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Multiculturality Before Multiculturalism: Troubling Black Identity Beyond the Last Stop on the Underground Railroad

Multiculturality Before Multiculturalism: Troubling Black Identity Beyond the Last Stop on the Underground Railroad. In this essay I locate myself as a non-historian working seriously and playfully with history on the margins of the North American project, the Promised Land: The Freedom Experience of Blacks in the Chatham and Dawn Settlements. Utilizing marginal data I trouble coherence and meaning, and the taken-for-granted politics (or race and race relations, nation and identity, history, revisionist history and historicity) of the project. More specifically I am interested in how the Promised Land Project might give the lie to the curiously taken-for granted presentist and futuristic conceptions of notions such as multiraciality and multiculturalism in national discourse. I am also interested in troubling the premises and building blocks of these concepts and indeed of the Promised Land Project itself, namely supposedly stable categories such as blackness and whiteness, the nation state, and community. Finally, rather than simply assuming that this important project needs to be undertaken to tell a scandalously missing story of Black Canadian (and American) history, I am interested in troubling the politics and purpose of history and historiography in and of the project (multiplying motives for undertaking the project, uses to which it could be put and approaches to this exercise in revisionist history).