laws about fugitive slaves, such as the Fugitive Slave Law of 1793. The law enabled slaveholders to recover formerly enslaved people in the United States and its territories, including free northern states (Frost, 2013).

Furthermore, free Black people are actors in the material process. They protested the arrest of a formerly enslaved couple and were an active participant in the rescue of the couple from:

Two heavily veiled women asked to visit Mrs. Blackburn in her cell. There, one of them changed clothes with the prisoner, and the other whisked the girl out past the guards.

Next day, as Lucie’s husband was led in chains from the jail, the crowd surged forward and grabbed the boy (*OTRN, CROSSING*).

The case demonstrates the preparedness of the Black community to challenge and protest the capture of enslaved people. However, in the following extract, formerly enslaved persons are also presented as beneficiaries of Canadian legal proceedings:

The United States applied for the Blackburns’ return as criminals, and the Canadian court made a famous decision – that no accused person may be returned to a country where the punishment for a crime is more severe than it would be in Canada. That’s still the law in Canada. The Blackburns were saved. (*OTRN, CROSSING*).

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Similarly, John Anderson's legal case in the court represents the events surrounding the trial and judgement through the works of abolitionists:

Sympathy for the slaves rose to new heights in Canada, where abolitionists were well organized and ready to protest decisions like that in the John Anderson case (*OTRN, CROSSING*).

Description of the general category of abolitionists is positive throughout the text ("well organized and ready to protest"). However, the choice of words to describe the movement of escaping enslaved people to Canada is contradictory:

The movement swelled from a trickle to a flood after 1850, when the Americans passed a new and tougher Fugitive Slave Law (*OTRN, CROSSING*).

Furthermore, direct reporting of Anderson's words is mediated through *The Montreal Gazette*:

Anderson, the now celebrated fugitive slave, was in town yesterday, and called upon us...to return thanks for the manner in which Montrealers stood by him (*OTRN, CROSSING*).

Community Builders

In the section of community builders, I have identified two sub-categories of social actors as per the learning objectives at the end of the section. The first sub-category of actors is the settlement planners. The text categorizes actors in this sub-category as "key persons who advocated abolition and helped new black refugees settle in Canada." The second sub-category actors are the abolitionists with visions. The text categorizes actors in this sub-category by the "brave and bold actions that abolitionists in Canada and the United States took to promote their cause" (*OTRN, PLANNING*).

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a. Settlement Planners

Richard Preston and William King were both considered leaders in the development of Black settlement in Canada. Richard Preston was a formerly enslaved person who “after buying his freedom from a Virginia plantation-owner in 1816, [...] founded 11 Baptist churches” (*OTRN*, *PLANNERS*). Meanwhile, William King was formerly “the embarrassed owner of 14 slaves” who later “formed the province’s single most successful farming settlement for escaped slaves” (*OTRN*, *PLANNING*).

Preston is described through his actions in relation to the Black community in Nova Scotia:

His purpose was to make contact with poor, struggling Blacks in the province and to help them organize – both within their communities and through connections with the larger Black community (*OTRN*, *PLANNING*).

Preston is named individually while the Black community is collectivized (“struggling Blacks,” “Black Community”). Preston is presented as both the recipient and beneficiary of the Black community’s action. He is also the social actor in the process. For example:

When Preston was 25 and serving as an apprentice minister in Halifax, the Black community raised money to send him to school in England [...] He returned to Canada determined not only to help his people, but to show them how to help each other (*OTRN*, *PLANNING*).

In the above text, we can see Black people as active agents in the development of the community and individual members.

Although both social actors have the title of “Reverend,” only William King is referred to by his title. Formerly enslaved people are mostly referred through references to William King.

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For example, in the few instances of direct reporting by former slaves, the subject of the speech is William King:

“When we grew tired of the cold and hard work,” a settler remembered, “Mr. King would jump upon a stump and swing his axe around, calling out, ‘Hurrah boys’ and set us laughing over some nonsense” (*OTRN*, PLANNING).

In the description of the Buxton Settlement, residents are beneficiaries of King’s actions and choices:

Example #1: As soon as he graduated, he brought the slaves to Canada and formally freed them.

Example #2: When white neighbours refused to welcome Black children to the local school, King founded a school of his own.

Example #3: He formed the province’s single most successful farming settlement for escaped slaves (*OTRN*, PLANNING).

In the examples above, King is foregrounded in the process of developing and maintaining the settlement. Residents are backgrounded in the narrative to demonstrate how “King was a good manager” (*OTRN*, PLANNING).

b. Abolitionists with visions

The second sub-category, Abolitionists with visions of social actors, encapsulate the diverse experience of Black people and “different visions that abolitionists in Canada had for Black refugees” (*OTRN*, PLANNING). There are three social actors represented by names: Henry Bibb, Mary Bibb and Mary Ann Shadd. The three social actors also represent different lived experiences with slavery. Henry Bibb was formerly enslaved in the United States:

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How, as a slave, he'd been forced to choose between freedom and family. How he had fled to safety, only to return, again and again, trying to rescue his family. How, tragically, he had failed (*OTRN*, PLANNING).

Bibb's experience with slavery is realized through generalized representation with an abstraction of a series of events during his enslavement ("forced to choose between freedom and family," "fled to safety," "return" "trying to rescue"). Mary Bibb, on the other hand, was the daughter of free Black people who was trained as a teacher. Similarly, Mary Ann Shadd was also a free Black woman. However, Shadd's description has an evaluative term:

A bright, articulate young American and the indulged daughter of prosperous free Blacks (*OTRN*, PLANNING).

Similarly, Shadd is realized in the text through an evaluative statement in the following extract with the mental clause ("discovered"):

Shadd was an *uncomfortable* colleague, as the Bibbs soon discovered (*OTRN*, PLANNING)

Both the Bibbs and Shadd arrived "in Canada in search of a haven from which to organize their campaign against slavery" (*OTRN*, PLANNING) through their respective newspapers, *The Voice of the Fugitive* and *The Provincial Freeman*. Similarly, the other social actors represented generically as abolitionists also came to Canada to organize their campaign against slavery. The category of abolitionists becomes specific as "hundreds gathered for the North American Convention of Colored Freemen. At this historic meeting – for Blacks only – the community took ownership of its own struggle" (*OTRN*, PLANNING). In the section, Black people in Canada are activated as agents in the process of developing nuanced conversations and debates about the community amongst each other.

The Underground Railroad Activists

The description on the Underground Railroad conceptualizes and categorizes formerly enslaved people as refugees in Canada, such as in the following extracts:

Example #1: A group of refugee slaves is shown arriving at a "station" (or safe house) on the Underground Railroad. "Passengers" on this so-called "railroad" were escaped slaves. Usually, they travelled at night and often with a guide (or "conductor") (*OTRN*, TRAVELLERS).

Example #2: He was known to have returned south from Canada to lead other refugees out of slavery (*OTRN*, TRAVELLERS).

Example #3: King divided the land there into 50-acre parcels which he sold to Black refugees for \$2.50, giving the buyers ten years to pay (*OTRN*, TRAVELLERS).

Example #4: They also founded the Refugee Home Society to help refugees to settle, become self-sufficient and learn the rules of freedom (*OTRN*, TRAVELLERS).

Example #5: Many refugees arrived in Canada with literally nothing but the clothes they stood up in (*OTRN*, HEROES)

Furthermore, the first statement also exemplifies how the text presents the main social actors ("stationmasters," "conductors" and "passengers"). The social actors are especially represented as collective social actors ("abolitionists" and "activists") who partook in "the most massive civil disobedience" (*OTRN*, TRAVELLERS). The abolitionists are both classified ("stationmasters") and named ("Quakers," Reverend John Rankin, Josiah Henson, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Harriet Tubman, Salem Chapel British Methodist Church, Nazrey Methodist Church, and Sandwich First Baptist Church).

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Reverend John Rankin is an example of a group of social actors called “stationmasters.” However, Rankin is also named. He is referred to both formally by his title (“Reverend”) and informally (“The Rankins”). Rankin is also realized as a pronoun (“From there, he could see down across the Ohio River to Kentucky, where slavery was legal”). In the previous sentence he is also an experiencer. Furthermore, he is a key participant in guiding fugitives to safety:

It was risky work. Even in the free North, “stealing” slaves was a crime, and some abolitionists were physically attacked by armed slave-catchers who came rampaging north in pursuit of slaves (*OTRN*, TRAVELLERS).

Here, the description of slavecatchers is notable because they are characterized as “armed slave-catchers who came rampaging north in pursuit of slaves.” The verbal phrase (“came rampaging”) stands out when recollecting the first part of the sentence (“even in the free North, ‘stealing’ slaves was a crime”). Altogether, the sentence highlights the lack of safety and legal security in the Northern states for enslaved people looking to escape the institution of slavery and sets up Canada as the image of legal security and safety.

Josiah Henson represents one of main social actors who are the travellers and the heroes of the Underground Railroad. Alternatively, as the text says, “[one of] the heroic Blacks who sometimes had to take extreme measures, risked life, freedom and security to help other slaves escape to the North” (*OTRN*, TRAVELLERS). He is portrayed in the text as someone:

[Who] had dignity and presence. As a slave, he gained the trust and approval of his owners. As a free man, he worked hard and prospered. He was known to have returned south from Canada to lead other refugees out of slavery, and he invested energy and money in their settlement and education in Canada (*OTRN*, TRAVELLERS)

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Henson is comprehended through pronoun usage (“he”) and nouns (“a slave,” “a freeman”). His attributes also describe Henson in enslavement as the following extracts illustrate:

Example #1: As a slave, he gained the trust and approval of his owners.

Example #2: [He] was a successful slave. By demonstrating unwavering loyalty to his owners, he won their trust and advanced to the position of overseer on the plantation.

Example #3: He was shocked, therefore, when he found that his owner – whom he had trusted and served – was planning to sell him away from his wife and children.

Example #4: In Canada, Henson proved just as successful a settler as he had been a slave (OTRN, TRAVELLERS).

In the examples provided above, the emphasis is placed on Henson’s success and actions as a slave, which extends to his success as a free man. In most of the examples, Henson is involved as a carrier of attributes of a successful slave. Absent social actors are the slaves he oversaw in the plantation. Additionally, the actions of the owners are not provided beyond Henson’s thoughts on them (“he had trusted and served”) and actions to sell Henson and his family. The text also points out the connection between him and Harriet Beecher Stowe, the author who recontextualizes his story into the novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*:

One of her models was Josiah Henson, whose life as a slave the novelist reshaped to create that famous fictional character, "Uncle Tom." Everyone read her book. It won so many northern abolitionists to the cause that it was held responsible, in part, for the Civil War (OTRN, TRAVELLERS).

Beecher Stowe is credited with the process of winning northern abolitionists to the anti-slavery cause. Henson is attributed with his role in the Underground Railroad as: “a ‘conductor’ on the Underground Railway and led others to safety” (OTRN, TRAVELLERS).

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Both Harriet Tubman and Josiah Henson are described in the text for “their efforts to create institutions and organizations to support their fellow men and women in their pursuit of freedom” (*OTRN*, TRAVELLERS) in later years. For example, Henson founded the British American Institute while Harriet established the Harriet Tubman Home for the Aged. Harriet Tubman is the only female Underground Railroad activist in the text, and certain phrases (“little woman,” “promote civil rights for Blacks and women was equally brave and determined”) stand out in her description. As well, Both Tubman and Henson are described for their actions in Canada that aided with (re)settlement of formerly enslaved people who are referenced as refugees:

[In Henson’s institute], refugees learned the trades they needed to prosper in Canada.

