

# Why I Killed Canadian History: Towards an Anti-Racist History in Canada

TIMOTHY J. STANLEY\*

*Anti-racism provides the basis for a richer understanding of the past, an understanding that is potentially more sensitive to the requirements of generally accepted standards of historical criticism than is the nationalist framework that shapes most historical writing about Canada. An anti-racist history takes seriously the existence of racisms and asks questions about their roles in shaping institutions and experiences, including those of dominant groups. It encompasses previously excluded meanings through a broader understanding of the historical record: written, oral, and material. It views the rise of nationalism and nation-states within the larger context of European colonialism, transforming nationalist projects (such as the making of Canada) into historical problems to be explained, rather than taking them for granted as organizing devices for the study of the past. It allows questions to be asked about how some identities come to be seen as fixed, how certain ones become normalized and others marginalized. Anti-racism thus has the potential to develop a better history than the nationalist one whose loss is lamented by J. L. Granatstein in Who Killed Canadian History?.*

*L'antiracisme nous permet de mieux comprendre le passé. Cette compréhension est peut-être plus sensible aux exigences des normes généralement acceptées de la critique historique que ne l'est le cadre nationaliste sur lequel s'appuie l'écriture historique au sujet du Canada. Une histoire antiraciste prend au sérieux l'existence du racisme et s'interroge sur son rôle dans le façonnement des institutions et des expériences, y compris celles des groupes dominants. Elle englobe des sens précédemment exclus en suscitant une compréhension élargie du document historique : écrit, oral et matériel. Elle voit la montée du nationalisme et de l'État-nation dans le contexte plus large du colonialisme européen, transformant les projets nationalistes (comme la création du Canada) en problèmes historiques à expliquer plutôt qu'en y*

\* Timothy J. Stanley is associate professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa. This manuscript has benefitted greatly from the criticism and support of many people. The author thanks in particular the following individuals for their careful reading of it: Frances Boyle, Edgar Wickberg, Kathryn McPherson, and the anonymous reviewers for *Histoire sociale/ Social History*. Thanks also to Chad Gaffield and the historians group at the Institute of Canadian Studies, University of Ottawa, for their support.

*voyant à priori des dispositifs organisants pour l'étude du passé. Elle permet de s'interroger sur la façon dont certaines identités viennent à être considérées fixes, comment certaines deviennent normalisées et d'autres, marginalisées. L'antiracisme a donc le potentiel de déboucher sur une meilleure histoire que l'histoire nationaliste dont J. L. Granatstein déplore la perte dans Who Killed Canadian History?.*

HAS RACISM been integral to the making of Canadian society and institutions, or has it been incidental, episodic, and idiosyncratic? Is it part and parcel of the main story of the making of Canada, or is it only worthy of passing mention and a few specialized monographs?

Increasingly I find that an adequate account of racism does not fit within the predominant nationalist framework that shapes most historical writing about Canada. Nationalist histories have not only failed to explain racisms;<sup>1</sup> they have failed to adequately document racisms and their consequences. This has less to do with the failings of individual historians than it does with the assumptions that shape the field. An alternative to nationalist frameworks, what I call an anti-racist history, draws on the contemporary body of literature known as anti-racism or critical multiculturalism.<sup>2</sup> Such a history needs to do at least four things. First, it should contribute to contemporary struggles against racism. Secondly, it should take seriously the human consequences of racisms, including their effects on members of dominant groups. Thirdly, it must engage the meanings created by those who have been subject to racist exclusion. Fourthly, it needs to adopt a postcolonial perspective. In the end, I suggest that an anti-racist history not only has greater explanatory power than its nationalist counterparts, but is also potentially more sensitive to the requirements of generally accepted standards of historical criticism (reliance on primary sources, internal and external criticism, the salience of context). In other words, anti-racism promises a richer and better history.

Although I draw extensively on my own research into the Chinese and racism in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century British Columbia, my reliance on the Chinese should not be seen as a case of special pleading. Since I am trying to develop an anti-racist history of anti-Chinese racism, it seems wisest to write about what I know best. Virtually all of the points that I make can be made with respect to the racisms experienced by members of other groups, including other Asians, Africans, Jews, and Aboriginal peoples. My narrative on the Chinese and racism is only one among many possi-

1 My use of the plural is consistent with anti-racist theory. It acknowledges that racism has taken so many different forms that it cannot be considered a single thing. I discuss this further below.

2 On "anti-racism", see George J. Sefa Dei, *Anti-Racism Education: Theory and Practice* (Halifax: Fernwood, 1996); Ali Rattansi, "Changing the Subject? Racism, Culture and Education", in James Donald and Ali Rattansi, eds., *"Race", Culture and Difference* (London: Sage, 1992), pp. 11–48. On the term "critical multiculturalism", see David Theo Goldberg, "Introduction: Multicultural Conditions", in Goldberg, ed., *Multiculturalism: A Critical Reader* (Oxford, U.K., and Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1994), pp. 1–41.

ble anti-racist ones and is at best a partial contribution to a full analysis of the role of racism in Canada and its past.

### **Fighting Racism**

My interest in anti-racism involves moral and political commitments, as well as intellectual ones. Anti-racism begins with a commitment to fighting racism in the world today. Furthering analysis of the dynamics of racism so that more effective anti-racist educational and political strategies can be found seems a worthwhile academic contribution to this fight. For example, one of the central problems in anti-racism education is that of “white” denial.<sup>3</sup> This phenomenon is particularly common in English Canada where the myth that there is no racism endures. Whether in public controversies surrounding specific allegations of racist actions, in private conversations, or in academic studies, many people speak either of racism as existing elsewhere (in the United States, for example) or of racist incidents in Canada as unfortunate exceptions to otherwise civilized and tolerant norms. People also speak of being tired of hearing about racism, implying that it is of marginal significance to their lives or is something over which they have no control and for which they have no responsibility.<sup>4</sup> By suggesting ways in which a particular form of racism came to be generalized, by showing how social geographies of “race”<sup>5</sup> came to be or how certain people’s meanings came to be excluded, we can identify specific strategies to show racisms as both common and central to the lives of people in Canada. History as a discipline can shed light on these questions. As someone trained in history and semi-literate in Chinese,<sup>6</sup> I can best make my contribution, it would seem, in the study of anti-Chinese racism.

3 See Leslie G. Roman, “White is a Color! White Defensiveness, Postmodernism, and Anti-Racist Pedagogy”, in Cameron McCarthy and Warren Crichlow, eds., *Race, Identity and Representation in Education* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 71–88; Christine Sleeter, “How White Teachers Construct Race”, in McCarthy and Crichlow, eds. *Race, Identity and Representation*, pp. 157–171. See also Leslie G. Roman, “Denying (White) Racial Privilege: Redemptive Discourse and the Uses of Fantasy”, in Michelle Fine et al., eds., *Off White: Readings on Society, Race and Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 270–282.

4 A useful introduction to racism in Canada today is Frances Henry et al., *The Colour of Democracy: Racism in Canadian Society*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Canada, 2000). On aspects of contemporary popular racism, see Leslie G. Roman and Timothy J. Stanley, “Empires, Émigrés, and Aliens: Young People’s Negotiations of Official and Popular Racism in Canada”, in Leslie G. Roman and Linda Eyre, eds., *Dangerous Territories: Struggles for Equality and Difference in Education* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 205–232.

5 Ruth Frankenburg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Philip Cohen, “The Perversions of Inheritance: Studies in the Making of Multi-Racist Britain”, in Philip Cohen and Harwant S. Bains, eds., *Multi-Racist Britain* (Houndsmill, Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988), pp. 9–118.

6 I am not being modest here. My Chinese is good enough to recognize the importance of a document, but often not good enough to read it with any ease. The fact that I am among the few historians of Canada who read any Chinese at all, when Chinese languages are the third most common in Canada, is itself an indication of the weakness of the field.

