

“HE WHO IS RELUCTANT TO RECOGNIZE ME OPPOSES ME”¹: SELF-
DETERMINATION, RECOGNITION, AND REVOLUTION BETWEEN THE BLACK
UNITED FRONT AND THE CANADIAN STATE

by

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¹ Frantz Fanon. *Black Skin, White Masks*. (London: Pluto Press, 1967). 218.

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Chapter One - Introduction

I'd first and foremost like to discuss the direct implications of a historian's biases and influences on their research. While academic historical research is slowly removing the myth of total unbiased and removed research, there are still lingering conceptions that a historian is entirely separate from their historical discussions, findings, and research. I firmly believe that every historian is deeply connected with their own research, methodology, and conclusions, therefore an understanding of each historian is paramount to fully comprehending the direction, conclusions, and even shortcomings of their particular historiographical contribution. In this regard, I feel it is vitally important to recognize my own position in relation to the research I've completed below. As a White, Male Canadian, I have, and continue to benefit from an unjust Canadian society. While I have attempted to provide meaningful research, insights, discussions, and conclusions below, I recognize that there is a multitude of aspects and elements of Blackness and anti-Black racism in Nova Scotia and Canada that I will never understand and justly represent from my position of privilege. It is my hope that this research leads to greater education on the Black United Front, and discussions pertaining to ingrained racism in provincial and federal institutions.

Before undertaking a direct analysis of Black activism in Nova Scotia, it is vital to note what is meant in discussing Whitecentricism, White Nova Scotian elites, and the roots of anti-Black racism in Nova Scotia. In discussing their opposition and confliction with Blackness, these terms can appear inconclusive and vague without proper

identification. In this research, what is meant by these terms is an inspection of Nova Scotians both defending Whiteness as the status quo, and attacking Blackness as “foreign”, “unequal”, or “lesser”. In an analysis of America’s caste system, Isabel Wilkerson notes the influence of dominant group status threat, a theory that suggests that the dominant group within an unequal society can react negatively and occasionally vehemently to improvements within historically disadvantaged groups: “[For the dominant group member] his whole life is one anxious effort to preserve his caste, caste is his precious possession which he must save at any cost”. Wilkerson states that “[The caste system] hangs there to this day without any support, for now it needs no prop but belief –like a weed on the surface of a pond”.² The individuals, institutions, and systems that uphold the unequal and anti-Black hierarchy of Nova Scotian society both - knowingly, and unknowingly - are the roots by which “Whitecentric elites” are discussed throughout this research.

The Canadian state is discussed unreservedly in relation to this view of caste and systematic racism. An amalgamation at municipal, provincial, and federal levels involving ministers, offices, systems and legislation, the terms ‘state systems’, ‘state officials’, and similar terms are utilized throughout this text to refer to governing, institutionalized order that upholds caste and anti-Black racism in Canada.

On November 30th, 1968, all levels of Canadian government, media, and institutions were forced to do something they were not often accustomed to do: wait. While they restlessly waited and were unable to influence what occurred behind the

² Isabel Wilkerson. *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*. (New York: Random House, 2020). 184.

closed doors of a single, North-End Halifax library, over 400 Black Nova Scotians gathered to discuss their concerns and positions in Nova Scotian society. The meeting was an entirely self-deterministic event, as only Black Nova Scotians were allowed to enter and discuss Black philosophy, Black Power, and the directions of Black activism within the province, and abroad. The culmination of a multitude of actions, approaches, and activism, the meeting organizers left the library to inform the waiting institutions that a self-deterministic umbrella organization of Black activism and community engagement would be formed, titled the Black United Front (BUF). In a province and nation fabricated with anti-Black institutions and filled with Whitecentric agendas, the BUF was an organization by Black Nova Scotians, for Black Nova Scotians which challenged engrained economic, social, and judicial racism through community support, building Black Power, and pushing government institutions towards rectifying anti-Black policies and actions. Yet, by the organization's conclusion in 1996, the BUF had developed a muddled and complicated legacy filled with claims of mismanagement, financial concerns, and social reform having fell to the wayside. How was this perception created? What is the exact legacy of BUF? How did state interactions and interferences affect the perception and activities of a self-deterministic, socially active organization? An in-depth analysis of the BUF, postwar Black philosophy, and approaches to Black activism sheds immense insight onto not only the perception of the BUF itself, but the entirety of postwar Canadian Black activism, and decisions undertaken by the Nova Scotian and Canadian state.

Historians who examine social change in Canada have divided social activism into two distinct periods: pre-war activism (approximately 1930-1955), and postwar

activism (approximately 1955-1975). These periods are defined in Dominique Clement's *Canada's Rights Revolution: Social Movements and Social Change, 1937-1982* and Matthew Baglole's dissertation, "'All the Messy Details': Two Case Studies of Activist Mobilization in Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1960-1982". As described by Baglole:

Studies of this period have generated important insights including: an early focus on issues related to religion and rights; and alignment between international concerns and local/national concerns; a state-focused approach to activism; a strong preference for 'respectable' (often quiet) tactics rather than disruption; the importance of inter-movement cooperation; and the predominance of integrationist and gradualist approaches.³

This period of social activism in Canada is often characterized by historians for its stark difference in approach from later forms of social activism. As some historians have pointed to the religious connections prevalent in the background of this era of activism, overall social action is viewed as being non-confrontational, integrating into existing governmental and social structures, and a much smaller focus on visibility in both media coverage and public appearance. This is why it is argued to be in stark contrast to the second period of social activism from 1960 onwards, wherein social activism largely opposed integrationist approaches to existing structures. Instead, it opted for a more visible, outspoken, and confrontational approach that relied less on operating within government bodies and relied more on operating in spaces that garnered media coverage, public visibility, and active public participation. Therefore, while the first period was primarily hidden and driven by integration within an existing status quo, the second period was opposingly outspoken, visible, and driven by dismantling a problematic status quo through means primarily outside the same institutions that maintain and foundation for engrained white-centric Nova Scotian systems.

