Performing Diversity: Black Bodies in Atlantic Canadian Post-Secondary Institutions.

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Abstract.

Performing Diversity: Black Bodies in Atlantic Canadian Post-Secondary Institutions

by Itai Ashley Kuwodza.

This thesis argues that the Black student experience in Atlantic Canada is explicitly limited by racist practices. Kuwodza further argues that Atlantic Canadian post-secondary institutions are built on a legacy of systemic racism which sanctions the conscious performance of race. The research delves into the multifaceted issue of the exploitation of Black bodies within Atlantic Canadian higher education through the student-athlete lens. The thesis traces the historical roots of exploitation, and analyzes how colonial legacies, racial biases, and economic disparities have contributed to the marginalization of Black individuals in Atlantic Canadian education and sport. Utilizing an interdisciplinary approach, Kuwodza draws on sports sociology, racial and literary theory, and cultural studies, to investigate how exploitative practices manifest at various levels of the Black post-secondary student experience.

Keywords: *necessitated inclusion, hyper recruitment, surrogate, performativity, race-based discrimination, cultural competence, tool, relative equality.*

Submitted: February 2024.

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"Why write this book? No one has asked me for it. Especially those to whom it is directed .... Only a few of those who read this book will understand the problems that were encountered in its composition" (Frantz Fanon, 1967, p. 7-8).

In the footsteps of Issa Rae, a woman whose confidence and excellence I adore, I agree that Black women "tend to dim [their] light and we're kind of conditioned socially to be humble," so, I, firstly, would like to acknowledge me: "I did this […] and I deserve it" (Rae, 2019). Jokes aside, I would also like to acknowledge the people who contributed to this thesis' production, who deserve much more than an acknowledgement.

I would like to thank Professor Zellars and Professor Fields for planting the seed that has become this labor of work. I would like to thank my mum (Idah), for every word she read and re-read. I am grateful for every kind word I have received to keep going from my friends and fellow Black student–athletes, Black international students, and Black students who, before I knew it, would sit and vent with me about a system that often left us drained, tired, disappointed, and confused. This thesis is borne out of those conversations.

Lastly, I would like to thank my supervisor Alex MacLeod who took the mess of thoughts, feelings, experiences, and pain and refined them into this document, a document whose impact he saw and believed in before I had any comprehension of what it was, I was writing. Thank you for always encouraging me to go deeper and push a little harder. I can't say how grateful I am and always will be. My next right step was having you as a supervisor. There are honestly not enough words in my vocabulary to convey and express my deepest gratitude.

Dedication.

I dedicate this thesis to my dearest and most beloved sister, Tafadzwa. The first person to ever dedicate anything to me. Thank you for running so that I could fly. Thank you for paving an intellectual path I am more than honored to follow.

Introduction.

Performing Diversity: Black Bodies in Atlantic Canadian Post-Secondary Institutions.

“The decolonization of research methodologies has been a leading research priority for over two decades […] and is widely recognized as being emancipatory and inciting positive social change […]. It is time that researchers from all disciplines start doing research in different ways” (Jacqueline Quinless, 2022, p. 213).

There is an explicit gap in the higher educational experiences of white students and Black[1] and racialized students on Atlantic Canadian campuses. This gap exists because, due to systemic and institutionally embedded prejudices, the concept of race shapes our entire experience of higher education. Though it often goes unacknowledged in a dominantly white culture, racism is so pervasive that it is akin to a virus that has, for centuries, infected every aspect of Atlantic Canadian social existence. Black and racialized bodies *inherit* systemic limits embedded within Atlantic Canadian Universities due to the racist beliefs and practices of the white supremacist culture that founded many of these institutions. Therefore, racism is an unneglectable ingredient in the negative experiences of Black and racialized students, student-athletes, international students, and staff or faculty. Institutional racism has long produced an environment where Black and racialized bodies experience race-vigilant intergenerational limits and trauma.

[1] This decision is defended by the excellent work by Mike Laws in *Why we Capitalize ‘Black’ (And Not ‘white’).* See Notes.

This thesis takes a specific interest in Black and racialized student-athletes. When they are seen as athletes, Black bodies are often desired commodities of universities. At the same time, however, in the classroom, they are also treated as second-class students. Therefore, it is possible to infer that post-secondary institutions that interact with Black varsity-athletes in this way gain to a greater extent from the enrolment and participation of this student group than the students do. Since these institutions are, at least outwardly, committed to the business of education for the entire student population, an obvious tension develops. In this environment, my thesis asks the following questions:

1. Do Black students and Black varsity student-athletes experience anti-Black racism within the post-secondary environment?
2. Do Black students and Black varsity student-athletes in higher education participate in and exist in a space that has a racist inheritance?
3. Are Atlantic Canadian post-secondary institutions conscious of the region's racist legacy?
    a. And do they use that knowledge to maintain an advantage in the on-going negotiations of inclusion with Black and racialized bodies seeking equitable institutional practices?
4. Do Atlantic Canadian post-secondary institutions' initiatives of diversity and inclusion seek to balance racial imbalances?
    a. Or do they exist so that white administrators and white people can applaud themselves for their self-perceived progressive social positions?

Contextualizing the Researcher.

As a Black international former student-athlete at Saint Mary's University (SMU) and the University of King's College (UKC), I believe I am well-qualified to contribute to the growing study of Black bodies on Atlantic Canadian campuses.

Though I did not realize it at the time, the intellectual questions at the heart of this research were planted shortly after I graduated from High School in Harare, Zimbabwe and subsequently moved to Atlantic Canada. I began my post-secondary education at the University of King's College and Dalhousie University (DAL). I arrived in North America brimming with excitement as I had achieved my lifelong dream of becoming a varsity student-athlete. Unfortunately, I understood far too late that I was not, and never would be ***just*** a student-athlete in the Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association (CCAA), the Atlantic Collegiate Athletic Association (ACAA), the Atlantic University Sport (AUS) organization or the University Sports (U SPORTS) organization. Instead, I was, and always would be, a Black person first, a Black athlete second, a Black student third, a Black international student fourth, and so on and so on. This meant that my status as a student would always be ***accompanied*** by a very significant adjective that would attempt to explain my presence on an Atlantic Canadian campus.

At UKC, I could count the number of Black students on my hands. (This total only includes Black students who exclusively attended King's classes or lived on the King's quad. Note, there was a larger Black student-athlete population comprised of Dalhousie students who were King's College student-athletes only). I was a Black international student-athlete at UKC who was accepted by King's and would have graduated from there had I stayed. As one member of this very small community, I was often singled out, and selected to be photographed and featured in several university promotional pieces. I was also a consistent subject of interest for the school's magazine, *The Watch*. During this period, I honestly felt

wanted and significant, as I was beguiled by the glitz and glamour of being a ***face of the university***. However, in hindsight, my reflection of that time has turned sour. It is not how I was presented that stays with me today; it is the fact that my constantly promoted body implied that King's was more racially diverse and inclusive than it actually was.

My transfer from UKC came about because I required more financial assistance to pursue my studies. I knew this going into my second year and I knew that an excellent soccer season was my key to getting a better financial offer. So, in 2017, I transferred to SMU, where I observed that there were more Black and racialized students, international students, and student-athletes. This larger Black community was in part due to the overall size difference between the two institutions, as well as the broader academic and varsity offerings of SMU in comparison to the smaller scope of UKC. However, beyond these considerations, by my experience, Saint Mary's was also visibly much more racially diverse than King's College. Therefore, in this larger institution, I felt certain that I would no longer be uncomfortably used as a diversity champion. In fact, at SMU I found I could go unnoticed except in dominantly white spaces like a classroom or varsity hockey games. At SMU, certainly, I was not a cherished singular commodity, but in this environment, I became something else, something bigger, something maybe worse.

At the time, fairly or unfairly, SMU was known as a place where Black ***student-athletes*** consciously or unconsciously reversed the priority of the university experience to see themselves as ***athlete-students***. Despite its best efforts, SMU was rarely recognized as an institution that encouraged the education of its Black students with the same fervor they encouraged Black student-athletes. This might be reflected by the institution's colloquial and local nickname 'Robie Street High School[2],' which one might find referenced on Dal meme

[2] Supported by a Reddit thread written 13 years ago. See Notes.

accounts and those kinds of rival discussions. It is important to state that this nickname was a direct comment on the ***believed*** academic standards maintained at SMU, not the actual value of the education itself.

For those individuals who wanted to be athlete-students, SMU appeared to have resources structured in a way that supported such ambitions. At SMU, an athlete could invest in their craft in a way that one could not at UKC. Athletes at Saint Mary's had free reign of the athletic facilities and it certainly felt like all the necessary resources of the institution were being ***invested in us***. At the time, it did not matter to me, or to many others, that SMU did not expend as much effort in making sure we could access Professors and Tutors in the same way we could Coaches, Athletic Therapists, Physiotherapists, Sport Doctors, and Surgeons. I believe that the university did not feel like it had to devote this type of effort because, at some level, it felt like we, the athletes, were fulfilling a socially conditioned desire. Because Black bodies in sport are often socially, economically, and scientifically revered, the university could appear to be serving the needs of Black student-athletes by rewarding our own desires to achieve success in what might be considered a socially ***rigged*** competition. This is obviously a complex intellectual exchange that shortchanges Black bodies and often interprets them only as commodities, but as we will see, the relative value of Black bodies and of the Black presence in Atlantic Canadian Universities, is a recurring concern in this thesis. My research is interested in tracing how Black Bodies have historically fit within such educational settings and how they can best negotiate with these cultural forces in the present.

Literature Review.

Affecting real change in Atlantic Canadian post-secondary education for racially marginalized students begins with a thorough decolonization of thought, concepts, and

systems. Therefore, the most important part of this research requires me to make these systems apparent to the reader and to show the roots of the problem and how the current situation developed. The argument is divided into three chapters, followed by a conclusion.

In Chapter One, we examine the historical roots of racism and white supremacy in Atlantic Canada. The examination begins by going back to the very beginning with the invention of race as a concept and a category of social difference. Together, we then track how racist assumptions came to be embedded in British North America and Atlantic Canada. I follow the evolution of theories on human difference spanning as far back as fifth century BCE. Key terms and topics discussed in this chapter include ***dichotomous classifications***, slavery, and the history of sport.

Dichotomous classification conceptualizes a binary worldview in the fabric of society that stipulates that there are people of superior origin, and those of an inferior origin. Furthermore, it also stipulates that one's superiority or inferiority is decided by race. Grounded in the expansive works of scholars like John Lovchik, Denise McCoskey in *Race. Antiquity and its Legacy*, and Loring Brace in *'RACE' is a Four-Letter Word. The Genesis of the Concept,* I map the origins of racially assigned superiority and inferiority. These scholars cement my understanding of the above-mentioned core concept. I especially rely on Hannaford's *Race: The History of an Idea in the West,* and Alan Goodman, Yolanda Moses, and Joseph Jones *Race: Are we so Different?* to show that race was never a ***natural marker*** of difference.

Further on, I engage with Afua Cooper's *The Enslavement of Africans in Canada,* and with other historians to show how assigning superiority and inferiority by race led to colonization and slavery in North America. The voices of Ira Berlin in *Many Thousands Gone: The first two Centuries of Slavery in North America*, and Harvey Armani Whitfield's expansive works including *Blacks on the Border* and *North to Bondage: Loyalist Slavery in*

the Maritimes describe the actual lived experiences of Black bodies stolen from their original cultural context. All the scholars recount the experiences of these people being reassigned as inferior within the racist construction of American, Canadian, and particularly Atlantic Canadian slavery.

Whitfield and Cooper bring Atlantic Canadian Black voices to the forefront and root this work firmly in the Atlantic Canadian context. Once Black Loyalists arrive and settle in the British Atlantic region, my thesis adds the voices of Jerry Bannister, Liam Riordan, Robin Winks, and James W. St. G., to expand the discussion. I especially utilise Walker's *Discrimination in Canada: The Black Experience*, and *The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone 1783-1870* to illustrate the effects of white ideals expressed through the British Atlantic Canadian government and white loyalists. By highlighting the racialized hardships that Black Loyalists experienced while settling, living, working, and gaining equitable access to public institutions in the Atlantic Canadian region, I identify a trend of conscious systemic and individual exclusion and segregation.

The primary cultural fields that my analysis focuses on are education and sport. Therefore, understanding the characteristics of the institution of sport and its culture in Atlantic Canada are imperative to establishing the argument. I rely on many Canadian sport historians to outline the development of sporting culture in the region. I start with a brief outline of the evolution of sport in Atlantic Canada with sport historian Morris Mott's book *Sports in Canada. Historical Readings.* Later, the works of sport historians like Colin Howell, Don Morrow, Kevin Wamsley, and Tony Collins establish our understanding of the industrial growth of organized Atlantic Canadian sport. I utilize Howell's *Blood, Sweat, and Cheers: Sport and the Making of Modern Canada* to gain an awareness of the transitions of Canadian sport from informal to formal, and then amateur to professional. Setting up the commodification of Black bodies in this chapter, I contextualize the value of Black bodies in

sport and examine the way this historical social environment was predatory towards Black bodies as professional and amateur athletes.

Anthropologist Robert Sands in *Anthropology, Sport, and Culture* redefines sport within social parameters that extend far beyond being ***just*** a physical activity. He argues that we must recognize the complex ways in which sport intersects with the social, economic, gender, and racial aspects of our shared lives. This is important because a limited perception of sport stunts our comprehension of sport as an expression of physical activity. This leads many to regard the dominance of Black athletes as a biological phenomenon only and not as a social, political, or cultural outcome. Therefore, this first chapter ends with an examination of the Kirk Johnson affair, and an analysis of his relationship with sport and Blackness in Atlantic Canada. Utilizing this case study allows me to contextualize the impact of racism in this region on contemporary athletic Black bodies.

In Chapter Two we study how the racial concepts discussed in Chapter One are folded into institutions of education and sport in Atlantic Canada and then inherited by contemporary Black bodies. We analyze the present realities of Black student athletes and provide recommendations for improving their experience on and off the field. I posit that racialized experiences in Atlantic Canadian higher education are mired by systemic racism, institutional racism, and individual racism.

In discussing Atlantic Canadian education, I ground my work in Selina Pratt's and Stephanie Slaunwhite's theses and other mixed media sources from Sylvia Hamilton to adequately reflect the struggles Blacks faced in trying to find their place within the education system of the region. To begin, I follow the evolution of Black access to education through Pratt's *Black Education in Nova Scotia.* I then dive into the complex issue of segregated schools with Doris Evan's and Gertrude Tynes' *Telling the Truth. Reflection: Segregated Schools in Nova Scotia.* Slaunwhite's thesis *The Intricacies of Integration: The Case of*

Graham Creighton High School follows through as she critiques the gap between stated intentions and lived realities in the movement towards integrated education. I also use Hamilton's "Little Black Schoolhouse" to show the positive and negative outcomes of integrated education. Drawing focus again on the Atlantic Canada context allows me to discuss two very important concepts that are central to the core argument of the thesis: ***racist inheritance*** and ***selective provisioning***.

When we discuss racist inheritance, we are trying to draw attention to the multigenerational longevity of racist ideals, practices, systems, and institutions. Pratt, Whitfield, and Slaunwhite all describe historical events that led to Black people in this region being first excluded, then reluctantly invited into broader society, and its major cultural institutions only when it was necessary and beneficial to white culture for them to be included. I call this process ***necessitated inclusion*** and I define it as the begrudging inclusion of Blacks into predominantly white spaces because there is some value that can be gained from it. In the current climate, this term might be used to convey that Black students are often found on Atlantic Canadian campuses in spaces where their presence is necessarily helpful to the institution. Such necessitated inclusion can be expressed in several ways. As earlier stated, Black student-athletes, are often desired because their athletic performance strengthens the reputation of the university and, in some cases, this reputational strength might even be directly profitable. This is a complex process, but it should be obvious to almost any observer that Black bodies in Atlantic Canada, as students, student-athletes, and international students experience and negotiate campus spaces differently than their white counterparts.

At the close of this chapter, we focus a little more closely on the experience of the student-athlete. I start by contextualizing North American sport organisations and the often-difficult relationships they have maintained with higher education. Through the exceptional

work of Humphrey Nartey's dissertation *Experiences of Black Canadian Male Student Athletes* and other notable scholars and writers, I introduce my readers to the complex ecosystem of varsity sport. Nartey is a formidable scholar in this discourse as I also refer to his piece *The Performativity of Race for Black Canadian Male Student-Athletes* which only strengthens my work, my arguments, and analysis. Further on, I again briefly return to the example of Kirk Johnson which establishes and contextualises the value of Black athletes within local, national, and international sporting culture. I refer to and consult several scholars and writers here as I investigate the relationship between sport and Blackness. There are excellent voices utilized in this section who help me demonstrate that Black bodies in Atlantic Canadian post-secondary education are often treated transactionally as they ***pay*** for their schooling with their athletic endeavours.

The crux of this chapter is to discuss Atlantic Canadian sport and to look at the ways it is perpetuating some of the same racist and colonial policies that have led many to characterize the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) of America as a modern-day slave plantation. I utilize a poignant article by Steven Thrasher called Super slaves. breeding and controlling the modern Black American Male through Sports, to illustrate the relationship between varsity sport and slave plantations. Black bodies in North America have been perceived as tools for centuries. In sport, integration was "a godsend for black athletes" but "was a disaster for black owners … [and for every other] black person involved in sports" (Thrasher, 2016, p. 172). This example shows selective provisioning and relative equality because the most profitable Black bodies were provided for when the rest were discarded.

In a more direct application to the thesis, the NCAA and some American focused literature make a brief comparative cameo, because though the NCAA experience is outside the scope of this thesis, it is well within the scope of our understanding of North American sport culture and the racial legacies that shape and sustain it. Mickey Melendez in Black

Football players on a predominantly white college campus: Psychosocial and emotional realities of the Black college athlete experience, describes sentiments expressed by NCAA players who felt like they did not belong on campus or the city. There are more sentiments described that I know I have felt, and so too have my fellow Canadian based athletes. Our organizations, programs, schools, and countries may be different, but it is important to note that as Black student-athletes in North America, we all, at some point, on a predominantly white campus, experience the "psychosocial and emotional realities of the Black college experience" (Melendez, 2008, p. 423).

To conclude this chapter, we discuss Whitfield's term ***selective provisioning*** which describes the trend where historically Black people were advanced with the condition that it would benefit white people as much, or more than it did Black people. Pratt's work is valuable here again, as she shows that the agenda that barred Blacks from accessing formal education was the same agenda that led to them being offered access to some form of education. By this I mean that in both situations (slavery and integration), whites needed Blacks to be more servile and useful, so access was granted in accordance to white needs. White people required free Blacks to be somewhat educated so that they could be better tools. This followed the same rationale that justified barring slaves from acquiring any education as that too made them more servile tools. Even today, education is considered a fundamental key in unlocking emancipation and liberation for many oppressed people. As we have seen, though Black bodies were considered necessary for these societies to flourish, that did not gain them equality. In fact, it did not even mean social support of integration either. This is why even with considerable efforts made to address systemic and institutional racism, we can still observe selective provisioning, necessitated inclusion, and relative equality in an integrated society and its institutions.

In Chapter Three, we study how contemporary Atlantic Canadian policies of inclusion in education and sport only ***appear*** to address the racism embedded in these institutions. As we will see, such ***empty performances*** of diversity are based on very powerful theories of ***racial surrogacy*** and necessitated inclusion. And, once again, these actions usually end up serving white institutional interests over the primary needs of Black student-athletes. In their performances of diversity, post-secondary institutions try to appear as moral agents that are open, accessible, and equally beneficial to all. However, when we examine these operations more closely, and study them through a lens informed by the historical construction of the institutions, we can almost always discover a pre-existing historical privilege which tips access and benefits heavily in favour of white students, staff, faculty, and communities.

In agreement with scholars like Basil Mortley in *Black Students' Perception of the Integrated School Environment. How do the Students Feel? A study of Black Students in Halifax, Nova Scotia,* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in *Americanah,* I argue that contemporary performances of racial inclusion do not actually redress the historical context of Black bodies in higher education. Instead of balancing racial inequalities, this practice leads to the perpetuation of historical injustices in the present. Performance is not the same as practice. And performances of diversity, based on a shared shame of racist history, cannot take the place of the effective implementations of racially inclusive practices and policies embedded in culturally attentive initiatives and programs.

Utilizing articles by David Crockett in Marketing Blackness. How advertisers use race to sell products, and Ted Thornhill, Joshua Rabinowitz, Jim Sidanius' et al. in "Why do White Americans Oppose Race-Targeted Policies? Clarifying the Impact of Symbolic Racism," I examine the ulterior motives that can propel the recruitment of Black and racialized students. The key terms and concepts discussed in this chapter are ***racial surrogacy***, and ***relative equality***.

Toni Morrison’s landmark text, *Playing in the Dark,* describes racial surrogacy as the use of racialized bodies to perform in specific ways or in select situations because white people cannot. The term comes from Morrison’s critique of Willa Cather’s *Sapphira and the Slave Girl,* a story in which Nancy, the slave girl is ‘a cipher, a perfect victim’ of racial surrogacy because she can be highjacked and used for white purposes. By using a disabled white woman and a slave girl, Morrison argues that Cather lures the reader into accepting that a slave girl’s body becoming a surrogate is justifiably necessary for the survival of her master. Morrison sees Black bodies the way Sapphira sees Nancy, as necessary surrogates operating in contemporary American culture and institutions. In my work, I simply extend this theory to the Atlantic Canadian context to demonstrate how Black bodies on Atlantic Canadian campuses are employed as agents of diversity and inclusion, and eventually become the literal embodiments of institutional inclusion. This performance of diversity can only be carried out by Black bodies for white institutions, and this is why, when diversity quotas are met, Black bodies can once again be discarded or kept at bay.