I am well aware that there are dangers inherent in the kind of *engagé* approach to the past that I am suggesting. Commitments can cloud judgement and overly romanticize past actors. It can also lead to presentism, imposing contemporary standards of judgement on the past, especially about knowledge of racisms and their consequences. While I am interested in making meaning of the past, it is decidedly not my purpose to impose today's standards on past actions. Ultimately there is no way of knowing whether an historical interpretation corresponds to the real past itself, because the real past is not knowable except through interpretation. This has led some critics to question history as a discipline and to argue that history is at best a genre of literature, and often bad literature at that.<sup>7</sup> It seems to me that one can adopt a realist historical strategy without falling into an oversimplified objectivism.<sup>8</sup> Of course interpretations presuppose vantage points from particular times and places, but this does not mean that the only basis for judging a history is a literary one. Most historians would argue that an even more important criterion is the extent to which the interpretation accounts for the available evidence in the written record. Part of my claim is that anti-racist theory guards against presentist errors by questioning received categories and by leading to a broader understanding of the historical record.

My interest in anti-racism leads me to question the "grand narrative" of English Canada.<sup>9</sup> Like other "grand narratives", the English Canadian one is more of a cultural artifact than a serious history. It is widely reproduced and appears to explain the world as it is. It is so much a part of "common sense" that for many people it has ceased to be a story about the past, but has come to be the past itself. While nationalist grand narratives purport to trace the origins of the "imagined community" that makes the nation, they in fact constitute it.<sup>10</sup> They identify who belongs in the nation and in what ways.<sup>11</sup> The English Canadian grand narrative focuses on Europeans, tracing the progress of European-derived communities and institutions. It begins with the arrival of Europeans (Leif Ericsson,<sup>12</sup> John Cabot, and Jacques Cartier) and rarely mentions Aboriginal people except as obstacles to European progress, as in the Riel Rebellion. It emphasizes continuities between the

7 Keith Jenkins, *Re-Thinking History* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991).

8 Martin Bunzl, *Real History: Reflections on Historical Practice* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997); Satya P. Mohanty, *Literary Theory and the Claims of History: Postmodernism, Objectivity, Multicultural Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997).

9 My usage of the term "grand narrative" follows Allan Megill, "'Grand Narrative' and the Discipline of History", in Frank Ankersmit and Hans Kellner, eds., *A New Philosophy of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 151–173.

10 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

11 On the American case, see Dorothy Ross, "Grand Narrative in American Historical Writing: From Romance to Uncertainty", *American Historical Review*, vol. 100, no. 3 (June 1995), pp. 651–677.

12 I take this spelling from the *Gage Canadian Dictionary* ([Toronto]: Oxford University Press, 1998), reproduced in *Canadian Encyclopedia 2000 World Edition [cd-rom]* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1999).

past and the present of the nation-state, ignoring discontinuities. It emphasizes an inevitable, largely peaceful, and natural progress to the current configurations of the nation-state, taking Confederation as its key organizational turning point and celebrating modern Canada as the place that redeems the evils of the past and of the rest of the world. The grand narrative of Canada as nation has been remarkably stable since its invention at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>13</sup> It is the stuff of popular and official histories,<sup>14</sup> Heritage Minutes,<sup>15</sup> beer commercials,<sup>16</sup> public school teaching.<sup>17</sup> It also is the device for organizing university courses, textbooks, and tenure-track positions (that is, pre- and post-Confederation Canada).

This grand narrative enables the articulation of racism and historical memory in popular culture.<sup>18</sup> In effect, it places people in different positions in relation to the nation. Some people who live in Canada can claim this history, and hence the status of being “Canadian”, as their own. Others cannot. By making Europeans and their activities the subject of the narratives, by telling the story of the past exclusively from their points of view, the grand narrative makes it difficult for non-Europeans to claim membership in the imagined community that it purports to explain. The problem has been eloquently put by Denise, an African-Canadian high school drop-out from the Toronto area. Speaking of her reasons for leaving school in *Reconstructing “Drop-Out”*, a study conducted by George Dei *et al.*, she said:

The curriculum ... was one-sided, especially when it came down to history. There was never a mention of any Black people that have contributed to society ... I mean, everything, it's the White man that did. History is just based on the European Canadian that came over. There is no mention of the Africans that helped build a railway, that ran away from the South and came up to Nova Scotia and helped work and build Canada too ... no mention of that.<sup>19</sup>

13 Daniel Francis, *National Dreams: Myth, Memory, and Canadian History* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1997).

14 Consider the Canada Hall at the Canadian Museum of Civilization. It starts its historical account with the arrival of Europeans (the Vikings at L'Anse Aux Meadows) and portrays the Chinese through the reproduction of a hand laundry. See “Canada Hall – Phase I” and “Canada Hall – Phase II”, <http://www.civilisations.ca/indexle.html>, accessed September 1, 2000.

15 CRB Foundation Heritage Project, *The Heritage Minutes/ Les reflets du patrimoine* [videorecording] (Kingston, Ont.: CRB Foundation, [1995]).

16 I have in mind a series of beer commercials modelled on the Heritage Minutes.

17 I arrive at this conclusion from having observed practicum students in both elementary and high schools. “Grand narrative” seems to be the stuff of most public school teaching, even if it does not represent best practices. Since few teachers before senior high school have any critical formation in history, this should not be surprising.

18 Timothy J. Stanley, “The Struggle for History: Historical Narratives and Anti-Racist Pedagogy”, *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, vol. 19, no. 1 (1998), pp. 41–52.

19 George J. Sefa Dei, Josephine Mazzuca, Elizabeth McIsaac, and Jasmin Zine, *Reconstructing “Drop-out”: A Critical Ethnography of the Dynamics of Black Students’ Disengagement from School* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), p. 138.

In effect, Denise's critique of schooling practices, especially historical ones, is that their Eurocentrism allowed no place for her. Denise is not alone in this feeling. To Darren, another drop-out in the same study, "It's like you're learning about somebody else's history: you're learning about when they discovered America when things were good for them and when they did this and when they did that.... It started to take its toll on me after a while."<sup>20</sup> Pedagogically, this version of history contributes to the disengagement of African Canadian students from school. As Kirk, a Grade 12 student, stated, "They're robbing you of your past.... And unless you have the interest and you could be in a group of people who have the interest that they want to learn, you're not gonna learn anything."<sup>21</sup> For these young people, the Canada whose history they are exposed to is a foreign country. The past as history of the nation not only fails to move them; it robs them of their own histories. According to the young people in the *Dei et al.* study, Canada is not the best country in the world, at least not the best that it could be. In effect, they are saying that the nation is not such a nice place: it does not and will not include them; its institutions, including schools, the police, and labour markets, do not serve them. As the authors argue, for most Blacks/Africans, dropping out means being forced out of this national system.<sup>22</sup> The term for such exclusions is racism.

### **Multicultural Add-Ons**

The power of the grand narrative to define who and what is Canadian is demonstrated by the efforts of members of various ethnic groups to include themselves within it. In the logic of the grand narrative, a place within it licenses a claim to belonging within the nation.<sup>23</sup> This is evident in Denise's desire for a history that acknowledges African Canadian contributions to the nation. This is also the reason that stories about building the Canadian Pacific Railway are among the few accounts of the Chinese in Canada one encounters. Including these stories is usually the result of a conscious attempt to incorporate the Chinese in the national past. This is how Chinese Canadians enter the narrative constructed by the Heritage Minutes, for example. The episode "Nitro" shows a young Chinese man using nitroglycerine to blast a way through the Fraser canyon. Similarly, railway building tends to be the only mention that the Chinese receive in public school history classes. Ironically, this affirmation of a Chinese "contribution" to nation building eclipses the roles of the more numerous railroad navvies from other nationalities, as well as the fact that few Chinese railway builders remained

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, *passim*.

<sup>23</sup> This resulted in the ethnic histories that Roberto Perin rightly criticized as "filiopietist". See Roberto Perin, "Clio as Ethnic: The Third Force in Canadian Historiography", *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 64, no. 4 (1983), pp. 441-467.

in the country.<sup>24</sup> Such accounts also popularize the myth that all peoples have been allowed to contribute equally to the country, and hence that those who complain of racist treatment today have only themselves to blame. This effectively silences a more important contribution to Canadian society by people from China and their Canadian-born children: their largely successful fight for democratic, political, and legal rights.