³ Matthew Baglole. "'All the Messy Details': Two Case Studies of Activist Mobilization in Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1960-1982" (PhD Dissertation, University of New Brunswick, 2011). 27-28.

In the context of Nova Scotia, this historical separation of two distinct “periods” of social activism is exemplified by the different Black activist organizations that operated in Nova Scotia and the ways in which their approaches to Black activism were divided. The first “period” of Nova Scotian activism therefore involved Black organizations such as The Colored Citizens Improvement League created in 1932, the Colored Education Centre founded in 1938, and most specifically the Nova Scotia Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NSAACP) created in 1945.⁴ These organizations operated as Black activist organizations focused on addressing Jim Crow era laws and sentiments throughout Nova Scotia, such as the inclusion of Black women in nursing school programs in 1947, and the inclusion of William Hall, the first Victoria Cross recipient in the province in school textbooks. The majority of these actions were done specifically through existing avenues of social activism and government agencies, with social activism attempting to be “non-confrontational.”⁵ Yet while confrontational methods were not regularly the approach and integration was the primary approach for first wave Black activists in Nova Scotia, to broadly display the entire period of Black social activism in the province as such would be inaccurate. There were occurrences within first wave Black activism in which confrontation with existing social structures was prominent, and public focus and discussion on the issue were utilized in a style often attributed more to second wave Black activism.

The most prominent example in Nova Scotia is the Viola Desmond Case, a civil rights case that arose from an incident that occurred in New Glasgow in 1946. While

⁴ Matthew Baglole. “‘All the Messy Details’: Two Case Studies of Activist Mobilization in Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1960-1982” (PhD Dissertation, University of New Brunswick, 2011). 18.

⁵ Colin Thomson. *Born With a Call: A Biography of William Pearly Oliver, C.M.* (Dartmouth: Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia, 1986). 83-84.

purchasing a ticket at the Roseland Theatre, Desmond was not permitted to buy a theatre ticket for the floor section due to the theatre following a racist and segregationist practice in which Black customers were only allowed seating on the balcony. Desmond opposed the racial barriers imposed in the establishment and sat in the floor section which resulted in an incident in which theatre staff and police officers forcibly removed Desmond from the premises and injured her in the process. The anti-Black, racist sentiments and structures in place both at the theatre and in the town justice system allowed for Viola Desmond to be imprisoned over the tax on a single cent. Desmond was later put on trial by the Canadian government for defrauding the government over the single cent, in which Desmond was given the option of imprisonment for thirty days or pay a twenty dollar fine.⁶ Understandably, the reaction to the incident from Black communities across Nova Scotia was one of shock and disgust as to how blatant anti-Black sentiment and segregation was in both businesses and government structures across the province. The incident came to be highlighted in both provincial and national news, and the NSAACP helped Viola Desmond with both her legal fees fighting the judicial outcome of the situation as well as in taking the case to the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia. The attention already given to the case and the nature of the situation being implicitly tied with existing social and government structures, the NSAACP adopted an approach to the situation which both directly promoted coverage and discussion of the situation, and openly confronted societal structures.⁷ Fifteen years later, while referencing the difference in

⁶ Colin Thomson. *Born With a Call: A Biography of William Pearly Oliver, C.M.* (Dartmouth: Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia, 1986). 83.

⁷ For public and media engagement see *The Clarion*, 1, no. 1. (New Glasgow, December 1946). Nova Scotia Archives.

approach utilized in this specific instance for the NSAACP, Dr. William Pearly Oliver stated:

this meant something to our people. Neither before nor since has there been such an aggressive effort to obtain rights. The people arose as one and with once voice. This positive stand enhanced the prestige of the Negro community throughout the Province. It is my conviction that much of the positive action that has since taken place stemmed from this.⁸

While the case itself was unsuccessful at the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia, the confrontation with existing social structures and the status quo in Nova Scotian society helped highlight and push active discussion on racial issues both apparent in Nova Scotian society and Nova Scotian government structures. Instances such as the Viola Desmond case show that while first wave Black activism in Canada and specifically Nova Scotia is characterized by non-confrontation and operations within existing status-quo structures, active engagement with confronting structural issues and highlighting these issues in public spheres was utilized as well to push for societal change.

The large volume of Black philosophical literature published in the postwar period gave the necessary space for Black activism to have a secondary wave which was rooted in confrontation, dismantling existing social structures, disrupting the White-centric status-quo, and creating a Pan-Africanist approach to Black movements which had previously been more secular. In what Black Marxist scholar Robin D.G Kelley marked as a “tidal wave”,⁹ scholars such as W.E.B DuBois, Frantz Fanon, Richard Wright, Aimé Césaire, among multiple others analyzed colonialism, colonial practices, Black relations, the White-centric nature of Western society, as well as many other topics

⁸ Colin Thomson. *Born With a Call: A Biography of William Pearly Oliver, C.M.* (Dartmouth: Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia, 1986). 84.