At the close of this chapter, I argue that the hyper racial integration in Atlantic Canadian post-secondary institutions is a conscious performance that serves to strategically separate contemporary practice from the real material outcomes of historical injustices. Therefore, inclusive and diverse practices tend to benefit the institution more than Black students. As we have seen, historical injustices influence the present by inducing contemporary responses that are consciously performative, rather than practical, consciously symbolic, rather than actual, and consciously inactive, rather than active. Jeremy Wood’s “Is Symbolic Racism, Racism?” is an important text here because he examines the way Black bodies are used as socially bankable symbols of inclusion and diversity. Woods argues that intentionally using Blackness as a symbol is an immensely powerful form of racism that is widely practiced in liberal spaces including in higher education. Writers like Morrison and

Chinua Achebe echo this as their celebrated work has consistently shown us that Blackness is valuable to whiteness only as a subdued or second-class people. From all these researchers, theorists, and scholars, and from my own experience, I have come to realize that Black bodies on Atlantic Canadian Campuses, are still doing this kind of symbolic work, and still fulfilling these designated ideas.

Research Methods.

By referencing so many different texts from so many different scholarly and non-scholarly primary and secondary sources, and by blending in my own autoethnographic experience this thesis is a truly interdisciplinary, and hopefully, a thoroughly decolonized, piece of work. Jacqueline Quinless in her book, *Decolonizing Data. Unsettling Conversations About Social Research Methods* notes that a broad perspective, bringing in as many voices and modes as possible, is essential to this kind of project because it "exemplifies what research should do: enable people to sit together and talk meaningfully" (Quinless, 2022, p.101).

My methodological approach is heavily influenced by Quinless's example, and her work is integral to my research methodology because she draws "on both Western and Indigenous methodologies" to conduct research that looks "at the ways that […] contribute to the colonization of" marginalized research subjects (Quinless, 2022, p. 3). Her writing offers researchers at every level a blueprint to produce "careful and respectful reflection on how to 'unsettle conversations' about applied social research initiatives for our most vulnerable groups" (Quinless, 2022, p. 3).

As we have seen, this text consults primary and secondary sources from a wide array of areas. In line with Quinless, the types of sources I utilize assure the presence of Black contributions which have long been overlooked in the undertaking of research and the

production of scholarship. Quinless's work is significant because the "central argument of [her] book is that state-centric colonial structures exert a form of structural violence on […] people because they exercise colonial power over them by legitimizing western ways of thinking" (2022, p. 22). Therefore, it is imperative that in examining state-centric institutions with colonial structures, we do not fall into the trap of doing so with a Western lens. To decolonize research as a whole, Quinless's alternative model avoids utilizing "research practices, particularly within the social sciences, [that] contribute to the colonization of research practices and data" (Quinless, 2022, p. 22). In this thesis, I hope that my decolonization efforts are expressed first in the content of my research itself, and in my explicit critique of institutional practices and policies in Atlantic Canada. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, I hope that this work can act as a catalyst that will lead to significant meaningful change.

Beyond its commitment to decolonization, the study is also deeply autoethnographic. In many ways, this research is my story, and I think my experience does add value to my scholarly argument. In Sherrie Steiner's "How Using Autoethnography Improved my Teaching," she states that,

> autoethnographers retroactively and selectively write about past experiences as a way to self-identify the important moments that significantly impacted the trajectory of events being described. This type of analysis lends insight into how intense situations are negotiated along with lingering feelings, images, and recollections. A benefit of using the autoethnographic method is that it introduces unique ways of thinking and feeling that helps make sense of oneself and his/her interactions with others, particularly in the presence of power relations. Autoethnography expands the lens of study to "accommodate subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher's influence on the research, rather than hiding from these matters or assuming they don't exist"

(Ellis, et al., 2011:13). Granger (2011) emphasizes how autoethnography allows us to give voice even to our complex *silences,* rather than limit interpretation to "just words," so that discourse can explore the multilevel, many-angled relationships that are shaped by power, legitimacy, and authority, including how repression reduces wishes to silence (2018, para. 2).

The purpose of this document is to effect meaningful change. Steiner's understanding of the value of auto-ethnography is powerful. It also articulates what my story is supposed to be doing in this document. My story gives voice to the silences of Black bodies who have felt all of what I have felt. I am working as a conduit to connect their pain and make it visible but also connecting a marginalized experience to the majority reader. Connecting to my readers and ensuring that my work is ***more relatable*** to readers is essential to what I am trying to achieve with this work. Merissa Hamilton, in Autoethnography research – advantages, disadvantages, and limitations, shows us that there is value in being able to "[subscribe] analysis to a personal narrative," personal observations, and personal interpretations (2021, para. 9). She argues that "personal narratives are much more relatable and offer readers the opportunity to empathize and connect with both the researcher and the subject on a more personal level. Not only are they being presented with a topic they may not ordinarily have explored, but it also becomes more human and less disconnected" (Hamilton, 2021, para. 10).

For systemic racism to be dismantled and for society to effectively decolonize itself, ***everyone*** must become more effective allies of marginalized groups. In order to do this, they need to engage with anti-racist literature and scholarship designed to do that. Therefore, in my writing, I try to be informative, accessible, and honest in ways that encourage my readers to engage in the kind of self and social reflection that is required from all individuals.

Addressing such broad readers means that my tone may shift a little as we move through the thesis. In some key moments, I imagine I am speaking to one specific group of

people, Black student-athletes like me, or international students, or interdisciplinary scholars working in history, sociology, literature, and or political science. At other moments, I imagine I am addressing all these groups (all of ***us***) at the same time. This is, primarily, a piece of scholarly work, but my hope is for it also to be a work of social activism and advocacy.

The last important research methodology I employ, though briefly, is the analyzing of case studies. According to Arya Priya's Case study methodology of qualitative research: Key attributes and navigating the conundrums in its application*,* there are exceptional benefits to applying case studies as a research approach. I do not undertake my own case study research, but I do look at various mainstream cases, such as the Kirk Johnson affair, and other well-known examples, that can support my claims, assertions, and prove my arguments. Priya's article states that a case study is "an empirical inquiry which investigates a phenomenon in its real-life context" (2021, p. 2). This methodological design is intentional because it is "based in a culturally respectful framework using mixed methodologies that does not place […] value [on] western ways" (Quinless, 2022, p. 164). Analyzing cases lets me distill relevant conclusions from lived experiences not drawn from first-person interviews.

In the end, the Conclusion of this thesis loops back to its origin. Learning while Black in Atlantic Canada means learning with racist sentiments and practices that constantly impact and limit Black learning. Unfortunately, this has always been the case. The history of Atlantic Canada is significant because racism is "built into [the] DNA" of the region and as it stands, we are struggling to "escape those origins" (Davis, Tweet, 2022).

During my research, the content I kept encountering on racism in Atlantic Canadian Educational institutions eventually began to sound repetitive. No matter when I picked up this story, Black bodies were being impacted in the same ways. Similarly, the solutions espoused by boards, administrators, and governments were also repetitive. Atlantic Canadian institutions are obviously stuck in a ***cyclical process*** that always starts with hopeful calls for

inclusion but ends with Black students being and feeling neglected or exploited. Scholars state that we need to decolonize and decenter whiteness in higher education. However, what scholars ***see*** and what Black students ***need*** to not feel neglected or exploited are quite different things. This research joins the discourse but offers an embedded observation and analysis designed to implore non-Black readers to distinguish between performative allyship and anti-racist work by starting from the racist roots and legacies of Atlantic Canada.

Chapter One.

“The desire for freedom is preceded by oppression.” – (Toni Morrison, 1992, p. 33).

Dichotomous classifications of cultural supremacy and inferiority have existed for centuries. These divisions have been constructed in many ways over the years and have been based on many different traits – language, religion, wealth, gender, and sexuality, for example - but the dominant social group has always decided how power and influence would flow across the divide. In this chapter, we start our examination when traits of inferiority and superiority were decided based on race. As we will see, Black bodies in Atlantic Canada today experience inherited systemic and individual racism because the region, and indeed the entire Western world, is an inherently racist place.

1.1 The Creation of Race and Racism.

Benjamin Isaac’s *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* provides us with a detailed intellectual history that traces the creation and rise of white supremacy as a social, political, economic, and cultural discourse. Isaac links the rise of racism to the environmentally deterministic theory of race that was first applied by Greek philosophers like Aristotle and Herodotus. This idea suggested that geography and climate were the primary forces that first determined social superiority or inferiority. Herodotus in support of this theory stated that “geography (…) can condition human existence and action” (Isaac, 2004, p. 59).

Though race was a partial consideration in the environmentally deterministic theory, Aristotle believed that climate mattered more as an initial primary marker of difference. In

fifth century, BCE he described “people of cold [European] countries, generally as […] full of spirit, but deficient in skill and intelligence” while “people of Asia are endowed with skill and intelligence but are deficient in spirit” (Isaac, 2004, p. 70). Even 2500 years later, Aristotle’s descriptions of Asians still somehow match with present day stereotypes about the universal mental acumen of a community of billions of people. Isaac shows us how racist ideas are always shifting and evolving, especially when one theory, like the environmentally deterministic model must give way, because it “could no longer account for the development of stable variations” (Isaac, 2004, p. 77). Unfortunately, the core sentiment remained that one group should always be superior and the other should be inferior. In Greek society, at the time, they used themselves as the default measurement of superiority, and then measured all other ***differences*** relative to a Greek standard of normative excellence.

In addition to determining superiority and inferiority, the environmental theory was also used to distinguish who should be free and who should not. This model shows us that people have been enslaving each other for millennia without using race as the primary marker of social difference. In fifth-century Athens, geography, nationality, language and or class could work in the same way. The distinctions of who was free according to Greek society was reflected in their ***perceived*** civility, determined by the perceived characteristics attached to a geographical location. They theorized that “uncivilized people [were] more servile” than them (Isaac, 2004, p. 72). Isaac notes that the Greeks considered that Asian people were only capable of being “subjects and slaves,” compared to the Greek and northern Europeans because they were geographically located at the bottom (Isaac, 2004, p. 71).

Aristotle fortified this theory of ***natural slaves*** as he implied that they were destined to be slaves due to their geographical position. He described a naturally enslaved person as inferior in a way that likened them to animals that exist only to serve their master. By comparing slaves to animals, Aristotle shows that a slave should be regarded as a tool, an

unthinking instrument to advance the will of the master. This is a sentiment that can still be observed today. Obviously, since race was not the decisive social marker in these early discussions of slavery, we can see that the idea of race did not lead to slavery and that, vice versa, the concept of slavery preceded the idea of race. From Isaac, we learn that enslaved people were always considered subhuman. What changed over time, was the single human trait that could be used to mark one as subhuman, and therefore ***qualified*** for slavery.

The British, and other European colonial empires adopted ideas of supremacy, inferiority, and natural slaves, from the Greeks and then evolved them by applying them to racial divisions. Ira Berlin's book explains that ideas, beliefs, and systems that enforce inferiority and superiority have not changed. It is only the subjects of oppressive ideals, beliefs, and systems that have changed. Meaning, who is inferior is now decided by race more than geographical location. For example, the Greek viewed anyone who was not Greek as inferior to them, and that national sameness then evolved and transitioned into racial sameness.

Great Britain by the mid 1500s had emerged as a leading European empire. In Abigail Swingen's *Competing Visions of Empires: Labor, Slavery, and the Origins of British Atlantic empire,* she discusses the challenges British colonizers encountered while searching for new land to conquer for the crown. Settling onto newly colonized land posed severe economic issues and hardships as the work was demanding and the environment exacerbated the working conditions. These challenges strained British class structures on the colony as the process proved far more labor intensive than first believed. The British citizens who had joined the colonization effort were of a class that did not perform intensely laboring work. Swingen notes that solutions were proposed to ease class tensions by getting “three hundred convicts” to help work the land “provided they might not be obliged to pay for them” (Swingen, 2015, p. 11). In chapter one of her book, Swingen states that this first quick fix

infused cheap labor ignited a thirst for it that would take centuries to die down. From then on a

> demand for colonial unfree labor increased throughout […] growing especially acute in Barbados by the 1640s and 1650s. […] But the supply of indentured servants and convicts from England was never enough for the West Indies colonies. […] the transatlantic servant market established during the earliest decades of colonial expansion no longer served the needs of the colonies by the second half of the century (Swingen, 2015, p. 12).

After some time, the colonies began consuming more bodies and required even more to maintain sustainable expansion. However, there were "changing cultural attitudes about the kinds of people who tended to go to the colonies as servants, especially the poor," so British colonizers began looking elsewhere for indentured servants (Swingen, 2015, p. 12).

According to Atlantic Canadian historians Phillip Buckner and John Reid, initial attempts to only rely on the working-class population heavily disgruntled white British people living in the colonies. In their book *The Atlantic Region to Confederation: A History,* they describe the tensions that arose between class structures due to a heavy workload. White indentured servants became resentful of elite whites and their successes in the new colonies built off their hard labor. Anthony Parent in *Foul Means: The Foundation of a Slave Society in Virginia 1660-1740* agrees with Swingen, that fear of dissent from indentured servants led the "transatlantic servant market [to be] established" (Swingen, 2015, p. 12).

In their book, *Race. Are we so Different?* Goodman, Moses, and Jones add that changing attitudes about social class spurred racial separation as an intentionally imposed social, political, and economic practice. In other words, differences in race, rather than wealth or class, began to matter in more profound, more dangerous ways. The authors state that by the

> (m)id 1600s, the status of Africans began to change dramatically. Like their European counterparts, they were no longer servants with the prospect of freedom following a period of servitude. Instead, colonial leaders relegated Africans to a status of permanent slavery [… which was eventually] limited to Blacks. […] English colonists began to develop laws of racial separateness and a racial hierarchy. [This led to the beginning of] racial projects (Goodman et al., 2012, p. 58).

Goodman et al., state that within the shadows "colonial leaders were simultaneously doing something else: they were laying the basis for the invention of the idea of race and racial identities" (2012, p. 203). There were capitalistic motivations behind this solidification of separate racial identities, and a social component that sowed seeds of white supremacy that are still in full bloom today.

Introducing and cementing race-based slavery meant convincing poor whites that they were white first and then poor second. This change meant that poor whites and "newly freed European servants [saw] opportunities to […] identify common interests with the wealthy and powerful" aligning whiteness with power and wealth (Goodman et al., 2012, p. 75). Aligning white people by whiteness eased class tensions enough to fortify racial power imbalances that are still prevalent today. The designation of worker and indentured servant fell not only to the present Black bodies, but to all Black people who would encounter European colonizers. All Black people were reduced to the status of "permanent slavery," which prohibited "their emancipation, and [prevented] their education and training" (Goodman et al., 2012, p. 76).

1.2 Race in British North America and the British Atlantic Region.

Khushbu Shah and Juweek Adolphe's article titled "400 years since slavery: A timeline of American history," distills a brief timeline of the experiences of Black bodies that were brought to British North America. In 1619 the "first [African] captives were forced on

to Virginia's shores by a Dutchman […] Majority of the [colony] remained white and relied mainly on the labor of native American slaves and indentured servants" (Shah & Adolphe, 2019, para. 6). However, the transatlantic slave trade increased that number exponentially over the coming decades as the capturing and transporting of enslaved people became a massive enterprise. Berlin argues that a steady stream of Black bodies allowed the colonies to evolve into "slave societies," while simultaneously persecuting, torturing, and murdering Indigenous people (p. 24). Setting up slave societies led to intentional policies, practices, and laws being created to remove Black people's right and ability to gain emancipation. For example, by 1661 the colonial government saw it fit to introduce laws that prohibited "marriage between races" as they sought to keep incoming slaves from gaining freedom through marriage (Shah & Adolphe, 2019, para. 7).

By the year 1776, "in the tobacco-producing areas of Virginia, Maryland, and North Carolina slaves constituted 50% of the population" but they were oppressed and refused any rights that reflected their humanity (Shah & Adolphe, 2019, para. 9). Berlin notes that "to be sure, the struggle between master and slave never proceeded on the basis of equality […] the master's [maintained a] near monopoly of force" (Berlin, 1998, p. 2). According to a "Humanities Council SC" document from 2013, British North America became entirely dependent on the slave trade to maintain racial hierarchies that upheld their thriving economies. Around 600, 000 trafficked Africans had landed in British North America after 1619, but by 1860 "the [region] recorded nearly four million enslaved Black people" (Shah & Adolphe, 2019, para. 10).

Slavery was not just a social and economic enterprise; it was also a scientific one. Scientists like Samuel Morton and Carl Linnaeus classified the characteristics of Black people to be unlike those of white people, betraying them to a theory that likened their existence to being closer to animals than white people. Their scientific contributions showed

that enslaved people were subhuman and gave scientific support for them to be treated as such. Goodman et al. state that in 1851 politician Mifflin Wistar Gibbs identified Sam Morton as a “benefactor, for aiding most materially in giving to the negro his true position as an inferior race” (2012, p. 89). The legacy of Linnaeus and Morton is still reflected in the contemporary use of brute force as a necessary condition to subdue and control Black bodies by white society today.

It is important to contextualize the institution of slavery within the Canadian context because there is a lingering belief that slavery did not take place here. This seeming gap in the historical record is foregrounded in the expansive work of Afua Cooper, particularly her book, *The Enslavement of Africans in Canada.* In this text, Cooper sets the landscape of slavery in the region up in a way that makes it indisputable. She starts by positioning Canada within the trajectory of slavery by stating that,

> Canada was imbricated in the Atlantic slaving system. First, as the French colony of New France, Acadia, and parts of Newfoundland (which the French called *Terreneuve)*, and later as a British colony, which came to be called British North America. The slave trade and slavery were the bedrock of these empires. As Canada was a colony in these imperial worlds, it participated in the economic, commercial, and cultural spheres, including slavery and slaving, that these empires offered (Cooper, 2022, p. 6).

Cooper shows that slavery in Canada happened, but it is overlooked because of the country’s historical proximity to the United States of America, Brazil, and the Caribbean where there were entire slave societies. Cooper explains that because “there were not that many slaves” in Canada, and Canadian slavery, “was not of the plantation variant, as in the Caribbean and the United States South,” there is a misconception that slavery in Canada “was ‘mild’” (Cooper, 2022, p. 7). Cooper asserts, that because slavery here was of the

familial and domestic [variant], most owners having less than five enslaved people, this did not mean that Canadian slaveholders were any less cruel than their American or Caribbean counterparts. Canadian slaveowners could be mean, cruel, and sadistic. […] Elias Marshall[3] beat his pregnant enslaved woman Elizabeth Watson to the point of death. Then Mrs. Marshall[4] split open Elizabeth's skull with a hot iron. Jude was murdered by her enslaver Samuel Andrews (Cooper, 2022, p. 7).

Though this thesis is based on racism in contemporary Atlantic Canada, it is important to foreground evidence like that provided by Cooper because this is the real historical record, and the lived reality, that this region is built on. Showing the reader that the British empire and, by extension, Canada's history with slavery informs every aspect of the relationship Black bodies have with society, and institutions today is essential if we are going to try to understand and reform these institutions in the contemporary period. In Cooper's work, we come to understand that the "image of Blacks in the minds of Whites" has gone unchanged for centuries (2022, p. 9). She conveys to the reader that, "the colony needed labourers" and the colonisers "wanted enslaved Blacks as labourers" because white Canadians would only work for themselves (Cooper, 2022, p. 9). Because the society of the Atlantic region was "raised in an environment of anti-Blackness and surrounded by ideas about Black inferiority and the place of Black people in the order of things" we must consider the influence on a society in that environment (Cooper, 2022, p. 9).

These attitudes remained even when the context of Blackness in Atlantic Canada changed from enslavement to freedom. As I will show, racist attitudes have followed Black bodies in the Atlantic Canadian region through every step of their immigration, regardless of

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[3] Elias Marshall was the owner of an enslaved woman called Elizabeth Watson. See Notes.

[4] Mrs. Marshall was the wife of Elias Marshall and so, an owner of Elizabeth Watson. See Notes.

their origins. This points towards historical context being an imperative consideration in the analysis of present-day anti-Black sentiments.[5]

Becoming free Blacks in British North America.

The transatlantic slave trade was abolished through significant effort in 1808. Unfortunately, the status of Blacks remained as enslaved people until 1865. The British territories in North America sought independence from their colonial masters during a period when the British empire leaned further into abolishing the institution of slavery and slave societies. The colonies that would eventually become the United States of America, particularly in the South, were very dependent on a slave society and its economy, and this triggered conflict between the empire and these colonial communities. This tension partially led to a revolutionary war for independence in 1775, which eventually saw the entire British empire and their Loyalists expelled from the United States to join neighboring colonies in British North America. It was at this point, in 1783, that the status of Blacks was changed for the first time in a long time. Among the Loyalist group were some Black people who willingly gambled on the opportunity of gaining their freedom by fighting for the British in the revolutionary war. Black people who fought on behalf of the British were given the freedom they were promised, but those who did not remained enslaved. However, due to this social transformation, in the "new world" of Loyalist British North America, "masters [, free Blacks,] and slaves" were renegotiating "the terms of life and livelihood" (Berlin, 1998, p. 379). Nevertheless, this did not mean the end of oppression for Blacks in the British Atlantic region.