Those who have been left out of the grand narrative cannot be included simply by having their stories tacked on as separate chapters in what might be thought of as a multicultural history. For one thing, newly arrived groups will always be left out. Such chapters could well contribute to popular racism rather than challenge it. In the context of an account that naturalizes European presence, separate chapters on the Chinese and others excluded from the narrative contribute to notions of difference. Indeed, it would be hard to imagine any basis for constructing such chapters other than difference from Europeans: different origins, different traditions, different challenges and accomplishments. In the case of the Chinese, a sense of difference would be further increased if this Chinese chapter emphasized the trans-national linkages of family, business, and politics that so characterized the Chinese communities of Canada.<sup>25</sup> Such linkages would be read in contrast to the main story of those Europeans who supposedly severed their ties to the old country upon their arrival in Canada. In effect, it would racialize the Chinese in contrast to their European counterparts as people who were never really committed to Canada. The Chinese would be affirmed as eternal “sojourners” rather than legitimate “settlers”. This, in turn, would feed into popular anti-Chinese racism which tends to construct immigrant Chinese as aliens to the imagined community of a multicultural Canada.<sup>26</sup>

The only way to avoid a racist reading of a Chinese narrative would be to recast the grand narrative itself. One way to do this would be to produce a “multicentric” history in which Canada is shaped by multiple diasporas. A history of the Anglo-Celtic diaspora as suggested by Donald Akenson could contribute to the kind of decentring of nationalist history that I have in mind here.<sup>27</sup> It would certainly help to locate the formation of the English-speaking

24 On Chinese railway workers, see the excellent account of Patricia E. Roy, “A Choice Between Evils: The Chinese and the Construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway in British Columbia”, in Hugh A. Dempsey, ed., *The CPR West: The Iron Road and the Making of a Nation* (Vancouver: Douglas and MacIntyre, 1984), pp. 13–34.

25 See Wing Chung Ng, *The Chinese in Vancouver, 1945–1980: The Pursuit of Identity and Power* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1999), for a brilliant account of such continuities. See also Timothy J. Stanley, “‘Chinamen, Wherever We Go’: Chinese Nationalism and Guangdong Merchants in British Columbia, 1871–1911”, *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 77, no. 4 (Fall 1996), pp. 475–503.

26 Eleanor Laquian, Aprodicio Laquian, and Terry McGee, eds., *The Silent Debate: Asian Immigration and Racism in Canada* (Vancouver: Institute of Asian Research, University of British Columbia, 1998).

27 See Donald Harman Akenson, “The Historiography of English-Speaking Canada and the Concept of Diaspora: A Septical Appreciation”, *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 76, no. 3 (September 1995), pp. 377–409.

society of Canada as a local variant in a global project. Multicentric accounts would trace the links that migrants from Europe maintained with family and friends in the old country and in other places in which they resettled (such as the United States, Australia, and Argentina). In this context, “bachelor” male Chinese workers who spent years dreaming of returning to China were not really so different from the many Englishmen who dreamed of returning home after making fame and fortune in the colonies. Their links to South China and to other Overseas Chinese communities were not qualitatively different from the kinds of links that Italian or Jewish immigrants to Canada felt to their cousins in the United States or their places of origin in Europe.

However, even if a multicentric history defused some aspects of contemporary popular racism, it would not necessarily succeed in accounting for racism. Where do Aboriginal peoples fit into a diasporic model? Would a diasporic history still begin with the arrival of Europeans? Also, not all migrations are necessarily “diasporas”. The term carries with it a flavour of forced dispersal. Thus it is quite appropriate when applied to European Jews and to what Paul Gilroy has called “the Black Atlantic”, the cultural formation created by those uprooted by African slavery.<sup>28</sup> There may have been “involuntary” migrants to Canada from Britain and other parts of Europe (most child immigrants for example), but, in general, until quite recently Europeans entered Canada under very different circumstances than immigrants from Africa. They were certainly received differently by those already in Canada. In addition, in the case of members of racially oppressed groups, racist practices in Canada shaped the trans-national links they maintained at least as much as ethnic preferences did. For example, during much of the twentieth century, racist immigration laws and popular antipathy made it impossible for “sojourning” Chinese men to bring their families from China to Canada or to develop meaningful links with their non-Chinese neighbours in Canada. Thus, they maintained links to China and to other Overseas Chinese communities in the absence of the possibility of meaningful links with their non-Chinese neighbours.

### **Nationalism and Killing Canadian History**

The power of the grand narrative to frame taken-for-granted conceptions of history and to inhibit analyses of racism is evident in the controversy surrounding the alleged death of Canadian history. In *Who Killed Canadian History?*, J. L. Granatstein indicts me of the crime, along with other professors of education, social historians, advocates of multiculturalism, and, dare I admit it, bad academic writers.<sup>29</sup> He specifically questions the use of history for anti-racist purposes. In his view, instilling nationalist pride so as to preserve political unity is the great purpose of public instruction in history.

28 Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).

29 J. L. Granatstein, *Who Killed Canadian History?* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1998).

Such instruction, when correctly carried out, would not only provide the young with appropriate Canadian heroes with whom to identify, but would address the contemporary political fracturing of Canada resulting from Canadians' failure to know "our national history".<sup>30</sup> Thus there can be no substitute for a solid grounding in national political history that would illuminate the structure and traditions of Canadian political formation and provide the basis for a renewed nationalism that all Canadians could claim.<sup>31</sup> Granatstein's history is unapologetically Eurocentric. He writes, "Our civilization and culture *is* Western, and there is no reason we should be ashamed of it or not wish to teach our students about it. Canadians are the inheritors of Greek and Roman traditions and the British and French experience, and the West is the dominant civilization in the world today in part because its values have been tested and found true."<sup>32</sup> Granatstein's history therefore is one of great white men nation building (with perhaps the occasional great white woman thrown in) in a more or less continuous progress to "the world's most fortunate of peoples".<sup>33</sup> His is the stuff of grand narrative and the making of imagined community through a shared account of the past.

Not surprisingly, Granatstein has drawn sharp rejoinders from other historians. The most extended scholarly discussion is provided by A. B. McKillop in the *Canadian Historical Review*.<sup>34</sup> McKillop rejects out of hand Granatstein's characterization of historical scholarship and provides an able defence of social history. Significantly, McKillop agrees with Granatstein that the key function of both public school and undergraduate history teaching is citizenship education, even as he advances a different notion of citizenship. Where Granatstein sees citizenship education as the promotion of national pride, McKillop sees it as the formation of identity, a formation which necessarily involves "teaching the social dimensions of human experience".<sup>35</sup> This, in turn, requires broader research than that embraced by Granatstein. As McKillop writes:

Canadian social historians understand what Granatstein apparently does not: that in order for Canadians to take the full measure of what it means to be Canadian, they must be made conscious of all aspects of their shared past. In this sense there are no subdisciplinary hierarchies of historical significance.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 149. People on both sides of the death of Canadian history debate often underestimate the difficulties of teaching history in elementary and secondary schools.

31 Granatstein, *Who Killed Canadian History?*, pp. 42–50, 149–150.

32 *Ibid.*, pp. 101–102. I am not sure how seriously Granatstein would be willing to argue, as this statement's exaggerated rhetoric implies, that the values of other civilizations have been "tested" and found to be "untrue". His use of the first person plural is even more problematic. Very much to the point is the question of who is included and who include themselves in his "our/we".

33 Granatstein, *Who Killed Canadian History?*, p. 148.

34 A. B. McKillop, "Who Killed Canadian History? A View from the Trenches", *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 80, no. 2 (June 1999), pp. 269–299.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 272.

Citizenship entails the understanding of what it means to be weak as well as powerful; it involves healing as much as it does pride.<sup>36</sup>

Even if his is a more textured and inclusive nationalism than Granatstein's, McKillop still reduces historical significance to nationalist purposes. He assumes that all Canadians have a "shared past".<sup>37</sup>

It is not at all evident that all people living in Canada have what McKillop calls a "shared past" or could be included in Granatstein's use of the first person plural. Experience of racism is one thing that divides them. Some people have been oppressed by it; others have been privileged by it. The assumption that there is a shared past comes in part from inadequate accounts of racism, not only on the part of Granatstein, but also on the part of the social historians defended by McKillop. Racism is a sidebar to Granatstein's history and not part of the main story. Although he admits that there has been much racism in Canada's past, he explains it away as the consequence of other factors (context), not itself part of the context for nation building or for government policies. Hence, injustices such as the destruction of Aboriginal peoples or the forced removal of Japanese Canadians from the West Coast between 1942 and 1949<sup>38</sup> are by-products of the necessary national and provincial politics of the moment. If only, he laments, "the racist interludes were presented in context".<sup>39</sup> For Granatstein, context is "all-important".<sup>40</sup> Yet he reduces context to the higher policies of the federal state. How racism also shaped that state and its policies is a question he does not ask.

