

Chalk Talk

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Letter from the Editor

Dear Subscribers,

As regular readers of **Chalk Talk** may suspect, I am a child of the 60's, a decade defined in large part by the rise of the baby boomers, the Vietnam War, Women's liberation, Civil Rights and may I say, the best music ever produced. I was raised on a border town in Southern Ontario and though I was living the Canadian experience, I had a front row seat to the turbulent civil rights movement which culminated with the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by President Lyndon Johnson. As the decade progressed, the nightly news was filled with protest, passion, and, at times, bursts of violence in many American inner cities.

On both sides of the border, this Black History Month, we are witnessing history in the making. Notably, the American primary process, now in full swing, has produced a race where the choice among Democratic voters for President is between a woman and an African American. In Ontario, the approval of an Africentric alternative school has been hotly debated. What has struck me are the community leaders, such as Governor General



Award winning history teacher, [David Watkins](#), (pictured left, with Her Excellency, The Right Honourable, Michaëlle Jean.) that have come forward to speak so eloquently, thoughtfully and passionately about the issue.

The debate is an important one which has engaged the public of all ages and backgrounds.

This week's issue of **Chalk Talk** features resources available through the NFB that document many aspects of Canada's Black History on film that educators can use in the classroom .

CoEd Communications is dedicated to supporting the important work of teachers by providing classroom resources on a range of topics. We invite you to visit our website at www.4edu.ca to view the many free teachers' resources on offer.

[As always, your feedback is important to us.](#)

Mary Kovack

NFB — Black History Films for the Classroom



Since its inception, defining our nation and telling our stories is what the [National Film Board of Canada \(NFB\)](#) does best. Always innovative, creative and socially relevant, the NFB has become one of the most respected and award-winning public producers of many of the world's best documentaries, animated features and short films.

Launched in summer, 2007, NFB's new educational website [Across Cultures/D'une culture à l'autre](#) celebrates cultural diversity in Canada from a cinematic and historical perspective. 60 films in English, 60 films in French and 5 films in other languages, spanning over 60 years of the NFB collection, are now available **free online** in short clips and in their entirety.

[Across Cultures](#) is supported by the Department of Canadian Heritage through the Canadian Memory Fund program (Canadian Culture Online). The site explores different aspects of Canada's cultural plurality and features a number of films produced by the NFB about **Black Canadian History**. Educators will find colour and black and white documentaries, and animated short features in the "See Everything, Hear Everything" section [a sample is listed **below** in the **Website of the Week** feature], including some films that deal specifically with the Black Nova Scotian community.

Please note, too, that [Across Cultures](#) offers teachers' guides and lesson plans to facilitate use in grade 9-12 classrooms.



[Source: National Film Board of Canada]

NFB Free Online Films — Canada's Black History — Suggested Viewing



Speak it! From the Heart of Nova Scotia (1992) — In the environment of their predominantly white high school, a group of Black students face daily reminders of the presence of racism, ranging from abuse to exclusion.

Black Soul/Âme noire (2000) — This animated film is an exhilarating immersion into the heart of Black culture via a whirlwind voyage through the defining moments of Black History.

Speakers for the Dead (2000) — This documentary examines a small town in rural Ontario and its quest to restore the history and dignity of its Black descendants.

Fields of Endless Day (1978) — In a series of dramatic and documentary episodes, this film outlines the presence of Black people in Canada, from the 17th century to the war-time participation and activist groups of the first half of the 20th century.

Older Stronger Wiser (1989) — Five Black women talk about their lives in rural and urban Canada between the 1920s and 1950s. What emerges is a unique history of Canada's Black people and the legacy of their community elders.

The Road Taken (1996) — Black jazz musician Joe Sealy talks about the experiences of Black sleeping-car porters like his father who worked on the Canadian railways from the early 1900s through the 1960s.

Home Feeling: Struggle for a Community (1983) — *Home Feeling* explores relations between West Indian Canadians and police in the Toronto public housing environment.

Black Mother Black Daughter (1989) — Filmmaker Sylvia Hamilton interviews her mother, Marie Hamilton, concerning discrimination. Not admitted to nurse's training, Marie became teacher in the Black community of North Preston, Nova Scotia.

For additional Black History Films, [click here](#).