⁹ Robin D.G. Kelley. “A Poetics of Anticolonialism” in *Discourse on Colonialism* by Aimé Césaire, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000). 8.

that questioned the foundations and systems of societal structures that influenced Blackness and Black identity. The connection between these philosophical texts and the second period of Black activism is observable in passages of Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism*, where he made statements such as:

Therefore, comrade, you will hold as enemies—loftily, lucidly, consistently—not only sadistic governors and greedy bankers, not only prefects who torture and colonists who flog, not only corrupt, check-licking politicians and subservient judges, but likewise and for the same reason, venomous journalists, goitrous academics, wreathed in dollars and stupidity, ethnographers who go in for metaphysics, presumptuous Belgian theologians, chattering intellectuals born stinking out of the thigh of Nietzsche, the paternalists, the embracers, the corrupters, the back-slappers, the lovers of exoticism, the dividers, the agrarian sociologists, the hoodwinkers, the hoaxers, the hot-air artists, the humbugs, and in general, all those who, performing their functions in the sordid division of labor for the defense of Western bourgeois society, try in diverse ways and by infamous diversions to split up the forces of Progress—even if it means denying the very possibility of Progress—all of them tools of capitalism, all of them, openly or secretly, supporters of plundering colonialism, all of them responsible, all hateful, all slave-traders, all henceforth answerable for violence of revolutionary action.¹⁰

Through Césaire's Marxist influences, there was an evident rejection of integrationist practice approaches to Black activism. Instead, he focused on the multitude of societally institutionalized apparatuses that, as Césaire argued, could not be solved through integration and status-quo keeping operations. Instead, Césaire viewed confrontation, dismantling, and uprooting the societal and social issues as paramount. Philosophical texts such as Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism* therefore created the space for Black activists in the postwar era to approach Black activism in a different capacity than Black activists in the first period. While a multitude of these texts (Césaire's included) focused on Western European nations and societies, these philosophical texts were largely accurate and malleable to suit Black relations and Black activist philosophy on a global level, which created a space for Black activism and Black Power to be transnational.

¹⁰ Aimé Césaire. *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000). 54-55.

The second period of Black activism that followed in the United States is arguably most easily pinpointed to the Rosa Parks case of 1955, and the cascading events of the Civil Rights Act of 1957 through to the Modern Black Lives Matter movement. What distinguished the Nova Scotian environment of Black activism periods is that the second period in Nova Scotia occurred at a different interval from the American movement. The second period of activism was spurred greatly in Nova Scotia by the return of Rocky Jones from Toronto in 1965,¹¹ as Jones's approach and connections to the Black Power movement created a new environment within Nova Scotian Black activism. The approach of Jones towards issues affecting Black Nova Scotians is characterized in his response to a discussion in 1967 in Kwacha House¹² about the lack of jobs that were available to Black youth in Halifax businesses, to which Jones stated,

I'm through this whole horseshit of going out and telling the White community and telling them "You know, I feel so bad, I know I'm inferior and this is because so many things have happened to me." I'm not inferior... it's about time we have some action, now you take a couple of those stores down there where these kids spend thousands of dollars and I mean thousands of dollars I think it's about time we try to get these kids some jobs, and if they don't give the kids the jobs, we get all the kids in here and we say look, not one of you kids is going in there to buy one ounce of chicken and you're not going in there to buy a shirt or a pair of pants unless they start giving you jobs... this is the only way it's going to get done, these guys regard dollars to the till.¹³

Jones brought an approach to Nova Scotia's Black activism in which confrontation with existing social structures was paramount to successfully creating change in Nova Scotian society and culture. Outright boycotts and protests that brought Black activism to the forefront of Nova Scotian media and public attention was favoured over previous approaches in which confrontation was avoided by functioning within the existing

¹¹ Rocky Jones and James W. St.G. Walker. *Burnley "Rocky" Jones: Revolutionary*. (Halifax: Roseway Publishing, 2016). 70-72.

¹² Kwacha House was a Halifax-based club designed for Black youth to host events and discussions surrounding Black affairs and culture in Nova Scotia. Kwacha House had three locations over a three-year period before closing permanently in January 1968. Jones and Walker. *Burnley "Rocky" Jones*. 74-76.

¹³ Rex Tasker. *Encounter at Kwacha House- Halifax* (National Film Board, 1967).

structures of government and society. Jones's use of the media to highlight the Black Power movement and discuss confrontation with existing social structures was displayed in *Dalhousie Gazette* articles published after his return to Halifax throughout the second half of the 1960s. One such article titled, "Black Power: Halifax, and the World," wrote:

Rocky believes that before there can be equality and respect for a group discriminated against, the underdog must have the power to command this respect, since the "establishment" does not surrender power without being forced, the Black people must be prepared to take power by revolutionary means. This could and probably will lead to armed confrontation with the white establishment in the near future.¹⁴

In a similar article titled "Canada's Own Stokely Carmichael," Jones highlighted the influence of Pan-Africanist Black Power philosophy on his approach as well as his separation from first period Black activist approaches. Jones stated that when "somebody hits you, you have to hit him back. People here have been praying for 200 years and look where it's got them. Nowhere."¹⁵ The confrontational, non-conforming, public activism Jones brought to Nova Scotia's Black activism was unlike anything Nova Scotia's movement had previously seen. It ushered in a second period of Black activism in the province that opposed the prevailing methodology of previous Black activist efforts. Jones's approach to state and societal relations with Black activism was similar to that discussed by Black philosophers in the postwar "tidal wave" of texts, evidenced by the influence C.L.R. James had on Jones's during and after Jones's time at the Congress of Black Writers in 1968.¹⁶ Through active protests, economic boycotts, and the occasional outright state confrontation, Jones brought a Black activist philosophy to Nova Scotia which outright rejected the belief that meaningful activism could be achieved through

¹⁴ Bruce Archibald. "Black Power: Halifax, and the World." *Dalhousie Gazette*. November 1968, 8.

¹⁵ Dan Proudfoot. "Canada's Own Stokely Carmichael." *Dalhousie Gazette*. March 1967, 2.

¹⁶ Jones and Walker, *Burnley "Rocky" Jones*. 115-117.

integration with the existing federal and provincial avenues. It is through these actions and sentiments that Jones brought the second period philosophy to Nova Scotian Black communities.