[Harriet] also worked there to help settle the growing flood of refugees. (*OTRN*, TRAVELLERS).

Like Henson, Harriet Tubman is also described in the moniker given to her by another abolitionist:

Abolitionist John Brown had been an admirer, calling her “General Tubman.” It was a name she earned. (*OTRN*, TRAVELLERS).

Through the *OTRN*, there are very few instances of direct reporting from any of the social actors used to describe their first days of experience in Canada. The social actors are usually referred through a collective category with similar attributes (“refugees,” “incoming flood of penniless refugees”), and their experiences are described without many quotational patterns. For example:

Many refugees arrived in Canada with literally nothing but the clothes they stood up in. Most couldn’t read or write. Some had trades, but virtually none had experience in

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finding work or working for wages. For many, Canada's Black churches gave them what they most needed – food, clothing, shelter and friendship (*OTRN*, TRAVELLERS)

Jarmian Logue is one of the few social actors who is referred to by his name (“Jarm Logue (later Jarmian Logue)”) and the exhibit directly relates his experience through a reporting clause (“wrote”):

He remembered his first days of freedom in Canada as a time of poverty, hunger, loneliness and despair. “There I stood,” he wrote later, “a boy of twenty-one years of age...with the assurance that I was at the end of my journey – knowing nobody, and nobody knowing me...” (*OTRN*, TRAVELLERS).

Numerous churches in Ontario (Nazrey Methodist Church, Sandwich First Baptist Church, Oro African Methodist Episcopal Church, and Salem First Baptist Churches) are credited for their aid in the establishment of the Black community in Canada from the time of the American Revolution:

A group of Black Loyalists settled just south of Georgian Bay after the American Revolution. The poor little log-built Oro Church (1849) speaks of the hardships those refugees faced in trying to farm in a harsh, inhospitable land (*OTRN*, TRAVELLERS).

Concluding Remarks

Through critical discourse analysis of *ON THE ROAD NORTH - Black Canada and Journey to Freedom*, certain presences and absences are evident in Parks Canada and the Multiculturalism Branch of the Department of Canadian Heritage's commemorative exhibit in Back History. The critical discourse analysis in this chapter highlights how the exhibit foregrounds certain Canadian experiences with slavery (the Abolition Movement in Britain, slavery in the United States, Black Loyalist experience(s), the Abolition Movement in Canada,

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and the Underground Railroad). The exhibit also categorizes social actors in different categories (British Abolitionists, Freedom Fighters, Loyalist Immigrants, Abolitionists in Canada, Refugees in Canada, Community Builders and Planners, and Underground Railroad Activists). At the same time, the exhibit backgrounds other Canadian experiences such as Canada's history of enslavement and enslaved people's resistance to enslavement.

As suggested throughout the section, the exclusion and understatement of events relating to Canada's history of slavery have to do with the origin of the exhibit. The basis of the exhibit's content material was Canada's national historic designations, whose purpose is to highlight events and social actors that ended slavery in Canada and not the enslaved people themselves. Furthermore, Ashley (2007) suggests "HSMBC has been a key player in deciding for Canadians what parts of their heritage are important and are worthy of remembrance. HSMBC decides what aspects of Canadian history and identity should be presented both to Canadian citizens and to the outside world (in the form of tourists)" (p. 481). For example, in a study prepared for the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, Wylie (1994) suggests that other historical Black sites incorporate and present the narrative of slavery in their commemorative site. He provides an example of the national plaque commemorating the Upper Canadian legislation of 1793 (p. 18). However, the existing plaque highlights the abolishment of Canadian slavery as a continuation of the British abolition movement. The plaque is an example of how the information on the conditions of enslavement and resistance to slavery by enslaved people are absent in federally designated sites.⁵ To conclude, this chapter reveals how narratives of abolition and physical sites

⁵ The text on the Upper Canadian Act of 1793 Against Slavery plaque:

Inspired by the abolitionist sentiment emerging in the late 18th century, Lieutenant-Governor J.G. Simcoe made Upper Canada the first British territory to legislate against slavery, which [sic] had defined the conditions of life for most people of African ancestry in Canada since the early 17th century. The Act of 1793 did not free a single slave, but prevented their importation and freed the future children of slaves at age twenty-five. Faced with growing opposition in the colonies, slavery declined. The Imperial Act of 1833

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relating to the Underground Railroad are memorialised and categorized in Parks Canada and the Department of Canadian Heritage understanding of Black history.

finally abolished slavery in the British territories in 1834
(https://www.pc.gc.ca/apps/dfhd/page_nhs_eng.aspx?id=1623).

Chapter 5: Canadian Museum for Human Rights

Almost all the Canadian Journeys gallery exhibits in the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (CMHR) have a measurement of eight by eight by eight feet. Most of the exhibits have two sides to the panels. The left-side panel introduces the topic of the exhibit. The right-side panel incorporates photographs and corresponding texts and labels. Each exhibit has a focal wall and a back wall with artifacts and/or images.

Exhibit Overview: Escape from Oppression

Escape from Oppression is situated between two exhibits. *Freedom of Faith* borders it at the left and *A Nation Reclaimed* borders it at the right. *Freedom of Faith* is about religious freedom in Canada, while *A National Reclaimed* is about proclaiming the rights of the Métis people. The focal area of *Escape from Oppression* comprises five tree trunks extending from ceiling to the floor with branches of leaves on the top. The two trunks to the left each contain a monitor. The two monitors play coordinated films “that combine archival images, harrowing written first-person accounts, and historic hymns that helped lead slaves to freedom” (Upswell, 2014). The exhibition’s backdrop (on all three sides) contains a mural-sized photo of a dimly lit forest.

Exhibit Development Process

The CMHR opened to the public on September 20, 2014 (CMHR, 2014), but not all the galleries were completed or exhibited at this time. Canadian Journeys was one of the last galleries to be unveiled on November 11, 2014, along with five other galleries. The cause for delay pertained to the complexity of the gallery, according to Maureen Fitzhenry, CMHR’s Communications Manager (Beaudette, 2014). The complexity results from trying to capture Canada’s human rights culture according to the description provided in the 2012 Gallery Profiles:

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There is no single viewpoint of Canada's human rights history, no one dominant narrative or standard account. Canadian human rights history is more like a 'patchwork' quilt than a single linear narrative. All of the pieces present human right stories – some traumatic, some inspiring, others iconic – and all speak to a rich and distinctive legacy, a multi-textured reflection of Canadian identity (CMHR, 2012, p. 19).

The niches in the gallery are arranged thematically instead of chronologically to reflect the "patchwork" quilt approach to Canadian human rights history. According to Jodi Giesbrecht (2016), the Director of Research, "thematic organization of the gallery encourages exploration of the intersections between a number of human rights issues, as well as an appreciation of the connections between past and present."

The CMHR Gallery Profiles (2012) also listed the selection criteria for stories in the gallery. The stories and themes throughout the gallery reflect the Museum's selection process. Stories and topics were chosen for four reasons. First, the selection of the topic was dependent upon its significance during the consultation process. Second, the stories represent events or people with significant impact. Third, the materials of the stories were appropriate for exhibits. Finally, the stories and topics needed to appeal to a diverse audience. The description in the Gallery Profiles echoes sentiments reported by the Content Advisory Committee (2010):

Success and failure. Pride and shame. In the accounts of human rights at home in Canada, as well as abroad in the world, we heard these contrasting themes again and again (p. 36). The success for Canada included Canada's role in the Underground Railway, and the failure encompassed Canada's history of slavery. According to the Committee (2010), displays of such history requires the museum to take a long view:

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Taking the long view would require an account of the history of African-Canadians that includes Canada's role in the Atlantic slave trade and slavery in colonial Canada as well as the more positive story of Canada's role as a refugee-receiving terminus of the Underground Railway from the United States. The contributions of African-Canadians to the founding and development of Canada are also brought to light by taking the long view. [They] were told that much of this history is now hidden, except to those who make a particular study of it, and should be much more generally accessible. The historical record documents the segregation of African-Canadians: segregated schools for African-Canadian children until well into the 20th century; the occupational segregation of African-Canadian people into certain jobs, like railway sleeping car porters; and stories such as that of Viola Desmond, who was recently pardoned and apologized to for being put into jail for refusing to move from the whites-only section of a Halifax movie theatre in 1946 (p. 38-39).

However, in the 2012 Gallery Profiles, there is no mention of the Underground Railroad. Instead, the exhibit on Black Canadians had the intention to address racial segregation as part of Canada's journey to human rights. For example, the objective of this exhibit was "to shine [a] light on Canada's history of racial segregation" (p. 41). Similarly, Busby (2016) traced the changes in curational decision making between 2012 and 2013. The author found that the story on the Underground Rail was included in the 2013 version and not the 2012 version. On the other hand, Boswell's (2003) newspaper report on Asper's proposal for the museum included the information on "Canadian history exhibit highlighting such triumphs and tragedies as the 19th-century Underground Railroad for escaping American slaves and the internment of Japanese Canadian during the Second World War." As well, Underground Railroad is mentioned as a key

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milestone for inclusion in the CMHR by the focus group participants' report submitted to the Department of Heritage in 2008.

Schroeder and McNabb (2014) reported that the planning documents revealed a niche dedicated to “[the] Underground Railroad will look at the human rights abuses of slavery.” Similarly, the decision to incorporate the Underground Railroad is demonstrated through the questions and answers portion of the Annual Public Meeting on December 10, 2013. The response on the CMHR (2013) website demonstrates the museum’s intent to exhibit the Underground Railroad alongside Canada’s role in the Transatlantic slave trade.

Will the CMHR feature how Canada was a human rights haven during the American slave trade?

Yes, the trans-Atlantic slave trade and Canada’s role in it will be treated in our inaugural galleries. Material on Canada’s experience of slavery will be included within our “Canadian Journeys” gallery that looks at Canadian history through a human rights lens. The Trans-Atlantic slave trade more generally will be included in our “Breaking the Silence” gallery, that looks at a cross-section of gross violations of human rights from around the world, and the importance of speaking out about these violations today. Canada as a safe haven during the American slave trade will also be featured in the “Canadian Journeys” gallery in an exhibit on the Underground Railroad. This exhibit will examine the gradual abolition of slavery in British North America in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, and will examine the ways in which refugee slaves as well as free Black Americans travelled north to Canada for refuge from American slavery. The exhibit shows that Black Americans, both former slaves and free, enjoyed civil and

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political rights in Canada that had been denied to them in the United States, but they also experienced racism and discrimination (CMHR, 2013).

So, together with *Breaking the Silence* and *Canadian Journeys*, CMHR intended to examine the abolishment of slavery as a process with contradictions rather than fait accompli.

Introductory Text Panel

The introductory text panel uses a white backdrop with black coloured text. The title of the panel uses a Serif font. The title of the panel is *Escape from Oppression*. The title suggests two readings. First, there is a situation of oppression. Second, there is a process of escape. Agents are not identified in the title. Furthermore, the use of the preposition (“from”) between the verbal phrase (“escape”) and the noun phrase (“oppression”) is notable. The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (“From”) provides several usages of *from* in instances such as when it is:

1. Used to show where somebody/something starts
2. Used to show when something starts
3. Used to show who sent or gave something/somebody
4. Used to show what the origin of somebody/something is

I am giving prominence to the preposition use because the title provides the first cue to the museum’s representation of the Underground Railroad. As Schroeder and McNabb (2014) reported, the niche was intended to explore the human rights abuse of slavery. So, the preposition use (‘from’) signals possibly that the oppression of slavery has its origin in the United States and Canada is the destination for escape. Beneath the title, in smaller font size, is the sub-title “The Underground Railroad.” Below this sub-title, in a smaller Sans Serif typeface, are three paragraphs. The three paragraphs inform about the topic of the exhibit.