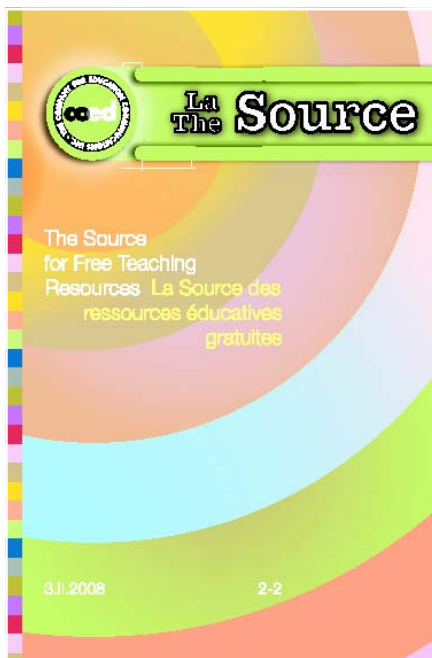


Across Cultures

(from top left) "Loyalties"; Black Soul/Âme noire"; Home-Feeling: Struggle for a Community"; "Black Mother Black Daughter"; (from top right) "Speakers for the Dead"; "Fields of Endless Day"; "Older Stronger Wiser"; "The Road Taken"

THE SOURCE FOR FREE TEACHING RESOURCES

February 2008 Issue Now Available!



Free copies of the new 44-page February 2008 issue of *The Source for Free Teaching Resources* are currently being distributed to schools across Canada.

This semi-annual, bilingual, printed reference guide to free, quality, curriculum-based resources for Canadian educators is produced by CoEd Communications, the same people who bring you *Chalk Talk* every week. We hope that this handy guide will make it easier for busy and dedicated educators to identify and order free supplemental classroom resources to assist in the preparation of lesson plans.

A limited number of extra printed copies of *The Source* are now available. To order your own copy and to receive future issues, simply go to CoEd's easy-to-use website, www.4edu.ca, and click on *The Source*, then *Free Subscription*, or email us at info@coedcomm.com. Our website also features a downloadable version of *The Source*. If you're interested in learning more about CoEd's many education communications services, contact Mary Kovack at maryk@coedcomm.com.

[What slavery did to Africa; To mark the start of Black History Month, a calculation of what the continent lost](#) – Louise Marie Diop-Maes, Human geographer and author of *Afrique noire, démographie, sol et histoire*. [The article was translated from French by Donald Hounam.], TheStar.com, February 3, 2008

“We know much about 16th century sub-Saharan Africa from surviving remains, archaeological excavations and written sources. There were integrated kingdoms and empires, with substantial cities (60,000 to 140,000 inhabitants) and significant towns (1,000 to 10,000); and less organized territories with large scattered populations. People practised agriculture, stock-rearing, hunting, fishing and crafts (metalworking, textiles, ceramics). They navigated along rivers and across lakes, trading over short and long distances, using their own currencies. In the 14th century the Arab traveller Ibn Battuta praised the security and justice of the Mali empire. Until the arrival of firearms, the Arab slave trade was insignificant in relation to economic activity and population. At the beginning of the 16th century, Leo Africanus noted in his *Description of Africa* that the king of Borno conducted only one slaving expedition a year.”

[40 years on, civil-rights killings still fuel activist; 'I have used the anger to ... do good,' says Toronto man of 1968's Orangeburg Massacre](#) — Royson James, Columnist, TheStar.com, February 8, 2008

“Toronto's Ken Jeffers is standing in the middle of a tumble-down shopping plaza, watching as 14 students from South Carolina State University re-enact a deadly civil rights protest he engaged in 40 years ago today. Days after Jeffers and fellow students picketed the town's segregated All-Star Bowling Alley, state police fired on them on campus, killing three and injuring at least 28. Known as the Orangeburg Massacre, one of the earliest martyrdom of students actively involved in the American civil rights movement, the events received little national press coverage as whirlwind events on the civil rights front kept the media busy. It was four years after the passage of the Civil Rights Act, two months before Martin Luther King Jr. was shot, and a young boy from Trinidad – at the school on a track scholarship – got swept along in the defining period of his life.”

[Ending the silence to save history; A new initiative is collecting the tales of Owen Sound's settlers and their families before slaves' stories completely slip away](#) – Stuart Laidlaw, Faith and Ethics Reporter, TheStar.com, February 2, 2008

“Bonita Johnson-de Matteis tells this story. She's not sure of all the details, or even how much to believe, but the tale of how her family came to Ontario is an integral part of Canadian black history...The history project reflects a growing recognition of the often overlooked black history of rural Ontario. A cairn has been erected in Owen Sound's main park to commemorate the Underground Railroad that brought slaves north, and a museum was built nearby. Each summer, the city hosts an Emancipation Picnic... In the end, she says, her own aversion to attention takes a back seat to reminding people that black history is not just an American or an urban thing. It is also a rural thing interwoven with European settlement of Ontario. In fact, she says, a century before Toronto began to think of itself as a multicultural centre, small towns like Owen Sound, Dresden and Chatham were already dealing with issues of race and ethnic tension. A decade after Confederation, Jackson says, nearly a third of Owen Sound was black, many of them escaped slaves. Their stories are piling up in the books and papers collecting in Jackson's home office, and in the very buildings of this Georgian Bay port.”

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