Harvey Armani Whitfield's ground-breaking research in this area influences much of what we now understand about the racialized history of Atlantic Canada during this period. In

[5] For more on slavery in Atlantic Canada, see Chute, Donovan, Smardz Frost, and Poulin.

Blacks on the Border. The Black Refugees in British North America, 1815-1860, he notes that before the arrival of approximately 3000 Black loyalists, the Atlantic region had encountered both free and enslaved Black people. Black people were already in the region as enslaved people like those held at the Ile Royale Slave community. Unfortunately, this pre-existing slave culture "created conditions and attitudes that greatly influenced the local governments and the local populations attitudes" towards the arriving free Black loyalists (Whitfield, 2006, p. 10). White people in the region "believed that people of African descent could never integrate into the colony's mainstream, both because of their race and because the refugees were former slaves" (Whitfield, 2006, p. 80). Any decisions made about integrating Black people into the colony were made in relation to white comforts to not threaten their privilege. Black loyalists were never able to escape the legacy of slavery and slave societies, because whiteness was always ready "to use the Black refugees as a semi-captive and cheap labor" (Whitfield, 2006, p. 24).

According to Buckner and Reid, between 1775 and early 1800, white loyalists were driven by a desire to build an Atlantic colony in the image of the United States of America where they had once enjoyed success. Through the arrival and resettlement of the loyalists a new burst of life came to the colony by increasing the population and bringing a much-needed economic infusion. However, the white loyalists and the white people already residing in the colony maintained their low regard of Black people and the contributions they could make to their society outside of being cheap tools. Whitfield notes that

> Black loyalists were at the bottom of the list of those to receive land [and] when [they] acquired land, their grants were much smaller than those afforded to the white settlers. The government also granted the Black loyalists some of the worst land in the colony (2006, p. 19).

This was a trend that would continue with the “Black refugees after the War of 1812” (Whitfield, 2006, p. 19).

In many ways, Black loyalists came to supply the region with “a free labor reserve that cleared the lands, laid the roads, and erected the public buildings” (Whitfield, 1974, p. 19). Black loyalists were made certain promises by the colonial government at the time that were supposed to ease the transition into the Atlantic region, but upon arrival those promises were broken. As a result, Black loyalists were forced to survive by entering relationships of indentured servitude with the white community reaffirming to white people that Blacks could not be free people. This conflicted with formerly enslaved Black people who were attempting to shed the “traditions and expectations from American slavery that influenced their struggles with freedom” (Whitfield, 2006, p. 25). Unfortunately, only knowing slavery, Black loyalists had to accept the limited form of emancipation as indentured servants. Renegotiating Blackness from both ends meant that Black people entertained “different ideas about labor, language and culture” as two hundred years of slavery had wiped out any semblance of freedom (Whitfield, 2006, p. 25). Neither race could forget the hand of slavery and that “the road to creating a distinct African British North American community in Nova Scotia had its roots in the plantations and farms” (Whitfield, 2006, p. 39).

1.3 The Currency of Blackness in Sport.

Today, one of the ways in which Black bodies remain valuable in contemporary society is through the cultural institution of sport. Sport has always been a key component of Black life even as enslaved people. David K. Wiggins in “’Black Athletes in White Men’s Games’: Race, Sport and American National Pastimes” asserts that “slaves were on occasion able to transcend the horrendous conditions of the institution and participate in various types of cultural activities, recreations and sports (2014, p. 182). Wiggins clearly states that these

activities of ten took place "out of view of the planter and his family" and so in the "slavequarter community" slaves were able to experience independence assert some modicum of "control over their own lives [... and] exhibit their unique style of physical movement and gift for improvisation" (2014, p. 182). There were some slaves that were able to exhibit their abilities in front of slave owners. This offer was extended to slaves who were seen as "more physically gifted, trustworthy and perhaps even more malleable" (Wiggins, 2014, p. 182). As a result, these slaves often had "more freedom of movement, special privileges and closer relationships with their owners" and it also became a way for some slaves to earn "their freedom as result of their good behavior and athletic success" (Wiggins, 2014, p. 182). Wiggins is showing us that Black athletic bodies have always been valuable even beyond the context of working slaves. His work reveals an inherent trait in white society to reward athletic success.

Today, in the "more structured world of white-organised sport" it could be argued that Black athletes have become the modern-day slaves. In a similar way, Black athletes today produce significant profits for white owners and administrators while experiencing a significant wealth gap between them and management. Extending Whitfield's and Wiggins' arguments, Amy Bride in *Dead or Alive: Racial Finance and the Corpse-Value of the African American Slave Body,* contextualizes why Black bodies are still valuable today, centuries after the human enterprise of slavery. Bride introduces readers to Cedric Robinson, the thinker who "termed 'racial capitalism': the capital valuation of race in and of itself" (Bride, 2020, p. 99). This term legitimizes social ideas about Blackness having a spendable value just like any other currency. Bride explains that, in the

> economic stage of slave-capitalism, in which the capital value of the slave is underwritten by the value of the material produce [the …] slave body is conceptualized by white owners and traders as akin to farm machinery or a working

> animal. Daina Ramey Berry, (2017, p.12) demonstrates this connection through analysis of the language used to describe slaves [like …] Enslaved mothers [being] called "breeders" past their child-bearing years.' [Showing that the] capital value of a slave is directly correlative to the labour they can perform and therefore the material wealth they can produce (Bride, 2020, p. 100).

David J. Leonard's article "It's Gotta be the Body: Race, Commodity, and Surveillance of Contemporary Black Athletes," found in Norman Denzin's edited collaborative work *Studies in Symbolic Interaction* carries on Bride's historical point with contemporary bodies, where they highlight that Black athletes today are akin to enslaved people on plantations. In his article, Leonard states that,

> Although the commodification of black bodies amid state violence and widespread racism is nothing new, considering the histories of Hollywood, jazz, minstrelsy, or even athletes enslaved on plantations (Rhoden, 2006), the hyper commodification of the contemporary black athlete, alongside expansive processes of globalization, growth in the profitability of black bodies, and their importance within colorblind discourse, demonstrates the importance of commodification within our new racist moment. Likewise, the shrinking opportunities afforded to African American youth, alongside clear messages about the path to desired black masculinity (Neal, 2005; Watkins, 1998; West, 1994), push black youth into a sports world where the possibility of striking it rich leads to a ''win at all costs'' attitude (Leonard, 2009, p. 168).

Similar to our linked-but-not-identical, conversations on slavery, our understanding of the model of Canadian sport is often overshadowed by the presence and influence of neighbors to the south. Though American sporting institutions from professional teams to university

programs produce staggering profits, there is a lot that can be said about Canadian and Atlantic Canadian sport as it pertains to the currency of Black athletic bodies.

In the contemporary period, the institution of sport in Atlantic Canada has come an extremely long way from where it started as pastime activity for middle class white men. Before I began this research, as an actively participating athlete, I understood sport as a domain where the individual's relationship with the institution was influenced only in accordance with their level of play. For example, at the grassroots level, I viewed sport as a domain to nurture motor functions, utilize youthful energy, and build initial bonding experiences among friends. As I progressed through the institution and my athletic achievements grew, I simply built upon previously laid foundations. As each level of competition advanced, sport appeared to me to be a transparent arena of meritocracy where one could display one's athletic ability at the highest level. This meant competing with people equal to your ability in the ultimate expressions of athleticism.

At this stage, I knew, but only somewhat understood, the complexities that gender, class, geography, and race added to sport. For example, in Zimbabwe we ***unofficially*** categorized sports by race because of the wealth attached to their participation and the racial make-up of its participants. ***White*** sports in Zimbabwe were field hockey, water polo, tennis, equestrian, rowing, cricket, triathlon etc. These sports often rostered white students and featured white coaches and spectators. In addition, sports like these required access to expensive equipment, and dedication to commuting and touring (locally and abroad). On the other hand, Black sports were football (soccer), rugby, track, and field (but not cross country), basketball, and volleyball. Sports like these only required the athlete to acquire appropriate footwear that could cost as little as $10 at a flea market. In addition, these sports were easily located and offered community for their participants and their families due to racial sameness, cultural sameness, and economic sameness. Though there were racial

outliers, Black athletes were more often priced out of having advantages such as private coaching in white sports, as they were frivolous added costs, while white athletes could easily slip into Black sports with little to no problem.

In Atlantic Canada, I have observed that there is more than just race and wealth that draw certain people to certain sports. There are historical prescriptions that keep sports like ice hockey white by majority, and sports like basketball and football Black by majority.

Nederveen's work shows us that there are historical prescriptions that allow for hyper performance and visibility of Black bodies in sport and entertainment and that this is, historically speaking, nothing new. Performances by Black people started with minstrel shows that "helped whites come to terms with problems of slavery" (1992, p. 133). In that same light, a Black athlete, understood ***only*** in terms of their sporting performance helps white people reinforce supremacist ideals about the place of Black bodies in relation to white society. For example, Nederveen notes that "slaves were expected to sing as well as to work. A silent slave was not liked by masters or overseers" (1992, p. 132). This highlights a trend in the forced participation in entertainment for the pleasure of whites. In contemporary culture, we see the same pattern repeated, as sport and entertainment are some of the only spaces where Black men are permitted to be superior, as long as they stay in that fixed category. The category of the dominant Black athlete, or the supremely talented Black performer, are cultural descriptions that maintain supremacist ideals and provide entertainment for white fans.

Today, we can comfortably define sport as an expression of social, cultural, and economic conditions. Robert R. Sands offers an anthropological definition of sport in *Anthropology, Sport, and Culture* that shows that sport is valuable because it is also "expressions of culture" and a reflection "of culture" (1999, p. 3). This is important because athletic performance today is an integral expression of Black culture. In sports that feature

Black athletes and participants, there is flair and signature that highlights Blackness. Consider Venus and Serena Williams playing tennis with colorful beads in their hair.[6] Before these sisters came along to dominate the competition for an entire generation, the sport of tennis maintained a strict all white only dress code. In fact, over the years, colorful hair evolved into colorful outfits that became symbols of resistance against white control in the sport. Black athletes have always integrated racial expression and culture into education, music, and sport, but these cultural spaces have often remained willfully colorblind to the limitations that race places on Black participants.

According to sports historian Colin Howell in his book *Blood, Sweat, and Cheers: Sport and the Making of Modern Canada,* "sport has always been important in the construction of gender identities, in debates about the body, in the shaping of ethnic, racial, regional, and community allegiance" (2001, p. 22). As we have seen, sport far transcends the role assigned to it as an amateur level, semi-professional, and professional activity. When you choose to only view it as one thing you consequently are not seeing the completeness of such a complex institution. Sport defines bodies and defines the standard of athleticism by assigning body types to specific levels of sporting expertise required to excel in the industry. It also plays a part in defining femininity and masculinity in ways that separate the two with ***norms*** in which the inferior type is excluded as a serious participant. Historically, sport in Canada has played a key role in cementing a color line, a gender line, and extending the wealth gap.

This brings us back to the explosive article written by Steve Thrasher where he discusses the value of Black bodies as athletes. Of course, Thrasher's work is speaking on the American context, but there are valuable insights that can be drawn here that apply across the whole spectrum of sport and culture. His work is applicable here because a variety of "social

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[6] See Notes for a picture.

institutions (the education system, the criminal justice system, collegiate sports conferences, and professional sports leagues) use sports as the frame for judging the worth of young black men prior to rewarding, controlling, or destroying them" (Thrasher, 2016, p. 2). North America's history with Black bodies has made it so that, "sports often appear to be the most seductive path away from the financial legacy of slavery for young black men with athletic bodies, even though, ironically, the execution of sports can look a lot like slavery" (Thrasher, 2016, p. 5).

Thrasher is highlighting that without intentional and specific changes to the execution of sports and its pathways, Black bodies are doomed to be stuck in a ***cyclical*** historical prism, because "performing was an essential part of slave existence" (Nederveen, 1992, p. 132). In the contemporary period, getting stuck in the prism is alluring because Black athletes are the favored Black bodies because where Black men are not wanted, Black athletes ***will always be wanted***. This means that, no matter what other obstacles they face in white society, there will always be room made for the athlete. Unfortunately, Black bodies cannot and will not always be athletes. Peak physical performance exists only for a moment in a lifetime, then it passes. When this happens for a Black athlete, white society has a clear historical handbook which they can use to destroy Blackness. A perfect example of this shifting value of the Black athletic body is found in the phenomenal story of Nova Scotian boxer Kirk Johnson and his interactions with the Halifax Police.

1.4 Kirk Johnson vs. The Halifax Regional Police.

As Berlin's work has shown us, it is essential for all people to understand the deep legacy of racial discrimination and the ways it continues to shape contemporary culture. He argues that racism and race-based discrimination operate at all levels of society and stay relevant because of a failure to understand and "demonstrate how race is continually

redefined" (1998, p. 17). Contemporary actions and practices that are racist often hide their more overt discrimination in more acceptable forms such as performing prejudice or bias. Dr. Neil Balan, a professor at Saint Mary's university and other Canadian institutions, with whom I was a teaching assistant, once said in a lecture that all institutions "produce reliable and predictable effects" (Balan, 2023). There is a deep historical bias that governs and predicts the social relationship between Black bodies, sport, and white society. These are all institutions that produce reliable results when it comes to race, and the story of Kirk Johnson reflects some of these predictable effects.

In 1998, Johnson sued the Halifax Regional Police due to an encounter he and a friend had with an officer Sanford during a 'routine' traffic stop. The proceedings of that encounter are as follows:

> On 12 April 1998 Earl Fraser and Kirk Johnson were pursued on Highway 111 by Constable Sanford and stopped at a shopping plaza just off Main Street in Dartmouth. Mr. Fraser was driving Mr. Johnson's Texas-registered 1993 Black Ford Mustang. The constable asked for proof of insurance and vehicle registration and was not satisfied with the documents offered. He then ticketed the driver, and ordered the car towed. In fact, Mr. Johnson's documentation was valid under Texas law. The next day an unidentified police official determined that the seizure had been erroneous and ordered the car released. Both Mr. Fraser and Mr. Johnson are Black. The central issues in this case are whether any of Constable Sanford actions on the night of 12 April constituted an act of discrimination, and whether any actions or omissions of the Halifax Regional Police amounted to discrimination against Mr. Johnson (The Human Rights Act, R.S.N.S. 1989, c. 214, as amended 1991, c. 12, 2003, p. 2).

Today, in the aftermath of so many similar widely reported confrontations between Black bodies and the police, society agrees to a certain extent that this encounter could be

described as racist, but at the time, the officer's behavior was perceived as subtle enough to be seen as a non-issue. This means, that, in their case, Johnson and his legal team had to prove that Sanford's actions were motivated by racism. Bonilla-Silva in "What makes systemic racism systemic?" argues that the "protection of whiteness" even in situations where racist practices are clear is always considered "reasonable" and this provides confirmation that the practice of normative behaviors can "have a larger impact on racial affairs" (2021, p. 7). If the normative behavior is carried out by a white person, then the action is always deemed justifiable and "non-racist" (Bonilla-Silva, 2021, p. 7).

The Halifax Regional Police and Constable Sanford claimed that everything that happened during this stop was routine, and that the race played no defining factor in the interaction. The crux of the case, then, stood on proving that Sanford was aware of the race of the occupants before stopping the vehicle so that the act of stopping the car was racially motivated. To this point, Mr. Johnson stated that he "had been stopped by police in the black Mustang a total of 28 times before 12 April 1998, during the cumulative three-month period he had visited his family in Nova Scotia since acquiring the car in 1993" (The Human Rights Act, R.S.N.S. 1989, c. 214, as amended 1991, c. 12, 2003, p. 16). These, obviously, were damning numbers and they spoke directly of a systemic issue within the police force. They showed that this was not the work of one rogue individual because Constable Sanford was not the officer all 28 times.

At the time, Kirk Johnson had recently won his 24th straight fight and the province championed him through countless accolades over the years, including a *Coast Newspaper* award which recognized him as the Best Halifax Athlete in 2002. Once he was outside the ring, however, and just driving a car, Johnson's social value clearly dropped. He was no longer an exciting force representing Halifax or Nova Scotia or Canada on an international boxing stage. This illustrates the prescribed role in which Black athletes are designated value

according to how well they play and how well that play can be commoditized. For example, over the years, I have watched several Black varsity Huskies be the shining jewel of the institution one year, and then completely disappear in relevance after they cannot perform on the field or court. In the case of Kirk Johnson, Constable Sanford is described to have "not at first know who Kirk Johnson was, but quickly became aware from his fellow officers that the passenger in the vehicle was a well-known local figure and not some fugitive miscreant from Texas" (The Human Rights Act, R.S.N.S. 1989, c. 214, as amended 1991, c. 12, 2003, p. 23). Obviously, because he did not assume innocence, Sanford required proof to acquit Johnson of a criminality that he, Johnson, had never participated in. According to this logic, ***Kirk Johnson, the man, was not worthy of fair treatment, but Kirk Johnson, the boxer, was***.

The court proceedings go on to say that after being made aware of Johnson's identity, Constable Sanford no longer perceived him as a threat and worked diligently to set the car on its way with no concern at all. Although Mr. Johnson had left his car which was recognized at the time as a threat cue by police officers, Sanford still did not see him as a threat. In fact, "Constable Sanford did not appear concerned by this behavior at all. If he had felt at all threatened, he would surely have asked one of his fellow officers to ensure that Mr. Johnson stayed in his vehicle" (The Human Rights Act, R.S.N.S. 1989, c. 214, as amended 1991, c. 12, 2003, p. 23). The story of Kirk Johnson is intriguing because it so clearly illustrates the way Black bodies have always had dichotomous classification attached to them. They are either favored or destroyed by white society. However, there is a great deal more at play in this example that I am yet to mention.

Layla Saad in her book *Me and White Supremacy* speaks to the importance of examining individual expressions of racism as components in a larger systemic discourse because "systems and institutions are created and held in place by many individual people" (2020, p. 12). Bonilla-Silva similarly clarifies what components maintain the functionality of

systemic racism in white society. He states that "all actors are preconditioned," to exaggerate the negative perceptions of Black men (Bonilla-Silva, 2021, p. 4). Additionally, he states that prescriptions of Blackness "continue to be systemically perpetuated" even if they do not situationally apply (Bonilla-Silva, 2021, p. 4). In the example of Kirk Johnson, we can see that constable Sanford acted on a preconditioned bias in white individuals to demonize Black bodies. Furthermore, Johnson having been stopped 28 times we can infer that those officers too, at least some of the time had responded to a preconditioned bias based on the probable race of that mustang's driver. This shows that it was not only Sanford who thought and felt this way but that it was systemically perpetuated.

Bonilla-Silva's work helps us understand what is taking place when racialized actors interact with a white institution. He argues that,

> [Systemic racism] is a structural feature of society, […] the interactional nature of racial exchanges produces a degree of variance (Pearson 2015; Rosino 2017). There is variation in the specifics of racial action (not all actors do the same things all the time and in the same way) (Perry 2002) [making it difficult to identify racist practices unilaterally and universally within public institutions as they represent the actions and inactions of varying people. The key component then to successfully identify it becomes the] 'white habitus' (Bonilla-Silva 2006) [that] generates practices, cognitions, perceptions, and emotions that reinforce whiteness and account for White's racial isolation (Bonilla-Silva, 2021, p. 9).

This is poignant because once the officer knew who Kirk Johnson was, he no longer fit Constable Sanford's "stereotypical view of people of color" because Johnson's reputation implied, he was not a stereotype (Bonilla-Silva, 2021, p. 18). This allowed Constable Sanford to step out of his white habitus and comfortably reign in his "emotional prejudices" (Bonilla-Silva,2021, p. 18).

Mr. Johnson won his case and Constable Sanford, and the Halifax Regional Police were found guilty of acting discriminatory towards him. The ruling stated that officers could be:

> held liable for violating the Human Rights Act on the basis of unconscious stereotypes [… Questions like the following arose] How can we guard against something that is not conscious? Isn't it unfair to hold us to such a high standard? [and the answer from Constable Christopher Regan was as follows] 'you have to work at it.' That simple answer is the essence of it. Recognizing the problem and developing techniques to deal with it, both at the personal and institutional level, are the key (The Human Rights Act, R.S.N.S. 1989, c. 214, as amended 1991, c. 12, 2003, p. 25).

Additionally, this ruling reflected a gap within policies and the implementation of practice frameworks that would make white officers check their bias before acting on it. The officers were concerned because in this case they were no longer protected by what Bonilla-Silva calls "unconscious personification" (2021, p. 13). This favorable ruling, however, did not remove the racist experiences that Black people in Nova Scotia continue to have when interacting with police. It simply acknowledged that Black people and white people all participate in a system that is inherently racist even if the actors participate in this system differently.

As we have seen, Black people often participate in such situations by being "recipients of unfavorable, differential treatment from Whites" (Bonilla-Silva, 2021, p. 15). Danardo S. Jones' thesis *Punishing Black Bodies in Canada: Making Blackness Visible in Criminal Sentencing,* amplifies the magnitude of Johnson's victory as Black people are seldom the victor in this context. Jones offers us a roadmap as we walk through the contemporary experience of anti-Blackness in Canada. He starts with a historical review where he asserts that within the criminal justice system, "virulent stereotypes and attitudes

about Blackness are reinforced and reified" (Jones, 2019, p. 26). As we have seen, there is a "clear genealogy" between "contemporary moments of racial injustice" and slavery, colonization, and segregation (Jones, 2019, p. 26). This reinforces the theme of this chapter that though long "gone are the days of slavery," Black individuals today, like Johnson, still feel the "sting and indignities of the state's whip" (Jones, 2019, p. 28). Jones identifies the Black body as "a site of immense historical and contemporaneous State violence and trauma" and the story of Johnson adequately conveys that the past and the present are continually at war with each other.