The extent to which American second period Black activism affected Nova Scotia's Black organizations and activism is debated by contemporary scholars. A deep polarization exists as to whether American influences either had an enormous impact on Nova Scotia, or, as some scholars suggest, Nova Scotia was secular and self-contained in its Black activism. Agnes Calliste, a sociology professor based at Saint Francis Xavier University who focused on Black Canadian history and sociology argues that Nova Scotia's postwar Black activism was greatly influenced by the Civil Rights movement in the United States and that the state confrontation it promoted spurred similar action to occur in Nova Scotia. Calliste notes: "The civil rights movement served as an inspiration for African Canadians and other human rights organizations in their struggle for equity. It also helped to increase Black pride, self-confidence and assertiveness."¹⁷ Calliste viewed the American civil rights movement as both being heavily influential for Nova Scotia's Black activist second period, and the social/emotional space Black Nova-Scotians were occupying during postwar Black activism. According to Calliste, American influences set the pace by which Nova Scotia's Black communities both mentally and physically approached addressing systematic issues in Nova Scotian systems and institutions. The framework of the American civil rights movement created the tracks by which Nova Scotian Black activism was able to both exist and develop into its second period.

¹⁷ Agnes Calliste. "The Influence of the Civil Rights and Black Power Movement in Canada" *Race, Gender & Class* 2, no. 3 (Spring 1995). 129.

Conversely, other scholarship has questioned the extent to which Nova Scotia's Black movements were influenced by any outside source, suggesting instead that the Nova Scotian movement was isolated and purely self-determined. This is discussed in *African Canadian Leadership: Continuity, Transition, and Transformation*, a text that analyzed the history, present, and future of Black leadership in Canada and the societal factors that influenced it. In a discussion on the Black Lives Matter movement, the authors – Tamari Kitossa, Erica Lawson, and Philip S.S. Howard – argue:

Despite the obvious conditions of brutality, murderousness, and racial profiling of African Canadians by the police, BLM is non-existent in Montreal and has had only marginal impact in Nova Scotia. What explains this? Montreal has its own very long tradition of pre-existing modes of Black radical confrontation and resistance that have a resonance all their own given the distinctiveness of Quebec in Canada's political life. As to Nova Scotia, and Halifax principally, it too has its own resolute, home-grown radical tradition with deep roots in the Black church, secular organizations such as the Black United Front, and a sort of Black nationalist culture that has no parallel elsewhere in Canada: in Nova Scotia's (understandable) parochialism, outsiders are looked upon askance.¹⁸

In other words, Kitossa, Lawson, and Howard contend that Nova Scotia's Black movement developed independently and removed from outside influence as a result of a combination between the influence of religion in Black communities across Nova Scotia, and the BUF operating as a secular organization that was individually and specifically Nova-Scotian. Furthermore, they advance the notion that these influences resulted in Nova Scotia's Black movement being largely self-sustained. As evidenced by the influence of Black Panthers, Black Power, and Pan-Africanism discussed in this research, there was an undeniable sharing of approaches in and out of post-war Nova Scotia, and yet the historiographical debate gives rise to important questions: Is Nova Scotia's Black

¹⁸ Tamari Kitossa, Erica Lawson and Philip S.S. Howard, *African Canadian Leadership: Continuity, Transition, and Transformation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019). 91.

activism influenced by the movement in Canada? Transnationally? Globally? If yes, to what extent?

As with most historiographical debates, the answer lies somewhere in the middle; Nova Scotia's Black movement was influenced and propelled by a multitude of influences that were concretely Nova Scotian and created a specifically Nova-Scotian identity for the movement, but it was also equally moved and motivated by a multitude of events, philosophies, and people that was occurring both nationally and transnationally. The first period of Nova Scotia's Black activism was markedly more individual and was heavily influenced by long-witnessed Baptist roots that helped create a foundation that was specifically Nova-Scotian in nature. This was exemplified through the NSAACP, who formed in 1945 and made the clear attempt to be distinctly Nova Scotian. Despite sharing a similar name and organizational structure to the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP) from the United States, the NSAACP did not affiliate itself with the NAACP. Instead, it remained an entirely Nova Scotian organization in both functionality and leadership through Oliver.¹⁹

There were equally important national and transnational influences in the development of Nova Scotia's Black activism. On the national level, multiple Black activists from across Canada wrote, spoke, and discussed Black activism in Nova Scotia. Howard McCurdy, the President of the National Black Coalition of Canada, gave a speech in Halifax in 1969.²⁰ Such actions and events were observed closely by Black communities in the province as potentially being related to the movement occurring not

¹⁹ Thomson, *Born With a Call*. 78. While the NSAACP defined itself as being entirely removed from the NAACP, the name alone suggests there was at least some level of influence.

²⁰ Thomson, *Born With a Call*. 98.

provincially, but nationally. This is exemplified in the student protest at the Sir George Williams University computer lab that occurred in early 1969; the event became a national source of activism instead of remaining a catalyst restricted to Montreal and Quebec. Protesting the alleged racist actions of university professor Perry Anderson who consistently and deliberately failed Black students (particularly students from the Caribbean), over 200 students occupied the computer centre on campus. After approximately a week and a half of protest, RCMP officers violently broke up the protest, which resulted in 90 arrests and over 2 million dollars in damage to the facility.²¹ The *Dalhousie Gazette* recognized the role race played in the altercation, but still placed a certain level of blame on the students. The publication stated that there was “no doubt the blacks were extremely sensitive to racism. They may have reacted too quickly, sized up situations too readily. They were of course influenced by the black movement in America and the emerging one in Halifax.”²² Certain Nova Scotian Black activists and residents applauded and supported the student protest at Sir George Williams University and related it to a national and pan-African struggle against systematic racism. There was an evident exchange of influence between the Black Power movement in Montreal and the movement in Nova Scotia, as Nova Scotian activists actively engaged with national activities and these actions were directly influenced by the movement occurring in Nova Scotia.

Jones’s return to the province also included the establishment of the Student Union for Peace Action (SUPA) in Nova Scotia, a national organization formed in 1964

²¹ David Austin. *Fear of a Black Nation: Race, Sex, and Security in Sixties Montreal*. (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2013).