Social historians have been able to account for racism little better than Granatstein.<sup>41</sup> A case in point is provided by the social history survey text

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 297.

<sup>37</sup> McKillop's reduction of history to the civic purposes of the nation-state has rightly been criticized by Bryan Palmer, "Of Silences and Trenches: A Dissident View of Granatstein's Meaning", *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 80, no. 4 (December 1999), pp. 676–686.

<sup>38</sup> Granatstein, *Who Killed Canadian History?*, pp. 96–98. Granatstein's discussion of the internment of Ukrainians during World War I and Italians during the Second World War, if anything, highlights that the Japanese "evacuation" was of a different order. The former actions were aimed at individuals, even if they swept up innocent bystanders as well. The latter was aimed at an entire population.

<sup>39</sup> Granatstein, *Who Killed Canadian History?*, p. 102. Contrast the limited notion of context in Granatstein's understanding of the Pacific war to that of John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986). A useful typology of racisms distinguishes between racism as individual, as institutional, and as cultural. The last two forms especially shape the nation-state itself. On this typology, see Benjamin P. Bowser, "Introduction: The Global Community, Racism, and Anti-Racism", in Bowser, ed., *Racism and Anti-Racism in World Perspective* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1995), pp. ix–xxix.

<sup>40</sup> Granatstein, *Who Killed Canadian History?*, p. 94.

<sup>41</sup> Two recent examples are James W. St. G. Walker, "Race", *Rights and the Law in the Supreme Court of Canada: Historical Case Studies* ([Waterloo, Ont]: Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, c1997); Constance Backhouse, *Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900–1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999). Significantly both of these works address issues in law, an area that has paid considerable attention to anti-racist history. Backhouse in particular frames her study in terms of critical race theory.

that Granatstein attacks and that McKillop ably defends, Margaret Conrad *et al.*'s *History of the Canadian Peoples*.<sup>42</sup> *History of the Canadian Peoples* is a generally successful attempt to synthesize social history into an over-arching account of the national past. This combines with the text's didactic qualities — reviews of historiographical controversies, time lines, extended and thoughtful discussions of further readings — to make it a work of high quality. It is also the closest thing to a scholarly “multicultural history” of Canada, one that attempts to incorporate understandings of ordinary people's experience as well as those of “the rich and powerful”.<sup>43</sup>

*History of the Canadian Peoples* does not move beyond the conventions of the old grand narrative. While it is less explicitly Eurocentric than Granatstein, it preserves European categories. For example, in discussing the early history of Canada, it justifies exclusive reliance on European accounts on the grounds that written records are necessarily more reliable than oral histories.<sup>44</sup> Its subsequent focus is almost exclusively on Europeans: their reasons for leaving Western Europe in the early modern period, the progress of European discovery and settlement, the road to Confederation and onwards. Confederation remains its major organizational division.<sup>45</sup> Although it includes an excellent discussion of Europe in the sixteenth century,<sup>46</sup> equivalent treatment is not accorded Europe during the eras of peak migrations before World War I and after World War II. Thus it ironically essentializes “Europeanness”. It is as if, once Europeans arrive in Canada, they are frozen in time. Meanwhile, the Aboriginal societies, which until the nineteenth century were the majority population in Canada and which continue to occupy much of its land mass, are reduced to minor roles. After an initial account of Aboriginal societies, the history refers to Aboriginal people only insofar as they interact with Europeans and European purposes: for example, their roles in fur trade society or in the Riel Rebellion, or Elijah Harper's blocking of the Meech Lake Accord. Although both First Nations people and Black/African Canadians appear as the subjects of white racism,<sup>47</sup> they are not dis-

42 Margaret Conrad, Alvin Finkel, *et al.*, *History of the Canadian Peoples*, 2 vols. (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1993). While Granatstein calls the authors to task for a number of shortcomings, he rightly sees their account as a departure from the political history that he wishes to restore. See Granatstein, *Who Killed Canadian History?*, pp. 57–58. Granatstein's critique of the authors' treatment of the two world wars seems especially well taken. It will be interesting to see if subsequent editions correct this. For a rather different appreciation of the significance of Conrad *et al.*, one more consistent with McKillop's, see Jean-Paul Bernard, “L'historiographie canadienne récente (1964–94) et l'histoire des peuples du Canada”, *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 76, no. 3 (September 1995), pp. 321–353.

43 Conrad *et al.*, *History of the Canadian Peoples, Volume I: Beginnings to 1867*, p. xvi.

44 *Ibid.*, pp. 10–11.

45 See, for example, *ibid.*, pp. 82–123. The second volume is Alvin Finkel *et al.*, *History of the Canadian Peoples, Volume II: 1867 to the Present*.

46 Conrad *et al.*, *History of the Canadian Peoples, Volume I*, pp. 48–81.

47 See, for example, *ibid.*, pp. 497–502.

cussed either as active participants in “Colonial Society” in their own right or as peoples whose exclusion was integral to shaping that society.<sup>48</sup>

The Chinese and their experiences receive only passing mention. In the 631 pages of the first volume, the Chinese are given one paragraph,<sup>49</sup> and in the second volume, they receive half a dozen passing references, generally as the objects of anti-Chinese feelings or as the builders of the CPR.<sup>50</sup> What might be thought of as the “ethnic” histories of the Chinese — Edgar Wickberg, ed., *From China to Canada*; Anthony B. Chan, *Gold Mountain*; and Peter S. Li, *The Chinese in Canada*<sup>51</sup> — are not even referenced. Instead of encountering histories about Chinese experience in Canada, students are referred to accounts of European attitudes towards the Chinese, specifically the works of Patricia E. Roy and W. Peter Ward.<sup>52</sup> Racism is only discussed as something that affected Jews and people of colour, not as a phenomenon that shaped “whiteness” and Anglo-Europeans’ power and privilege. Thus, for all of its sensitivity to issues of context, to questions of gender, and to what the authors describe as “the New Social History”,<sup>53</sup> *History of the Canadian Peoples* fails to provide an adequate account of racism.

The failings of the *History of the Canadian Peoples* are a measure of the field as a whole. As tertiary accounts, survey histories are particularly prone to such failings. If the secondary literature has not fully explored the topic, it is unlikely to appear in the survey text. The same situation is evident in two survey histories of British Columbia, where the so-called Chinese are and have been a more significant group than in Canada overall.<sup>54</sup> Interestingly, both make some efforts to incorporate Aboriginal peoples. Jean Barman’s *The West Beyond the West* includes a discussion of Aboriginal peoples as one of its central chapters.<sup>55</sup> One chapter in *The Pacific Province* argues that British Columbia’s cultural life has been shaped by the dynamic tension between two groups, and two groups only, Anglo-Europeans and Aboriginal people.<sup>56</sup> Both surveys focus primarily on Europeans and give

48 See, for example, *ibid.*, pp. 502–508.

49 *Ibid.*, pp. 470–471.

50 See, for examples, Finkel *et al.*, *History of the Canadian Peoples, Volume II*, pp. 100–101, 118–119.

51 Edgar Wickberg, ed., *From China to Canada: A History of the Chinese Communities of Canada* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1982); Anthony B. Chan, *Gold Mountain: The Chinese in the New World* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1983); Peter S. Li, *The Chinese in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988).

52 Finkel, *et al.*, *History of the Canadian Peoples, Volume II*, pp. 259–260.

53 *Ibid.*, pp. xii–xv.

54 Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991); Hugh M. Johnson, ed., *The Pacific Province: A History of British Columbia* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1996).