In this battle between two historical epochs, we see a legacy of intentionally harsh policing of Black bodies versus a contemporary expectation to temper that legacy and police justly. The ruling stated that constable Sanford and the other officers involved in stopping Johnson about 28 times were over-criminalizing "through biased-policing" (Jones, 2019, p. 39). Constable Sanford fell victim to a legacy of fusing "Blackness and criminality" which others Black bodies and makes them the "subject of unwanted and extreme scrutiny. Despite Black Canadians' putative membership in Canadian society, there exists an almost impassable gulf between [them] and [their] non-racialized counterparts" (Jones, 2019, p. 41).

While white people reproduce white privilege, white protection, and white immunity, Jones argues that Black people, throughout the ages, have had to fight to reconcile their "Blackness and innocence" and to prove, in the Canadian context, that these are not "mutually exclusive concepts" (Jones, 2019, p. 43). Unfortunately, the onus is always put on Black bodies in any context to advocate for their Blackness, innocence, worth, and so much more. And even when we do take part in such advocacy, it does not always end in victory. Jones reflects that though "there is no reliable scientific evidence that Blacks are more prone to criminality than their non-Black counterparts," Canadian Courts have "only ever marginally engaged in a race-based analysis" of their procedures and policies (Jones, 2019, p.

42). These are sentiments that I highlight throughout this thesis. However, from now on it will be in the post-secondary education and sport contexts. Standing on the excellent work of Jones, I will engage with other scholars and writers who agree that equality, equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives as they are currently applied in institutions today reproduce differential treatments from whites towards their Black counterparts. In turn, unfortunately, Black bodies experience continual mental, physical, and emotional harm; while white privilege, white protection, and white immunity are strengthened individually and systemically.

Chapter Two.

"Racism should never have happened and so you don't get a cookie for reducing it." – (Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, 2013, p. 227).

The initial tentative research question that launched this thesis was: Why are post-secondary institutions the sites where Black student-athletes are universally the favored recruit yet also one of the most exploited students? As a Black student on an Atlantic Canadian campus, I have always felt interchangeable. This is an inherent trait of living while Black in Nova Scotia, and as we will see, these negotiations have always been part of the colonial experience, even when this province was part of British North America. In Chapter one, through Whitfield, I showed the reader that these are long standing legacies inherited by both racialized people and white people. The racial sameness of Black skin has made Black bodies interchangeable in this region since the 18th century, a period during which, "Government officials and the local population labelled" Black loyalists "interchangeably [with] 'Black Refugees,' 'Negro Refugees,' 'People of Colour,' and 'Black people'" (Whitfield, 2003, p. 25). In the contemporary period, racialized traits like interchangeability continue to be folded into Atlantic Canadian post-secondary institutions due to Atlantic Canada's extensive relationship with slavery and colonization. The influences of these encounters are deeply embedded into the history of several Atlantic Canadian Universities.

Take a moment and ponder the broad cultural impact of the following Universities: Saint Mary's, St Francis Xavier, and Mount Saint Vincent. All these schools were founded on the teachings of Roman Catholic Church[7] in the1800's. ***What legacies are embedded in their***

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[7] For more on the Roman Catholic church see Pasquier, Pereira, and Jordan.

systems? The Roman Catholic Church, as an institution, participated and prioritized the reproduction and dissemination of white supremacist social and racial orders for centuries. Gary Younge's article "Why Every Statue Should Come Down" illustrates how upholding the memory of dubious historical symbols can continue to inflict trauma in the contemporary moment. The history of the Atlantic Canadian post-secondary institutions named above carries their legacies as "permanent statements of fact, culture, truth, and tradition that can never be questioned, touched, removed or recast" (Younge, 2021, para. 11). The permanence of a name, for example, reflects onto people of color the permanence of a racist legacy folded into the institution. Names like Dalhousie, (a slave owner), function as contemporary reminders that ignore the shifts in our understandings of history, morality, and ethics. What is "acceptable […] changes with time," but names do not so, they "stand, indifferent to the play of events, impervious to the tides of thought that might wash over them and the winds of change that swirl around them" (Younge, 2021, para. 12). Younge's article shows us that racist history is preserved and represented in institutions by names and statues. This means that Atlantic Canadian post-secondary institutions like King's and Dalhousie are ***inherently*** racist because the legacy of racism is literally part of their founding cultural ***inheritance.***

2.1 Atlantic Canadian Education.

Shirley Tillotson's work on the University of King's College in conjunction with the *Universities Studying Slavery Conference* reveals an inescapable connection between the institution of slavery and King's College. From that endeavor, Tillotson's work *How (and how much) King's College Benefit from Slavery in the West Indies, 1789 to 1854,* draws a direct line from slave profits in the West Indies to the coffers of Atlantic Canadian post-secondary institutions enrolling Black bodies today. Tillotson states that the Atlantic region of Canada,

> (w)as connected to the mass enslavement of Africans […] because Nova Scotia was part of the economy of the Atlantic world in the 18th and 19th centuries. Well into the late 19th century, a crucial part of that economy was the labor of enslaved Africans and the trade in sugar and other tropical goods produced through their brutally exploited, coerced labor (2019, p. 1).

The University of King's College initial budget, Tillotson demonstrates, was directly derived from the "taxes from the trade in slave-produced goods" (Tillotson, 2019, p. 1). In addition, Cooper, in her *Report on Lord Dalhousie's History on Slavery and Race,* makes several connections between Dalhousie and slavery. She shows us that a "culture of whiteness" was built into the university (Cooper, 2019, p. 12). At the time, Lord Dalhousie's ideal students were "Christian, White and male" (Cooper, 2019, p. 64). These pieces of work prove that within Atlantic Canadian post-secondary institutions, there is a history of varied involvement, support, and reproductions of slave sentiments.

The morality of Dalhousie University's founder is significant today because his name lives on in the works of the institution, its students, staff, faculty, and everything the university touches. As Cooper and Francoise show, Dalhousie was not a neutral figure in the Black lives of his time period. His letters show him begging Lord Bathurst "to refrain from requiring him to spend the Castine money on settler's needs" and consistently resisting "means to institute fairness for the Black refugees and raise rations to the same standard as those of" whites?" (Cooper, 2019, p. 61). These historic facts are impossible to ignore, and Dalhousie does not deny their veracity. In fact, it has issued an official apology to its students of African descent, but can such admittances or any of the institution's work with Black bodies today be considered adequate reparations for centuries of misdeeds? When we look back over the region's tumultuous past negotiations offering education to Black bodies,

should Black students today feel lucky to be symbolically chosen as inclusion and diversity champions at predominantly white Atlantic Canadian post-secondary institutions?

As we've seen, a key component of slavery was to deny enslaved people an opportunity to gain ***any form*** of education at all. Slaves were not allowed to learn to read or write because white people feared they would want equality if they did. On plantations, enslaved people were ministered to and often followed the religious teachings of white masters, which affirmed their enslavement. This mingling of educational and religious cultures continues to this day, and some critics might find the historically important role of the Black church in Atlantic Canada to be an ambiguous inheritance. How can the Black church, which has so often been the site of Black freedom and safety, also be a reservoir of Western Christian ideals that were often used to support notions of White Supremacy? As Whitfield shows us, in the 18th and 19th centuries, the Black church functioned as the "organizing principle around which life was structured" for Black loyalists and subsequent Black communities (Whitfield, 2003, p. 228). The Black church in Atlantic Canada carved out its own path that intentionally deviated from the racist attitudes and roots of white dominated churches. Whitfield argues that Black people across the region "found in churches solace and sanctuary from an otherwise harsh and difficult world. Black church's provided spiritual guidance, community services, and social and political action" (Whitfield, 2003, p.113). To this day, "the importance of the black church [...] can be found in [...] historic venues" that mark the strength and survival of the Black community (2003, p. 104).

The complex linkages between religious and educational institutions are omnipresent in Atlantic Canada. In her dissertation *Black Education in Nova Scotia,* Selina Pratt sketches out the beginning of formal education for Black bodies in Atlantic Canada. She identifies critical organizations like the S. P. G. (Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in foreign parts) who designed methods to consciously roll out segregated and unequal educational

opportunities to free Blacks. While reading Pratt's work, I realized that the agenda that barred enslaved Blacks from accessing any education was the same agenda that led to them being offered access to some reduced form of education as free Blacks. In both situations whites needed Blacks to be more servile and useful, so access was granted in accordance to white needs. According to Rev. Dr. Breynton, in February 1785, education was introduced to provide what white people felt Black people required to participate and contribute basically within a new colony. The schools' teachings were designed according to what whites observed as lacking in Blacks. The S. P. G. provided Black people "with a rudimentary education […so they] were able to read and write" only (Pratt, 1972, p. 30). This offer of a strategically reduced education was intentional because white society could not allow Blacks to "look on education as a means of upward mobility" (Pratt, 1972, p. 25).

Historian James W. St. G Walker's books, *The Black Loyalists. The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone 1783-1870,* and *Racial Discrimination in Canada: The Black Experience* outlines how a rudimentary education was actually a new form of oppression that, in turn, produced a brutal economic and social reality. Walker advances Pratt's argument by showing us that poor education was intrinsically linked to poor economic and social existences. Walker points out that a "poor education […] meant limited employment opportunities" which in turn meant "low—paying jobs at the bottom of the prestige scale" (Walker, 1980, p. 44). Furthermore, Black people were then locked into a brutally cyclical model of poverty where "their menial jobs served to create an image of Blacks as ambitionless, lazy, and suited only for the simplest and dirtiest jobs. […] With feelings like these in the white community, Blacks clung even more closely to their own communities" socially alienating themselves (Walker, 1980, p. 44).

It is not surprising then that segregated schools in Atlantic Canada started as natural customary components of life in the colony. They were, in all right, an improvement to the

educational system that started with the church. However, they still only offered Blacks the bare minimum. Doris Evans and Gertrude Tynes' in *Telling the Truth. Reflections: Segregated Schools in Nova Scotia,* recount the realities of the segregated school system from a firsthand perspective. This book provides different accounts of segregated schooling experiences and the broader social repercussions of an educational policy that was explicitly based on racial division. Evans and Tynes start by naming and identifying every segregated school in Nova Scotia. In "Antigonish, Guysborough Counties," they tell us, there was:

- Lincolnville
- Rear Monastery
- Sunnyville
- Upper Big Tracadie.

In "Hants, Kings, Digby, Yarmouth Counties" there was:

- Conway
- Delaps Cove
- Gibson Woods
- Greenville
- Inglewood
- Three Mile Plains
- Weymouth Falls.

In "Halifax County" there was

- Africville
- Beechville
- Henry G. Bauld
- Mrs. Caldwell's Kitchen
- Cobequid Road

- Dartmouth Stairs Street
- Halifax African
- Lucasville
- Lake Loon
- Nelson Whynder /Allan W. Evans
- Partridge River
- Upper Hammonds Plains (1995, p. 10).

Each school named above is clear historical and physical evidence of segregated education system in Nova Scotia. The inclusive schools we see today exist due to the persistence of Black people "who pressed on and insisted that they receive an education" (Evans & Tynes, 1995, p. 7). The resources provided to these segregated schools were selective. Selective provisioning at this stage involved enforcing the *Common School Act*[8] which asserted that Black people were legally free to seek formal education. Though this was everything that Black people wanted, it was problematic for "white parents [who] believed that Blacks were inferior and had a bad influence on their children and were not prepared to have their children educated side by side with them" (Evans & Tynes, 1995, p. 8). For Black people, these segregated schools "would offer security from white prejudice and an opportunity for Black children to learn at their own pace" (Evans & Tynes, 1995, p. 8). Because of this, segregated schools were provided selectively as they were "strengthened in areas where there was a large population but weakened where a few black families resided" (Evans & Tynes, 1995, p. 8).

Sylvia Hamilton's documentary, "The Little Black School House," emphasizes the government's culpability in securing segregated schools formally and legally. Segregated

[8] For more on the Common School Act see Notes.

schools continued the agenda of disadvantaging Blacks through selective provisioning and making sure that their upward trajectory could never reach that of whites. These schools were set up in a way that white students in white schools would receive the highest designated form of education and aid that guaranteed their supremacy over any Black students. Segregated schools served a purpose, and it was not to edify Black minds and nurture Black intellect. Their existence was possible because whites had already discerned that such schools could not upset their racial superiority. In fact,

> the Education Act of 1918 continued to allow the establishment of separate schools until 1954 where all reference to race was removed from the statute. In 1964, there were about six segregated schools left, but with the consolidation of schools, more and more schools became integrated (Pratt, 1972, p. 40).

Atlantic Canadian integrated education.

Stephanie Slaunwhite's master's thesis, *The Intricacies of Integration: The Case of Graham Creighton High School,* states that since segregation was a "socially enforced construct," integration needed to be a socially enforced as well (2017, p. 32). Unfortunately, the impact of years of segregation "allowed for racism to manifest in an indirect manner" (Slaunwhite, 2017, p. 45). This made it difficult to socially enforce integration, let alone enforce it institutionally. In my initial reading of this period and all the policy debates around segregation and integration, I first focused exclusively on the shortcomings of attending segregated schools. However, Hamilton's documentary exposed me to insights I had not yet considered. In its moving portrayal of the period, "The Little Black School House" conveyed that Black people perhaps lost more than they gained through integration as better resources and provisions could not equate to better teaching and learning in rich Afrocentric environments. One of Hamilton's interviewees spoke about how segregated schools were a

Black community that offered them security, support, and encouragement. These were things that Black people lost with integration.

In 1964, Graham Creighton High School kicked off the inaugural 'school integration' project in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The school was in Cherry Brook and serviced the neighboring white and Black communities around that area. When the integration policy was introduced, Graham Creighton High School became the site where that policy was implemented. Integration brought Black students into white-centric systems designed to exclude and reinforce white supremacy. Therefore, it was not possible for Black bodies to experience white education the way white students did. On the other hand, the impact of a lengthy period of segregated schools was apparent socially and inside the classroom. There was a clear racial gap in academic performance and the integration of races exacerbated racial tensions as white parents, reminiscent of the segregated schools, did not want to integrate.

Slaunwhite's case study of Graham Creighton High School is an excellent examination of standard Atlantic Canadian inclusion and diversity practices and initiatives. The social pushback against integration highlighted that centuries of sanctioned racism created a cycle that continually placed Black bodies against an immoveable white obstacle. Like selective provisioning, segregation was a tool to assert control over Black bodies, support "white prejudice," and "sustain" it (Slaunwhite, 2017, p.15). However, Blacks in the region resisted control. Slaunwhite points out that Councilor Johnson, a member of the North Preston community, urged the council to consider "welfare problems" to equal opportunities of education so that they could give the Black community a chance to better their lives (Slaunwhite, 2017, p. 59). The case of Graham Creighton shows that the school had "ingrained prejudice" into its day-to-day operations (Slaunwhite, 2017, p. 122). The rationale behind integration was that it "would level the playing field, allowing blacks access to white education" unfortunately, this was a simple solution to a very complex situation (Slaunwhite,

2017, p. 4). As we'll see, the kinds of inclusion and diversity policies we see at work in educational institutions today share this same simplicity and, just like before, all these protocols do not adequately address racial imbalance in education.

The story of Graham Creighton school raises important questions: Can inclusion or diversity initiatives and policies ever really address deeply embedded racial imbalances? Can this imbalanced field even be balanced? And better yet, should Black educators ever want it to be balanced*?* In her research, Slaunwhite calls the Graham Creighton integration strategy an example of exposing Black people to ***white education*****.** This implies that what is on offer is never ***just*** education because it has ***always belonged*** to whiteness. Balance inside such a system is impossible because the system itself is white-centric. A white-centric system cannot be inclusive to all other races without tearing it down and starting again with inclusivity at its core. At their best, all these institutions can do, it seems, is sadly guarantee performances of inclusion and diversity which comfort Black people into accepting some semblance of progress and change over non-at all.

At Graham Creighton High School, there were practices unfolding that continue to be seen in educational institutions today. In 1968, the school's Principal, Mr. Reid Harrison, believed that the school could afford to be more culturally attentive because, in his opinion,

> (t)there are culturally deprived children who may not receive the academic training that is necessary for them to have in order to make their way in the world. The achievement tests that have been carried out […] indicate that they are […] definitely not University material (Slaunwhite, 2017, p. 79).

Harrison observed that integration was impacting students who were incorporated into white education because the system was not providing for their unique needs. Today, education appears to have evolved from past integration experiments like Graham Creighton, but if inclusion and diversity practices are still only adding to a white system, then has there really

been a change? Or are Black students in the present just experiencing a more efficient and culturally proficient variant of selective provisioning?

Post-secondary context.

Inclusion and diversity initiatives can be understood as measures of ‘progress’ that are clearly designed with the blessing of white people. Senior administrators are consciously employing strategies to increase diversity on campuses without employing adequate strategies to directly address systemic racism. The general consensus is that post-secondary institutions have always offered higher education as a means to further distinguish elite white men from their white counterparts. Black people were not imagined as possible students who could enroll in post-secondary education, let alone be successful graduates. As we’ve seen this position was supported by the founders of most Atlantic Canadian institutions who, we know, regarded Blacks poorly.

Today, Atlantic Canadian post-secondary institutions encourage us to believe that the past has no correlation to how racialized students experience campus life in the present. But as we have seen, the legacy of Atlantic Canadian education is that of “inherent racial bias” (Slaunwhite, 2017, p. 116). There is a trickle-down effect of centuries of systemic racism here. Slaunwhite wisely observes that “many of the children of Graham Creighton alumni would have attended Cole Harbour High for their high school education” and this transition guaranteed the “perpetuation of inherited ideas over time” (2017, p. 116). Those students would also go on to both local and external post-secondary institutions where they would continue the trend. Obviously, this process doesn’t apply only to the alumni of Graham Creighton. Every student, either white or racialized, that has successfully enrolled in an Atlantic Canadian post-secondary institution has been a part of that racist inheritance.

As an international student, I believe I have a valuable perspective on this issue, because I did not grow up in the grip of Atlantic Canada’s unique racial inheritance. As a

child, in my home country, I did not perceive any limits on my Blackness when I started, and this allowed me to notice the limits that were being imposed on me when I arrived in Atlantic Canada [9]. Joy DeGruy powerfully conveys the value of that difference in her book *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome. America's Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing.* DeGruy uses her observations of a South African village whose people had not experienced colonization and slavery as a foil to a village of people who did. DeGruy notes that there were key differences between the villages, as one was structured by the inherited experience of slavery, and the other was completely free of it. DeGruy noticed that in the village that shared in the legacy of slavery, "there were no tribal associations, because the people of Onverwagt were no longer connected to a tribe or a tribal language" (2005, p. 472). In the neighboring villages, that did not have an inherited legacy of slavery they spoke "multiple tribal languages" (DeGruy, 2005, p.474). Today we can see a cinematic example of DeGruy's observations in the fictional country of Wakanda from the Marvel production blockbuster Black Panther.

DeGruy defines slavery as trauma that Black bodies today face as a constant threat of "repetition and justification" (2005, p. 100). The foundations of slavery contribute to the legacy that Black people confront, but white people are "conditioned to uphold as they believe themselves superior to Blacks" (DeGruy, 2005, p.100). For such internalized inferiority to follow Black people through generations, there has to be white people willing to impose it and Black people who "unconsciously share this belief" (DeGruy, 2005, p. 491). Within Atlantic Canadian institutions, you can find white people conditioned or willing to uphold structures that permit white privilege because it is preferable to be privileged. You can

[9] I often rely on my experience of education in Zimbabwe as a comparison of living without inheriting a legacy of racial inferiority. Due to colonization, Zimbabwe also went through periods of systemic exclusion, segregation, and integration. For more on this see Notes.

also find white people willing to exert their privilege even when it limits the positive experiences of marginalized people. As we move forward, I take these lasting intergenerational impacts of segregation, and integration in the Atlantic Canadian region and apply them to post-secondary sport and their governing organizations.

2.2 Canadian Varsity Sport.

Universities and colleges are supposed to offer a treasure-trove of benefits and educational opportunities to their students. Historically, however, and in the contemporary period as well, Black people have not been the primary audience that post-secondary institutions aimed to deliver these benefits to. Black people were not the communities that were being served then, and, I argue, that we are intentionally not being served now either. The diversity initiatives we see at work now on most campuses are just by-products of shifting racial attitudes to what are acceptable practices today. In the current climate, as we have seen, post-secondary institutions boast that more Black people than ever before are attending, enrolling, and graduating from colleges and university. While this is true, and Black bodies are no longer systemically locked out of attending and enrolling in Atlantic Canadian Universities, these changes are not the result of grand systemic changes aimed at racial inclusivity.

When I first considered this research, it was very important to me to focus my study on the Black student-athlete experience from the Canadian based U SPORTS lens. This was due to wanting to carve out the Black Canadian athlete experience as being very different from the monopolizing discourse of the African American varsity student-athletes in the United States of America.

In Humphrey Nartey's excellent doctoral dissertation, *Experiences of Black Canadian Male Student Athletes,* he stresses the value in distinguishing the Canadian athlete experience

from the American one because the NCAA differs from U SPORTS in “terms of access, quality, and funding” (Nartey, 2019, p. 4). He goes on to state that,

> U SPORTS does not exist to compete with NCAA Division I athletics. Instead, where Canadian universities compete is from the student-athlete experience, as the academic rigor at a Canadian university is comparable to that of Harvard, Duke, or Stanford (Moyo & Jones, 2015). In other words, Canadian universities […] strive for the complete student-athlete experience. This means that Canadian universities emphasize academic responsibilities to the same degree, if not more than athletic responsibilities (Nartey, 2019, p. 5).