²² “Sir George- Analysis”. *Dalhousie Gazette*. February, 1969, 7.

which was a major influence on Black activism. Jones's time in Toronto during the early 1960s had introduced him to a multitude of national and transnational resources. This included SUPA, which, when establishing itself in Nova Scotia in the latter half of 1965, based the structure of its programs and engagement on similar American projects.²³ While the NSAACP had clearly distinguished itself as a Nova Scotian organization and remained independently so, SUPA was directly related to both the national organization as well as to similar American organizations. Separately from formalized, organizational influences, Jones also brought a multitude of transnational individual influences and philosophies directly to Nova Scotia. Jones actively discussed the movement in Nova Scotia at various conferences and events across Canada and the United States such as the "Anatomy of Change Seminar 69" at the University of Saskatchewan,²⁴ and the infamous Congress of Black Writers of 1968 where he spoke alongside, Stokely Carmichael, C.L.R. James, Eldridge Cleaver, and others. Jones noted that the latter conference influenced much of his own philosophy. It was also where he forged a close relationship with Stokely Carmichael whom he invited to visit Halifax.²⁵

Jones' influence across Canada became a marker for how Nova Scotia's Black activism was viewed. As one previous BUF employee noted when they moved to Nova Scotia to be employed with the organization,

We were aware of the work of Rocky Jones. Although he was based here, his work, really in terms of its impact and following was right across the country; it was national. And in fact, I knew very little about Nova Scotia at that time before I got here. I took the job because I knew that there was this guy called Rocky Jones that was doing things over there. Well then it must be okay to go and make my contribution type of thing. So had it not been for him, I probably wouldn't have been there.²⁶

²³ Asa McKercher, "Too Close for Comfort: Canada, the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, and the North American Colo(u)r Line", *Journal of American History* 106, no. 1 (June 2019): 93.

²⁴ "Anatomy of Change Seminar 69 Advertisement." *Star-Phoenix*. January 1969. 13.

²⁵ Jones and Walker, *Burnley "Rocky" Jones*, 115-117.

²⁶ Anonymous, Interview with Author, April 19th, 2023.

The transnational element of Jones' activism and the national visibility of his work in Nova Scotia influenced the manner in which Nova Scotian Black activism was viewed, and how the BUF would be viewed in its foundational years across Canada.

The Carmichael visit was the largest international influence on the Nova Scotian movement and garnered a multitude of responses from a variety of provincial, national, and international sources. Jones later recalled that the parameters of the visit were changed due to the police attention and fearmongering created by negative media attention given to the "militancy" of Jones, Carmichael, and the American Black Panther movement. What was meant to be a private visit was suddenly a heavily politicized, state-altering, polarizing and pressurized event. After a few media interviews in which Carmichael emphasized the need for Black coordination and "internationalizing Black Power", he left Nova Scotia. Numerous other Black Panthers visited Nova Scotia over the following months, both sharing and listening to Black Power discussions and philosophy across the province. According to Jones, there were few suggestions of 'illegal' actions on the part of Black Panthers in Nova Scotia. Notably, there was a loitering charge against Rosie Douglas, which was a targeted arrest by the police, and an illegal weapon charge against George Sams. The illegal weapon charge involved the police 'randomly' finding a gun during a 'routine' stop, a situation heavily influenced by negative media attention, systematic racism, and police perspectives on the Black Power movements 'militancy'.²⁷ Regardless, an image was already created of a 'militant' and 'dangerous' Black Panther. An article "Negro Militancy Evident in Nova Scotia" displays the media attention given to the Black Panther visits in Nova Scotia well. It stated that

²⁷ Jones and Walker, *Burnley "Rocky" Jones*, 118-123.

Black Nova Scotians “are showing a new militancy... their aggressiveness has grown steadily during 1968, influenced largely by events in the United States. Recent visits here of Stokely Carmichael, U.S Black Power leader, and members of the hard-line Black Panthers group appear to have given new urgency to the dialogue between black and white communities”.²⁸ Many White Nova Scotians, media institutions and government agencies viewed the American influences in Nova Scotia as creating a Black movement that was suddenly militant, aggressive, and -most importantly- explosive, which gave a sense of fearful urgency to settling affairs so as to avoid the “Black violence” that was seen as imminent. Black leaders in Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada were divided on the influence of the Black Panthers. Joseph Drummond, a New Brunswick based Black activist, feared the Black Panther influence threatened the leadership of established Black activists and would lead to a movement controlled by only external leadership. Oliver stated he was not concerned about the Black Panther party in this regard, and while he did not openly support the organization, he was not opposed to their actions and likely saw in them a window of opportunity to secure federal funding for the BUF. Ross Kinney, a leader with the African United Baptist Association voiced strong opposition to the Black Panthers, as he noted that “the people in general of this province resent the implications and impressions that have been made by those who are representatives of an organization outside of this province, namely the Black Panther movement”.²⁹ Especially related to the approaches of first wave Black activists in Nova Scotia, it makes sense that a section of Black Nova Scotians would view the confrontational, non-conforming, direct

²⁸ Dal Warrington, “Negro Militancy Evident in Nova Scotia”, *Sault Star*, December 1968, 28.

²⁹ Dal Warrington, “Negro Militancy Evident in Nova Scotia”, republished in *Sault Star*, December 1968, 28.

approach of Black Panther influences in Nova Scotia as more harmful than helpful. Black consensus on the Black Panthers in Nova Scotia was evidently never a possibility as philosophical or political consensus on any approach is never a totality. Yet, despite this, many Whitecentric Nova Scotians viewed the ‘militancy’ of the Black Panthers as a totality; part of a thematic occurrence and issue in which Black Nova Scotians were viewed as being (and required of being) a total entity with total consensus. In reality, Black Nova Scotians and Black Nova Scotian communities were -just like any other group- a collection of differing philosophies, politics, and approaches to Black activism. For this reason, while many White Nova Scotians were fearful of a collective Black uprising in Nova Scotia, this notion was never entertained by Black Nova Scotians or Black Nova Scotian leaders.