Figure 2. *Escape from Oppression* exhibit with the two panels of text and focal area.
(Source: Author's photograph)

Throughout the introductory panel, the exhibit presents the text through mostly active voice and uses declarative sentences. The text begins by defining the term Underground Railroad with scare quotes around the term, suggesting that this is a contested term loaded with meaning (Fairclough, 2013, p. 217; Baker & Ellege, 2011, p. 123). For the CMHR, the Underground Railroad is a secretive network that helped “thousands of people escape from slavery in the United States to freedom in Canada.” In the above quotation, we can see the relationship between the United States and Canada. The United States is attached to slavery (“slavery in the United States”). At the same time, Canada is attached to freedom (“freedom in Canada”).

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Discursively, the museum characterizes Canada as the opposite in relation to the United States. Yet, the opening text panel does not offer a completely closed narrative of Canada as a site of freedom. The following sentence introduces the actors who ran the network. Both Americans and Canadians ran the network. Anti-slavery organizations and individuals from both countries are the agents in the first paragraph.

Similarly, the first sentence in the next paragraph introduces those formerly enslaved as the recipient of those actions (“most of those helped”). However, the second paragraph returns the personal agency of the escapees. The second paragraph reintroduces them as newcomers who settled in existing towns or formed their own settlements. Despite the authoritative tone of the title, the introductory panel of the exhibit does not present a wholly uncontested narrative. The last sentence in the second paragraph states: “They had political and legal rights but faced many challenges, including racism.” The exhibit seemingly indicates the experiences of the newcomers in Canada may contain a multitude of aspects. Once again, in the final paragraph, there is a reference to the relationship between Canada and the United States established from the first paragraph. Slavery is abolished in the United States, and many newcomers return to the United States. However, those remaining “build new lives” in Canada.

Focal Area: The Tree Trunks and Media Pieces

A prominent feature of the exhibit that captures the audience’s attention to the exhibit is the degree of dimness in comparison to the two adjacent exhibits. As mentioned previously, the backdrop of the exhibit is a photo mural of a night scene in the woods. The spotlight lighting is shining slightly below the leaves, almost like the moon is trying to shine through. The leaves on the top of the exhibit and the five tree trunks extending from the ground to the ceiling complement the visual feel of the exhibit. The overhanging leaves are lush and dark in colour,

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and it feels almost as if it is shrouding the audience. Altogether these physical elements of the exhibit cue visitors to the secrecy and danger to the idea of escaping from oppression highlighted in the introductory left-side text panel and the right-side panel. Travis Tomchuk (2015), the lead Research-Curator, discusses the visual representation of the forest in a blog post on the Museum's website:

Forests were important to the Underground Railroad because they offered protection from the elements and places to hide – and forms the visual theme of our exhibit alcove.

The Museum's Underground Railroad exhibit reflects the importance of forests along the route of the Underground Railroad.

Two of the stylized tree trunks to the left each contain video monitors. The two monitors play coordinated films that blend archival images, first-person accounts, and historic hymns to narrate the journey to Canada. Upswell and Northshore Productions partnered together to create the almost eight-minute multimedia narrative that is constantly looping and alternating between French and English closed captions (Upswell, 2014). In terms of technical descriptions, the video begins with the same titles and sub-titles as the introductory text panel. The font for the title is a Serif typeface font. I mention the typefaces because different typefaces are also used depending on the content in the videos. For instance, texts that represent the voice of the exhibit uses Sans Serif typeface while the voices of individuals (i.e. quotations) use Serif typeface as illustrated in Figure 3 and Figure 4. The use of two different font types also acts as a cue for visitors to differentiate instances when the museum provides contextual information and the voices of the formerly enslaved people quoted throughout the video. The exhibit consistently also uses Sans Serif typeface in the introductory text panel and right-side panel to provide information. It must be noted that the CMHR follows Smithsonian guidelines for texts, and at times tries to exceed

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the Smithsonian guidelines (CMHR, 2013). For example, Smithsonian (2001) suggests that main text information be provided in Sans Serif. One of the monitors displays text as the second monitor presents an image relating to the text. When informative texts flash on the screen, various songs and sounds play in the background. However, if quotes are on the monitor, a narrator reads the text out loud. Finally, the video ends with credits for the images used throughout the video.

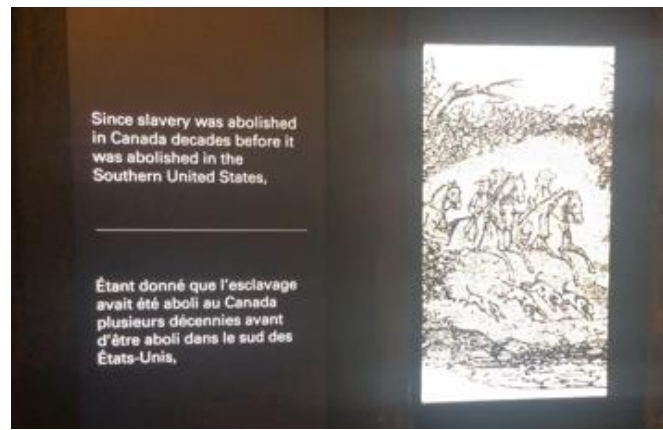


Figure 3. The font typeface the museum uses to provide information throughout the *Escape from Oppression* video (author's photograph). Also, when providing information, the video provides text in English and French.

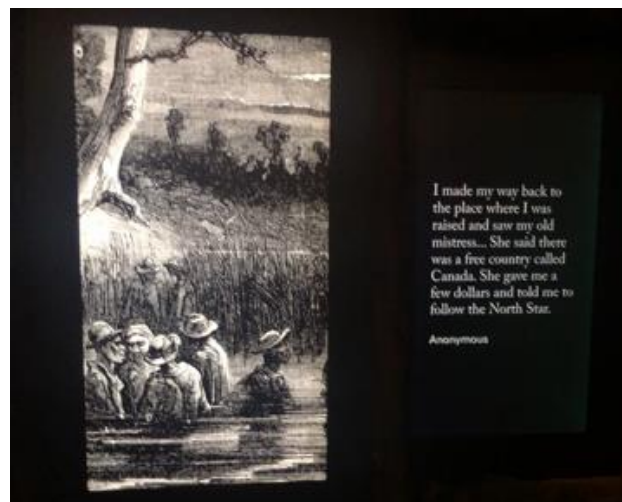


Figure 4. The Serif font typeface the museum when providing quotes throughout the *Escape from Oppression* video (author's photograph). As well, the video uses Sans Serif to note the author of the quote.

The Right-Side Panel: Photographs

On the right side of the panel, the exhibit has four photographs with corresponding texts. As the introductory text panel, the right-side panel uses Sans Serif typeface. This side of the exhibit space also uses *Escape from Oppression* as the title. The text on this side of the exhibit space also uses an authoritative tone. The sentences are declarative. The accompanying text deciphers the photograph for the visitor. These photographs present snapshots of the Underground Railroad.

The first photograph is the Thomas Moran painting of a family escaping slavery via the Underground Railroad. The picture is a longshot and covers a landscape of forest and swamp in the nighttime. In the painting, there is a Black family (a man, a woman, and a baby on the woman's arm) on the bottom left of the painting at the foot of a big tree. The family is standing on a body of water and appearing to be glancing up. Towards the upper right corner of the painting, two dogs are leaping towards the family. The longshot appears to be drawing attention to the secretive nature of the Underground Railroad and the danger inherent in attempts to escape. The caption, which states: "Those seeking freedom travelled great distances at tremendous risk," further highlighting the danger. The second photograph, a collage of two photographs, presents two prominent abolitionists, Henry Bibb and Josiah Henson. The inclusion of these two abolitionists underscores how resistance against slavery did not just stop at escaping slavery via the Underground Railroad. Resistance also meant attempts to abolish the institution.

Similarly, the third photograph featuring the works of another abolitionist, William Still, also addresses how CMHR sees the Underground Railroad activities as activism. The photograph is a close shot of some pages from Still's journal. The description, which states: "Still was one of the Underground Railroad activists who helped formerly enslaved persons find refuge in the

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northern states and Canada,” seems to be drawing attention to the activities in the Underground Railroad as a form of activism. Likewise, Canada, alongside the northern states, is depicted as a refuge. The final photograph features a Black settlement and its residents. It reads: “Many who escaped slavery settled in Black communities in Ontario and Nova Scotia. Others formed new settlements.” This caption is the only caption that references the race of formerly enslaved persons. The picture and accompanying text also draw attention to the fact that Black people remained in Canada after the abolishment of slavery in the United States. The photograph portrays a Black settlement around 1900 in Ontario, which is decades after the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 referenced in the introductory text panel.

The overall narrative told by the exhibit on the right side-panel underlines escape from slavery as a process. Escape does not end with successfully navigating the Underground Railroad network. For instance, the first photograph highlights the danger of the escape. Meanwhile, the last photograph underscores the lived experiences of the formerly enslaved persons in Canada. The Black settlement and new settlements raise questions of how racialization occurred in Canada. Likewise, the four photographs in the right-side panel display the various elements characterizing the escape from oppression. Similarly, the photographs provide various portraits of Black people and give agency to the formerly enslaved persons in the process. For example, in the first picture, the Black man and woman in the painting are active agents in the escape from slavery. In the second and third photographs, Black people are depicted in the roles of abolishers of slavery. They are also credited as Black leaders who assisted other Black people. The three leaders (Bibb, Henson, and Still) are described in terms of what they did (abolishment) versus what was done to them (enslavement). Finally, the last photograph highlights that escaping

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slavery was not just about the flight. It is also about what comes after the escape. Here, Black people are given the agency to be active agents in their settlement of Canada.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Representation of Social Events

As previously mentioned, Fairclough (2003: 135) maintains that social events include various elements, including forms of activity, persons, social relations, objects, times and places. In CMHR's *Escape from Oppression*, elements of the social events represented include the forms of activity. The forms of activities included can best be treated under three headings: escaping to Canada, guiding/helping freedom seekers, and building and settling in Canada. Other forms of activities are excluded. I will first discuss the included elements such as social actors and events included. Then, I will examine the excluded elements.

a. Escaping to Canada

Activities concerning escape to Canada are evident from the title of the exhibit, *Escape from Oppression*. Likewise, the first paragraph in the introductory text panel defines the Underground Railroad as *the* avenue of escape:

“‘[The] Underground Railroad’ is the term used to describe a secret network that helped thousands of people escape from slavery in the United States to freedom in Canada.”

Similarly, the right-side panel includes Thomas Moran's *Slave Hunt*, which is a painting concerned with the risks associated with the concept of escape as “those seeking freedom travelled great distances at tremendous risk.”

The narrative video provides further examples of activities relating to escape. The video first introduced the theme of escape to Canada through the song recording of Joshua M.

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Simpsons' poem titled "Away to Canada" (Sherman, 1992). The video plays the first few lines of the song:

I'm on my way to Canada,
That cold and dreary land;
The dire effects of slavery,
I can no longer stand.

Simultaneously, the text on the left monitor, along with the illustration, describes activities relating to escaping to Canada. Once again, the Underground Railroad is highlighted:

Since slavery was abolished in Canada decades before it was abolished in the Southern United States, thousands of enslaved people sought freedom in Canada through the Underground Railroad. (*Escape from Oppression*)

At the same time, the right monitor displays a black and white drawing depicting a slave hunt. Men on horseback and dogs chase an enslaved Black male through tall grass. The illustration accompanies text discussing slavery in the 1840s drawn from Edmund Ollier's *Cassell's History of the United States*. However, there was no specific reference to the illustration. Meanwhile, in the context of *Escape from Oppression*, the illustration depicts activities concerning escape from slavery.

