

blacks contributed to by courageously challenging housing's color line (127, 224)? Since Wiese features numerous black middle-class individuals who question what they have in common with black wage earners, the reader might wonder if there is a basis for solidarity and political action (264-269). In explaining that "community service" and "profit-seeking" were not necessarily contradictory to black real estate brokers securing more housing for black clients, Wiese points to "the malleability of civil rights rhetoric for private gain" (133). I would extend his insight beyond "civil rights" to suggest that the pliability of race was key to explaining the political agenda of postwar black real estate, government and civic elites. Wiese interprets their politics as contributing to a "tradition of spatial nationalism" that incorporated "self-help" and "black power" and culminates in the black elite politics typified in Prince George's county (277). I would argue instead that by emphasizing the "malleability" of racial interests, this "territorial nationalism" also represents a class politics that flowered in Prince George's county from the seed planted by black policy elites fifty years ago.

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Harvey Amani Whitfield, *Blacks on the Border: The Black Refugees in British North America, 1815-1860* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006).

*Blacks on the Border* does double duty as important scholarship on the growing literature on the Black transatlantic experience, all the while also breaking out of the well-worn mold of Canada-US history focused narrowly on business relations between the two countries. The author's stated goal is to bring to life the transnational connections between blacks in the Mid-Atlantic's Chesapeake and the Lowcountry districts with those in Nova Scotia, both regions home to thriving slave economies during the Eighteenth century. In fact, Whitfield reminds us that for a time following the American Revolutionary War, Nova Scotia developed into a 'colonial slave society', as American expatriates, turned Loyalists, exported with them firmly held beliefs about the value of black life and the questionable benefits of freedom for enslaved Africans. Whitfield posits that for "American exiles, the institution of slavery became an important link to their former home as they expanded the institution in Nova Scotia. Thus slavery, as much as freedom, influenced Loyalist culture and society" (22). In truth, the Crown often rewarded white Loyalists with persuasive financial incentives when heading to the Canadian Maritimes, granting them larger land lots when they immigrated with their chattel. Whitfield claims that despite the great distance between Halifax and Baltimore, for example, as a result of slavery, war, and the shuttle migration of African Americans, there developed a rich and often times complicated exchange between black com-

munities along the Atlantic axis, what historian Ira Berlin has so adroitly called the Atlantic littoral. In other words, Whitfield reminds readers that for much of the Nineteenth century—especially during critical wars between Britons and Americans—black communities in New England and the Canadian Maritimes remained intimately connected with political developments south of the Mason-Dixon line, precisely because so many people of African descent from New York to Ile Royal, present-day Cape Breton, still had powerful kinship relations in the South, whether actual or imagined.

Whitfield argues that during the Nineteenth century, the Canada-US border, so often presumed as a clear demarcation between slavery and freedom, British abolitionist sensibility and American slaveholders' steadfastness, was in fact seen as more porous by African Americans intent on making their way into Nova Scotia. He makes a compelling case for how borders matter and contends that Refugees played an important role in shaping the meaning and perceptions of borders in the New England borderlands. According to Whitfield, Boston, Providence, and New Haven communities mirrored Nova Scotian ones with the chief distinction that as part of British North America, Halifax became a linchpin in the transatlantic experience.

*Blacks on the Border's* close and nuanced examination of the different types of black migrants who made their way north, as freedpersons or bondsmen, is the book's real strength. Rather than lump together all blacks in Nineteenth century Nova Scotia, Whitfield demonstrates how various push and pull factors landed African Americans and West Indians in the Maritimes. His point is that in order to fully appreciate the later makeup of black Nova Scotian communities, readers must first understand who these early migrants were and how their political experiences—as enslaved Americans or West Indians caught up in colonial rule—provides insight into how they articulated their political and social concerns once in British North America. Chapter two is dedicated to explaining the powerful role that life in the Chesapeake and Lowcountry played in establishing patterns of subsistence for African Americans who eventually made their way to Halifax after the War of 1812. For those migrants, whom Whitfield calls the Refugees, there remained very real connections between these Mid-Atlantic and Maritime local economies that then explain the status and perceptions of blacks once in Canada. In other words, Whitfield tells us that throughout the Nineteenth century, tolerance for African Americans in Nova Scotia ebbed and flowed with the availability of waged work and the warring moods between Britons and Americans.

And when abolitionist feeling waned, blacks in Nova Scotia registered that shift. Whitfield's account of the hardships endured by black settlers, including homelessness, famine, joblessness, and many health complications, is gripping. White settlers concluded that black émigrés who abandoned their experiment with Nova Scotia farming after weathering consecutive seasons of failed crops proved their inability to handle the full rewards of citizenship. Thus, in an exercise of tor-

tured logic, white settlers read the decision made by Refugees to seek alternatives in African utopian settlements like Sierra Leone as proof in the failure of freedom and citizenship for former slaves unable to cajole crops from lands known to be barren as early as the Eighteenth century. Similarly, black Nova Scotians who gave up farming for city life were seen as corroborating the racialised myth that blacks could not shoulder the responsibility of land ownership, ignoring the fact that lands worked by generations of black Nova Scotians had often been leased, with land titles withheld for fear of sparking strife with white American expatriates dissatisfied with rebellion, if not slavery itself.

To be sure, *Blacks on the Border*, presents some challenges that have more to do with its intended audience than its author's objectives. Canadians may be more familiar with the historiography and topography that he describes in detail; for some Americans, contemplating the intersections between the Maritimes and the Mid-Atlantic may be refreshing food for thought. In either case, *Blacks on the Border* is an engaging and informative text ideal for undergraduates, especially within the context of a Black Atlantic/Black diaspora course. Though ambitious in scope, at times Whitfield sacrifices some depth of analysis, producing a hurried handling, as in the case of his explanation of Jamaican Maroon arrival in Halifax, and in particular his emphasis on polygamy (22). Likewise, when discussing Preston Refugees' intent on securing land titles, Whitfield brings up the importance of land ownership for Freedmen during Reconstruction in the United States. He misses the opportunity, however, to make clear that land ownership remained a central driving force of Reconstruction ideology precisely because it served as a correction to landlessness during slavery and reinforced belonging for four million emancipated African Americans who would not be moved. At its core, land ownership, even before the debate about what to do with the land itself, was held up by Nineteenth century African Americans as an unimpeachable citizenship right. We see that same anchor in the world that Whitfield creates for us in the Maritimes: blacks in Nova Scotia belonged because they owned and worked the land beneath their feet. So much of the social and political work that they then did was fuelled by a desperate need to affirm their sense of place. The social and political organizations handily studied in *Blacks on the Border's* last chapter shed light on the diversity of opinions present among black Nova Scotians, mirroring their varied backgrounds as newcomers/old timers; freed persons/Freedom Seekers; urbanites/rural folk. Whitfield works against the tempting narrative pull of describing black urban life as monolithic in order to establish the power and scope of its presence. Instead, he uses canonical institutions like churches and political organizations to give shape and contour to the diversity of black life in Nineteenth century Nova Scotia.

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