According to Nartey, U SPORTS is supposed to provide an “alternative destination for Canadian student-athletes who desire the complete university experience (Miller & Kerr, 2002)” (2019, p. 5). The above statement implies that USPORTS is the better destination for a more holistic educational experience, but is this really the case? After reading Nartey’s work I became disillusioned with U SPORTS because it seemed to me that while the Canadian organization was promoting its difference from the NCAA on the educational front of the student-athlete experience, in many ways they were reproducing many of the same poor outcomes.

As we have seen, Black varsity student-athletes are often considered scholastically inferior to their white counterparts. This, as I have established, is due to historically outdated ideas on Blackness that continue to burrow into contemporary society. However, there are also realistic material outcomes that make it appear as though Black varsity student-athletes cannot succeed academically or “obtain desired life outcomes” (Nartey, 2019, p. 25).

Doug Lederman in his article “Black Athletes and Other Black Men*,* which is a report on a study from the University of Pennsylvania by Harper, Williams Jr., and Blackman on the NCAA, argues that post-secondary institutions apply historically influenced tactics in how

they approach the education of Black student-athletes. He writes: “we hear over and over again that colleges and universities just cannot find qualified, college-ready men to come to their institutions,” but there seems to be more than enough college ready athletes (Lederman, 2012, para. 3). These sentiments can be observed in the U SPORTS context, as well. Nartey states that “though some Black Canadian students make sound educational choices, supported by their parents’ encouragement in their school activities, the belief that Black Canadians display no motivation for school continues to exist” (2019, p. 15). Nartey and Lederman both point out that “Black culture” is wrongly fingered as “responsible for Blacks being dumb, lazy, athletic, inferior, dangerous, deviant, and stupid” (2019, p. 15). Lederman and Nartey also agree that the “school system is failing Black [...people] by downgrading their educational potential in favor of their athletic prowess” (Nartey, 2019, p. 18). The volume at which I have observed this occurring is staggering as one should assume that, if accepted, a college ***bound*** athlete should be able to perform scholastically, at least enough to maintain the required standard of passing three courses per semester.

U SPORTS has procedures and policies designed to promote and uphold high academic standards. Unfortunately, there are student-athletes struggling to maintain those standards. This implies that somewhere along the line, academic institutions and U SPORTS are failing to adequately enforce their own procedures and policies. There are systemic aspects that limit one-size-fits-all procedures and policies from being effective. Black student-athletes are largely given primacy within post-secondary institutions when they are interpreted as athletes. The effort expended in recruiting athletes far outweighs that put into recruiting Black students and the evidence of this lies in the concentration of Black males on found on football and basketball rosters in comparison to those in the classroom. Lederman states that “institutions seem to be more interested in offering educational opportunities to Black male athletes than educating Black males” (2012, para. 7). I agree with this as my

personal experience at SMU privileged my athleticism and international student-status over addressing how being Black negatively shaped my experience of sport, campus, and education.

Throughout history, Educational and sporting institutions have been revealed as sites where we can observe the way the white dominant culture exerts control over racialized individuals and collective bodies. Tony Collins's *Sport in a Capitalist Society. A Short History* shows us ***how*** education became the chief delivery method of amateur sport. He states that "education was […] the artery through which sport was transmitted to the colonial peoples subjugated by the British Empire – or at least to the local elites, the only sections of non-white society that the British thought worthy of education" (Collins, 2013, p. 64).

Furthermore, Collins argues that exposing colonized people to sport through education "was clear in its purpose" in that they wanted to

> (d)iscipline their bodies in the manliness and hardihood of the English public schoolboy. […] The school produced two of India's greatest cricketers, the princes Ranjitsinhji and Duleepsinhji, both of whom played for England rather than India, a telling indication of the relationship not only between cricket and empire at this time but also that between the British and Indian elites (Collins, 2013, p. 64).

In this passage, Collins is describing ***necessitated inclusion***. Initially, when they were perceived as citizens of India, Ranjitsinhji and Duleepsinhji were seen as racially inferior and in need of guidance and correction from their white superiors. However, when they excelled at cricket, they were integrated into the national team of England and the nation. To the rest of the world, when "cricket began to be played outside of the colonial settler milieu, it remained elitist and racially segregated," but on the English national team these players were necessarily included because they fulfilled an essential role with their excellent performances (Collins, 2013, p. 65). Collins asserts that the idea that sport provides a level playing field on

which merit alone can triumph, regardless of class or color, was a progressive extension of fair play. Unfortunately, this belief ignores that the field of play systemically has "controlled access" (Collins, 2013, p. 65).

Black athletes do not control the spaces in which they participate. As Collins notes, they "play sport but not under the circumstances of their own choosing" (Collins, 2013, p. viii). Nolan Cabrera's work *White Guys on Campus: Racism, White Immunity, and the Myth of Post-Racial Higher Education* is extremely relevant here as he emphasizes that specific white-centric environments are designed to, "elevate the status" of white people even when white people "find themselves in an elevated social status" already (2019, p. 11). This is largely due to the fact that systemic racism continues to "[depress] the life chances of people of color" even when white people do not receive elevation (Cabrera, 2019, p. 11). This is an exceptional counterargument to scholars and people who claim that the success of several Black athletes shows that sport is a reliable pathway to professional success. Cabrera argues that there are in existence institutions who, at their core, "were not created to be racially inclusive, and they have been struggling with that legacy ever since" (Cabrera, 2019, p. 4). These institutions work twofold as they exist for the "societal elite, while concurrently […] preventing equal participation" (Cabrera, 2019, p. 4). Cabrera highlights a very important point. Taking us back to Thrasher and Hamilton, he argues that perhaps educational integration took more from Black communities than it gave. Perhaps this model of integration was never really equitable and, instead, its work stole opportunities from generations of Black bodies that are still trying to find equal footing today.

Working within these conditions, what do Black student-athletes at Atlantic Canadian institutions need for there to be meaningful change that takes into consideration the racial, social, economic, and cultural imbalance of their student experiences? What do they need to gain equal footing?

2.3 Atlantic Canadian Varsity Athlete Impact Analysis.

Blackness distorts the unfettered access Black bodies are believed to have at Atlantic Canadian post-secondary institutions. In my earlier examinations of the Black athlete dynamic, I argued that "athletes serve as the most prominent images of success that Black youth, especially Black young men, see. They are the primary role models along with entertainers and they also serve as the sole standard of Black success" (Kuwodza, 2020, p. 2). Furthermore, I also suggested that both Black communities and white society seemed to view success in athletics as an "accessible" pathway to financial freedom (Kuwodza, 2020, p. 2). Through further investigation, two things became clear. First, that Black youth sincerely wanted to be student-athletes and, if they were lucky, eventually, professional athletes. Second, that society and specific institutions ***wanted*** Black youth to ***want*** to become student-athletes and professional athletes.

In Rodney D. Coates article, *Towards a Simple Typology of Racial Hegemony* he claims that "(w)here there is injustice, perceived or real, there will also be general failures in the social fabric. People respond to injustices by their increasing unwillingness to engage in the collective enterprise" (2006, p. 2). Sport is a valuable social and economic enterprise; this has been unequivocally established. However, it is also a hub of "corporate excess" (Collins, 2013, p. 15). This means that sport is a very lucrative institution. It is imperative to highlight the relevance of profitability as "exploitation appears most evident in capitalist situations" (Coates, 2006, p. 2). However, Coates does leave room for us to expect willing participants in this type of exploitations when he states that racial hegemonic systems that "preserve, maintain, or create power" do so by achieving a "consensus between the exploiters and the exploited" (Coates, 2006, p. 2). This means that it is normal to observe for example, Black student-athletes eager to be recruited and buy into the athlete-student persona. Black student-

athletes give consent because they want to be athletes, because it is an accessible means of success, a form of cultural expression, and a preconditioned societal want.

Varsity student-athletes are valuable to the athletic ecosystem of post-secondary institutions. The current landscape of athletic performance in Atlantic Canada reflects that Black bodies are overrepresented in football and basketball.[10] This overrepresentation coupled with the athlete buy in causes many to believe that Black varsity student-athletes are not exploited. Due to social conditioning, an inability to see the role of race to shape opportunity and circumstance, and a lack of awareness or lack of knowledge about systemic racism, there are those who cannot separate the Black student-athlete from the white student-experience. Especially since white student-athletes participate in the same environment and are legislated by the same policies and practices and excel in comparison. This line of argument fingers Black student-athletes as solely responsible for their vastly different outcomes. I am inclined to agree with this conclusion because white student-athletes do not have to also live and learn while experiencing the constant threat of racism, and exclusion.

In Nova Scotia, race-based statistics paint a stark picture of the material realities of being Black in this province. Consider the following figures:

> In 2011, African Nova Scotians had a rate of unemployment higher (14.5%) than the rest of Nova Scotia (9.9%) and African Canadians (12.9%) across Canada. […] In 2011, the average incomes for African Nova Scotians were $29,837 for males and $24,929 for females. In comparison, the average income for Nova Scotians was $42, 545 and $29, 460 respectively. The 2011 National Household Survey found that 34.8% of African Nova Scotians had a prevalence of low-income versus 16.5% for the rest of Nova Scotia (ANSA – Government of Nova Scotia, 2020).

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[10] Look at the last 5-10 years of men's basketball and football programs. Especially, SMU, St Francis Xavier, University of Prince Edward Island, and Dalhousie University.

Any scholar of the Black student-athlete experience in Atlantic Canada must take the far-reaching consequences of such statistics and apply them to their research. Grace-Edward Galabuzi in her chapter *The Colour of Poverty. Racialization and Inequality in Canada,* found in the collaborative work of Este et al. *Racism and Anti-Racism in Canada* succinctly describes poverty through a racialized lens, and this effectively allows her to show how the impact of poverty moves along racial currents in almost all cultural institutions, including sport and education. Galabuzi defines the racialization of poverty as a

> (p)rocess by which poverty becomes disproportionately concentrated and reproduced among members of racialized groups, in some cases intergenerationally. The racialization of poverty emerges out of structural socio-economic features that predetermined the disproportionate incidents of poverty among racialized groups (2018, p. 131).

Poverty for Black bodies in the Atlantic Canadian region endures because the

> (s)tructures that create inequality are built into the very foundation of Canadian society and the Canadian economy. […] From its early days, Canada created institutions that operated in a way that economically, socially, and politically disadvantaged some people along the lines of class, gender, [and] race. These have subsequently determined opportunities, quality of education, access to resources, dwelling, location and participation in society and its various institutions (Galabuzi, 2018, p. 135).

Atlantic Canadian post-secondary institutions have to be cognizant of the endurance of poverty and how it can impact most racialized people's access to higher education in the communities they serve. These institutions must also be aware of the desire of many racialized people to escape poverty, and the universities must offer opportunities to make such economic and cultural changes possible. Mechanisms such as scholarships and bursaries

that only cover meager portions of tuition and fees with conditions that shape the individual into a deserving applicant, are marketed as helpful to students but they are also, perhaps primarily, helpful to institutions.

Consider this: at Saint Mary's University as of 2022, one Arts course for an in-province student costs $744.70, Commerce $864.70, Science and Engineering, $829.70. For outside province students, these same programs would be $873.00, $993.00, and $958.00 respectively. Playing varsity sport offers some financial relief to many marginalized students and the opportunity to enroll in university. Athletic Financial Awards serve as a key source of funding for Black student-athletes in Atlantic Canadian institutions, offering lucrative supports which often results in a large representation of Black bodies on athletic rosters. For example, on the 2019 Saint Mary's University Men's Basketball roster, 73%[11] of the Huskies were Black. In the 2017 season, 56% were Black, in 2018 63%, 2020 64% and in 2021, 71% were Black. This shows a disproportionately large, but localized number of Black men on a specific sports team. These numbers are not reflected in the classroom, and this should trouble our seemingly transparent ideas of ***student-athletes***.

2.4 Recommendations.

The dominant racial rhetoric around sports in North America, suggests that Black male athletes are genetically predisposed to become better athletes than white males. Nartey explains that "the use of racial differences to explain athletic or genetic advantages ignores the historical context of anthropological discourse," leading to "an examination of the Black body, when the real issue is an examination of White mythologies ascribed to the Black body" (2019, p. 1). This rhetoric completely ignores the socio-economic culpability of

[11] These statistics are from publicly available and posted rosters.

systemic racism. Black youth are systemically streamlined toward specific sports because of social, economic, cultural, and perceived biological traits. These are all then reinforced by public systems that support the streamlining of Black bodies into specific spaces. Consider the city planning of Halifax; Black neighbourhoods are built around open fields and basketball courts, while white communities are built around tennis courts, swimming pools, and ice hockey arenas. In addition to this, consider the social demographic serviced by the Dixon basketball courts in Central Halifax and then compare them to the tennis courts, or the yacht clubs found in the South End of Halifax. The Uniacke Square community is a predominantly Black community in the middle of the city, and the South End is home to largely white middle-class families and university students.

As we move from one court to the other, we are not just changing sports, we are changing our social definition of how sport connects to the larger community. Public systems uphold the idea of Black sports and white sports. By this I mean public parks and REC centres servicing Black bodies and communities have a particular infrastructure that does not include ***affluent*** sports such as tennis or hockey that require expensive individually sourced equipment and a great deal of travel. It follows that hockey arenas and tennis courts are not built in Black neighbourhoods. This is evidence of public systems asserting where Black athletes ***belong*** in the sport arena, and them enforcing their white supremist characteristics. These characteristics do not only apply to Black athletes in the field of play, but they also apply to Black students in the classroom.

Danielle Gabay in her dissertation, *Race, Gender, and Interuniversity Athletics: Black Female Student Athletes in Canadian Higher Education* makes a compelling argument urging institutions to make decisions about racialized students by considering their past and present-day racialized experiences. She shows us that post-secondary institutions maintain the precedent of historical exclusion by making “decisions” without “better” understanding the

"needs and experiences of different" students and working to incorporate that knowledge into that system (Gabay, 2013, p. 6). Additionally, she argues that contemporary performances of diversity and inclusion are preceded by an inability to make meaningful efforts to "create a hospitable climate for Black" students because these institutions do not work towards understanding "which environments promote [success] and which restrict success" by race (Gabay, 2013, p. 11).

Post-secondary institutions choose to engage within the parameters of their comfortable white-centric confines. In applying Gabay's assertions to Atlantic Canadian post-secondary institutions, I believe post-secondary institutions perform the role of an equally accessible community resource by now sharing their infrastructure, but Black bodies are only equal in areas that perceive ***them*** as assets. As we've seen, athletics is one of the key sectors of the university that 'favors' Black bodies in this way, but the same processes occur with racialized international students who pay much higher tuition fees and are also often used as symbols to augment the institution's reputation for multi-culturalism, diversity, and inclusion.

After outlining some of the profound challenges Black students face on Atlantic Canadian campuses and examining the deeply ingrained historical currents of racism that produced the current crisis, I would like to use the final pages of this chapter to discuss some recommendations that might improve the situation for Black student-athletes trying to live, work, compete and live in these educational and sporting institutions. Obviously, policies and procedures need to change, and universities need to be held accountable. Conscious and unconscious bias are elements that function within all institutions and all participants need to be aware. Conscious bias can be somewhat addressed with more inclusive language in policies and anti-racist practices in procedures, but very often, the policies in place at the top, do not trickle down to individual institutions. This troubling gap leaves too much room for each institution or department to interpret and implement policy at their own discretion. In

order to address this, post-secondary institutions and their athletic departments must uniformly adopt effective and transparent guidelines to address anti-Black racism across the entire region. U SPORTS, AUS and their member post-secondary institutions often suffer a kind of operational paralysis on these issues because they break down Black campus experiences and life into too many different separate elements. By only addressing, for example, the academic and/or the athletic sides of lived experience, institutions ignore that Blackness is threatened or discriminated against far beyond those two areas.

In applying lessons learned from both Quinless and Pratt, this thesis calls for culturally competent reforms that move towards reparations and restorative justice for Atlantic Canadian post-secondary institutions, their athletic departments, and their Black students. If my research has taught me anything, it's that structural changes like these would make immediate meaningful changes in the scholarly and athletic experiences of Black student-athletes in a way that privileges the experiences of racialized students.

Here are the summarized recommendations:

1. *Every AUS University should employ a Black student success coordinator.*[12]

At the 2023 U SPORTS Final 8 men's basketball tournament, the Atlantic region representatives all had a higher representation of Black players than the other programs. This reflects a culture throughout the region of recruiting Black student-athletes, and this, in turn, shows us the ***need*** for specially trained administrative personnel who can advocate for prospective and present Black student-athletes as they commence the journey of higher education. Black student-athletes need an ally who can guide them through the recruitment process and make sure that the exceptional athlete is also a college-ready student.

I argue that institutions of higher learning can do more to protect their Black student-athletes and provide a better, holistic campus experience. There should be universal and

[12] For more on this see Notes.

consistent means to check on a student's academic performance, adjustment, and more. This would allow for the following: First, a check in process before the semester begins to make sure all athletes are enrolled in classes, and they have a clear plan for the academic year. Second, weekly or monthly check ins, dependent on the grades of the athlete or the struggles they are facing to ensure they are up to date and managing. Teams can keep track on their own, but the student-athlete success coordinator has access to the check ins in the form of documentation. Third: study hall programs need to be worked through with the student-athlete success coordinator so that a consistently effective program is in existence and in use. A tracking system that takes note of progress, engagement in the form of attendance and task completion, and outcomes, would be helpful in accurately estimating performance results with enough time to make meaningful changes.

2. *Every AUS school should provide training in systemic racism, unconscious bias, and the racial genealogies of our educational system at every administrative, faculty, and staff level within the institution.*

Students, staff, and faculty all need to be exposed to workshops, lectures and information sessions that explicitly focus on the fight against systemic racism. All staff and administrators should have access to the same information they can use to create a fair and just working environment. This training will also be offered to athletes and coaches of all teams even those without racialized athletes or staff. Training will be important in informing racialized student, coaches, members, staff, custodial and more of their rights and the rights of others. Additionally, to go along with this an updated handbook should be made available to staff, students, and faculty. In it should be inclusive language, human, racial and sexual rights information

This is important because, as stipulated by the court in Johnson vs. Halifax Regional police,

> Learning to recognize and deal with racism is another form of training that the police [and other state institutions] must add to their repertoire in order to continue to provide quality policing [, administrational, educational, and other] services, just as learning about domestic violence [, mental health crises and evidence of abuse] became a larger part of police [and other institutions] training in recent years. Here I think Constable Sanford was not well served by his employer (The Human Rights Act, R.S.N.S. 1989, c. 214, as amended 1991, c. 12, 2003, p. 26).

3. *All AUS Universities must regularly collect and make publicly available race informed, race-based, and race-sensitive data.*

Madison Danford and Peter Donnelly in *'Racial' Representation in Canadian Interuniversity Sport: A Pilot Study* acutely express why it is important to employ racialized data. In their pilot study, they identified that such data can be used to better inform research processes as their study investigated if "teams that represent Canadian universities look[ed] like the student bodies from which they are selected" (Danford & Donnelly, 2018, p. 5). Danford and Donnelly acknowledge that there are many factors that can go into the analysis of racialized data, and so it is imperative to see such data as "instructive" (2018, p. 22).

These recommendations are just the beginning, but if they were fully implemented, their effects would be immediate and positive and also have long lasting influences. There is so much that can be and should be done. What is important is that we start having these conversations that openly discuss race and strategize how to combat white supremacist sentiments. Educated jargon and empty performances are simply not enough. When applied on a university campus, the aids and concessions made for racialized students today simply

do not equally or equitably balance the circumstances that produce and reproduce the socio-economic challenges most often aligned with race. Often society wants to break down these issues that exacerbate Black life into separate categories and appear as if they do not act on each other, but they do. The color of your skin can aggravate social issues and economic issues, because even when white and Black people are in the same class bracket, there are racial advantages that will always elevate white people and racial disadvantages that lower Black people.

The recommendations I have suggested here cannot address all the issues discussed at once, or at all, but I know they would lead to positive change. Unfortunately, I can only be skeptical of the changes these recommendations would bring. Whitfield has shown that change means different things to different people. In the sources used in chapters 1 and 2, I have highlighted the importance of language. Unfortunately, Jones speaks to the limits of such measures as they "represent change in language but not attitudes" (Jones, 2020, p. 38). What Black bodies need for meaningful changes on campus is radical change, not "a new interpretation of" integration (Jones, 2020, p. 101).

Chapter 3.

"The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" (Audre Lorde, 1979, Essay Title).

Black bodies on Atlantic Canadian campuses, whether they be students, student-athletes, international students, staff, or faculty, all experience various forms of racial surrogacy and symbolic racism. Black bodies on campus are ensnared in a white-centric system that stands to gain more from their enrollment than their scholarly participation. Basil Mortley's thesis, *Black Students' Perception of the Integrated School Environment. How do the Students Feel? A Study of Black Students in Halifax, Nova Scotia* written in ***1995*** echoes, almost exactly my feelings and experiences as a Black student in Halifax in ***2023***. Nearly thirty years ago, Mortley stated that the "shortage of 'cultural capital'" on Atlantic Canadian campuses, was impacting Black learning more than any changes would ever inhibit white learning (Mortley, 1995, p. 19). For decades, North American post-secondary institutions have been implementing different measures directed towards addressing systemic imbalances in the provision of higher education.