The video also examines songs as instruments of escape to Canada. Aside from "Away to Canada," the video also provides lyrics to "Follow the Drinking Gourd" to demonstrate:

[That] even songs contained coded messages to help lead the way to freedom. People seeking freedom learned that the "drinking gourd," or the Big Dipper, pointed towards the North Star and Canada (*Escape from Oppression*).

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At the same time, the right monitor displays *The Old Plantation* (Figure 5). The painting belongs to the Colonial Williams Foundation's collection. The watercolor painting is ascribed to John Rose and was painted between 1785-1790. In 2010, Susan P. Shames uncovered John Rose, a plantation owner, as the artist of the painting. The painting stands out amongst the images in the video for two reasons. First, *The Old Plantation* is the only colourful image among the pictures displayed throughout the video. Second, the combination of the text on the left monitor with the painting demonstrates how the image has been recontextualized. Shames (2010) argues that the painting depicts the lives of enslaved people away from labour and unrelated to their owners. The painting portrays the group playing music, dancing and interacting with each other. Shames (2010) notes:

The Old Plantation offers information on what a slave could choose to do given those brief opportunities within an economic and social system designed to limit choice and individuality. It shows what slaves themselves valued, not how their owners placed value on them (p. 17).

Within the context of the exhibit the placement of the accompanying text with the painting is interesting when considering the implications present in the text. Du Bois (2009, p. 133) also argues that Black spiritual songs (or slave songs) have hidden meanings behind them:

I know that these songs are the articulate message of the slave to the world. They tell us in these eager days that life was joyous to the black slave, careless and happy. I can easily believe this of some, of many. But not all the past South, though it rose from the dead, can gainsay the heart-touching witness of these songs. They are the music of an unhappy people, of the children of disappointment; they tell of death and suffering and unvoiced longing toward a truer world, of misty wanderings and hidden ways.



Figure 5. *The Old Plantation*. (Source: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation)

The lyrics, both vocally and textually on the monitor, bring forward the importance of the natural world to a successful escape:

The riverbank makes a might good road

The dead trees show you the way

Left foot, peg foot travelling on

Just follow the drinking gourd

For the old man is a waiting

For to carry you to freedom

If you follow the drinking gourd

The video juxtaposes semiotic texts with visual texts – the black and white drawings of escaping enslaved people looking up to the sky and pointing to the North Star and the Big Dipper and sketches of the night sky. Likewise, attributed quotations from Black people also mention the North Star and Canada, such as the following anonymous quote:

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I make my way back to the place where I was raised and saw my old mistress. She said there was a free country called Canada. She gave me a few dollars and told me to follow the North Star (*Escape from Oppression*).

In the quote above, the relationship between the North Star, Canada and freedom is reiterated. As well, Canada is verbalized as a place of freedom by both the enslaved and slave owners. The mistress speaking about the North Star and Canada troubles the idea of encoded messages in the songs. It was not just people seeking freedom who connected the North Star and Canada with liberty. The familiarity of Canada as a potential destination for fleeing enslaved people is demonstrated using John Little's assertion "[he] was hunted like a wolf in the mountains, to Canada." The quotation highlights the danger present for enslaved people who were fleeing. Furthermore, the accompanying illustration alongside his quotation is equally revealing (Figure 6). In the illustration, a Black man is kneeling on the ground with his elbow and knees touching the ground. Behind him, a Black woman stands with a baby on her arms. Around her are three Black children of varying ages. In the background, two men (presumably white) with hat and coats are standing on top of a deck as the Union Jack waves. The illustration is from Josiah Henson's autobiography, *Uncle Tom's Story of His Life: An Autobiography of the Rev. Josiah Henson (1876)*. In the book, Josiah Henson (1876) speaks of the moment when his feet touched Canadian soil:

It was the 28th of October, 1830, in the morning, when my feet first touched the Canada shore. I threw myself on the ground, rolled in the sand, seized handfuls of it and kissed them, and danced around, till, in the eyes of several who were present, I passed for a madman. "He's some crazy fellow," said a Colonel Warren, who happened to be there. "Oh no, master! don't you know? I'm free!" He burst into a shout of laughter. "Well, I

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never knew freedom make a man roll in the sand in such a fashion." Still I could not control myself. I hugged and kissed my wife and children, and, until the first exuberant burst of feeling was over, went on as before (p. 95).



Figure 6. Illustration of a man (presumably Josiah Henson) kneeling on the ground while a woman with a baby on her arm and three children surround her. (Author's photograph)

b. Guiding/helping freedom seekers

Activities related to guiding enslaved people to Canada is introduced first by defining the actors:

Guiding those seeking freedom were people called “stationmasters” who provided shelter and “conductors” who helped move them from station to station, place to place until they reached Canada (*Escape from Oppression*).

Activities discussed include providing shelter and relocating from place to place until the escapes reached their desired destination, Canada. For example, Harriet Tubman “was a conductor of the Underground Railroad for eight years, and can say what most conductors can’t say– [she] never ran [her] train off the track, and [she] never lost a passenger.” Harriet Tubman is one of two Black women who is quoted throughout the exhibit.

Guidance could come in the form of helping others escape. Josiah Henson, who escaped through the Underground Railroad, took this as motivation to help others:

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After having tasted freedom, my thoughts turned to those who, I knew, suffered in captivity, and I immediately took steps to free as many as possible. I helped liberate 118 human beings from the cruel and merciless claws of a slave owner (*Escape from Oppression*).

Alongside this quotation, on the left monitor, an example of the cruel and merciless claws of a slave owner is exhibited through the photograph titled “The Scourged Back” (Figure 7).

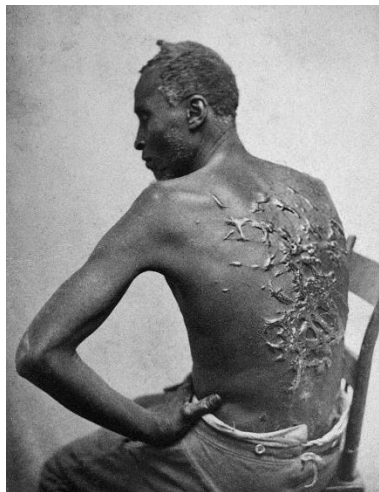


Figure 7. Black and white picture of Gordon's back. (Wikipedia)

The photograph is attributed to McPherson and Oliver. “The Scourged Back” is one of the most famous Civil War era portraits of enslaved persons. In the photograph, Gordon is sitting on a chair with his back to the photographer. His exposed back is riddled with whipping scars. Hall (2006) writes:

The image pictured a history of violence written on the slave's body and in the master's hand. In the photograph of Gordon's scarred back, the viewer reads a narrative inscribed by the slave owner himself. By allowing the slave master's actions to speak through the image of the slave's body, the image appears to remove the mediating factor of interpretation on the part of the slave (p. 89).

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In the CMHR, the simultaneous display of the picture alongside Henson's words is striking. For instance, in this context, the duality of the photograph and text provides an example of the lived experience of violence enslaved people faced at the hands of their owners.

Additionally, guidance could take form in campaigning for the abolition of slavery and other acts of activism. For example, Henry Bibb, in *The Voice of the Fugitive*, one of the newspapers owned by Black people in Canada, argued:

We must campaign for the immediate and unconditional abolition of slavery everywhere in the world. We must also persuade all oppressed people of color in the United States to come to Canada, where the laws make no distinction between people based on the color of the skin (*Escape from Oppression*).

As the above quote demonstrates, guidance took two forms. First, guidance was provided to formerly enslaved people in navigating the Underground Railroad to come to Canada. Second, the guidance also took form in acts of activism, such as the campaign to abolish slavery everywhere. For example, the right-side panel discusses how William Still helped free enslaved persons in Canada through the language of activism.

c. Building and Settling in Canada

Activities relating to building and settling in Canada feature less than the other two forms of activity identified above. The introductory text panel presents activities relating to building and settling in Canada:

Most of those [the Underground Railroad] helped arrived in Ontario between 1840 and 1860. There, the newcomers settled in existing towns and founded all-Black settlements. They had political and legal rights but faced many challenges, including racism (*Escaping from Oppression*).

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In the right-side panel, the photograph of a Black settlement in Ontario illustrates the theme of settling in Canada. In the video, narratives of settling are provided by quotations from various people. John Little and Eli Johnson discuss freedom of settlement, regardless of race, in Canada.

John Little speaks of making settlements out of the wilderness:

We had heard about Queen's Bush, where everyone could move, poor people or people of color. We walked straight to wilderness, where there were thousands of acres of forest.

We shot trees with our hands alone, without the help of oxen or horses. I own 150 acres of land of which 110 are cleared and well cultivated. (*Escape from Oppression*)⁶

While Eli Johnson talks about setbacks in the process of settling down:

I rent a piece of land, and make out to live. My family are sickly, so that I have not been able to purchase land. But I am not discouraged and intend to work on, while I have health and strength (*Escape from Oppression*).

The exhibit also examined how racism affected the activities related to settling and building of lives in Canada because “free in Canada did not necessarily mean equal.” However, experiences of racism are contrasted with the experiences under slavery in the United States because “for most, freedom in Canada was far superior to bondage in America” (*Escape from Oppression*).

⁶ The quotation by John Little in the exhibit was one of the original texts translated to French throughout the exhibit. I chose to work with the English translation along with the original quotation/text in the source material, *Narratives of the Fugitive Slaves in Canada* by Benjamin Drew. I would like to provide the translation used in the exhibit to demonstrate the (re)presentation of the quotation in the exhibit:

“Nous avons entendu parler de Queen's Bush, où tout le monde pouvait aller s'installer, les gens pauvres ou de couleur... Nous avons marché tout droit vers des régions sauvages, où il y avait des milliers d'acres de forêts... Nous avons abattu des arbres avec nos seules mains, sans l'aide de bœufs ou de chevaux... Je possède 150 acres de terrain dont 110 sont défrichés et bien cultivés. [traduction]” (*Escape from Oppression*).

The original narrative of John Little in Drew's (1854) book:

We heard of the Queen's Bush, where any people might go and settle, colored or poor... We marched right into the wilderness, where there were thousands of acres of woods... We logged the trunks with our own hands, without cattle, horses... I have one hundred and fifty acres of land; one hundred and ten of it cleared, and under good cultivation (p. 216-218).

Representation of social actors

Social actors in *Escape from Oppression* are classified according to their actions in the Underground Railroad narrative. I have identified three categories of social actors throughout the exhibit:

1. actors who sought freedom through the Underground Railroad;
2. actors who guided/helped with the Underground Railroad; and
3. actors who built and settled in Canada.

1. Actors who sought freedom

The helped actors are first introduced in the initial panel of text in a general way. They benefited from “a secret network that helped thousands of people flee from slavery in the United States to freedom in Canada” and “most of those helped arrived in Ontario.” They are also classified specifically as “the newcomers [who] settled in existing towns.” Many of those helped are first introduced as victims of slavery. For example, the lyrics to “Away to Canada” speak to the effects of enslavement on a person:

I am on my way to Canada that cold and dreary land;

The dire effects of slavery I can no longer stand.

Here, persons seeking freedom from enslavement are provided with a voice of resistance and agency. They were also beneficiaries of others’ actions:

People fleeing slavery followed a secret network of routes and safe houses. Free Blacks and others who wanted to end slavery, known as abolitionists, helped them (*Escape from Oppression*).