The sense of urgency in White Nova Scotian society caused by the American Black Panther influence and by Jones himself ended up being vitally important to the establishment of the BUF. Jones and the Black Panthers created an environment in which a generally lethargic Nova Scotian society and government was ‘forced’ to address the problematic status-quo that they had previously so assiduously protected. As aforementioned, while the issue was ‘forced’ by the influence of Black Panther philosophy in Nova Scotia, the actual force behind this sense of urgency was more imagined than actualized. Nevertheless, a social environment was created in which Black Nova Scotian leaders were suddenly a moderate and non-violent escape from the ‘foreign Black Panther threat’.

Given the range of philosophies, actions, approaches, and attention from both the media and the state, a decision was made to call a Black Family Meeting. The idea to

host a Black-only meeting to discuss Black affairs in Nova Scotia was brought by the Black Panthers during their visits to the province. A discussion, they argued, was necessary to develop direction for the Black Power movement in Nova Scotia and to avoid the interference of a White-centric state. The direct influence of Black Panthers in the organization of this meeting displayed an element of outside influence in the Nova Scotian Black movement, while the meeting being driven by Black Nova-Scotians suggested a homegrown establishment for the BUF. Two preliminary meetings were held in advance of the main event on November 30th, 1968. Initially, the prospect of a Black-only meeting was opposed by Oliver as it leaned closely to a Black Power philosophy that was driven by anti-state, confrontational methodology that Oliver viewed as dangerously radical. Despite initial hesitations, support for a Black-led, Nova Scotian umbrella organization was large enough to support a third and final meeting that was hosted at the North-End Halifax library.³⁰

With over 400 Black Nova Scotians gathered at the North-End Halifax library all eyes were on Halifax. Influenced by the Black Panthers, the possibility of revolution, and the position of moderates, a discussion occurred which involved every aspect of Black activism across the province. The decision for the meeting to be open to only Black Nova Scotians drew complaints from White Nova Scotians of ‘reverse racism’ and raised the issue of what constituted Blackness in Nova Scotia. The crisis of identity was described by Jones:

in the Black community there is all kinds of movement and discussion because we had to deal with who is Black. Does that mean if your father is Black and your mother is white, you are Black? Does it mean if your grandfather is Black you are Black? Who is Black? And in Nova Scotia, that is a difficult, difficult question. And we had a little group who was trying to organize this and make decisions because we knew on opening night we had to deal with this at the door. And it was something we couldn’t resolve, because in Nova Scotia the politics of who is Black is

³⁰ Jones and Walker, *Burnley “Rocky” Jones*, 124-125.

interesting. By the night of the meeting our definition is self-identification: whoever self-identifies as Black we'll accept it. I'll never forget that night; it was one of the most difficult nights I have ever gone through. People are arriving early, people are coming to make sure they got their seats. There are women, particularly white women, who were married or living with Black men who had children with these Black men, who showed up and said, "We want to come in." And our position at the door was "You're not welcome." And they were saying, "What's wrong with me, I'm married to him, these are my children, and this is my future you're talking about," and we were saying "No you can't come in, no, we're sorry," and it almost came to blows... For Black people in Halifax that was such an incredible shift in terms of position that no one was used to it, including myself, but I knew what I had to do in terms of fulfilling a leadership role and moving people to take control of their own destinies. We had to do that, but the people we were doing that to were our friends.³¹

The decision to create a Black-only environment to discuss Black affairs and Black activism in Nova Scotia was fruitful and self-deterministic. It also required a confrontation with White friends and family on the elements of Blackness and racism in Nova Scotia that necessitated a space for Blacks to discuss their position in Nova Scotia. The decision to follow self-identification as the methodology for creating this space allowed for a multitude of Black voices to contribute as many of the attendees had previously occupied spaces between Black and White identities; a place of questioned racial identity.

Due to the nature of second wave Black activism, and the methodology of Jones's activism, the Black Family Meeting was not supported or entertained by many Black Nova Scotians due to the connections with Jones. George Elliott Clarke was raised in North-End Halifax and was a BUF employee between 1986 and 1987 as the editor of *The RAP*. Discussing the Black Family Meeting, Elliott Clarke noted, "my parents would not have attended. They would have seen it as Rocky [Jones] causing trouble, causing a disturbance, and, given that attitude, they would not have been all that far removed from probably most Black Nova Scotian mainstream opinions at the time."³² For many Black

³¹ Jones and Walker, *Burnley "Rocky" Jones*, 125-126.

³² George Elliott Clarke, Interview with Author, April 12th, 2023.

Nova Scotians, particularly older, conservative Black Nova Scotians, the Black Panther's and Jones's influence in the creation of the Black Family Meeting would have conflicted with their philosophies and forms of activism.

Given the impact of Black Panther philosophy contrasting the moderate and 'anti-Panther' approach of Black leaders within AUBA and the NSAACP, the direction and discussions of the Black Family Meeting were polarizing. The primary leadership of the Black Family Meeting was divided between the religious conservatism of Oliver and the contrasting radical nature of Jones. While the polarization of the conflicting approaches led to difficulty approaching Blackness in Nova Scotia and how Black activism in Nova Scotia should be conducted, Jones noted that the polarization was fruitful. The discussions and differences were unable to be influenced by outside forces and were entirely controlled and determined by Black voices; "for the first time, even in that meeting with all the dissension, people realized that we as Black people could control what we did. We told the press they couldn't come in, and we were in control. Cops couldn't come in, we were in control. I think what we accomplished that night was the sense of power that the community had for the first time ever."³³ Self-determination had helped Black communities in Nova Scotia create an environment in which White Nova Scotian institutions and anti-Black sentiments were unable to influence or affect an honest and Black-only discussion of Black affairs and Black identity, which directly led to the creation of a Black-led, Black-only organization with self-determination as a key and vital component.