55 Barman, “Disregard for Native Peoples, 1858–1945”, *The West Beyond the West*, pp. 151–175.

56 Douglas Cole, “Leisure, Taste and Tradition in British Columbia”, in Johnson, ed., *The Pacific Province*, pp. 344–381. However much this may be a step forward in some respects, it is historically highly problematic. For a different assessment of the role of the Chinese in British Columbia, see Robert Galois and R. Cole Harris, “Racalibrating Society: The Population Geography of British Columbia”, *The Canadian Geographer*, vol. 38, no. 1 (1994), pp. 37–53.

only passing reference to the Chinese. Neither provides an adequate account of anti-Asian racism, its effects on Asian British Columbians or on European dominance.

For survey histories to be meaningful to new generations of young people, mentioning gender, ethnic, sexual, or racialized minorities, while leaving the national grand narrative intact, is not enough. Texts such as *History of the Canadian Peoples* need to show how multiple social categories were normalized and contested, and especially how racialization and racism have shaped the dominant as well as the minority parts of society. They need to acknowledge people's multiple and complex links to and conflicts with others, both in what is now Canada and with other places. Far from being add-ons to "The History of Canada", this is the warp and weft of people's lives, of their histories and present realities.

### **An Alternative to Eurocentrism**

The apparent inability of good historians to come to terms with racism and the experiences of people subjected to racist oppression is part of a larger phenomenon. It is the product of a conception of the past, reproduced in graduate seminars and innumerable undergraduate essays, that reduces Canada's history to the English-language historical record and its subject matter to the limits of the modern nation-state. The reproduction of this idea is often quite unconscious. Consider Carl Berger's magisterial review, *The Writing of Canadian History*.<sup>57</sup> Although his subtitle acknowledges that he is looking at English-language accounts only, his main title claims that he is accounting for all of Canadian history. Imagine a work with the same title whose subtitle was "Chinese-Canadian Historical Writing" or even "French-Canadian Historical Writing"! In effectively limiting the writing of Canadian history to English-language works, or even to English- and French-language works, one leaves out important historical accounts, especially those in non-European languages.

An example is provided by a little-known Centennial project. Nineteen sixty-seven seemed a fitting occasion for the publication of a history of the Chinese in Canada. David T. H. Lee's (Lee Donghai's) *Jianada Huaqiao shi* appeared in Taipei just in time to mark the Centennial.<sup>58</sup> Lee was not new to writing history. In 1960, as the principal of the Chinese Public School in Victoria, he had edited and overseen the publication of a special volume of essays marking the 75th anniversary of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association and the 60th anniversary of the Chinese Public School. Although focused on Victoria, the essays were the first published accounts

<sup>57</sup> See Carl Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History: Aspects of English-Canadian Historical Writing Since 1900*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986).

<sup>58</sup> David T. H. Lee [Lee T'ung-hai], *Jianada Huaqiao shi* [A history of Chinese in Canada] (Taipei: Zhonghua Da Dian Bianying Hui, 1967).

of the histories of the Chinese in Canada.<sup>59</sup> His 1967 work was the first, single-authored scholarly history of the Chinese in Canada, one of the first published Canadian ethnic histories, and the culmination of many years of careful research. Yet, even though Edgar Wickberg has identified it as the place to start in writing a history of the Chinese in Canada,<sup>60</sup> it is poorly known except among a small group of historians. To be fair, *Jianada Huaqiao shi* is written in Chinese, but here the political economy of Canadian historical production enters the picture. Chinese has been spoken continuously in what is today Canada since 1858, yet no English or French translations of Chinese-language primary sources relating to Canada have been published.<sup>61</sup> One wonders how long a language needs to be spoken before it receives academic recognition as Canadian.

*Jianada Huaqiao shi* is significant not only because it documents Chinese Canadian experience. It demonstrates that there are alternatives to Eurocentric conceptions of Canada's past. Lee's history has its proper beginning with the founding of the Victoria's Chinese community in 1858, rather than with the founding of Quebec's European community in 1608.<sup>62</sup> Rather than political continuities with Europe (rivalries between England and France, constitutional continuities with the United Kingdom), narrative chapters record political continuities with China (the role of the Imperial Qing consulate in San Francisco in the founding of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association in Victoria in 1884 and the activities of the Chinese Empire Reform Association and the Confucian reformers Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao as well as those of Sun Yat-sen and the Guomindang in Canada).<sup>63</sup> Even the book's title demonstrates Chinese nationalist and ethnicist concerns. The term "Huaqiao" is a bit like referring to English Canadians as "Greater Englishmen". It is often translated as "Overseas Chinese", a term originally used to refer to first-generation migrants from China. Increasingly, it refers to members of the Chinese diaspora more generally.<sup>64</sup> The concluding chapter discusses the contemporary "ideology" or world view needed for

59 David T. H. Lee (Lee T'ung-hai) [Li Donghai], ed., *Jianada Yuduoli Zhonghua Huiguan/ Huaqiao Xuexiao chengli qishiwu/ liushi zhounian jinian tekan* [Special memorial publication marking the 75th anniversary of Canada's Victoria Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association and the 60th anniversary of the Overseas Chinese School] (Victoria: Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, 1960).

60 Wickberg, ed. *From China to Canada*, p. 334.

61 An informal English translation of *Jianada Huaqiao shi* was prepared as part of the background material for *From China to Canada* (Edgar Wickberg, personal communication, March 4, 1999). This translation can be found in the Chinese Canadian Research Collection of the Special Collections Division, University of British Columbia.

62 Consider the time line discussion of major events in Lee, *Jianada Huaqiao shi*, pp. 479–507.

63 See the chapters on Li Hongzhang, Kang Youwei, and Sun Yat-sen in *ibid.*, pp. 256–272, 273–278, 279–320.

64 For a full discussion of the term, see Wang Gungwu, "Patterns of Chinese Migration in Historical Perspective", in Wang Gungwu, *China and the Overseas Chinese* (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1991), pp. 3–21.

the Huaqiao to maintain their identity,<sup>65</sup> rather like a discussion of whether the Greater English are still English if they eat Yorkshire pudding but drink their beer cold and talk like Americans.

Significantly, non-Chinese do not enter into this history except insofar as they present obstacles that the Huaqiao overcame. For example, the role of Chinese workers in the construction of the CPR receives passing mention in a discussion of “Overseas Chinese Contributions to the Canada’s Communications Enterprises”.<sup>66</sup> Instead, major emphasis is given to the fight against the immigration head tax, disenfranchisement, and the construction of Chinese Canadian institutions.<sup>67</sup> Anglo and Franco-Canadian hopes, dreams, and motivations are ignored. Non-Chinese appear on the margins, rather like the scenery to which Aboriginal people are reduced in certain Eurocentric accounts. In this respect, *Jianada Huaqiao shi* is an inversion of the usual accounts of Canadian history, a Sino-centric rather than a Eurocentric history.<sup>68</sup>

*Jianada Huaqiao shi* departs from Eurocentric accounts in other ways. Following what Wickberg has called “traditional Chinese standards of historical writing”, entire sections avoid the over-arching narratives of European histories.<sup>69</sup> It contains pages of lists, for example, the names of the directors of Victoria’s Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association. To those schooled in western historical traditions, this betrays an antiquarian interest that gets in the way of a good story and that might be best satisfied in an appendix. It also belies European cinematographic notions of narrative — of subject, plot, and climax. However, Lee was not writing in a European tradition or for a European audience. Such lists, and the lack of narrative, make a great deal of sense in the 2,000-year-old tradition of historical scholarship in China.<sup>70</sup> What emerges might be considered to be more like a painting, a perspective assembled through a series of brushstrokes, than a Hollywood film.

Of course, *Jianada Huaqiao shi* is not an anti-racist history, even if it does demonstrate that historical frameworks need not be Eurocentric. It does point to the possibility of writing a history of Canada’s past without linking that history to Canada as nation, or without seeing the nation as the *telos* that organizes the past. Indeed, in *Jianada Huaqiao shi*, Canada, rather than an

65 Lee, *Jianada Huaqiao shi*, pp. 469–478. Part of this chapter is translated in Ng, *The Chinese in Vancouver*.

66 Lee, *Jianada Huaqiao shi*, pp. 443–444.

67 See, for example, the chapter on “Overseas Chinese Culture and Education” in *ibid.*, pp. 321–354.

68 The absence of Aboriginal peoples and other non-Chinese in *Jianada Huaqiao shi* demonstrates that one grand narrative cannot simply replace another.