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It is interesting to note that a distinction is drawn between people fleeing slavery and those wanting to abolish slavery. Similar differences between the two categories are also seen in the following lyrics:

When the sun comes up and the first quail calls,
Follow the drinking gourd.
For the old man is a-waiting to carry you to freedom,
If you follow the drinking gourd.

There is no disclosure of the old man's identity. However, like the quotation above, two categories of actors are identified. The old man is the helper, and the listener of the song is the beneficiary of the help he provides.

Violence faced by enslaved persons is also articulated in the exhibit. For example, an anonymous person in the video recalls:

At 16 years of age, I went in a chain gang to Mississippi. There they calculated to work me down. Taking my shirt off and whipping was a new thing to me. I made my way back to the place where I was raised and saw my old mistress... She said there was a free country called Canada. She gave me a few dollars and told me to follow the North Star (*Escape from Oppression*).

The quotation above provides an instance of an enslaved person's multitude of experiences. For example, whipping, as a form of punishment, was not the usual experience for the person quoted. Furthermore, the quotation possibly provides contrasts between the new owner and the old mistress who aids him in escaping to Canada. John Little also recalls instances of monetary aid in escape in his recount:

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I was hunted like a wolf in the mountains, to Canada. At Chicago money was made up to help me on, and I took passage for Detroit, and then crossed to Windsor, in Canada (*Escape from Oppression*).⁷

Here, John Little provides his route to Canada, which includes various cities such as Chicago, Detroit and Windsor. His recollection also offers the visitor the numerous opportunities and threats of capture escaping enslaved persons faced as they traveled through the various cities in the long journey to Canada.

2. Actors who guided/helped with the Underground Railroad

The next classification of actors in the exhibit included persons who guided and helped with the Underground Railroad. A distinction is, once again, made between the users of the network and managers of the network:

Guiding *those seeking freedom* were people called “stationmasters” *who provided shelter and “conductors” who helped move* them from station to station, place to place until they reached Canada [emphasis added] (*Escape from Oppression*).

Harriet Tubman is provided as an example of conductors. However, the categories of actors are not always mutually exclusive such as with Josiah Henson and Henry Bibb:

Bibb and the Hensons escaped slavery through the Underground Railroad, and settled in Ontario. Bibb and Josiah Henson became vocal abolitionists (*Escape from Oppression*).

Josiah Henson’s narrative illustrates the ways in which actors of the Underground Railroad occupied categories of the recipient and contributor:

After having tasted freedom, my thoughts turned to those who, I knew, suffered in captivity, and I immediately took steps to free as many as possible. I helped liberate 118

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human beings from the cruel and merciless claws of a slave owner (*Escape from Oppression*).

Henson's narrative demonstrates the agencies of formerly enslaved persons. Furthermore, he provides an example of how formerly enslaved people conceived of slavery as an institution. The exhibit also provides an example of the agency of Black people in Canada by quoting the two Canadian newspapers "both produced by Blacks [that] championed abolition and the Underground Railroad" (*Escape from Oppression*). For example, Henry Bibb in *The Voice of the Fugitive* provides an example of a collective voice:

We must campaign for the immediate and unconditional abolition of slavery everywhere in the world. We must also persuade all oppressed people of color in the United States to come to Canada, where the laws make no distinction between people based on the color of the skin. (*Escape from Oppression*)

At this point, Bibb identifies those enslaved as victims of oppression and recognizes the central role race plays in the enslavement. Bibb's assertion is also one of the few instances throughout where the race of enslaved people is articulated. Another of the few mentions about race in the exhibit also is provided by Bibb's examination of inequality and prejudice in Canada.

3. Actors who built and settled in Canada

The final category of social actors in the exhibit are people who built and settled in Canada. According to the introductory panel, these actors were:

The newcomers [who] settled in existing towns and founded all-Black settlements. They had political and legal rights but faced many challenges, including racism (*Escape from Oppression*).

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Asides from being labeled newcomers, the Black abolitionists also provide the identity of refugees for people who were formerly enslaved. *The Provincial Freeman* characterized their purpose to be:

The Provincial Freeman will be devoted to the elevation of the Colored People. The refugees from the southern plantation shall be made welcome and pointed to means and measures for such improvement and development. (*Escape from Oppression*)

The community builders take accountability for their own elevation. For many of the actors, settlement and ownership of land and property is a measure of improvement and development.

For example, John Little says:

We had heard about Queen's Bush, where everyone could move, poor people or people of color ... We walked straight to wilderness, where there were thousands of acres of strong ... We shot trees with our hands alone, without the help of oxen or horses ... I own 150 acres of land of which 110 are cleared and well cultivated (*Escape from Oppression*).

Similarly, Eli Johnson highlights the importance of land for success:

I rent a piece of land, and make out to live. My family are sickly, so that I have not been able to purchase land. But I am not discouraged and intend to work on, while I have health and strength (*Escape from Oppression*).

However, social actors also articulate the relationship between the Black community with the rest of Canada. As mentioned previously, race and race relations are rarely mentioned outright throughout the exhibit. It is through the discussion of prejudice that race relations in Canada are articulated. Francis Henderson talks about personal experiences of prejudice against Black Canadians:

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There is a lot of prejudice against us here. I have always been busy with my business and have always tried to earn respect. One day I stopped at a hotel and was going to check in when I was told that the hotel was full (*Escape from Oppression*).

Respect is associated with business ownership in a quotation by *The Voice of the Fugitive* as well:

Color-phobia is a contagious disease. It frightens them up from the dining table at public houses, not because of a black man's cooking the dinner or waiting on the table, but because of his sitting down to eat. It excites them awfully when colored passengers enter the rail cars or stage coaches but not when they come in the capacity of waiters or servants (*Escape from Oppression*).

In both quotations, the agents of prejudice are not mentioned. Nonetheless, there is a categorization of "Us" vs "Them." The recipients of prejudice and color-phobia are defined by both actors. For instance, Henderson articulates that "There is a lot of prejudice against us here." Likewise, there is no explicit definition of what group represents 'them' in Bibb's quotation that is afflicted with the contagious disease of color-phobia. Instead, the recipients of the ills of color-phobia are the Black man and colored passengers.

Furthermore, Bibb's (1851) description of color-phobia as a disease is like Frederick Douglass's (1850) analysis of black-phobia in the *North Star*:

First, then, the fact that a white man or woman is willing to be waited upon at the dining table by a person of sable hue, does not necessarily prove that the white man or white woman is free from the loathsome disease denominated above as "black-phobia."

Secondly - The fact that a white man or woman may be willing to be driven in a carriage by a colored driver, and to have that driver hold an umbrella over his or her head, in a

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rain-storm, is no evidence whatever that such a person is free from the "black-phobia;" for these gentle services, when tendered in due menial obsequiousness, act as opiates, and lull the black madness into serene repose, so that the disease is scarcely to be perceived by the most experienced practitioners. Thirdly – Nor must we be deceived into the belief that a man is free from this grievous distemper, simply because he will quietly sit in the chair of a colored barber and give to that barber the entire freedom of his face; for the fact is, (and this ends our negations,) that our magnanimous white fellow-citizens are always perfectly willing to have either their pride, their indolence, or their interests, subserved by men, no matter how black soever they be.

Both Frederick (1850) and Bibb (1851) discuss the ways in which white people are comfortable with Black people in roles of servitude and social hierarchy of subservience, such as servers or drivers. The act of Black servitude served to remind white people of their place in racial hierarchy.

Despite the tensions in race-relations, actors argue being a Canadian and a Britisher is still preferable and “far superior to bondage in America” (*Escape from Oppression*). Bondage in the United States means enslaved people have no ownership, both in property and self-ownership. One’s own ownership of the self in Canada is conveyed by Mrs. Christopher Hamilton:

I prefer to live in Canada and eat a potato a day rather than live in the South despite all its riches. Today I am my own mistress. I can make my own decisions without anyone telling me where to go, and without being sold when they feel like it (*Escape from Oppression*).

As well, Alexander Hemsley articulates a sense of citizenship through settlement in Canada:

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For years after I came here I was in hopes that I might safely return to my old home in New Jersey. I then made up my mind that salt and potatoes in Canada, were better than pound cake and chickens in the United States. Now I am a regular “Britisher” (*Escape from Oppression*).

In both two quotations above, the actors articulate aspects of their lives in Canada and the United States. Canada is portrayed as poorer in materials but as enabling Black people to live their own lives according to their wishes. These actors were the ones who “remained in Canada to build new lives” (*Escape from Oppression*) after the abolishment of slavery in the United States.

Absences

So far, much of the textual analysis looks at the salient elements of the exhibit. I will now discuss the elements of social events that were either excluded or backgrounded. As discussed previously, activities relating to the Underground Railroad in Canada were prominent throughout the exhibit. Actions helping with “[the] escape from slavery in the United States to freedom in Canada” are foregrounded “since slavery was abolished in Canada decades before it was abolished in the Southern United States” (*Escape from Oppression*). Consequently, the activities highlighted did not include actions relating to the abolishment of slavery in Canada and British North America. Recall the intention of the CMHR (2013) to have an exhibit about Canadian experience with slavery and how “[the] exhibit will examine the gradual abolition of slavery in British North America in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.” Activities related to gradual abolishment in British North America are non-existent throughout the exhibit. Instead, an abstract representation of abolishment in the United States is presented. For instance, the introductory panel provides a timeframe for when formerly enslaved persons came to Canada as

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“most of those helped [by the Underground Railroad] arrived in Ontario between 1840 and 1860.” What was the reason? The video provides the answer:

The Fugitive Slave Act made life unsafe for every African-American. Following its passage in 1850, free Blacks in the north also fled to Canada.

Absent, too, are the social actors who brought about the abolishment of slavery in British North America. Instead, the exhibit begins with the abolishment of slavery in Canada and foregrounds continuation of slavery in the United States. Consequently, enslaved people in Canada are absent as social actors. Similarly, discourse on Canadian slave ownership is absent. The exhibit also fails to consider how Canada’s history of enslavement affected the relationship between white people and Black people who escaped to Canada to resist enslavement. As Wylie (1994, p. 17) argues:

In spite of slavery’s demise, however, it can be argued that the institution had important implications for the course of Canadian history. In the first place, its impact on Blacks extended long after the early 19th century...The image of the Black slaves persisted in the minds of the white colonists. Their subsequent refusal to deal with Blacks on a basis of equality may stem in part from their identification of the [Black]⁸ race with slavery, an association that was based of course not only on the Canadian situation but on the enslavement of Africans throughout much of the world.

Concluding Remarks

Critical discourse analysis of *Escape from Oppression* uncovered presence and absence in CMHR’s representation of the Underground Railroad. The critical discourse analysis in this chapter emphasizes how the exhibit centers certain experiences with slavery (slavery in the

⁸ I have substituted Black to replace the author’s use of N-word in the original text.

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United States, the travel to Canada, the Abolition Movement in Canada, refugeehood settlement in Canada). The exhibit presents the story of the Underground Railroad in three different forms: introductory text panel, the focal area, and the panel with photographs. The exhibit looks at three forms of activities in the Underground Railroad. The activities related to escaping to Canada, guiding/helping others to Canada, and building and settling in Canada. Similar categories appear for social actors in the exhibit. Throughout the exhibit, actors seek freedom through the Underground Railroad, actors guide the Underground Railroad, and actors build and settle in Canada. All at once, the exhibit does not cover the Canadian history of slavery or enslaved people in Canada. Instead, the focus is on ending American slavery. Social actors are either white or Black. Indigenous people are not represented in the exhibit.