This chapter acknowledges the importance of such initiatives as the Scarborough Charter[13] and others like it. However, there is an extensive gap between well-meaning initiatives and their impact. There has always been a gap between the two, since the region began making efforts to integrate marginalized people into white society. Shannon J. Giannitsopoulou in her thesis *Uncovering Discourses Surrounding (In)equity in Canadian University Sport and Recreation: A Critical Policy Analysis* states that studies like mine do

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[13] For more on this see Notes.

not “contest that university employees who work hard to create university sport and recreation programming do not have the best intentions of enriching the lives of students” (Giannitsopoulou, 2020, p.3). There has always been a fault in these initiatives that either cause or maintain harm of Black and marginalized bodies on predominantly white campuses. For one, the long history of privileging whiteness, and protecting whiteness are key factors in why Black people continue to experience less privilege than their white counterparts. Therefore, studies like this “encourage” institutions to “turn a critical lens on the discourses furthered by their institutional practices and policies on equity” (Giannitsopoulou, 2020, p. 3).

Mortley explains that the “characteristics of the school” and “the problems that Black students face in the school environment are reinforced by their historical and socio-cultural backgrounds” (Mortley, 1995, p. 20). As Mortley demonstrates, the school environment,

> [Is] a popular metaphor for a complex phenomenon that is easy to perceive, but formidably difficult to define, measure, or manipulate. It refers to the aggregate of indicators, both subjective and objective, that convey the overall feeling or impression one gets about a school (1995, p. 16).

As we have seen, the relationships between Black bodies and Atlantic Canadian institutions are fraught with racial tension. Despite, or possibly directly because of this racist inheritance, these same institutions have in recent times been enthusiastically sharing their initiatives and strategies to increase diversity and inclusion within their campus communities. At the level of employment, this means targeted hiring and designating new positions to specific marginalized groups to guarantee diversity in the workplace. Within these professional and learning environments, there have also been several human resource strategies, or even manifestos, deployed which outline how institutions of higher education can better combat anti-Blackness on campus and systemic racism in the wider community.

Unfortunately, the value of historical context in these discussions is often ignored or devalued as white administrators lack the embedded cultural competency required to see how such historical currents remain relevant, active, and alive. The truth is that most of the disadvantages that Black people face in higher education, happen precisely because they are Black, and this is a direct result of the legacy of white supremacist ideals that are built squarely into the foundations of these institutions.

As we have seen, race was an intentional intellectual concept created to rationalize colonization, slavery, and segregation. Today, the dangerous legacy of this conceptual apparatus has become so obvious that many public and private institutions now recognize the striking racial disparities within their communities. This has led to the proliferation of many diversity and inclusion strategies to help address the situation. Ironically, these strategies are, most often, both designed and then enforced from a white, Eurocentric perspective. It follows, unsurprisingly, that such policies often turn out to be incomplete attempts that end up re-enforcing a broken system rather than repairing it.

No one is more qualified than Nobel Prize winner Toni Morrison to discuss, assess and analyze the broken white and Eurocentric systems that impact Blackness daily. Though she approaches the subject from a literary perspective, her arguments fit perfectly within the context of this interdisciplinary study, and as Giannitsopoulou argues, all scholars benefit from the "use of analytical frameworks capable of uncovering the Implicit knowledges" that inform policy when it is analyzed as discourse (2020, p. 4). In her breakthrough critical text, *Playing in the Dark,* Morrison famously examined the structural interdependence of Black and white cultural relationships. She noted that the concept of "freedom is preceded by oppression" and that it is impossible to discuss ideas of liberation without also trying to come to terms with the struggles that led to the need for such liberation in the first place (1992, p. 33). In that same spirit, we can see that the startling need for contemporary diversity and

inclusion initiatives are perhaps the clearest evidence we have of the destructive power of so many preceding centuries of privileging racial discrimination and racial exclusion. In that one line, Morrison shows us that without reckoning with the past, Atlantic Canadian institutions can never achieve meaningful and effective inclusion, no matter how passionately they seek it. Some of the many ways that limit these white built, diversity 'seeking' initiatives is the reliance on white tools, to support, and shape Black bodies in accordance with white needs.

3.1 The Governance Conundrum.

In another important text, *The Origins of Others,* Morrison introduces readers to the concepts of ***destructive*** and ***constructive*** white tools that "inspire–both violent and constructive" (2017, p. 55). Throughout the student recruiting process, institutions often use constructive ideas like increasing diversity and inclusion as the rationale behind a focus on recruiting racialized students. However, there are also destructive ideas about race that permeate constructive ones, and very often, these policies cause more harm than good. In turn, destructive policies are more overt tools that re-enforce or uphold racially normative systemic outcomes. Rather than addressing the root cause of a systemic issue faced by students, it could be argued that many of these policies are being created in order to achieve a measurable positive change for the institution itself. An example of such a policy is aiming to be more racially integrated or inclusive. Having a measurable quantitative goal like that chases physical representation without considering the 'experiences' of racialized people being integrated into a white-centric and European system.

Isalean Phillip's thesis *Where are the Black Female Faculty? Employment Equity Policy Failures and the Overrepresentation of Whiteness* can help us better understand exactly how destructive policies hinder meaningful change. Phillip states that "university

equity policies are developed by institutions to demonstrate their commitment to improving equity and diversity" (2018, p. 19). However, the policies are often seen

> as non-performative since they rarely bring about the effect that they name. The failure of equity policies to do what they say is not a failure of intent or even circumstance but is actually what the policy is doing (Ahmed, 2007, 2012). In other words, statements of commitment to equity and diversity and the policies cited to demonstrate that commitment are taken up as if they are the effect of the actions they name; as if naming the action in university mission statements and strategic plans, on websites […] means the effects have already been achieved. [These] equity policies are therefore seen as a way of not bringing equity and diversity into effect; as […] university equity policies are non-performative by default; that is, they are made and sustained to be non-performative (Philips, 2018, p. 19).

Obviously, this shortcoming of policy making is not unique to post-secondary institutions. The same phenomena can be observed at the provincial and federal levels of government as well. Peter Li discusses the Canadian government's many different policies around race, ethnicity, and immigration. His research is relevant here as he analyses policies by measuring their ***actual*** (destructive) impact and not their ***intended*** (constructive) impact. Li shows us that policies can be lacking and can cause harm even if they do not intend to. This is also affirmed by Giannitsopoulou again who states that there can be "contradictions between what policies state an institution commits to or values and the actual impacts of a policy" and that a thorough investigation should focus on "potentially disproportionate negative effects on marginalized groups" (2020, p. 11). From these works, we can begin to see that policy often remains fixed as a representation of change even if it is not effecting change, let alone meaningful change. Through Li's work, we learn that adding and implementing policy is not enough because the system itself remains 'broken' and inclusive

policy only adjusts a broken system. Institutions are "employed to extend or defend the traditional interests of dominant culture" (Li, 1999, p. 102). As it stands today, in Atlantic Canada, the intent of a post-secondary institution does not digress from its initial intended impact, which was to unequally advance the status of the dominate white culture. The solution to such a situation seems obvious. If institutions claim to be inclusive, and seek their redemption through inclusive practices, then those practices must equally advance the status of all who enroll. As Li argues:

> Racialized Discourse' considers how racism is woven into not only everyday discourse but is also deeply embedded in public policies and legislative acts. At the level of policy making, there is a discourse that is used to further the interests of the dominant White culture, which helps to maintain existing systems of inequality (1999, p. 89).

Below are examples of destructive policies (official and unofficial[14]) that are applied at SMU and other U SPORTS member schools. As we will see, most of these initiatives appear or profess to be shaping the learning environments and experiences of their student-athletes in positive ways, but they often produce negative results. Consider this example from the U Sports basic regulations on student-athlete eligibility:

> A student-athletes must be enrolled in a minimum of three (3) courses recognized towards a degree (minimum 9 degree-granting credit hours or equivalent as confirmed by the registrar) in the semester in which they are competing within U SPORTS, unless there are circumstances within their academic program which would warrant an exception to this ruling in which the university continues to

[14] I am using dictionary definitions of official and unofficial. Therefore, unofficial policies are generally not formally specified in written documentation but are a suggested guide. Whereas official policies are written down on formal documents that are readily available for people to access.

> declare this individual as a full-time student in that semester (U SPORTS Policies and Procedures 40 - Eligibility, 2021, 40. 10. 3. 2. 1).

In addition to this official policy, student-athletes are strongly encouraged by coaches to defer their more grueling classes to off-season semesters. Also, student-athletes struggling with their academics are often advised to switch from intensive majors to maintain their athletic eligibility. If it appears that a student may have registered for a course that is too difficult, they are likewise encouraged to drop that class and start again in order to protect their GPA and their eligibility.

On the surface, policies like these appear to be helpful, but when we plug in other intersectional variables such as race, gender, and class, the helpfulness of these directives starts to change. An example of what I am describing here is made readily available to us by Phillip who argues that "despite the enactment of" equity acts like "Canada's Employment Equity Act over thirty years ago, […] equity for racialized groups within Canadian academia is an elusive reality" (2018, p. 8). She further states that these policies fall short because "equity policies operate on a basis of selective performativity, whereby whiteness is privileged; this enables white women's inclusion while Black women continue to be marginalized and excluded" (Phillip, 2018, p. 8).

In the case of the SMU athletic policies, the stated central purpose of such guidelines is to not overload student-athletes so that they can better manage their demanding schedules. Unfortunately, in the long run, this 'lack of overloading' can cause more harm than good because it encourages student-athletes to switch into less intensive courses and it reenforces the idea that student-athletes are intellectual inferior to 'regular' students. According to Phillip, effective equity policies and initiatives need to consider,

> [the] culture of whiteness that permeates through university institutions. While equity policies have the intention of improving the representation of racialized and

> Indigenous groups, white hegemony blocks institutional change towards socially inclusive and equitable academic spaces. Due to the embedded nature of whiteness, individuals' access to and experiences in faculty positions are conditioned by white hegemonic culture and traditions which, as this research highlights, has debilitating effects for Black female academics who, unlike their white female counterparts, have not benefitted from employment equity (2018, p. 17).

There are unforeseen consequences when white policy writers, write policy that focuses on a racialized experience as they can only imagine the actual challenges that Black people face in order to arrive at the same level of success as white people. Therefore, white policy writers cannot fully appreciate every possible impact and consequence of policies without embedded cultural competency. In *Playing in the Dark,* Morrison shows us that this same deficiency can be observed in literary culture when white authors and writers, even those working with the best of intentions, often reinforce the stereotypes they profess to be undermining with their Black characters.

Morrison suggests that white writers and other white cultural intellectuals often unconsciously impose their will (and their limited understanding and knowledge of the Black experience) on the Black bodies they imagine. In one poignant passage, in which she demonstrates how this these limitations operate in the quintessentially 'American' novel, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,* Morrison argues that "neither Huck nor Mark Twain [the author] can tolerate, in imaginative terms, Jim freed" (1992, p. 41). This leads to an absurdly complicated plot that defers Jim's freedom till the novel's end, as a kind of comic reward for all the trials and tribulations he has had to endure throughout the story. Obviously, in this case, the status of 'just' being a slave was not tribulation enough. In Morrison's analysis, Jim, the character, is limited by Twain, the author, and not by his own ability to gain his freedom. This power dynamic between character and author is transferrable to the Atlantic Canadian

region and policy writers because the imbalance is the same. In both cases, it is the author of the story or the policy that can establish its social meaning or significance. For more than a century, in a dominantly white-centric industry, Twain and Huck Finn were universally celebrated as anti-racist champions of diversity. Morrison, as one of the leading Black intellectuals of the contemporary period, simply reads the text differently and calls out the imbalances she sees when white culture ***plays*** in the dark.

The core problem of this dynamic remains obvious to almost every Black reader and observer. In the eligibility policies, for example, as a Black former student-athlete, it seems to me that almost every one of these initiatives implies that student-athletes cannot cut it academically. In many ways, Black bodies are hobbled scholastically in the same way Twain hobbles Jim. Morrison argues that Jim is intentionally placed in the text as a slave character so that he can be used to give freedom meaning. As a result, Twain and his white readers can 'correctly' imagine the concept of freedom as they have never been without it. Without Jim the concept is moot because whiteness's ability to grasp the concept is limited by never having experience race-based enslavement or carrying its legacy for centuries. Though policies like those above and plot relationships such as the one between Huck Finn and Jim may make the white people feel better, or think ***the right thing***, they do not necessarily make the fundamental material changes they appear to call for, or that Black students need.

Writing and shaping a genuine and authentic Black lived experience is not possible without living while Black. There is simply no authenticity possible without being embedded in the lived experience. This is why when policy is written by white people only racialized people can be negatively impacted as there are aspects of our existence that cannot be imagined by white people. Therefore, any writing by white people designed to support, or shape the experiences of racialized bodies could ignore, even if not consciously, that white people have white privilege which advances their chances to be successful in a white society.

As we've seen, there are several racial considerations that must be made in the creation and application of institution policy. No one dimensional policy can work for all students because race effectively splinters and complicates so many other social concerns. For example, in a policy that suggests that student-athletes defer more grueling classes to off-season semesters, athletes with a year-round season are left in a very difficult position. The Atlantic University Sport conference boasts only four seasonal programs and then the rest of the sports are considered as being played throughout the school year. Being a student-athlete in a year-round program means deferring some classes to summer and spring semesters only. This provides several challenges to students relying on financial support for example, as Athletic Financial Awards in Canada do not cover summer and spring semesters. Furthermore, many student-athletes, both white and Black, rely on these summer months to work without interruptions in order to fund their academics in the new year. Summer employment is a source of important income to students who need supplements to their finances or have taken on provincial and federal loans. It is also a source of much deserved time off to rebuild one's mental, physical, and emotional resources.

In addition, institutions usually prioritize Fall and Winter semesters for their regular course offerings. This means that the academic options available in Summer and Spring rarely allow student athletes to access the core classes required for many majors. Furthermore, Summer and Spring classes are usually very condensed due to the shorter time frame. This means students have less time to dedicate to their classes, especially if they must work full-time. University resources, such as the library, and other student services, also operate on shorter Summer and Spring hours, and this limits the access students have when compared to Fall and Winter. At the very least, summer courses are not as convenient or as accessible as Fall and Winter courses because the institutional design does not prioritize the administration of classes during those periods. This leaves student athletes forced to play

catch up without financial support, and without access to a full catalogue of classes. Not surprisingly, such fundamental obstacles significantly limit student-athlete's ability to complete their degrees on time and graduate.

Race consciousness obviously influences the way we interpret racialized disparities in policy outcomes. As we have seen, the administrative policies I have just discussed were and continue to be marketed as tools of support that student-athletes can access to help ease negative campus experiences. In reality, they limit the student's potential and their ability to be successful because they are not culturally competent. Culturally competent policies would consider that most Athletic Financial Awards in the AUS do not systemically balance centuries of depressed life chances for Black students. Secondly, they would consider that racial variables can disproportionately impact how effective these policies are. In my research, and in my experience, I have found that most of the policies that affect Black student-athletes are not being written by people who understand Blackness in any of the broader, more historically and literary informed ways we have been studying in this discussion.

The ripple effects of maintaining full-time status*,* deferring grueling classes*,* and switching majors' numerous times in one course of study often force student-athletes into completing what should be a 4-year degree in 5 or 6 years, or maybe never at all. This is not necessarily a bad thing, as attaining a university education may not be the end goal for everyone, but this more expensive, more extended study period can disproportionately impact Black students. To complete a university degree with one major, students need to fulfill 120 credit hours. To complete that in 4 years, the student ***must*** take 5 courses per semester for 4 years. University Sport caps the eligibility of student-athletes so that they will only be "allowed to participate in U SPORTS competition for five (5) academic years," and institutions follow these rules when handing out athletic financial awards (U SPORTS

Procedures and Policies – 40 Eligibility, 2021, 40. 10. 4. 3. 1). This means that a student-athlete who uses the suggested, extended strategies in their academic journey can only be compensated for five years and no more. These conditions are not favorable for completing a degree on financial aid, particularly if that is your only source of income to fund your education. Universities recruit student-athletes with the promise of a scholarship that will make higher education affordable, but the funds they offer often cannot adequately cover the cost of living as a student-athlete with limited earning (or learning) potential.

Anthony P. Carnevale published an article that states that “[working] while in college might hurt students more than it helps” (2019, Title). Carnevale goes on to say that “the reality is that working while in school doesn’t leave enough to cover living and tuition costs. You just can’t work your way through college anymore” (2019, para. 2). Furthermore, he emphasizes that “[working] while learning takes a greater toll on low-income students” and that they are “disproportionately” women and people of color (Carnevale, 2019, para. 3). In addition, he implies that this can directly impact a student’s “likelihood” to complete their education and get good grades (Carnevale, 2019, para. 4). As we saw in chapter two, Black people in Nova Scotia make up a significant percentage of low-income earners in the province. This agrees with Carnevale’s assertions and makes it clear that Black people experience university policies around academics and athletics differently than white students.

The economic challenges of the Black student-athlete experience, along with the social conditions expressed above, only deepen the impact of white-centric or one size fits all policies. For example, through a race conscious lens, consider in how many ways student-athletes (white and Black) on Athletic Financial Awards can be assisted by the same scholarship amount. In Atlantic Canada, and the AUS, an Athletic Financial Award is capped at $2,000 per semester. This does not adequately compensate ***any*** student-athlete, but less so, for student-athletes from a low-income household who, as Carnevale has stated, are more

often racialized students. $4,000 does not adequately cover one-year of degree costs. $4,000 does not cover rent payments, bill payments, equipment payments in an active athlete's year, where they also must manage classes, practices, homework, travel, work, games and so on. Obviously, being a student-athlete is difficult for everyone and athletic scholarships do not elevate white student-athletes over Black student-athletes, but they also do not elevate Black student-athletes to an equal level with white-student-athletes.

I refer once again to Giannitsopoulou who states that sport has "productive power" as the institution can "produce certain subjectivities, which may increase or decrease equity for certain participants, depending on context" (2020, p. 23). This is a key point to remember because it "complicates the idea that diversity of participants is necessarily a desirable goal" as sporting environments must first be made "equitable, inclusive, and safe" (Giannitsopoulou, 2020, p. 24). Without this first step, racialized student-athletes will continue to experience harm in sporting institutions. In respect to student-athletes, the harm can be two-fold as the deficiencies of higher education collide with those of sport and recreation.

In my experience as a student athlete and coach between 2016 and 2022, I observed that, on average, Black student-athletes took more than the 4 years to complete an undergraduate program. I took 5 years. My academic experience included transferring programs, schools, and switching majors. As I explained earlier, many of these changes were made for financial reasons, and this is a very common occurrence for student-athletes, but one that is tragically under-reported and studied. Even a casual fan would notice if they perused the athletic rosters of an AUS team that it is usually the Black student-athletes that are always appearing and disappearing at various stages of their careers and struggling to stay in one program consistently for 4 years. During my years in this process, I watched several players on the Husky football and basketball teams go from the field or the court to the

bench, and then completely away from the university, never to set foot on campus again. Only a small number of Black male student-athletes retained their position on the team for 4 consecutive years and graduated on time. A key impediment to both is academic eligibility.

Nartey in collaboration with Carl E. James in their article "Breaking the Mould': Resisting the Stereotypes of Being a Black Canadian Student-Athlete," dives into the academic sacrifices that Black student-athletes make. He states that Black student-athletes at Canadian universities must "navigate, negotiate, and act against the stereotypes that teachers, coaches, peers, the media, and even parents wittingly or unwittingly re-enforce about the value of" athletic ambitions "at the expense" academic pursuits (Nartey & James, 2022, p. 32). Black bodies at SMU for example, often represent the brand of the University as athletes, but seldom as students. This affirms an outdated stereotype that a "lack of academic success" among Black student-athletes is only a result of "inherent physical abilities and skills" resulting in "preferential treatment" of Black youth in the "area of athletics" (Nartey & James, 2022, p. 35).

In "Breaking the Mould," Nartey and James explain that perceiving Black student-athletes as lacking intellectual skills is a construction that is then lorded over them. This is important because, as we have seen, this is a stereotype with an inherited legacy that goes as far back as white society stopping enslaved people from accessing any means of education. This legacy has led to Black intellectuality being "contested and struggled over" as it became "embedded in […] institutional structure[s] thereby benefitting those with related social and cultural capital" (Phillip, 2018, p. 17). The problem is that post-secondary institutions do not seek academically inclined athletes because it would contradict "the stereotype that Black youth are supposed to excel athletically" (Nartey & James, 2022, p. 32).

Black male student-athletes are conditioned to accept that sports will take them where academics would take white people. In fact, white people are allowed to be whomever they

want to be, because they have never been told they cannot. The truth is that "white hegemony has created an environment where white people in North America are insulated from race-based stress and are able to live in comfort and be oblivious to the impacts their race privilege has on non-white, racialized bodies" (Phillip, 2018, p. 24). Nartey and James show that Black bodies are largely wanted because they are believed to be

> physically gifted, possessing genes that enable them to run faster and jump higher than other races, all without having to work as hard to achieve such performances […]. Despite evidence to the contrary, this myth of Black genetic advantage has sustained assumptions about Black athletic superiority and intellectual inferiority that are proving difficult to dispel (2022, p. 32).