69 Wickberg, ed., *From China to Canada*, p. 334.

70 See the intriguing Grant Hardy, “Can an Ancient Chinese Historian Contribute to Modern Western Theory? The Multiple Narratives of Ssu-Ma Chien”, *History and Theory*, vol. 33, no. 1 (1995), pp. 20–39, which suggests that such multiple, overlapping, and contradictory accounts may be more accurate than the over-arching narratives of European histories.

imagined community to which the Huaqiao either belong or are excluded, appears as a series of barriers, checkpoints at which people are either barred or through which they are allowed passage. This conception of Canada, not as a community or indeed a series of communities, but as a series of gates, is almost certainly a larger cultural production. For example, it runs through a collection of 600 Chinese letters from the early twentieth century that I am currently investigating.<sup>71</sup> This concept of Canada as a series of barriers suggests that “Canada” has multiple meanings, not all of which are nationalist.

### A Case for Anti-Racism

Anti-racism offers the best hope for coming to terms with the contests and exclusions that shape historical categories. As suggested earlier, it begins with a commitment to fight racism in the world today. This in turn requires taking the existence of racisms seriously.<sup>72</sup> As Christian Delacampagne reminds us in *L'invention du racisme*, “le racisme n'est pas seulement un mot parmi d'autres dans l'univers du discours, mais une réalité. Une réalité qui tue, lentement ou brutalement, chaque jour, des milliers d'hommes [et femmes] sur la planète.”<sup>73</sup> Rather than being merely a way of speaking or thinking (as I intend my historical research to demonstrate), racisms fundamentally structure social experience, people's interactions with others, their life chances, and the meanings that they can make. As a fundamental structuring of social experience, a racism is not individual prejudice or discriminatory actions alone, but is a generalized social phenomenon. Among other things, this suggests that racisms, rather than being the by-products of the necessary national politics of the moment, themselves help to shape those politics and their categories. Put differently, racisms have been important elements in historical context during the modern era.

Racism is not a single thing, following a fixed pattern and producing monolithic social conditions. There have been multiple racisms.<sup>74</sup> Each racism has its own particularities and features and its own history. Thus, anti-Semitism and anti-Chinese racism have different origins and consequences in Canada and affect people differently with time and place. As David Theo Goldberg suggests, “It follows that there may be different racisms in the same place at different times; or different racisms in various different places

71 These can be found in the City of Vancouver Archives, Yip Family and Yip Sang Company Ltd. Papers, Add. Ms. 1108, vol. 89–91.

72 While there is a significant literature on particular racisms in history, including in Canada, only recently has the salience of racism to historical theory been explored. See, for example, Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995). My discussion here follows David Theo Goldberg, *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning* (Oxford, England; and Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1993).

73 Christian Delacampagne, *L'invention du racisme : antiquité et Moyen-Âge* (Paris: Fayard, 1983), p. 13.

74 See the various contributions to Donald and Rattansi, eds., “Race”, *Culture and Difference*.

at the same time; or again different racist expressions — different, that is, in the conditions of their expression, their forms of expression, the objects of their expressions, and their effects — among different people at the same space-time conjuncture.”<sup>75</sup> An emphasis on understanding racisms in particular contexts highlights history as an anti-racist methodology.

Although there is no essential form of racism, Goldberg argues that all racisms have met certain conceptual conditions.<sup>76</sup> Specifically, Goldberg argues that racisms involve racialized exclusions and concomitant inclusions, and that these have significant (“non-trivial”) consequences for the excluded. This analysis is extremely useful for constructing an historical account of racisms.

The concept of racialization is central to Goldberg’s analysis and to much of contemporary anti-racist theory. Racialization is part of an anti-essentialist approach to understanding social categories that recognizes that social identities are fluid, their contents and boundaries specific to time and place. For example, all human societies appear to have been gendered, but they have not necessarily involved the kind of binary that exists in the dominant notions of masculinity and femininity in Canada today.<sup>77</sup> If social identities are fluid, anti-essentialism leads to questions about how they come to be fixed. For example, it can lead to investigation of the processes through which dominant categorizations are policed. This is as true of categories like “race” as it is of seemingly more ephemeral ones like political loyalty. Indeed, notions of race as immutable and inheritable difference are of recent origins, little older than the modern nation-state.<sup>78</sup>

Racialization is the social process of making “race”. Robert Miles has described it as an ideological process of dividing human populations into groups on the basis of allegedly different, immutable and inheritable characteristics.<sup>79</sup> According to Miles, racialized groupings are “socially imagined” rather than objectively real, natural, or biological.<sup>80</sup> However, Goldberg differs from Miles in arguing that racialization does not necessarily require constructing hierarchies among groups, just the ascription of immutable difference.<sup>81</sup> Although racialization in Canada today commonly takes place with respect to supposed skin colour groupings, it is possible to have racial-

75 Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, p. 91.

76 *Ibid.*, p. 97.

77 Tani Barlow, “Theorizing Women: *Funiü, Guojia, Jiating* [Chinese Women, Chinese State, Chinese Family]”, *Genders*, no. 10 (Spring 1991), pp. 132–160. See also Barlow, “Politics and Protocols of *Funiü*: (Un)Making National Women”, in Christina Gilmartin *et al.*, eds., *Engendering China: Women, Culture and the State*, Harvard Contemporary China Series (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), pp. 339–359.

78 Theodore W. Allen, *The Invention of the White Race*, 2 vols. (London and New York: Verso, 1994); Bowser, ed., *Racism and Anti-racism in World Perspective*.

79 See Robert Miles, *Racism*, Key Ideas Series (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 74.

80 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

81 Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, pp. 94–95. Racialization is not in and of itself racist.

izations, or what Hannah Arendt once referred to as “race-thinking”, without race.<sup>82</sup> For example, representations of “the French” versus “the English” in certain English Canadian discourses seem to me to be effectively racialized, although they are rarely thought of as such.<sup>83</sup>

The concept of racialization makes for a better understanding of how racist categories get enacted. Racisms especially essentialize.<sup>84</sup> The problem is to affirm the reality of racist oppression without reinscribing the categories that racisms foster. An anti-racist history, therefore, needs to be alive to the contingent, contested, and fluid nature of social identities and to draw attention to the efforts of various individuals, groups, and institutions to fix identities. For example, in 1885 while debating the *Dominion Franchise Act*, John A. Macdonald justified the exclusion of the Chinese from the right to vote on the grounds that they were “an Asiatic population, alien in spirit, alien in feeling, alien in everything” and that the male Chinese labourer “has no British instincts or British feelings or aspirations”.<sup>85</sup> When seen as an instance of racialization, his statement ceases to be an objective description of the “facts”, but becomes an invention of Chinese and British difference. If Macdonald had to invent this notion of difference, others must have questioned it. Sure enough, several members of the House resisted Macdonald’s characterization, affirming that the Chinese were already respectable citizens who had even voted in the last election. This becomes a common feature of all racisms. People do not naturally fit into the fictions of “race”, however defined. They have to be shoved into them, and the boundaries of “race” need to be continually policed.

Goldberg’s contribution is to move beyond the concept of racialization to argue that racisms also involve the organization of exclusions.<sup>86</sup> Exclusion implies an active process: something that one human being does to another. Exclusions need not be deliberate or intended. They are a matter of fact. Either one is excluded or one is not. By using the term “exclusion”, Goldberg also draws attention to more than the discursive. Exclusions can be symbolic or discursive (not having one’s meanings engaged) or they can involve material exclusions from various social groupings, from certain institutions or territories. Racist exclusions can even involve exclusion from life itself. Goldberg’s discussion is important for understanding racisms as

82 Hannah Arendt, “Race-Thinking Before Racism”, *Review of Politics*, vol. 6 (1944), pp. 36–73.

83 English and French differences have been conceived in racial terms. Perhaps best known is Pierre Vallières, *Nègres blancs d’Amérique*, new rev. ed. (Montreal: Typo, 1994). But see also André Siegfried, *The Race Question in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1966). “Race” is a rather slippery category whose elements shift over time. See, for examples, Michael Banton, *Racial Theories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Nancy L. Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain, 1800–1960* (London: Macmillan, 1982).