³³ Jones and Walker, *Burnley "Rocky" Jones*, 126.

The location itself demonstrates the self-deterministic nature of the Black Family Meeting. As described by Elliott Clarke, “we all knew that if we went a few blocks to the South of Halifax to the South End, that our color, our race, our culture, would definitely be instantly criminalized. We would be instant suspects for everything and our employment prospects would drop to almost nil unless we accepted to work as low wage, unskilled laborers.... to go to the South End was to enter an alien place.” Elliott Clarke continued, “a young black woman, who I had known in elementary school... we got to talking and I decided it would be really nice for us to just go for a walk together. And so we did. And I walked her down to the South End, and she shocked me when she told me she’d never been there. We were both the same age, from the same neighbourhood, but she’d never been to the South End.”³⁴ The North-End Halifax library was therefore a location that symbolized Black self-determinism, and a removal from the white-centric spaces that promoted anti-black racism. This was a space removed from the influence and guise of systemically racism institutions that prevailed elsewhere in the city.

At the Black Family Meeting the proposal was created and adopted to create an umbrella organization to support and oversee Black activist groups in Nova Scotia through the practice of self-determination: the BUF. An interim committee was chosen consisting of Oliver as the chairman, Jones, Edie Gray, Ross Kinney, Keith Prevost, H.A.J Wedderburn, Churchill Smith, Buddy Daye, Denny Grant and Arnold Johnson.³⁵

³⁴ George Elliott Clarke, Interview with Author, April 12th, 2023.

³⁵ Bridglal Pachai, *The Nova Scotia Black Experience Through the Centuries*, (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing, 2007): 274. Members of the interim committee were elected based on community connections. Edie Gray was a member of the Coloured Citizens Improvement League. Ross Kinney was the previous President of the Laymen’s Council of AUBA. Keith Prevost was a younger activist with business connections. H.A.J Wedderburn was the President of the NSAACP. Churchill Smith who was involved with AUBA. Buddy Daye was an Africville activist and later Sergeant-at-Arms for the Nova Scotia Legislative. Denny Grant was an activist involved with Rocky Jones and the Black Power movement. Arnold Johnson was a veteran from North Preston who was well-respected in the community and with AUBA.

The interim committee selection was chosen to represent every aspect of Black activism in the province, with members such as Oliver and Wedderburn chosen to represent the moderate, NSAACP approach to Black Nova Scotian affairs, and members such as Jones who represented the more radical, Black Power influenced activists. As argued by Bridglal Pachai in his research on BUF, despite the existence of an interim committee, “there was really no groundwork laid. While it was firmly decided that this was to be a black organization it was less firmly agreed whether the organization was to follow the path of radicalism”.³⁶ While the interim committee consisted initially of a diverse group of activists, it lacked the immediate discussion of direction and methodology as to whether or not it would be dictated by first or second wave approaches to Black activist interactions with politics, the public, and the media.

A large influence on the direction of BUF came shortly after the formation of the interim committee when its members approached the federal government for funding. The decision to request federal financial assistance and the willingness to do so differed depending on the source material. Oliver attested that the overall committee chose to pursue federal funding.³⁷ Meanwhile, Jones described that the decision to pursue federal assistance was fought by him and likeminded radical committee members. To Jones, federal funding opposed Black Power philosophy, self-determination, and second-wave Black activist actions towards both the state and state apparatuses. Unknown to Jones and other committee members, the meeting with federal cabinet ministers was planned and held by committee “moderates” and federal funds were agreed to without the knowledge

³⁶ Pachai, *The Nova Scotia Black Experience Through the Centuries*, 275.

³⁷ Thomson, *Born With a Call*, 123.

and consent of all the committee members. This led to the committee members who were opposed to state funds eventually leaving the organization.³⁸

Regardless of the direct pathway that was taken to achieve the meeting with federal officials, the approach was noticed by state officials and RCMP officers. Initial decisions were made to ensure the federal government could control certain aspects of Black activism in Nova Scotia and remove the threat that the Black Power philosophy and Black Panther influence had in the movement. The inclusion of 'radical' and 'dangerous' activists such as Jones who opposed state interference was noted by federal ministers and funding for the moderates of BUF was viewed as a solution and potential suppression of second-wave Black activism. A memorandum sent to the federal Cabinet from the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy and Cultural Affairs noted that "there was a possibility of violence in the Black community of Nova Scotia and a possible disruption of the Canadian Games this summer by Black militants. A grant now might alleviate this situation. Absence of support might enable Black militants to take over the moderates now in charge of the Black United Front."³⁹ Influenced by the media attention given to the Black Panther influence in Nova Scotia, the state ministers saw an opportunity to influence both the direction and leadership of BUF from the creation of the organization onwards by funding a side of the organization they viewed as being able to diminish the possibility of violent action by 'Black militants.' For the committee members in line with Oliver and the moderate first-wave activist approach, federal funding was important regardless of the state intentions, as a direct relationship with the state was key to their

³⁸ Jones and Walker, *Burnley "Rocky" Jones*, 127-128.

³⁹ Calliste, "The Influence of the Civil Rights and Black Power Movement in Canada," 133.

activist methodology and funding would improve their ability to pursue their desired direction for the BUF.