Chapter 6: Discussion

In Chapter 1, three research objectives were listed alongside the overarching question of how do Canadian state authorities and agencies depict and articulate Black history? The research project was broken down into three different parts:

1. To examine the instances of the commemoration of Black history in Canada by state authorities in public history;
2. To identify a theoretical framework to critically examine state depictions of Black Canadian history pointing to the conditions and contexts of presence (and absence);
3. To appreciate how the history of Black Canadians is used and misused to generate national narratives of immigration, multiculturalism, and unity.

This section of the thesis will interrogate and interpret the findings discussed in the previous chapters in the context of the objectives listed above. The discussion of the first objective will compare how the two state agencies commemorate Black history. The discussion of the second and third questions will examine findings from the previous two chapters through a critical race theory lens. Finally, this section will discuss some of the challenges that limited the scope of the thesis and outline recommendations for future research.

1. What instances of Black history are commemorated in Canada by state authorities in public history?

The two state authorities I examined were the Parks Canada Agency and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. Parks Canada Agency, as a state authority, commemorated the Underground Railroad in *On the Road North: Black Canada and Journey to Freedom*. During my visits to the CMHR, there were four instances of Black history commemorated: *One Woman's Resistance: Viola Desmond's Challenge to Racial Segregation*, *Escape from*

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Oppression: The Underground Railroad, “Breaking Silences,” and *One Woman’s Challenge*.⁹

My textual analysis was based on the *Escape from Oppression* exhibit in the “Canadian Journeys” gallery.

The exhibits reflect the institution’s decision to emphasize specific instances of Black Canadian history. For example, Matthew McRae, a CMHR staff member, writes:

The abolition of slavery allowed the British colonies in North America to become a safe haven for escaped enslaved people in the United States, with many making their way North via the famous Underground Railroad. The story of the Underground Railroad is a positive moment in Canadian history, worthy of commemoration.

A similar thought is also found in the introductory panel of *OTRN*:

Slavery ended in Canada in 1833. The people, places and events that won that victory are remembered today in Canada’s system of National Historic Persons, Sites and Events.

The learning materials presented here are based on Canada’s national historic designations.

In both exhibitions, Canada is introduced as a terminal point in the Underground Railroad, confirming existing literature (Wright, 2014; Cooper, 2014; Bakan, 2008). Cooper (2014) argues:

The Underground Railroad has a way of being used as a stand-in for all four hundred years of Black Canadian history, especially in moments of “multicultural celebrations” (p. 193).

⁹ *One Woman’s Challenge* was part of the temporary *Right of Passage* exhibition on level 6. The exhibit enabled visitors to “experience 150 years of human rights history” from December 2017 to March 2019. *One Woman’s Challenge* examined the story of Carrie Best who reported on Viola Desmond’s arrest and subsequent trial (<https://humanrights.ca/exhibition/rights-of-passage>).

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Moments of “multiculturalism celebrations” also appear in the Government of Canada’s (2012) *Discover Canada: The Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship*, the official study guide for the Citizenship and Immigration Canada citizenship test. Black Canadian history in the Canadian History chapter is, once again, described through the metaphor of the North Star:

In 1793, Upper Canada, led by Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe, a Loyalist military officer, became the first province in the Empire to move toward abolition. In 1807, the British Parliament prohibited the buying and selling of slaves, and in 1833 abolished slavery throughout the Empire. Thousands of slaves escaped from the United States, followed “the North Star” and settled in Canada via the Underground Railroad, a Christian anti-slavery network (p. 16).

The study guide features and celebrates many of the actors and events that are also presented in *OTRN*, such as Simcoe and the referenced years (1807 and 1833). However, the attribute of the Christian nature of the network is slightly different from *OTRN*, where religious groups and the network were only loosely connected. Nonetheless, what is being commemorated in Black history is largely consistent across governmental agencies.

We must also consider the context within which the two texts were produced. *OTRN* was created in 2008 as a traveling exhibit for Black History Month, so one might expect it to be celebratory of certain aspects. For example, in 2009, the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic displayed the exhibit, and the Government of Nova Scotia (2009) described it as:

An exhibit that tells the stories of successive migrations to Canada by enslaved African Americans, will open at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic today, June 8. On the Road North: Black Canada and the Journey to Freedom contains narratives of groundbreaking laws, acts of personal heroism, and years of steady and determined work

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Meanwhile, CMHR intended to explore the experience of Black people through the human rights of slavery (Schroeder and McNabb, 2014).

2. To identify a theoretical framework to critically examine state depictions of Black Canadian history pointing to the conditions and contexts of presence (and absence);

Brooms (2011) analyzes depictions of American slavery across five Black identity centered museums in the United States. Black identity centered museums allow for what CRT theorists refer to as the voice of color:

Coexisting in somewhat uneasy tension with antiessentialism, the voice-of-color thesis holds that because of their different histories and experiences with oppression, Black, American Indian, Asian and Latino/a writers and thinkers may be able to communicate to their white counterparts matters that the whites are unlikely to know (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 10).

The author found four main themes across the museums. First, exhibits portray physical hardships during enslavement. Second, exhibits have intentions of humanizing and personalizing slaves and portraying them as humans. Third, the agency is displayed through individual or collective actions and triumphs in ending enslavement. Finally, exhibits display cultural achievements and traditions during enslavement. The themes identified are important to consider because both *Escape from Oppression* and *OTRN* portray these themes. I will examine these themes in detail below.¹⁰

¹⁰ CMHR as an idea-based museum does not feature much material-based items on display. Much of the discussion on this theme will be based around The Parks Canada Agency.

a. Themes of physical hardships

OTRN addresses the hardships faced during enslavement in more detail than *Escape from Oppression*. The exhibit addresses the Middle Passage and the Slave Trade. Hardship is also explored through examination of the consequences fugitive slaves faced upon arrest:

Thornton Blackburn's destiny was likely to return to slavery in Kentucky, to be whipped, branded and sent south to be worked to death on a cotton plantation. His wife would be sold as a prostitute (*OTRN*, CROSSING).

Similarly, the theme of physical hardship examined in Harriet Tubman's fear "that she was about to be sold into the Deep South, where a field hand's life was short and terrible" (*OTRN*, TRAVELLERS). Meanwhile, in the *CMHR* exhibit, this theme is explored through the accounts of the anonymous narrator and his experience of physical punishment. Josiah Henson refers to the merciless claws of a slave owner in his discussion of hardship. Likewise, the portrait of Gordon's scourged back provides visual evidence of physical hardship. However, most of the physical hardships mentioned throughout both exhibits feature stories of enslavement in the United States. Little mention is made of enslavement in Canada nor the hardships faced through enslavement in Canada. Furthermore, both exhibits examine physical hardship in attempts to escape to Canada, such as the geographical hardships (wilderness).

b. Humanizing and personalizing language

Autry (2012) quotes a curator at an identity-museum promotes using the term "enslaved people" because "calling them slaves takes away from their humanity. They were people first and enslaved after (p. 66)." Along these lines, the *CMHR* uses the term "enslaved persons" in describing William Still's work. Furthermore, in *Escape from Oppression*, rarely is slave used as a noun. Instead, when the authoritative voice of the museum is used, these people are described

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with verbs such as ‘people escaping slavery’ and ‘people fleeing slavery.’ Likewise, most of the direct quotations are attributed to formerly enslaved people. In both exhibits, formerly enslaved people are given names and identities. However, in *OTRN*, slave as a noun is used more frequently. For example:

Those who were owned – we call them “slaves” – worked not to support themselves, but their owners. (*OTRN*, INTRODUCTION).

The discussion of slaves versus enslaved people also arises in scholarly literature. On her blog, Andi Cumbo-Floyd (2011) argues:

By changing from the use of a name – *slaves* – to an adjective – *enslaved*– we grant these individuals an identity as people and use a term to describe their position in society rather than reducing them to that position. In a small but important way, we carry them forward as people, not the property that they were [at] that time.

Similarly, Daina Ramey Berry (2012, p. xxi) argues that terminology matters when discussing enslavement :

Referring to bondspeople as “enslaved” emphasizes the reality that enslavement was an *action* –a verb enacted on individual(s) rather than noun, “slave,” that describes a social position these individuals presumably accepted.

In terms of intertextuality, the most common form of reference to other texts throughout *Escape from Oppression* exhibition is reported speech. Almost all the reported speeches are attributed to named actors. All the reported speeches throughout the video are from Black enslaved people. In the exhibit, the authoritative voice of the museum decides where and when Canada enters the story of abolishment and the Underground Railroad narrative. As stated in the previous chapter, the commemoration of the Underground Railroad through Canada does occur in the authoritative

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museum text. However, the attributed quotations open textual space for counterstorytelling, a major tenet of CRT. Counterstorytelling is understood as text “that aims to cast doubt on the validity of accepted premises of myths, especially held the majority” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 159). In the context of the exhibit, counterstorytelling troubles the idea of Canada as the terminal point for formerly enslaved people to an extent. For example, the introductory panel notes “many returned to the U.S. in 1863, when slavery was abolished across the border. Others remained in Canada to build new lives” (*Escape from Oppression*). Similarly, the video mentions “though many people returned to the United States after the American Civil War, others had created new lives for themselves in Canada” (*Escape from Oppression*). Here, discussion in the video and introductory panels return to the United States troubles “the railroad metaphor [which] in itself suggests Canada as a final destination, a last stop, a terminus. Canada is not simply an end point in these narratives; it is a *blissful* end point” [emphasis in original text] (Wright, 2014, p. 53). Both examples have a specific date (“1863”) and event (“American Civil War”), but the viewer is not provided with possible motivations behind the return. Instead, “many people returned” while “others remained.”

Important to note, most of the attributed quotations in the exhibit come from Benjamin Drew’s *The Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada Related by Themselves*.¹¹ Another title for the book is *The Refugee: A North side view of slavery*. The book is a collection of more than one hundred narratives of formerly enslaved people who fled to Canada. Drew (1856)

[endeavored] to collect, with a view of placing their testimony on record, their experiences of the actual workings of slavery – what experiences they have had of the

¹¹ Quotes from the following can be found in Drew’s book: Anonymous, John Little (he was quoted twice), Francis Henderson Eli Johnson, Rev. Alexander Hensley, Mrs. Christopher Hamilton

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condition of liberty – and such statements generally as they may be inclined to make, bearing upon the weighty subject of oppression and freedom (p. 15).

In other words, Drew's work allows the formerly enslaved people to speak about their lived experiences. For example, Charles Henderson's account demonstrates how racial prejudice affected Black people living in Canada. However, George Elliott Clarke warns in the introduction of the book:

Canadians should approach [the book], not as a species of exotica or “off-colour” Americana, but as a foundation of Canadian political philosophy (anti-republicanism) and as a distinct set of *settler* narratives [emphasis in the original]. But nothing about Canadian identity is simple: if Americans have not wanted to view fugitive slaves as Canadians, neither have Canadians wanted to view them as anything other than American (p. 10-11).

c. Display of agency

Brooms (2011) identifies two displays of agency in the analysis of the museum exhibits. The author categorizes “[the] two distinct portrayals of African and African-American triumph include resistance to enslavement and identifying African-American freedom fighters” (p. 516). Both *OTRN* and *Escape from Oppression* exhibit the two distinct portrayals of triumph. The two exhibits identify the names of Black people who resisted slavery in the United States. The two exhibits share many of the social actors, including Josiah Henson, Mary and Henry Bibb, Harriet Tubman. *OTRN* provides concrete information about these actors' resistance to enslavement. For example, the exhibit presents Josiah Henson's life in enslavement and resistance through specific details in his life. Meanwhile, *Escape from Oppression*, the quotation attributed to Henson,

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expresses and articulates his conception of slavery as an institution and his relation to others in enslavement.