84 Paul Gilroy, “Nationalism, History and Ethnic Absolutism”, *History Workshop Journal*, no. 30 (Autumn 1990), pp. 114–120.

85 Canada, House of Commons, *Debates* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1885), p. 1589.

86 Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, pp. 98–103.

generalized social conditions because racialized exclusions point to concomitant processes of racialized inclusion. Thus, in the example above, Macdonald was not only racializing the Chinese; he was organizing the federal state as the preserve of British and other European men.

Goldberg further argues that racialized exclusion is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for racism. If only for tactical reasons, people subject to racialized exclusion have often had to come together in exclusive ways to fight racism. Goldberg is reluctant to call such efforts racism. He therefore adds a third condition. Racialized exclusions must have non-trivial consequences for the excluded.<sup>87</sup> This effectively privileges the understandings of those subject to racialized exclusions in deciding whether or not racism is present. It does not mean that because someone claims to be excluded that person should be automatically believed. It does mean that the claim needs to be examined seriously, that the burden of proof should be placed on those who would argue that theirs is not a case of racialized exclusion.

Goldberg's discussion shifts attention from the individual prejudices and intentions of members of racially privileged groups to the effects of exclusion on the members of oppressed groups. Thus, for Goldberg, an action can be judged to be racist by its effects. Goldberg's analysis is consistent with a rich tradition of anti-racism.<sup>88</sup> Thus, an anti-racist history could concern itself with following one particular racism, tracing the origins and generalization of the racializations that define it; with documenting the ways in which exclusions are organized within and between institutions, territories, and social groups (for example, how racialized exclusions interact with social class or gendered categories); as well as with recording the effects of exclusion on members of excluded groups.

### Engaging Excluded Meanings

Following Goldberg, engaging the meanings of the excluded is central to an anti-racist project and accordingly needs to be central to writing an anti-racist history. This, in turn, requires a departure from the ways in which the history of racism in Canada has been written. For example, several generations

87 *Ibid.*, pp. 111–116.

88 In addition to works cited above, consider M. Ibrahim Alladin, ed., *Racism in Canadian Schools* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace, 1995); E. Ellis Cashmore, *The Logic of Racism* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987); Barry Troyna and Richard Hatcher, *Racism in Children's Lives: A Study of a Mainly-White Primary School* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992); Michael Omi, Michael Winant, and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States from the 1960s to the 1980s* (New York and London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986); David Theo Goldberg, ed., *Anatomy of Racism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990); Christine Sleeter and Peter McLaren, eds., *Multicultural Education, Critical Pedagogy, and the Politics of Difference* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995); Roxana Ng et al., *Anti-Racism, Feminism and Critical Approaches to Education* (Westport, Conn.: Bergin and Garvey, 1995); M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997); Alistair Bonnet, *Anti-Racism* (London: Routledge, 2000).

of scholars have documented the activities, ideologies, and politics of Anglo-Canadians in British Columbia. They have done so from a variety of theoretical and political perspectives. The work of Patricia E. Roy, W. Peter Ward, and Kay Anderson come particularly to mind here.<sup>89</sup> Granatstein has even raised important questions about the federal government's 1942 decision to remove forcibly those of Japanese racial origin from the West Coast.<sup>90</sup> Despite recurring criticism of much of his work, Peter Ward's *White Canada Forever!* makes an important contribution by linking the 1907 Vancouver riot, the Komagata Maru Incident, and the forced evacuation of Japanese Canadians to a larger social phenomenon.<sup>91</sup> Certain passages, such as his discussion of the stereotype of "John Chinaman", continue to provide important insights.<sup>92</sup> Patricia E. Roy has brought an unsurpassed, almost encyclopaedic knowledge of primary newspaper and archival sources to her work and has consistently raised important questions about context, about the shifts in discourse over time, and even about the roles of those subjected to racism in challenging particular regulations. For example, she establishes that anti-Asian state regulation varied in its intensity and in its effectiveness.<sup>93</sup> Kay Anderson's *Vancouver's Chinatown* exemplifies the potential of historical research when well grounded in social theory and original primary research. It not only introduced a social constructivist understanding of "race" to historical scholarship on Canada, but also established the importance of the local as well as broader cultural processes in constructing racisms.<sup>94</sup> That these works represent good history is important. This implies that their limitations are the result of a broader phenomenon and not of poor scholarship.

Significantly, Ward, Roy, and Anderson rely exclusively on English-language sources to construct their analyses. These include newspapers, official documents, and the like. These sources contain few statements by those who were the objects of anti-Asian racism. There is literally a handful of statements by so-called Chinese in the English-language record before World War I. By contrast there are hundreds, if not thousands, of statements by

89 See, especially, W. Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever! Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Toward Orientals in British Columbia* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978); Patricia E. Roy, *A White Man's Province: British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858-1914* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1989); Kay J. Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991).

90 In Patricia E. Roy, J. L. Granatstein, Masako Iino, and Hiroko Takamura, *Mutual Hostages: Canadians and Japanese During the Second World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).

91 For critiques of Ward, see Rennie Warburton and David Cobern, eds., *Workers, Capital and the State in British Columbia: Selected Papers* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988).

92 Ward, *White Canada Forever!*, especially pp. 1-22.

93 See Roy's discussion of the *Coal Mines Regulation Act* in *A White Man's Province*, pp. 134ff.

94 Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown*.

people of European origins about the so-called Chinese.<sup>95</sup> While these statements are not monolithic — some are sympathetic, some admiring, some viciously negative — their combined effect is to present a view of racism as merely a kind of discourse, the product of a natural, if lamentable, desire for racial homogeneity, as Ward has argued, or the by-product of regional politics, a reflection of insecurity due to the tenuous nature of settlement in a largely hostile environment, as Roy argues.<sup>96</sup>

The statements of those privileged by racism cannot fully account for the effects of their own practices on the excluded. Understanding these effects requires engagement with the meanings of the excluded. However, the very nature of racialized exclusion is that such meanings do not have to be engaged. Consequently, in these statements, the effects of racialized exclusion, Goldberg's "non-trivial consequences", are silenced. Thus, ironically, these histories have underestimated the racisms that they wish to document and have downplayed the significance of the few statements about these effects that do appear in the English-language record.

An anti-racist history necessarily seeks to engage the meanings created by those subject to exclusion and should try to understand the complexities of their lives. Indeed, rediscovering such meanings and incorporating them into contemporary understandings of the past are, in and of themselves, worthwhile contributions to a more complete understanding of racisms. They are especially useful in trying to understand the historical construction of racial privilege. Privilege needs to be understood relationally. Someone's privilege only exists in relation to someone else's oppression or lack of privilege. One cannot document the former without also documenting the latter. Thus the engagement of excluded and silenced meanings is central to an anti-racist project. In the case of anti-Chinese racisms in early-twentieth-century British Columbia, this means that Chinese-language sources must be explored and the experiences of Chinese British Columbians documented.

The major documentary source on the Chinese in early-twentieth-century Canada is the Vancouver Zhigongdang newspaper, *Dahan Gongbao*. What immediately becomes evident to the reader of this newspaper is the extent of racism endured by the Chinese until at least the end of the Second World War. Reports of racist violence, which often do not appear in the English-language newspapers, are common. Not only are people assaulted or

95 Consider the many statements by Anglo-Europeans and the few by Asians in the two Royal Commissions on Chinese immigration. See Canada, Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, *Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Subject of Chinese and Japanese Immigration into the Province of British Columbia* (Ottawa: S. E. Dawson, Queen's Printer, 1902); Canada, Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration, *Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration: Report and Evidence* (Ottawa: By order of the Commission, 1885).

