

Unsettling the Great White North:

# Re/Viewing, Re/Visioning, and Re/Imagining Black Canada



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO  
FACULTY OF ARTS & SCIENCE

liberal arts &  
professional studies



**Thursday, February 2, 2023**

Register for Day One

University of Toronto – St. George Campus

Cadario Conference Centre , University College (183 UC)

**9:30 Symposium Welcome: Funké Aladejebi and Michele Johnson**

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**10:00 Keynote Address #1: Chantal Gibson, Exploring *Historical In(ter)ventions***

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**11:00 Session #1: Theorizing Black Canadian History and Studies**

- Barrington Walker, “Critical Histories of Blackness in Canada.”
- Daniel McNeil, “Wrestling with Multicultural Snake Oil: A Newcomer’s Introduction to Black Canada.”

**12:00 Lunch**

**1:00 Session #2: Enslaving Blackness**

- Karolyn Smardz Frost, “Planting Slavery in Nova Scotia’s Promised Land, 1759-1775.” (Virtual)
  - Natasha Henry, “Where, Oh Where, is Bet?: Locating Enslaved Black Women on the Ontario Landscape.”
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**2:00 Session #3: Constructing Blackness across Borders and Boundaries**

- Adam Arenson, “A Forgotten Generation: African Canadian History between Fugitive Slaves and World War I.”
  - Wendell Nii Laryea Adjetey, “Petitioning Power: Canadian Racial Consciousness Meets Alabama Injustice, 1958.”
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**3:00 Coffee Break**

**3:15 Session #4: Schooling Black Canadians**

- Deirdre McCorkindale, “Black Education: The Complexity of Segregation in Kent County’s Nineteenth Century Schools.” (Virtual)
- Carl E. James, “‘We have to strive for the best’: The high aspirations of Black Caribbean-Canadian youth of the 1970s and 80s.”

**Friday, February 3, 2023**

York University – Keele Campus

Archives of Ontario (134 Ian MacDonald Blvd)

Register for Day Two

**9:30 Opening: Michele A. Johnson & Funké Aladejebi**

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**10:00 Keynote Address #2:**

“Conversations on Blackness” with **Wayde Compton & Andrea Davis**

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**11:00 Session #5: Building Black Communities and Shaping Black Resilience**

- o David Este and Jenna Bailey, “The Shiloh Baptist Church: The Pillar of Strength in Edmonton’s African American Community, 1905-1940.”
- o Sean Mills, “Montreal’s Black Renaissance.”
- o Anna Ainsworth, “‘The part of you that’s Rwanda’: Creating a Rwandan Diaspora Community in the Greater Toronto Area in the Early Twenty-first Century.”

**12:00 Lunch**

**1:00 Session #6: Gender, Labour and Black Women’s Knowings**

- o Claudine Bonner, “‘Likely to become a public charge’: Examining Black Migration to Eastern Canada, 1900-1930.”
- o Michele A. Johnson, “‘. . . not likely to do well or to be an asset to this country’: Canadian Restrictions of Black Caribbean Female Domestic Workers, 1910-1955.”
- o Funké Aladejebi, “‘I Don’t Know if I Should Say This’: Black Women, Oral History, and Contesting the Great White North.”

**2:00 Coffee Break**

**2:15 Session #7: Locating Historical Black Presences in Cultural Artefacts**

- o Paul Watkins, “Hogan’s Alley Remixed: Wayde Compton’s *Performance Bond* and the New Black Can(aan)Lit.”
  - o Winfried Siemerling, “Jazz, Diaspora and the History and Writing of Black Anglophone Montreal.”
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**3:15 Roundtable with Graduate Students:**

“Navigating the Archives: Finding Sources on Black Canada”

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**4:15 Social Gathering/Closing Remarks**

## Acknowledgements

We would like to express our sincere thanks to all those who helped to make this symposium possible. *Re/Viewing, Re/Visioning, and Re/Imagining Black Canada* was largely funded by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Connection Grant. In addition, the Department of History, Canadian Studies Program, and the Faculty of Arts and Science at the University of Toronto, as well as the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies at York University provided generous financial and administrative support for the symposium. Contributions were also provided by Sean Mills serving as the Canada Research Chair in Canadian and Transnational History. The Archives of Ontario and University College provided us with spaces where we could convene and engage in lively conversations about issues concerning Black life in Canada. Many thanks to the Communications and Media Relations team at the University of Toronto, most especially Lia Quickert and Teresinha Costa who were pivotal in supporting outreach and creating promotional materials for the symposium.

This collaborative process has sought to reflect on and engage with ongoing debates around Black Canadian Studies and histories and was strengthened by the thoughtful and critical engagement of scholars and contributors to *Unsettling the Great White North: Black Canadian History*. We thank the University of Toronto Press, and all participants and contributors for joining us on this intellectual and political journey. We also extend gratitude to our keynote speakers, Wayde Compton, Andrea Davis and Chantal Gibson for their generous reflections, which set the stage for the symposium. We also extend our thanks to Chantal Gibson whose artistic creativity and image *Redacted Text*, 2019 graces the cover of this symposium program and the edited collection.

*Re/Viewing, Re/Visioning, and Re/Imagining Black Canada* has sought to understand the ways in which scholars of Black Canada have spearheaded the development of the historiography, shaped the field, expanded its conceptual framings, and responded to some of the limitations of earlier scholarship. We hope this symposium has created space to tell more expansive and nuanced stories of Black Canadian experiences.

**Michele A. Johnson and Funké Aladejebi**