Similarly, the inclusion of two Black owned and published newspapers (*Voice of the Fugitive* and *The Provincial Freeman*) across the exhibits demonstrate that dialogue surrounding agency and resistance to enslavement was contested and multivocal. For example, Mary Ann Shadd Cary, the publisher and editor of the *Provincial Freeman*, exemplifies how multiple actors “pushed the debate on freedom – and what freedom should look like – to new levels” (OTRN, PLANNING). Walcott (2000) brings to attention the importance of Mary Ann Shadd Cary, multiple identities and the transnational connections between abolishment and slavery:

Given this, I insist on reading Shadd Cary as a figure of the in-between. By this I mean that she sits between Canada and the USA; she sits between race and gender in her thought and actions; she sits between Canadian Studies and Black Studies; and for my purposes, she sits between lack and desire. These in-between positions of Shadd Cary are indicative of the sensibilities of Black Canadian-ness. Blackness in Canada is fashioned by and constituted via the in-between positions, utterances and desires of multiple identifications (p. 139).

Here, I read Walcott’s comment on how discussions of Blackness are not tied to national borders, especially since the history of Blackness in Canada and America has been predicated on crossing borders. Furthermore, Mary Shadd Cary articulates multiple identities: a woman, the first female editor in Canada, immigrant and abolitionist.

d. Cultural displays and achievement

The final theme found across museum exhibits on slavery “identify dances, narratives, music, language patterns and beliefs as the most distinctive cultural achievements and survival of

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enslavement” (Brooms, 2011, p. 519). Across both exhibits, famous Black spirituals are shown to display the determination of enslaved people in resisting enslavement. In the transcript of “Oh, Freedom” there is a resistance to enslavement. Similarly, “Away to Canada” resists the ownership of the master as the enslaved person declares, “Farewell, old master! That’s enough for me.”

During the introduction, as I previously mentioned, we are told of the sources that informed *OTRN*:

[The] materials presented here are based on Canada’s national historic designations.

Their purpose is to introduce you to the heroic persons, the honored places and momentous events in Canada that helped to end slavery. (INTRODUCTION).

As a result, throughout the exhibit material, federal heritage designations are referenced throughout. Most of them are linked to the Underground Railroad stories, and most are in Ontario like the findings by Kheraj (2003) and Thomas (1996). Similarly, neither exhibits examine slavery in Quebec (New France).

3. To appreciate how the commemorations use and misuse history of Black Canadians to generate national narratives of immigration, multiculturalism, and unity.

The two state commemorations (mis)use the history of Blackness in Canada to generate national narratives of immigration, multiculturalism and unity through metaphors of journey and progress. The titles of both exhibits exemplify these narratives: *ON THE ROAD NORTH- Black Canadian and Journey to Freedom* and *Escape from Oppression: The Underground Railroad*. Altogether the titles conjure up metaphors of journey and travel to freedom implying linear progress in achieving racial equality. The title of *OTRN* centers the voices of people of colour more clearly following one of the main tenets of CRT. The exhibit’s title alludes that the exhibit

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is about Black Canada and their journey to freedom. CMHR's *Escape from Oppression* does not explicitly state who is doing the escaping and who is doing the oppressing.

Both exhibits deliver a linear narrative and follow a similar timeline. Both exhibits begin with slavery as the main obstacle. Both exhibits provide Canada as an asylum for formerly enslaved people. Both exhibits examine the participants of the Underground Railroad. Similarly, both displays look at the process of settlement and the challenges faced in building lives in Canada. Finally, the two exhibits discuss the Civil War. Both exhibits look at the end of slavery, either in Canada or the United States, as a sign of progress. CRT theorists are more cautious in such readings of history as the framework "incorporate[s] skepticism of triumphalist history" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 5). For example, in *OTRN*, abolition is first introduced when "some 200 years ago, Europeans started to wake to the horror and protest" as "new scientific discoveries, philosophies and religious movements changed how people thought in the 18th century. Many began to question the morality of slavery" (*OTRN*- Milestones). What is missing from this linear progressive narrative missing the ideas of European scientific racism, which flourished at the end of the slave trade. Drescher (1990, p. 127) explains:

British and French scientists generally accepted the premise of African cultural deficiency, a premise they shared with abolitionists and missionaries. [Scientists] also assumed that blacks belonged to a distinct group, whether characterized as a "race" (subspecies) or a "species." Scientific differences arose concerning the degree to which racial inheritance inhibited the progress of "civilization." This question was frequently related to the "place" of the black in nature and the role of slavery and the slave trade in future relations between Europeans and Africans.

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Furthermore, the two exhibits also evoke a sense of colour-blindness throughout. The differences are shown in (re)presentations of different contents in the two exhibits. *OTRN* addresses race more explicitly than *Escape from Oppression*. As the following paragraphs demonstrate, the question of race is mainly addressed and highlighted when it comes to Blackness. The *OTRN* exhibit begins by providing a brief history of slavery. Slavery is represented as a natural consequence of war and conquest. As a result, the exhibit text (re)presents slavery as an institution with a long history. For example, the text reads, “slavery has existed for thousands of years in almost every part of the world. The ancient Greeks and Romans enslaved prisoners of war, along with whole populations of defeated peoples” (*OTRN*, MILESTONES). However, the exhibit does acknowledge the difference between ancient slavery and the Transatlantic slavery. The section recognises prior existence of slavery, “but the European trade was especially horrific. It started in the 1400s, when Portuguese ships first sailed along the coast of Africa and discovered the Black races” (*OTRN*, MILESTONES). Here, Europeans are not explicitly defined by the markers of the race, while racial categories marked Africans. The definition of race is taken for granted, and the history of racial categories left unquestioned.

Additionally, the exhibit defines the history of Atlantic slavery around the language of discovery with Europeans as the agents of discovery. Jyotsna Singh (1996) believes that the theme of “discovery motif has frequently emerged in the language of colonization, enabling European travelers/writers to represent the newly “discovered” lands as an empty space, a *tabula rasa*” (p. 1). Although Singh (1996) is using the framework of the British ‘discovery’ of India, Europeans (and the British) also used a framework of discovery about their encounter with the continent of Africa whereby the Europeans are afforded with privileged epistemological position (p. 2).

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Furthermore, throughout the *OTRN* exhibit, Blackness is suggested by various terminologies such as “Black races,” “Black spiritual,” “Black slaves,” “Black Loyalists,” “Black settlers,” “Black immigrants,” “the Black people of Nova Scotia,” “Canadian Blacks,” “Black community,” “Black farming settlement,” “free Blacks,” “Black clergy” and “Black churches.” Whiteness as a category rarely appears in the exhibit. The discussion on education is one of the few instances where whiteness (underlined) appears in the text:

When white neighbours refused to welcome Black children to the local school, King founded a school of his own. And it was such a good school that before long the white community was begging to send their children there as well. Buxton, almost accidentally, was a pioneer of integration (*OTRN*, PLANNING).

What the text above fails to mention is that the white neighbours did not just refuse to welcome Black children to a local school. They also threatened mob violence upon the school, according to William King. King (1892) wrote about the school in his autobiography and said:

I placed the building near my own residence that when I opened the School I might be near to have a constant oversight and care of the School as threats had been made, that when a School should be opened to teach the negroes the mob would break it up, and with the breaking up of the school, so annoy [*sic*] the settlers, as to cause them to leave with their families (p. 86)

Furthermore, the text underemphasizes the white neighbours’ refusal to send their children to the same school as Black children was an instance of white resistance against Black settlement near their communities. For instance, a petition by three hundred citizens who described themselves as “Inhabitants of the Township of Raleigh and its Vicinity” to the Presbyterian Synod stated:

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The Negro is a distinct species of the Human Family and, in the opinion of your Memorialists is far inferior to that of the European. Let each link in the great Scale of existence have its place; the white man was never intended to be linked with the black. Amalgamation is as disgusting to the Eye, as it is immoral in its tendencies and all good men will discountenance it (quoted in Prince, 2012, p. 100).

The exhibit does not provide visitors with information about the process of how Buxton became an accidental innovator of integration. Instead, the text frames the case of education and schooling in Buxton through a narrative of unity.

The narrative of William King in *OTRN* also demonstrates how the exhibit alludes to color-blindness when it comes to white abolitionists. The text does not explicitly identify William King as white. Instead, he is an immigrant from Ireland to the United States who in Canada “formed the province’s single most successful farming settlement for escaped slaves” (*OTRN*, PLANNING). Similarly, the exhibit describes King as “the embarrassed owner of 14 slaves” (*OTRN*, PLANNING). One could argue that slave ownership perhaps functions as a marker for whiteness throughout the text. William Wylie’s (1994) study prepared for the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada notes that William King was “a white Irish-Presbyterian minister who had first come to Upper Canada in 1846” (p. 111).

On the other hand, the plaque that commemorates Williams as a National Historic Person does not mention his race. Instead, the question of race is in the plaque to demonstrate a narrative of unity and William as its agent. “A tireless leader, [William] worked to break down racial barriers by building links between this settlement and surrounding communities” (King, Reverend William National Historic Person). Kheraj (2003) that the national commemoration in the form of the plaque:

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[It] Portrays the site as an early example of immigration history and racial tolerance in Canada. Missing from this narrative are the racist assumptions of Reverend King and the Presbyterian Church and the resistance of local whites to the establishment of a settlement for black people in Buxton (p. 18).

Immigration and Unity

Sheila Copps, the Minister of Canadian Heritage from 1996-2003, in her foreword in *Commemorating the Underground Railroad* document says, “the story of the Underground Railroad is the stuff of courage and compassion, heroes and history. In a new place, the refugees built a new home and helped lay the foundations of a new country.” Both exhibits frame the story of Black Canadians through the narratives of settlement and immigration. For instance, in the introductory text panel of *Escape from Oppression* describes formerly enslaved people arriving in Canada as “newcomers [who] settled in existing towns and founded all-Black settlements.” The language of the settlement also appears in the captions accompanying photographs in the second panel. “Many who escaped slavery settled in Black communities in Ontario and Nova Scotia. Others founded new settlements” (*Escape from Oppression*). Similarly, terminologies of settlement and immigration permeate the *OTRN* exhibit. Discussion in the exhibit centers the settlement of Birchtown, Shelburne, Elgin/Buxton Settlement. Discourses of various plaques referenced throughout the exhibit demonstrate the ideas of settlement and immigration:

Example 1: They formed the first substantial African communities on Canadian soil. The most influential of these settlements was Birchtown, founded in August 1783, which

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became the largest free Black community in North America (Black Loyalist Experience National Historic Event).¹²

Example 2: Tubman helped these Black refugees settle after their arrival and played an active role in the fight to end slavery (Tubman, Harriet National Historic Person).¹³

Example 3: Some returned south after the outbreak of the Civil War, but many remained, helping to forge the modern Canadian identity (Underground Railroad National Historic Event).¹⁴

Example 4: The settlers created the regular pattern of roads and drainage ditches seen today, transforming the landscape into the prosperous Elgin Settlement, as it was then called, where neat cottages spoke of industry and thrift, and children received a classical education. Buxton lives on today through descendants of these determined immigrants who carved out a free life for themselves and their families on the tranquil plains of southwestern Ontario (Buxton Settlement National Historic Site Event).¹⁵

Parks Canada's National Historic Sites System Plan and Thematic Network (2001) has five broad inter-related themes. Peopling the Land consist of these four sub-themes: Canada's earliest inhabitants, migration and immigration, settlements, People and the Environment, and (p. 2). The first three sub-themes represent an uneasy grouping. Parks and Canada (2001b) does acknowledge the uneasy relationship between the theme of settlement and Canada's first inhabitants:

[The] settlement should be applicable to all forms of human habitation or occupation of the land. To link the term exclusively with the activities of a specific process such as

¹² https://www.pc.gc.ca/apps/dfhd/page_nhs_eng.aspx?id=1576

¹³ https://www.pc.gc.ca/apps/dfhd/page_nhs_eng.aspx?id=10913

¹⁴ https://www.pc.gc.ca/apps/dfhd/page_nhs_eng.aspx?id=1320

¹⁵ https://www.pc.gc.ca/apps/dfhd/page_nhs_eng.aspx?id=1868

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European colonization reflects an unnecessarily narrow cultural bias that is being increasingly challenged within and outside the academic community. This reevaluation confirms the need to re-examine the attributes we convey when we refer to the settlement process (p. 5).