These are imposed limitations that can be observed in Atlantic Canadian universities as well. This is done through the manifestation of the institution's shared assumptions with colonial and white supremacist thought. Varsity athletic programs at predominantly white institutions have created a site ready to mine Black talent for institutional notoriety and profit at the expense of Black bodies' mental, emotional, physical, spiritual, and cultural well-being. The quality of an academic experience is not at the forefront of most universities' presentation to Black students precisely because this cohort is not part of the dominant white culture. Instead, Black students are more often recruited as athletes, emphasising their role as racial surrogates.

3.2 Surrogacy.

Morrison's *Playing in the Dark* explains racial surrogacy as the use of racialized bodies to perform in a specific way or situation precisely because white people cannot. As Nartey and James demonstrate, Black student-athletes perform a surrogate function through their participation in varsity sports. Their success in sports is reputationally helpful to the

university, and this fact sowed the seeds that can cause us to question if post-secondary institutions are as freely accessible and as generous with their support for student-athletes as they might wish to appear. *Playing in the Dark* was one of the first texts to introduce the concept of racial surrogacy to the study of social and cultural structures in the North American context. Morrison critiques several authors and several of the supposed masterpieces of American fiction. In each case, she shows how Blackness is often used, consciously or unconsciously, to advance white ambitions.

In her reading of Willa Cather's *Sapphira and the Slave Girl,* she notes that Nancy, the slave girl of the title, becomes "a cipher, a perfect victim" of racial surrogacy because she can be put to use by Sapphira, the other protagonist of the story, a disabled white woman (1992, p. 30). The relationship between Sapphira and Nancy is Cather's inquiry into the "reckless, unabated power of a white woman gathering identity unto herself from the wholly available and serviceable lives of Africanist others" (Morrison, 1992, p. 31). As the story goes on, Sapphira "transfer(s)" her body "into the hands of others" by using a disabled white woman and a slave girl to act out this dynamic (Morrison, 1992, p. 31). Cather lures the reader into accepting this role of Black bodies as surrogates for white needs. Nancy eventually "becomes [Sapphira's] hands and feet" (Morrison, 1992, p. 31). Disabling Sapphira means that readers are willing to overlook the moral and ethical quandary of Nancy's racial conditions so that we can accept her role. If Cather wrote Nancy as a white woman the morality of Sapphira's actions would be irredeemable, meaning that Nancy is aware of the larger racial discourse enough to avoid that. Morrison notes that "only with Africanist characters is such a project thinkable" because "the shape and detail and substance of their lives are [Cather's], not theirs" or their ancestors (1992, p. 32). Obviously, Cather, the author, is imagining the experiences of slavery in this plot and then using it for her own narrative purposes.

Looking back over my time at SMU and UKC I know that I have felt the grip of racial surrogacy several times. One prominent moment occurred in 2019 after I was employed as a resident assistant at SMU. The application process for this role highlighted how the department valued diversity because they wanted staff that adequately reflected the diverse institution they wished to represent. I was very excited when I got the job, but unfortunately my excitement soon turned to a racial unease that would later play a key role in my stepping away from the position.

During racial sensitivity training, facilitated by a white and Black student, a racially charged incident occurred that made me realize that, in this context, ***diversity*** and ***racial sensitivity*** were just words being used to lure in racialized applicants for the job. During the session, the Black student facilitator started talking about the Black Lives Matter movement, and the value of that movement to stimulate conversations about systemic racism. At some point during the talk, white resident assistants became upset and started to chant that 'white lives mattered too.' As we know, this is a possible, even predictable response that Black people often face whenever Black Lives Matter is brought up. None of the supervisors in attendance intervened and that meeting set the tone for how Black and racialized resident assistants were to be treated that year. An opportunity to make sure that ***all*** resident staff were trained in cultural competency and capable of supporting the diverse student body they boasted about turned out to have the opposite effect. The space became racially volatile, angry, and unsafe for Black students.

In the example above, my body was "employed [as a] surrogate" because my racialized, international presence was "serviceable" within the institution (Morrison, 1992, p. 29). The residence coordinators hired me precisely because they needed a symbolically ***visible*** minority to carry out these training sessions and make the institutional environment appear to be diverse and welcoming. However, at exactly the moment the institution turned

out to be uncomfortable with advanced discussions of race, the environment turned out to be very unwelcoming. Morrison's critiques are applicable here because, in this case, ***diversity*** was only a rhetorical check mark to be achieved in the university's narrative of its own inclusivity. Black and racialized students and staff were employed in this context precisely because white students, and staff, could not represent or ***be*** the diversity the institution coveted. It was clear then, in that meeting, that for Saint Mary's Housing, it did not matter that racialized people in residence did not actually feel included in this narrative of inclusion.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie fortifies this point in her book, *Americanah,* where she points out that most institutional inclusion initiatives with an agenda do "not want the content" of racialized experience to be highlighted; "they merely [want] the gesture of [our] presence" (Adichie, 2013, p. 227). In my example, SMU's Residence and Housing lured racialized students into believing that they had carved out space for diverse experiences to be highlighted. The administrators also consciously presented themselves as allies so it would appear as if SMU residence was a safe space. Armed with their knowledge of racial discourse, they symbolically performed the role of ally convincingly right up until the moment that real action was required. When no substantial action arrived, it became clear that all of us were caught up in a Performance of Diversity that had very little to do with diversity itself. This experience, like my very first experience being photographed at Kings, got me thinking: if Atlantic Canadian post-secondary institutions could treat me and so many others as racial surrogates for these types of initiatives, in what other capacity could we all be participating as surrogates?

3.3 Performing Diversity.

As we have clearly seen, Atlantic Canadian institutions of higher education are guilty of profiting off racialized bodies at the expense of their mental, cultural, physical, emotional,

and social well-being. On a fundamental level, being a racialized student (local or international, athlete or not) on an Atlantic Canadian campus boil down to being a creator of extractable revenue and wealth for the institution itself. These institutions covet racialized students because they have a symbolic and a commercial value that can be distilled by the institution, for the institution. However, since there are no real monetary benefits for the institution to gain through excellent academic performance, racialized students are not required to 'perform' in the same way in the classroom. An institution's ability to appear diverse and multi-cultural is a bankable asset that can help earn social and economic capital. In these situations, however, regular white students from Nova Scotia simply cannot 'perform' diversity and this means that this important work must be entrusted to racialized bodies who must then play the surrogate role as champions for symbolic, not actual, diversity initiatives.

I have come to see racialized bodies, even my own body, as a form of symbolic currency on Atlantic Canadian campuses. Symbolic interactionists view symbols as powerful tools in society. They are easily recognizable because they are designed to draw attention with their social, economic, and political capital. Symbolic racism in this context, as observed in the work of Bonilla-Silva and Wood is the process of putting up or tearing down expressions of what white people think are "conventional representation[s]" of good and bad Black attitudes (Oxford dictionary, 2023). Symbolism is very important in higher education as universities rely on symbols to identify, promote, and represent the core values of their institutions. Anyone who has ever opened a brochure or seen a university web page in the twenty-first century understands this. Racialized bodies on a predominantly white campus anywhere in North America, are perceived and treated as valuable symbols.

Symbolic racism in post-secondary education builds upon biased knowledge while simultaneously exercising that bias. For an unfortunately long time, the actual experiences of

Black bodies in Atlantic Canadian institutions have never been seen as requiring the same kind of urgent intervention that we see in today's promotional publications. For example, as we've already seen, white loyalists and the colonial forces in British North America, sought to ease the plight of Black people only with selective provisioning, even though those same loyalists were responsible for creating such poor living conditions in the first place. I refer back to Whitfield here, as he explains that

> poor whites and the Black loyalists were at the very bottom of the list of those to receive land. [However, … where] poor whites had to wait a few years to obtain their land […] only a third of the Black loyalists had acquired land by the late 1780s. Moreover, when the Black loyalists acquired land, their grants were much smaller than those afforded to white settlers. As would be the case with the Black Refugees after the war of 1812, the government also granted the Black loyalists some of the worst land in the colony (2003, p. 19)

This shows that ignoring the often-desperate needs of racialized people is a learned and inherited response by Atlantic Canadians. This leaves racialized people exactly like Jim on Twain's raft, "rendered voiceless" and doomed to be "perfect victim[s]" of enduring systemic performativity (Morrison, 1992, p. 28).

Another problem with being identified as a symbol is that the university exerts extra control over your body, and this sets the social conditions in which an individual can actually live. Performing Blackness is a way to fulfill the ***trope*** of being Black according to an institutional definition that is inescapably shaped by whiteness. Whiteness' version of a 'good' Black person means you are non-threatening, well-spoken, well-mannered, and that you present yourself as aligned with whiteness socially and politically. Some students perform this role because it is the best way to survive. Others have been conditioned into performing whiteness because they are not perceived as Black enough or are trying ***not*** to be

perceived as Black. Then, there are those who are just being themselves, accused of performing. Obviously, institutions of higher education in North America prefer 'good Blacks' on campus because they do not question the imbalances that exist. As a result, good Blackness is a state of being that most institutions are trying to attain, and difficult conversations, like the one around Black Lives Matter, are better left alone.

William Sedlacek in his article, "Black Students on White Campuses: 20 Years of Research," identifies several ways in which Black students are treated as resources instead of being treated as students. Sedlacek notes that "Blacks may find it especially difficult to get close enough to faculty, staff, and other students to become a central part of the informal" system, leaving them to be observers or supporters instead of active participants like white students (p. 540). Furthermore, he observes that "White students are able to negotiate the campus systems" in ways that Black students cannot because the institution has a traditionally racist system (Sedlacek, 1999, p. 541).

Sedlacek raises an excellent point as he wonders if "past and present Black students mean the same thing when they refer to racism" (1999, p. 545). In the Nova Scotian context, we could add local and international students to that question, as both populations understand this term in different ways. Sedlacek appears to conclude that "it is [all] still racism" and that racialized students today are "obligated to deal with it if they are to succeed in school," but my answer would be that institutions are evolving their racist practices exactly as expressions of racism evolve (1999, p. 545). Contemporary post-secondary institutions do benefit from the history of overtly racist practices and marginalized students today do have to identify, prove, and protect themselves from racist practices that many white administrators do not believe exist or are ongoing. As we've seen, post-secondary institutions in 2023 are guilty of practicing 'respectability' politics. By ignoring the subtle and overt racial elements that exist on campus institutions, and by staying silent or remaining neutral at key moments of dramatic

debates, they are effectively stating that a multicultural appearance is more important than a lived multicultural reality and that the actual unique lived experiences of students do not matter.

Atlantic Canadian institutions have had multiple opportunities to address and change the asymmetrical power dynamic they have with marginalized bodies. There is an enduring component of expressing racism in post-secondary institutions through language, symbols, practice, policy, and behavior. Today, institutions consciously perform inclusion to ***Blackwash*** the contemporary period so their historied participation with racial injustice, and racial inheritance can be forgotten. Blackwash here is a term used to describe the practice of recruiting Black bodies only to use them as evidence of racial advancement. As we have seen, this may produce additional advantages like diverse representation, but it can also produce disadvantages. Braeden McKenzie et al., in “Whiteness, Canadian University Athletic Administration, and Anti-Racism Leadership: ‘A Bunch of White-Haired Dudes in the Back Rooms” reveals some of these unforeseen disadvantages. They all agree that “good intentions frequently reinforce the status quo, and acknowledgements are repeatedly provided to absolve guilt rather than to create foundation for meaningful” change (McKenzie et al., 2023, p. 9).

Diversity for the sake of diversity results in the interchangeable representation of individuals as symbols. This is very different from the kind of reforms that would be required to produce real effective inclusion that would have a far-reaching positive impact on the actual student experience. Unfortunately, ***appearing*** inclusive seems to be the order of our time, because without the investment of real resources and the real implementation and ratification of new policies, we are left only with window-dressing that only partially hides but never directly confronts the deep systemic issues we face. McKenzie et al., imply that perhaps if anti-racist work was financially “viable” more administrators would buy into

effective change, but that leaves marginalized people having to prove that their positive campus experiences could increase the "bottom-line revenue" (2023, p. 10).

Chinua Achebe's famous essay *An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness* offers us great insight into the power dynamic at work in flawed inherently racist systems. Achebe implies that colonization and its white centric view poisons all our thoughts and can consciously or unconsciously shape our perceptions whenever we interact with the question of race. In his analysis, he shows us exactly how Conrad used symbolism, language, and gestures as "layers of insulation" to protect himself from the "moral universe" of colonial slavery that his novel seemed, at least on one level, to be exploring (Leitch (Eds), 2001, p. 1541). McKenzie et al., also explore this line of reasoning as they posit that when anti-racist initiatives "steeped in whiteness" are used "the goal encompasses 'institutional performance' […] rather than institutional change – regardless of intention" (2023, p. 9).

In a similar way, I would argue that SMU's infamous brand story *World Without Limits* operates in the same kind of problematic cultural context. In this situation, the institution is like Conrad, insulating itself with grand acts of symbolism, while the moral universe it operates in is directly shaped by painful lived realities of racialized students. This again reflects a model of "anti-racism steeped in whiteness" and a "feigned commitment to doing the work" so that "it becomes useable as a measure of good performance" (McKenzie et al., 2023, p. 11).

For too long post-secondary institutions have relied on good words to protect their actions and inactions when it comes to meaningful anti-racist work. This often leaves racialized bodies disenfranchised as they do not feel that the university's words line up with their experiences. When the university said that they are supporting a *World Without Limits*, I was reminded of Achebe's words as the university is intentionally being "careful as ever with [their] words" (Leitch (Eds), 2001, p. 1542). It appears as if the university is more concerned

with making sure racialized bodies will not be "laying a claim" on equality and equity as they describe a world in which that is not necessary (Leitch (Eds), 2001, p. 1542). Post-secondary institutions prefer that advancement in the form of inclusion and diversity be something that they can "gift intermittently" in accordance with their comforts (Leitch (Eds), 2001, p. 1542). This leaves matters of equality and equity where they have been for centuries, in the hands of white centric institutions who never move against their own deep-seated interests.

As a racialized international student, I take issue with the world ***without limits*** brand because it is so obviously untrue, especially as a description of the school's contributions to higher education. As we've seen, on Atlantic Canadian campuses, racialized students experience a world of nothing but limits. My entire thesis reflects that this brand story does not tell an accurate story. Consider the following press release that accompanied the unveiling of this powerful new symbolic agenda for the institution:

> 'World Without Limits' is a wonderful distillation of who we are and what Saint Mary's strives for every day. It is about investment in people, about economies, international relations and social prosperity, changes in science, technology, environment, and business. It is also about tackling the very real limitations placed on diverse and marginalized cultures and peoples and addressing the mental health issues that many grapple with every day. It is about Saint Mary's bold vision and our commitment to our university community, for Halifax and for Nova Scotia (Saint Mary's University News, 2021, para. 5).

Perhaps revealing, this statement and brand idea seem far too focused on broadcasting what Achebe sees as an "irrational love" of diversity (Leitch (Eds), 2001, p. 1543). He writes that to match performances of irrational love there is often a real experience of "irrational hate" (Leitch (Eds), 2001, p. 1543). Racialized students negotiate between these two poles because "irrational love may at worst" gain them opportunity and access to white culture,

while "irrational hate can endanger the life of the community" which it often does (Leitch (Eds), 2001, p. 1543). The irrational love embodied in 'World Without Limits' acts as a layer of symbolic insulation that is protecting the outward morality of the institution, but, on the ground, in the real world with limits, students experience neglect and exclusion because, as in Conrad's writing, their professions of love cannot fully mask the institution's unchecked racist sentiments.

If they really want to address systemic inequities on their campuses, then post-secondary institutions need to remove 'being diverse and inclusive' from the context of the white administrative imagination and apply Achebe and Quinless' positions to change their basic understanding of the dynamic at work. Before they can make the necessary changes that are so desperately needed, they first must become acutely aware of the racism that currently propels their policy making, and their perceptions of Blackness in higher education.

3.4 Identifying Performativity.

In Robyn Maynard's *Policing Black Lives. State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present,* she details several instances in which social perceptions of racialized people are used to interact with them to their disadvantage. An excellent example of this is the story of Kirk Johnson and the Halifax Regional Police. From Maynard, we learn that very often, enrolling in higher education as a racialized person incurs a heavier toll than the opportunity rewards. I incurred many burdens of the emotional, physical, and mental variety because I was racialized and both SMU and UKC naturally othered me. As we have seen, at different times, my participation in campus life was largely as an "interchangeable" commodity (Maynard, 2017, p. 17).

In a similar way, in her book, *They Said this Would be Fun. Race, Campus Life and Growing Up,* Eternity Martis details the ways in which she had to navigate her race and the

many confrontations she encountered campus at Western University. Martis voices the mental health burden it is to be racialized on predominantly white campuses and through her work I saw that melanated skin can be threatened physically, emotionally, culturally, spiritually, and mentally. We also learn that racialized people constantly resist threats at each front, and often at the same time. Martis attributes the experiences of racism and discrimination as basis for the "emotional costs" incurred by Black students seeking a higher education (2020, p. 6). Her words allude to poor campus experiences being almost uniform for racialized people across the country. Such near identical commonality in so many different contexts lead one to conclude that being the racial other is the unifying feature that dictates marginalized experiences.

As established, racialized students as student-athletes are a formidable financial, and social currency. Unfortunately, wherever there is social and financial value to be gained, there is also an opportunity for someone to exploit that value. Within Atlantic Canadian higher education, slews of strategies steeped in whiteness are employed that subconsciously and consciously disadvantage Black bodies and communities. Take, for example the celebrations put on during African Heritage month at SMU for the inaugural 'Black Heritage Day' in 2023. In the promotional material for the event, Scott Gray, the Athletic Director of the institution, wrote that the event was an opportunity to "come together to celebrate" with the institution and wider community (Saint Mary's University Huskies News, 2023, para. 7). Perhaps predictably, SMU's festivities for Black Heritage Day revolved around a basketball game which was supposed to draw Black patrons, alumni, students, and the wider community. However, by using only a basketball game as the key event for this Heritage celebration, the Athletics department, perhaps unconsciously, was performing their version of racial and cultural awareness by drawing attention to the traditional commodification of athletic Black bodies and their representations.

What I inferred from this statement and the gesture, is that SMU was thrilled to celebrate Blackness with Black people ***only***. If this celebration of Black Heritage was not symbolically performative in a traditional way, why were these festivities not held during another traditional winter sport, such as hockey or volleyball? And why would African Heritage be largely celebrated in a Black space that is clearly not part of the university's normal educational setting? SMU was thrilled because celebrating Blackness with black people only keeps the predominantly white institution and community's understanding of Blackness contained within its traditional spaces. In the materials promoting event, Gray stated that "Black Heritage Day is a celebration of the rich cultural heritage of our Black community, and we are thrilled to be able to offer this opportunity for our students, alumni, and wider community" (Saint Mary's University Huskies News, 2023, para. 7). This celebration could be perceived as performative because celebrating this way would not change anything. Acts like these allow "universities [to] slip into a comfortable regression to 'normalcy' under the guise of […] triumph […] without ever" effecting meaningful change (McKenzie et al., 2023, p.3). By carving out an already existing space they did not have to grow beyond the institution's comfortable confines. This reenforces the institution's propensity to be inclusive only when inclusivity suits them.

This type of inclusive action leaves me feeling uncomfortable and Phillip's thesis excellently articulates why. She states that performances such as this "merely serve to uphold positive perceptions of the university but lack intention and deliberate practice where necessary" (Phillip, 2018, p. 18). Celebrations for diversity and inclusion perform because of "institutional whiteness" which guarantees the "reproduction of likeness" and upholds the "desire for sameness, whereby [participation in] the university space becomes restricted to individuals who [do not] possess whiteness" (Phillip, 2018, p. 17). Black and racialized bodies fall victim to several other performative processes within post-secondary institutions

that are more concerned with what diversity can do for the institution. This unfortunately leaves us scrambling as we learn how to navigate and negotiate mixed messaging in order to survive the whiplash.

Ted Thornhill in his article, "We Want Black Students, Just Not You: How White Admissions Counsellors Screen Prospective Students," introduces this survival phenomenon of good and bad Blacks. As we have seen, post-secondary institutions are always in the market for good Blacks, meaning they want Black people who accept their role or Black bodies that embody white-centric values. As stipulated by Thornhill, "good Blacks will think of themselves as people first and Black people second (or third or fourth); they will neither 'play the race card' nor generate racial antagonism or tension. [Additionally], they will work hard to assimilate themselves into the [institution's] culture" (2019, p. 457).

As we've seen, at my first time of enrollment at King's, like many others, I showed a readiness to fulfill my role as an African international student-athlete. I perhaps wanted to be a good Black because at the time, I did not fully understand that both good and bad models of Blackness are constructions of whiteness. Black people cannot aspire to be either good or bad because these are not fixed descriptions that are even applicable, and they mean as much as white society bestows on them.

Morrison's *Bluest Eye* tells a horrifying yet insightful story about Blackness, beauty, desire, and the social ramifications of intentional exclusion based on fixed descriptions of race. In this text, Morrison uses the Black body of a young girl to take on the entire burden of Blackness. The character of Pecola desires blue eyes because she has internalized this as the symbol for betterment or improvement. Pecola believes that blue eyes would remarkably improve her life which is why "each night, without fail, she prayed for" them (Morrison, 1970, p. 59). What Pecola yearns for is an escape through blue eyes from the "great harms" she faces as a Black girl due to "discrimination, violence, exclusion, [isolation] and neglect"

(McKenzie et al., 2023, p. 3). For her, blue eyes embody goodness and comfort which are inherently linked to whiteness. According to Thornhill, the definition of a good Black is always found close to idealist whiteness. We see this in Morrison's text as Pecola spends the novel yearning for idealist whiteness. Morrison critiques this yearning because she believes that pursuing whiteness is a tragic way of living that leads to the "disabling consequences of accepting rejection as legitimate, as self-evident" (1970, p. 14). Morrison is speaking here about the rejection of your own identity being a disabling consequence. In my work, I interpret this process to mean performing as a good Black.