96 See Ward, *White Canada Forever!*, pp. 119, 169. See also W. Peter Ward, "Class and Race in the Social Structure of British Columbia, 1870–1939", *BC Studies*, no. 45 (1980), pp. 17–35. Roy's views are most clearly stated in Patricia E. Roy, "British Columbia's Fear of Asians", *Histoire sociale/Social History*, vol. 13, no. 25 (May 1980), pp. 161–172.

harassed, but entire districts are reported as closed to the Chinese. At the same time this source reveals a sense of Chinese activity, of their combined efforts to resist or circumvent racist regulations. The resulting picture of racism that emerges is starkly different from that evident in accounts that rely on English records. Even as specific racist measures changed or fell into disuse, their combined continual effect was to circumscribe the lives of Chinese British Columbians. Yet racism and its effects are only a small part of what engaging such sources promises. *Dahan Gongbao* also reports on political and military events in China and elsewhere in the world. It traces the Zhigongdang's opposition to the Guomindang and other "bad elements". It even includes discussions of literature and of other cultural activities. Thus it describes a far different and more complex world from that contained within the fantasies about Chinatown circulated by English papers.<sup>97</sup>

### Postcolonialism

The failure of the Canadian historical community to draw on sources like *Dahan Gongbao*, to engage the work of scholars like David T. H. Lee, or to develop adequate accounts of racism bespeaks the ways in which Europeans and their meanings have come to be the ones who count within contemporary culture. During the last 500 years, the European colonization of the world involved concomitant projects of silencing, subordinating, and displacing the meanings created by non-European peoples, including their understandings of their pasts.<sup>98</sup> This situation, although changing, still endures. Postcolonial critique highlights this silencing and points to the ways in which it shaped not only the colonized, but Europeans as well.<sup>99</sup>

Much historical writing on Canada is actively colonizing, in two senses — it presents a sanitized view of the past in which the negative costs of the European occupation of the land are glossed, while it colonizes contemporary understandings of the past. Starting Canadian history with Leif Ericsson or Jacques Cartier creates the mistaken impression that before Europeans there were no people who had a real past. From this it is not such a great step to argue that "organized societies", or at least the only ones that count, came into existence with the arrival of Europeans, and that Canada as an organized society is solely a European creation. This, incidentally, is precisely one of the arguments used to deny Aboriginal land claims. It was the view

97 I discuss some of the implications of this source in Timothy J. Stanley, "Schooling, White Supremacy and the Formation of a Chinese Merchant Public in British Columbia", *BC Studies*, no. 107 (1995), pp. 3–27.

98 See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993).

99 For an example of colonialism's shaping of a European domestic sphere, see Ann McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995). Although not grounded in postcolonial theory, still of value is John M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880–1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984).

advanced by Chief Justice Allan McEachern, now of the British Columbia Court of Appeals, in the Gitskan-Wet'sewet'en land claims case in which he not only rejected the claim but questioned the existence of the Gitskan and Wet'sewet'en prior to contact with Europeans.<sup>100</sup> The view that the only real history is that of Europeans is the one that Peter C. Newman has advanced in calling for rejection of the Nishga Treaty.<sup>101</sup>

Even the vocabulary of Canadian historical writing contributes to colonization. Applying the term "settler" to people who rarely stayed in one place long and who promoted the rapid depopulation of the land by those who had occupied it for hundreds, if not thousands of years obscures the human and ecological costs of European colonization.<sup>102</sup> Popular claims such as "Canadian women got the right to vote during World War I" hide the racial basis of the franchise that continued in the case of men and women of Asian "race" until 1947–1948 and for so-called "status Indians" until 1960. Discussions of the history of the working class which do not acknowledge Aboriginal people, Asians, and Africans as workers reproduce the racialized exclusions that characterized so much of working-class life in the past.<sup>103</sup>

Overcoming colonialism is a complex project. It requires rejecting simple binaries of heroes and victims. The British Columbia Chinese were at one and the same time people displaced by colonialism and those who helped to displace others. New vocabularies and new categories of analysis are needed to analyse such complexities. For example, what should we call those people who migrated from Guangdong province in South China to British Columbia during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and their Canadian-born children? Before the twentieth century, they identified themselves as being from a particular town or county and had relatively little sense of sharing a common "Chinese" identity. China was a civilization, not a nationalism or ethnicity.<sup>104</sup> In British Columbia, the term "Chinaman" was generally

100 See Allan McEachern, CIBC, *Reasons for Judgment: Delgamuukw v. B.C.* (Smithers, B.C.: Supreme Court of British Columbia, 1991). MacEachern's findings have been substantially overturned by the Supreme Court of Canada. See Supreme Court of Canada, *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia* [1997], 3 SCR, 1010. In calling for Aboriginal title to be established by a combination of European and Aboriginal historical traditions, the Supreme Court seems to be taking an anti-racist stand. I am indebted to Arthur Ray for bringing the significance of the Supreme Court decision to my attention.

101 Peter C Newman, "A Treaty that Threatens the National Agenda", *Maclean's*, August 10, 1998, p. 52.

102 This has led Cole Harris to speak of "resettlement". See Cole Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essay on Colonialism and Geographical Change* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997).

103 I have in mind here Bryan D. Palmer, *Working-Class Experience: Rethinking the History of Canadian Labour, 1800–1991* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1992), although a better demonstration of a failure to conceive Chinese as workers is Rennie Warburton, "Race and Class in British Columbia: A Comment", *BC Studies*, no. 49 (Spring 1981), pp. 79–85.

104 This does not imply that they would not have recognized certain people as like themselves through the performance of certain shared rituals. For a view of traditional Chinese culture as performative, see James L. Watson, "The Renegotiation of Chinese Cultural Identity in the Post-Mao Era: An Autobiographical Perspective", in Kenneth Lieberthal *et al.*, eds., *Perspectives on Modern China: Four Anniversaries* (Armonk, N.Y. and London: M. E. Sharpe, 1991), pp. 341–363.

applied to them by migrants from Britain, Canada West/ Ontario, and the United States. Originally this term may have been a statement of origin, not a racialization, not dissimilar to “Englishman” or “King George Man” in Chinook jargon. However, by the mid-nineteenth century, this term was also a racist ascription. By 1900 the term “Chinaman” had been remade into a nationalist Chinese identity. This nationalist identity did not replace the earlier local ones, but added to it.<sup>105</sup> By the 1920s these “Chinamen” were claiming their rights as British subjects, even organizing a Chinese Canadian Club in Victoria. This was more or less the same moment that the federal parliament fixed all those of “Chinese race” living in Canada as aliens who had to register with the government or face possible deportation. Rather than seeing “the Chinese” as a group whose identity was fixed and unproblematic, an anti-racist understanding leads to asking how it was that Chinese identity was fixed from the outside, at the same time asking how the so-called Chinese reinvented their own identities for their own purposes.

### **Conclusion**

From the foregoing, I hope it is clear that my efforts to “kill” Canadian history have been, at least in part, intended. An anti-racist history has the potential to be more successful in capturing the multiple pasts of this time and place than nationalist frameworks have proven to be. This is not to suggest replacing one grand narrative with another. An anti-racist history needs to acknowledge that it is itself a product of a particular time and place. Its narratives are necessarily “small” ones which can be written in multiple ways. These can range from focusing on a restricted geographic area over time and tracing how racisms and European cultural constructions colonized it, to focusing on particular institutions and the roles of racisms in shaping them, to placing local patterns within the broader ones of European colonialism. Anti-racist histories can be written about those excluded by racisms such as Aboriginal peoples, Jews, Asians, Africans. They can also be written about those who have benefitted from them, most often people of European origins. Nor is it necessary to be overtly studying racism to write an anti-racist history.

In calling for an anti-racist history, far from abandoning history, I am affirming its role as a disciplined way of knowing that can inform our understandings of the world we inhabit. History at its best places particulars in context, understanding them in terms of what else is happening at the time and place under investigation and what else is known about the history of the period. History in this sense is always unfinished. As previously unexplored records become available and as new questions are asked, so, too, new interpretations emerge. Anti-racism provides a better basis for understanding the past because it sees context more broadly than the nationalist framework and entertains a series of richer questions. This broader understanding makes

105 See Stanley, “ ‘Chinamen, Wherever We Go’ ”.

into subjects of research such matters as the role of racism in the rise of the nation-state and the invention of nationalism. It also allows for investigation of the ways in which people in all eras, both privileged and oppressed, fought against racisms. This, in turn, promises richer and more exciting histories that may enable us to see that racisms have shaped and continue to shape us all.