I read the above as Parks Canada call for inclusivity in the use of settlement as a terminology, but one that ignores the consequences of settler colonialism. As Sherene Razack (2002) cautions, “the national mythologies of white settler societies are deeply spatialized stories. Although the spatial story that is told varies from one time to another, at each stage the story installs Europeans as entitled to the land” (p. 3). For instance, throughRout the two exhibits, there is only one mention of the Indigenous people and Upper Canada is referred to as a colony:

In 1791, John Graves Simcoe became the first Lieutenant-Governor of a new British colony to the west of Quebec. It was called Upper Canada, and it consisted of the southern part of today’s Ontario. When Simcoe arrived, the colony was *sparsely inhabited by Aboriginal peoples* and small pockets of British Empire Loyalists who had fled the new United States (with their slaves) [emphasis added]. (*OTRN-Crossing*).

The exhibit presents the material on Upper Canada as a British colony. Furthermore, the passage emphasized is the sparse amount of inhabitation both by Indigenous people and Loyalists.

Quotations and songs in *Escape from Oppression* use comparable terminology of uninhabited land. The song lyrics throughout the exhibit also orients the discourse of Canada as wilderness.

For example:

I’m on my way to Canada
That cold and dreary land;
The dire effects of slavery,

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I can no longer stand (*Escape from Oppression*).

Similarly, John Little recalls:

We had heard of Queen's Bush, where everyone could settle, poor people or people of color ... We walked straight to wilderness, where there were thousands of acres of forest... We felled trees with our own hands, without the help of oxen or horses (*Escape from Oppression*).

As mentioned earlier, the CMHR recontextualizes John Little's quotation by extracting various points from a much longer text in Drew's book. The original text says:

We heard of the Queen's Bush, where any people might go and settle, colored or poor... We marched right into the wilderness, where there were thousands of acres of woods which the chain had never run around since Adam... We logged the trunks with our own hands, without cattle, horses, or help.¹⁶ (Drew, 1886, p. 217).

In comparing the original text and the representation of the text in CMHR, it is interesting to note the removal of the Biblical reference of Adam, especially when considering how the bush is synonymous with the wilderness. Indigenous presence is absent in these exhibits. Amadahy and Lawrence (2009) point out that mostly narrative of early Black settlement did not address Indigenous peoples and the relationship between the two groups.

King (1892), in his autobiography, addresses the relationship between Indigenous and Black people with a discussion on the Aborigines Protection Society, which was established to challenge British imperialism and the exploitation of Indigenous people. King (1892) records the comparison of Henry Christy, one of the members, makes between Indigenous people and formerly enslaved Black people:

¹⁶ In the original quotation, John Little also says, "The settlers were to take as much land as they pleased, when it should be surveyed, at various prices, according to quality" (Drew, 1886, p. 217).

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[Christy] was surprised to see so much done in such a short time without assistance, some of the Indians¹⁷ who had been assisted he said made but little progress when compared with what the coloured people had done[.] He said Indians when placed on farms could not get along without aid they were still minus and had yet got the length of self support (p. 110)

Here we are provided with the assessment of Indigenous peoples and Black people through the eyes of the paternalistic white gaze. The lack of Indigenous presence in the exhibits means viewers are not able to contemplate what interrelationships existed between Black settlers (both in enslavement and freedom) and Indigenous peoples. Amadahy and Lawrence (2009, p. 120) reflect upon the intersection between colonization and enslavement in Canada:

It becomes clear that Black struggles for freedom have required (and continue to require) ongoing colonization of Indigenous land. While the Underground Railroad frequently ran through the crossborder reserves of Indigenous peoples, it brought Black peoples to Canada to claim land that was newly taken from Indigenous peoples. And yet it is clear that, because of slavery, in this context, there was little choice. Moreover, Black settlers, unlike White settlers, were generally forced to proceed without the support of established colonization programs.

OTRN and *Escape from Oppression* do not examine the conditions of enslavement in Canada such as the enslavement of both Indigenous peoples and Black people in New France and the implications of those erasures from Canadian historical consciousness (Rushforth, 2003). The

¹⁷ Indian(s) was the term used by King (1892) to describe Indigenous people in his recount. King also mentions Hurons who set camp in the woods near Buxton. Dr. Frederick Monod, the head of the Evangelical movement in France, expresses interest in meeting with the tribe. King (1892) describes the Huron camp as “the camp it was of the usual Indian fashion [,] a few poles set up in a circle at the top and covered outside with [b]ark... The Doctor had often heard of these Children of the Forest, the original proprietors of the country, But the Romance attached tot hem had disappeared when he saw them in their native land” (p. 111).

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absence of Indigenous presence in both exhibits demonstrates how Black history is (re)presented through a white-settler framework as the two exhibits fail to adequately examine the relationships Black communities and Black people may have had with other communities (Indigenous Jewish, Chinese, Japanese etc.)

Concluding Remarks

In the above section, I examined the differences and similarities between the two exhibits to understand how national stories of immigration and unity are told through the history of Black Canadians on display. Both exhibits tend to celebrate Canadian history of abolition and underplay practicalities of slavery in Canada. However, the two exhibits also differ in certain ways. *Escape from Oppression* centers and incorporates the voices of Black people throughout the exhibit. *OTRN* incorporates and reinforces discourse from other governmental agencies, such as the governmental system of commemorations. Both exhibits also present Black History by focusing on the White-Black connection and fail to examine Black history with other communities, such as the relationship between Indigenous and Black communities.

Melanie Adams (2017, p. 295) suggests museums incorporate basic tenets of CRT in the following four ways:

1. Create experiences that dismantle racism instead of putting it on display
2. Encourage diverse narratives that benefit people of color without having to appeal to the interest of whites
3. Move away from narratives as told through the eyes of the oppressor
4. Allow artists of color to question the dominant narrative and remain in the conversation.

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Afronautic Research Lab by Camille Turner is an example of an art installation that meets the above principles. The Jamaican-born, Toronto-based artist and academic's work exhibits Newfoundland's involvement in the 18th century slave trade. In the eighteenth century, Newfoundland built ships used to transport enslaved people from Africa to the United States and Caribbean. Turner revealed 19 ships involved through Harvard University's online Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database (CBC News, 2019; Mckenzie-Suttter, 2019, Turner, n.d.). Turner speaks of her work as a "counter archive, countering what is presented as truth" allows her to "map this place as a site of the black Atlantic. This place was made by people from the African Diaspora crossing the Atlantic" (CBC News, 2019, para. 5). Turner's work also attempts to put the enslaved people in the center through intent "to really honour the people who are made invisible by this rewriting of history, and writing them out" (CBC News, 2019, para. 3). For instance, heavy rock is laid in the middle of the floor in the Bonavista iterative of the installation. In the video, she walks across the Bonavista area holding a stone. The stone symbolizes the missing people from the landscape. Turner says, "I'm using this stone as a way to really think about the people who are missing in this story" (CBC News, 2019, para. 17). Turner's work speaks to how race becomes space in uncovering hidden truths and histories of familiar places. Turner observes, "everyone sits in this history, and we sit in it differently. To gain some sort of understanding of where we are in this history is really important, and how this history shaped this place" (Mckenzie-Sutter, 2019, para. 20).

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Summary

The thesis began by examining how the history of Underground Railroad continues to reverberate in the collective Canadian national identity by providing an example of how journalists conjured up the history of the Underground Railroad when discussing contemporary migration, especially in comparison to the United States. The following chapter considered the literature on various cases of museum commemorations of Black history (*Into the Heart of Africa* and *The Underground Railroad: Next Stop Freedom*) and geographical commemorations. The thesis considered how a critical race theory framework and critical discourse analysis could be used to examine occurrences of memorialization. The thesis identified two unexamined commemorations of Black History across two governmental agencies to understand how Canadian narrative is articulated. The thesis used critical discourse analysis to examine Parks Canada and the Department of Canadian Heritage's *ON THE ROAD NORTH - Black Canada* and *Journey to Freedom* and Canadian Museum for Human Rights' *Escape from Oppression*.

Altogether, the two commemorations generally presented a linear progressive version of history and uphold the myths of Canada as an asylum from American slavery. Both cases of commemorations center Canada as the benevolent, freedom granting nation in comparison to the United States. CMHR centers the voices of Black people using quotations when addressing various themes. These themes include escaping enslavement to Canada, aiding enslaved people in the United States, and settling and building in Canada. Parks Canada focuses on more specific content and social actors. Furthermore, Parks Canada examines the actions relating to ending slavery in Canada, Britain, and resisting/dismantling of slavery in the United States. CMHR

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examines the actions relating to resisting slavery in the United States. Neither commemorations examined Black Canadian's relationships with non-white communities.

Recommendations and Limitations

This research, however, is subject to several limitations. The first limitation concerns one of the two main data sources. The data analysis of the *On the Road North: Black Canada and Journey to Freedom* was based primarily on the virtual exhibition due to an inability to access the physical display. As a result, I experienced the information through the virtual exhibit in a different manner than I would have through a physical exhibit. I was unable to make comparisons across the two forms of the exhibit to appreciate the extent of difference about textual and visual display through the various mediums. A potential future project could be tracing how the information is displayed differently and digested depending upon the medium.

Second, the amount of textual data limited the extent to the type of engagement I could undertake with the data. For *OTRN*, I only examined the aspects relating to the Underground Railroad. A deeper understanding could be unearthed in future research that engages with the entirety of the exhibit. Similarly, looking back, this research would have benefitted from the combination of various approaches to critical discourse analysis. However, this study points to the potential present in combining CRT and CDA. Use of CDA allows for scholars to become aware of presence and silences in the commemorative texts. CRT asks who benefits by these silences and who gains by the stories told? As previously stated, whiteness (slave ownership, activists in the Underground Railroad, agents of racial prejudice) was present throughout both instances of commemoration examined in the study. I would argue that the narrative in the exhibits became a majoritarian story. Solorzano and Yosso (2002) define a majoritarian story as

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“one that privileges Whites, men, the middle and/or upper class, and heterosexuals by naming these social locations as natural or normative points of reference” (p. 28).

Finally, numerous commemorations of Blackness in Canada have been left unexamined. For example, in the *CMHR* a temporary exhibit called the “Rights of Passage: Canada at 150” examined Carrie Best’s reporting on the Viola Desmond case and provided an overview of Canada’s 150 years of human rights history. Similarly, *Under a Northern Star* offers seven collections at Library and Archives Canada which document various experiences of Canadians. So far, no one has studied these collections and exhibits. Hopefully, we will see more studies of such exhibits and collections which offer “a unique snapshot into how knowledge about human rights is produced through particular framings of citizenship, nationhood, history and memory” (Failler, 2018, p. 358).

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