Morrison chooses Pecola as the symbol because she is "least likely to withstand […] damaging forces because of youth, gender, and race" (1970, p. 16). This is a significant piece of writing because Pecola cannot be blamed for wanting to do anything to have a better life in the same way that I believe Black bodies cannot be blamed for seeking post-secondary education through any means that is accessible to them. Black people desire the same things that white people gain from attending university, like an opportunity to become socially, financially, and mentally stable as an individual and a community. Black people yearn for that because they do not have it, and whenever they do attain it, whiteness is often looming in the shadows waiting to take it back. Morrison believes this to be an evil that exceeds even Pecola's yearning.

As we have seen, whiteness has always been the racial standard throughout Atlantic Canadian society and its institutions. Pecola wrestles with that standard throughout the novel in the same way that Black people wrestle with white supremacy in every aspect of their existence. As McKenzie notes, whiteness has been "inscribed into the normative consciousness of all dimensions of society" (McKenzie et al., 2023, p.13). Pecola wanting blue eyes was advantageous to whiteness because she sought whiteness out and upheld and participated within the structure of whiteness. The idea is that the closer to whiteness you are,

the better your life can be. This implies that the only way that Black people can become equal is by upholding white supremacist values.

This reinforces that diversity and inclusion initiatives today as tools of whiteness cannot elevate Black students and Black communities. Though it is because of initiatives like this that "any progress at all has been accomplished" their white origins will always limit their impact on Black bodies as white supremacy is an "inevitable, permanent, and eternal part" of the ***current*** social and systemic Canadian landscape (Morrison, 1992, p. 30).

Conclusion.

> *"I speak out of direct and particular anger at an academic conference, and a white woman says, 'Tell me how you feel but don't say it too harshly or I cannot hear you.' But is it my manner that keeps her from hearing, or the threat of my message that her life may change?" (Audre Lorde, 1981, p. 7).*

When I first began my research, my initial plan was to title this thesis: *Universities and Colleges are Failing Black Student-Athletes: Invest in Black Minds*. When I submitted my proposal to the Research Ethics Board (REB) of Saint Mary's University in 2022, they called the title "unduly provocative" and observed that I "seem(ed) to assume the answer to (my) research question" (Research Ethics Board of Saint Mary's University, 2022, p. 1). In another part of their response, they said that my thesis likely "constitute[d] minimal risk" (Research Ethics Board of Saint Mary's University, 2022, p. 1).

My interpretation of this feedback reflects exactly the argument I am making here. Certainly, the REB viewed my research as important, but they also felt that the way I shared my experience, and my scholarly work, could also be perceived as a ***provocative*** weapon. To be provocative, in this case, means to purposefully cause negative feelings in another person. I can only infer that though my work was important, gaining evidence of what I was saying through that methodological approach would cause institutional disruption and outrage. The word ***unduly*** also feels like a key term in this response. I think it means that they saw my statement as unwarranted, especially for what they deemed to be a minor concern. Those two words, 'unduly provocative,' taken together, seem to contradict the belief that my research also, simultaneously, 'constitutes minimal risk.'

I was not trying to being radical when I initiated this project. I was not trying to disrupt or provoke emotion. If we use the outline of good or bad Black given by Thornhill in chapter 3, I suppose that me writing this thesis ultimately means that I would not be considered a good Black. At least this is what the REB response seems to suggest. When I started this research, I wanted to produce a scholarly document that would one, gain me a post-graduate degree and, two, hopefully begin to undo some of the systemic damage to Black bodies I had witnessed in higher education and varsity sport. The response I received from the REB silenced part of my methodological approach, but it also provoked the passion in this document to voice the plights of the excluded, exploited, and invisible.

As we've seen, the situation I am describing above is part of a long historical sequence in Atlantic Canada. In 1783, free Black bodies arrived in this region and were immediately denied social and racial equality. The Black Loyalists were never given the opportunity to live as freely as the white loyalists and the received fewer rations and the worst land grants the empire could offer. Nearly 30 years later, the Black refugees of 1812 experienced the same thing. Money like the Castine Fund[15] that could have been allocated to ease the settlement of settlers including refugees was instead used to build Dalhousie University. Once again, Black bodies lured to the region with promises of a better life were failed because their needs were invisible to those who had the means to address them.

Clearly, Atlantic Canada is accustomed to selectively providing for Black and racialized bodies. A precedent was set here where Blackness has been continuously redefined and endowed with "a new hard edge" that confines "people of African descent to a place of permanent inferiority. Just as slavery had continually redefined notions of race, so notions of race would inform a new servitude" (Berlin, 1998, p. 374). I feel strongly that the racism, exclusion and exploitation that Black bodies experience today in Atlantic Canada in

[15] See Cooper, in notes.

education, sport, the workplace, and more stems from the initial "lowly status and miserable conditions" originally imposed on Blackness centuries ago (Berlin, 1998, p. 380). White society today, consciously and unconsciously, applies and upholds racist precedents and legacies. When deciding the place of Black Loyalists, the white society in Nova Scotia at the time looked to its slave owning past. When deciding the place of the refugees of 1812, white society looked to the precedent in the decision of the Black Loyalists. And so, the Atlantic Canadian region has been making decisions on Black life built off an initial wrong precedent. Over the centuries, there have been more and more precedents, "two precedents. Then three. Then four. And on. And on" (On the Basis of Sex,2018, 1: 46: 25). There is a line from the silencing of Black Loyalists upon their arrival in 1783 to the REB at SMU in 2020 silencing the voicing of discontent of systemic ill treatment of Black bodies on campus

This system is broken and outdated, so much so that when an international student from Zimbabwe was dropped into it, the original ideas I held about Blackness, sport, and education were disrupted. As a scholar, and a student-athlete I began to question why I experienced Blackness, sport, and education in such divergent ways. How could changing my position, both geographically and discursively, make such a profound alteration in something that seemed so essential to my social being? It took another scholar and former international student to give me an answer. Here is Adichie's searing letter to Non –American Blacks:

> when you […] come to America, you become black. Stop arguing […] America does not care. So, what if you weren't 'black' in your country? You're in America now. We all have our moments of initiation into the Society of Former Negroes. Mine was in a class in undergrad when I was asked to give the black perspective, only I had no idea what that was. So, I just made something up. And admit it – you say 'I'm not black' only because you know black is at the bottom of America's race ladder. And you want none of that (Adichie, 2013, p. 284).

I experienced Blackness, sport, and education differently because sport, and education were different here. As we have seen, for me, being Black in Atlantic Canada disturbed many of the original ideas I held on Blackness, sport, and education. According to Berlin, for us to understand the legacy of racial discrimination, how it operates and how it stays relevant, we must identify “who does the defining […] why,” and how (1998, p. 3). I believe that this thesis offers you the identity of who does the defining and offers you several theories as to why and how. Furthermore, this thesis pushes forward discussions about Black varsity student-athletes in Canada and the way that they are treated. The brand of racism cultivated and embedded in Canada, particularly in Atlantic Canada and its institutions has vastly shaped the sporting and education environments.

The evolution of racial discourse in Canada follows its own path that is often overshadowed by their neighbors, resulting in the racial plight of Black bodies in Canada being largely overlooked and pushed aside. The experiences of Black bodies on an Atlantic Canadian campus, especially student-athletes, are not seen as in urgent need of intervention because U SPORTS and the AUS are not generating billions of dollars. They are, however, upholding precedent, that leaves Black and racialized bodies excluded, exploited, and invisible. Along with upholding precedent, Atlantic Canadian institutions are consciously performing inclusivity to appear, as Paul Freund states as if they are “influenced by the climate of the era” (Coyle, 2020, para. 1).

Post-secondary institutions in Atlantic Canada cannot meet the holistic needs of their Black student populations because they were not designed to do so. Black and racialized students, especially international students, and student-athletes can be used as extractable resources and exploitable capital[16]. In the conclusion to Pratt’s thesis, ***written in 1972*,** she

[16] For more on this see the W5 expose on international students attending Cape Breton University refers to them as Canadian post-secondary institutions Cash Cows.

advocates for the need for further studies because she believed, more than 50 years ago, that more scholarship on this subject would be vital to the process of bettering the quality of education offered to Black bodies throughout the educational institution. At the time, she said, "it is hoped that this work has thrown more light on the subject of the education of Nova Scotian Blacks. However, there is still a lot more ground for research. […] It is thought that studies such as the present one will throw more light on modern educational problems and thereby clear the path for their correction" (Pratt, 1972, p. 103).

Following that example, I hope that my thesis also contributes directly to conversations around contemporary Atlantic Canada's current problems with its post-secondary institutions. I, too, want to clear the path for the correction of a broken system and extend our critical research into new areas. At the time of her writing, Pratt offered recommendations that, she hoped, would adequately address the inequitable effects in education because of systemic racism. Some of these recommendations were as follows:

> […] 3. The development of curricular that will take into account the cultural background of Black students, for use in schools, teacher training institutes and universities. […] 5. Adequate funds for all Black students who may need it. 6. A greater opportunity for upward mobility for Blacks in the educational system and other positions of decision making in the province (Pratt, 1972, p. 102).

These recommendations were important in 1972 and they are still ***relevant*** in 2023. Though there have been notable advances, Pratt echoes, or precedes, my concerns that without post-secondary institutions committing to overhauling the system, Black people will only be uplifted as high as necessary to reflect social change and mimic upward movement. Pratt states that at the time of her writing there were pessimists who believed that:

> (e)ducation [was] not, the answer to the solution of the Black problem. The present educational system is controlled by that group in society (the middle and upper class)

> who would not wish to see the Black man removed from his positions in the lower echelons in society. If the Black man cries out for more educational opportunities, it will be given to him, but this will not change his position in society for, when he completes his education, he still cannot find a job or be totally accepted as an equal in the white society (1972, p. 100).

When I first read that Pratt believed these were pessimistic positions on the status of Black education, I chuckled, because in 2023, the educational system is still controlled by middle-and upper-class whites who do not want Black people to be equal. This means that ***between 1972 and 2023***, it has not yet been an achievable possibility for Blacks to gain equity and equality in and through education.

Though a sad note to end on, this thesis follows the path carved out by the likes of Selina Pratt, Doris Evans, Gertrude Tynes, Sylvia Hamilton, Stephanie Slaunwhite. At the core of this work are ***advancing the discourse, getting Atlantic institutions to pay attention and effect meaningful change***. The words of Loretta Rose, come to mind here: Atlantic Canadian post-secondary institutions, I am “calling you in, to call you out” because “to be accountable you must reflect” on you (Coen-Sanchez Lecture, 2023). Only through the decolonization of self, society, and institutions can we hope to bring about the meaningful equitable change that is long overdue.

Footnotes.

Introduction.

[1]See Laws, M. (2020). *Why we Capitalize 'Black' (And Not 'White') where* he states that "*Black* reflects a shared sense of identity and community. White carries a different set of meanings, capitalizing the word in this context risks following the lead of white supremacists" (2020, para. 1). This article comes from the *Columbia Journalism Review* and is part of their effort to draw attention to the "orthographic injustice" which perpetuates "the iniquity of an institution that uprooted people from the most ethnically diverse place on the planet, systemically obliterating any and all distinctions regarding ethnicity and culture" (Laws, 2020, para. 4).

[2] A Reddit user, states the following "we've all heard those catchphrases such as 'If you can count to two, you can go to SMU' or labelling of said university as 'Robie Street High.'" This thread legitimizes the nickname in Nova Scotia. See https://www.reddit.com/r/halifax/comments/kzxky/dalhousie_truly_the_tiger_it_claims_to_be_and_smu/?rdt=38701

Chapter One.

[3] "Elizabeth Watson lay shackled to the floor of a dark cellar. She was an American slave in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Her owner was Elias Marshall, master shipwright of the royal dockyard. It was early March 1778, seven o'clock in the morning. Marshall beat her for six hours. Elizabeth Watson was pregnant. He had known for eight days" (Paz, 2018, p. 2). For more see Paz, F. (2018). *On the Edge of Freedom: The Re-enslavement of Elizabeth Watson.* The Faculty of the Graduate College of The University of Vermont. Master's Degree.

[4] The next day, he took Watson back into the house. Mrs. Marshall was waiting for her. She seized a fire iron from the hall and split her skull open. Marshall dragged Watson up the stairs and into the cellar once more. He tied her hands and feet to a beam and beat her again for one hour. He left her there and walked downstairs to eat dinner" (Paz, 2018, p. 3). Also see Paz, F. (2018). *On the Edge of Freedom: The Re-enslavement of Elizabeth Watson.* The Faculty of the Graduate College of The University of Vermont. Master's Degree.

[5] Chute, Sarah Elizabeth. (2021). *Bound to Slavery: Economic and Biographical Connections to Atlantic Slavery between the Maritimes and West Indies after 1783*. Master's thesis, University of Vermont.

Donovan, Kenneth. (1995). *Slaves and Their Owners in Ile Royale*. Acadiensis 25, no. 1 (1995): 3-32.

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Poulin, N. R. (2019). *Laws that make them Slaves there, make them Slaves here.* The Status of Slavery in England and its Influence on the Colony of Nova Scotia. The General: Brock University Undergraduate Journal of History, 4, 84-95. https://doi.org/10.26522/tg.v4i0.2127

[6] This is a picture of Venus and Serena Williams taken from Obika, Irene (2020). *Venus & Serena: Why Their Hair Beads Gave Me Self-Esteem.* https://medium.com/@drirene/venus-serena-why-their-hair-beads-gave-me-self-esteem-95106299192b

Chapter Two.

[7] Pasquier, M. "Though Their Skin Remains Brown, I Hope Their Souls Will Soon Be White': Slavery, French Missionaries, and the Roman Catholic Priesthood in the American South, 1789–1865." *Church history* 77, no. 2 (2008): 337–370.

Pereira, J. “The Roman Catholic Church and Slavery in José Evaristo d’Almeida’s O Escravo (The Slave).” *Dialog: a journal of theology* 55, no. 3 (2016): 239–246.

Jordan, William Chester. The Slaves of the Churches: A History. The Catholic Historical Review 108, no. 4 (2022): 779–781.

[8] Robson, K. L. (2019). *A Historical Overview of Education in Canada.* Sociology of Education in Canada. Accessed January 12, 2024: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/robsonsoced/chapter/__unknown__-3/#:~:text=The%20School%20Act%20for%20the,for%20residents%20of%20Lower%20Canada.

[9] I often rely on my experience of education in Zimbabwe as a comparison of living without inheriting a legacy of racial inferiority. Due to colonization, Zimbabwe also went through periods of systemic exclusion, segregation, and integration. For more on this see Notes. However, because Zimbabwe has a majority Black population, our independence movement saw Black people gain a monopolizing political, economic, and social control of the country. As a result, I grew up knowing that Black people could **be** anything even in a country that offered a limited form of success. In my experience, Black people were not limited by a condition of racialized inferiority in the classroom and so my analysis of Atlantic Canada functions as a natural foil. Also see information on the Lancaster House Agreement here: https://sas-space.sas.ac.uk/5847/5/1979_Lancaster_House_Agreement.pdf

12

Black Athletic Coordinator (Saint Mary's University)
Proposal by Itai Kuwodza and Bria Symonds.

Presented by Bria Symonds (Former Black Student Advisor).
July 25, 2022

Overview:

Black student athletes have been expressing their concerns of maintaining their well-being, academic demands, and athletic requirements while navigating struggles of oppression from an institutional level. Prior to the role of the 'Black Student Advisor', Black student athletes have been finding their own ways to cope, which is not easy when you feel underrepresented both in your studies and in the sport, you enjoy playing. Though some may argue all student athletes have the same wrap around supports while attending Saint Mary's University, Black/Racialized students have a unique experience accessing said supports when they are not culturally accommodating and/or the support is not in place at all. Under the role of the 'Black student Advisor' All Black students have access to individual supports, academic guidance, cultural programing, cultural events, and pathways that fit best for their post-secondary journey while attending SMU. However, through qualitative research data shows there is a great demand for a Black Representative/Coordinator in the athletic department.

Black Student Led Recommendations/Results

Itai Kuwodza (2022) states: "Personnel are important and so are their roles and responsibilities in the institutions at which they are employed. The power they wield and the abilities they can exercise have to put into action meaningful change and that is only possible with the having representation and access in the form of an all-encompassing Black Student Athlete Success Coordinator."

Action	Recommendation
Terms of employment:	Office/physical space designated in the athletic department. This is required for visibility and access. There is a disconnect between campus and the campus that athlete's access. Easy is key. Must be included in information pieces given out to athletes. Recruitment packages, acceptance packages and any other pieces handed out. Paid fixed salary as there is a long-documented history of undervaluing the input of people of color into businesses and institutions so we suggest a starting point: • Entry level 5 to 7 as they would be performing duties like those of a recruitment officer, academic admin assistant, and career and employment coach to name a few. A full-time permanent position is recommended as this would allow the individual to be integrated into the workings of the university and athletics department which provides services on a full-time full-year basis. Resources to engage with the immediate Black community and further away on behalf of the university. This would include resources to run workshops for or invite the community members to give workshops and talks to the students.
Applicant requirements:	Athletic background (student-athlete history is an uncompromisable requirement) This is vital for connecting and understanding the desires and needs of the students you are working with. Athletic background (student-athlete history is an uncompromisable requirement) This is vital for connecting and understanding the desires and needs of the students you are working with. Knowledge and understanding of university environment and structure. Familiarity with USPORTS standards and the processes of recruitment, enrollment, transition, and academics at the University. Bachelor's degree in applicable field of study. Academic advising history or background at a high school and or university level. Ability to facilitate and give talks, workshops etc. tailored to the needs and issues faced by racialized student athletes.
Roles and Responsibility:	Liaising with coaches, professors, administration and more on behalf of the athlete which could also include advocating for their well-being. The students will always be your focal point and their success on campus. Make campus resources more accessible and visible to student athletes. There is a disconnect between activities and information marketed to student-athletes and students. Let alone racialized students. And if the resources are not available create them if necessary but, locate the gaps within the available resources and fill them with what is needed. Management of tutors and advisors for athletes. This could include hiring and firing of tutors.

	Offer and facilitate life skills programs/workshops such as: • Budgeting, tenant laws, financing (loans etc.,) academics and classes, racism on and off campus, student life experience. Involvement in athletic recruitment (First years and transfer students) • A mandatory step required to green light the recruitment process after potential recruits is assessed. • Advise on the success percentage before and after enrollment.

ON AND OFF CAMPUS ADVOCAY:

In partnership with the Black Student Advisor, the Black athletic coordinator would work closely together with Black student supporters and staff to make sure there is accessibility outside of the athletic departments.

Itai Kuwodza (2022) states: "Being Black on campus can be alienating whether you are on a team or not. Navigating the university experience when you do not know what resources you have at your disposable and what your options are when you need assistance can make it impossible to come through on the other side. This section looks to bring forward recommendations that would increase the information available to racialized students and making sure they can always access it."

The Black Student Advisor would consult with the Black Athletic Coordinator to uphold policies and procedures in alignment with the university, that also helps Black student athletes when navigating their 'day-to-day' operation, but especially during wrongful or discriminatory incidents.

Anti-racist and discriminatory policies:	The university needs anti-racist and anti-discriminatory policies drafted with explicit terms published and dispersed through the campus. This would cover the *how* racist conduct performed by anyone is dealt with and disciplined with a degree of transparency for the victim. These policies would unequivocally state the stance of SMU on racism on campus where the institution can control the protection of its Black students. Policies would offer an official means to hold perpetrators accountable for racist misconduct offering some comfort.

Process of support or witness:	If it does not exist a process should be created regarding the support persons and or witnesses, they can have with them to attend meetings they wish to have someone attend. An in-house advocate is essential as they can be included in all manners of meeting at short notice. The support or witness person can be used by the athlete and or the administrator, coach and more.
Training system creation:	At present there is no inclusion of anti-racist and discrimination training included at any level of employment. A department that caters to the needs of several racialized students should include training for all staff starting with head office administrators to gym floor employees and everyone in between. All staff and administrators should have access to the same information they can use to create a fair and just working environment. This training will also be offered to athletes and coaches of all teams even those without racialized athletes or staff. Training will be important in informing racialized students, coaches, members, staff, custodial and more of their rights and the rights of others.

Chapter Three.

[13] "The *National Scarborough Charter on anti-Black racism and Black Inclusion in Higher Education: Principles, Actions, and Accountabilities* is a commitment by institutions across Canada to combat anti-Black racism and foster Black inclusion in higher education. The *Charter* was a co-creation process involving extensive consultations and collaboration with Black communities, academic institutions, governments, political and civic leaders, and activists across Canada. The *Charter* recognizes the realities of anti-Black racism and includes concrete steps for action and to ensure institutional and cross-sector accountabilities" (University of Calgary). See Charter: https://designrr.page/?id=140172&token=1735715840&type=FP&h=9346

Conclusion.

[15] Cooper, A. (2019). *Report on Lord Dalhousie's History of Slavery and Race.* Pages 62-69. Dalhousie University.

[16] W5 Investigation. (2023). Cash Cows: Foreign student recruitment crisis at Canadian universities. Official W5 YouTube Channel. Accessed 2023: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uzxOAqH-pkc

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