Jones and likeminded committee members left the BUF shortly after the committee received the confirmation of federal assistance and formed their own organization, the Afro-Canadian Liberation Movement (ACLM). The ACLM promoted the objectives and direction Jones had hoped to see in the BUF, promoting Black Power activism, Black self-determination, and an opposition to any state interference with Black lives, viewing the Canadian state as being innately entangled with the racially unjust aspects of Canadian society. To Jones, “the most important thing about the ACLM was that it provided a different voice for the community besides the Black apologists and the NSAACP. We did consider ourselves to be in ‘opposition’ to a certain faction of BUF”.⁴⁰ Jones’ “opposition” to only a selection of BUF displays that while the Canadian state viewed the division between “moderates” and “radicals” in Nova Scotia’s Black activism as absolute, there was still a willingness to cooperate and operate within the same system of support for Black Nova Scotians for both the ACLM and BUF. While the methodology and approaches of each organization were quite different, “BUF and ACLM called on African-Nova Scotians to unite in creating a Black identity in combatting racism and in community development.”⁴¹ The willingness to include “radical” philosophy and possibility within BUF would eventually become an area of contention between the organization and the Canadian state, leading to further efforts by the Canadian government to control and shape the organization towards fitting its agenda of diminishing Black Power activism.

⁴⁰ Jones and Walker, *Burnley “Rocky” Jones*, 132-133.

⁴¹ Calliste, “The Influence of the Civil Rights and Black Power Movement in Canada,” 132.

Chapter Two - Foundational Years: 1970-1973

With funding secured for the foreseeable future, BUF programs, community engagements and publications began during the summer of 1970. The BUF Interim Committee oversaw the hiring of the first Executive Director, Jules Oliver, the son of William Pearly Oliver. Direct correspondence with Black communities was primarily conducted through *GRASP*, a newsletter created by BUF that began issues in August 1970.⁴² The establishment of accurate information and data on Black communities was paramount to BUF's ability to create meaningful engagement with Black families across the province, as municipal, provincial, and federal interactions and data pertaining to Black Nova-Scotians was unreliable, pessimistic, and influenced by problematic views.⁴³ This led to numerous BUF funded data collections across the province highlighting housing, education, employment, discrimination, harassment, and relations with existing government programs, such as Provincial Social Services, Welfare departments, police departments, and the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission. Located in downtown Halifax at Scotia Square, the BUF Office contained two stenographers, an office manager, four field organizers and the Executive Director.⁴⁴ While the Provincial government had successfully persuaded the federal government that a provincial council was necessary in BUF's governance, the decision-making process and influence over BUF's actions was maintained at this time by the Executive Director and the BUF Field Organizers. While the Provincial Council was on paper the governing body of BUF's

⁴² *GRASP- Growth, Readiness, Advancement, Self-Determination, People*, August 1970, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

⁴³ Robin Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991).

⁴⁴ *GRASP*, August 1970, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

decision making process, with Federal funding already secured, the Provincial Council members main roles were being active community members, being informed on community issues, and to serve as a resourceful aid to potential Field Organizers from BUF present in their community.⁴⁵ While Council Members would later be voted in through elections in each community, positions at the BUF office, including the Executive Director were hired positions through the Provincial Council. Jules Oliver was the notable exception, as his application was accepted by the BUF Interim Committee.

BUF's central office focused on crucial data, office management, and directing BUF affairs. Meanwhile, BUF's Field Organizers were vital in both establishing connections across the province, and helping local communities establish their own Black-led, independent committees and organizations. Field Organizers were also paramount in helping local groups apply for government grants and other funding opportunities, which proved to be a major tool for BUF's agenda of Black self-determination. By March 1971, the end of BUF's first fiscal year, twelve Black community organizations were reported as revitalized, and eight groups newly established across Nova Scotia.⁴⁶ Among these organizations were community specific advocacy groups such as the Beechville Youth Group, New Glasgow's Pursuers Group, and the Yarmouth Minorities Committee, while other organizations encompassed province-wide operations, such as Blacks Unite for More Money (BUMM) and BUF Enterprises Ltd.

Community led organizations were primarily focused on community resources, the development of community spaces to support Black culture, and addressing racialized

⁴⁵ *GRASP*, January 1971, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

⁴⁶ *GRASP*, March 1971, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

violence against Black residents in their region, offering a space for legal discussion, advocacy, and justice. The Pursuers Group was a major advocacy group for a young couple who in January of 1971 were verbally abused while looking for housing for being a mixed-race couple, a racist situation which rightfully was disputed and highlighted by both the Pursuers Group and the BUF, who demanded a public apology and government supported programming for equal homeownership and tenancy opportunities for Black residents.⁴⁷ The Pursuers Group was also very active in the establishment of a community centre to serve the Black community for gatherings, meetings, and quorums. This was one of many community development projects that was pursued by numerous Black advocacy groups across the province.⁴⁸

Provincial organizations under the BUF network functioned primarily on issues that affected Black Nova-Scotians because of prior and ongoing provincial and municipal racism and neglect. While the agenda of many provincial organizations were not often as immediate as community-based organizations, their specific focus aimed to ameliorate province wide issues over a period of time through a combination of community resources and pressure on White-centric government bodies to act on provincial Black issues. The Blacks Unites for More Money (BUMM) organization was a province-wide Black advocacy group that had the primary aim of addressing economic insecurity in Black communities by pressuring government bodies to give equal economic opportunities to Black Nova Scotians. BUMM also ensured that Black residents of Nova Scotia were adequately informed on the economic programs and financial assistance

⁴⁷ *GRASP*, February 1971, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

⁴⁸ *GRASP*, March 1973, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

available to them through government programs, as many assistance programs through government agencies created racial barriers and a lack of resources for Black Nova Scotians seeking financial assistance. For example, as many Black community members received a lack of benefits due to racial discrimination in social service programs, a demand of BUMM stated “that any person who is refused social assistance be given in writing the reasons for the denial of such within 24 hours of refusal”.⁴⁹ While provincial organizations such as BUMM found success in presenting demands to government bodies and using advocating pressure to achieve steps towards equity, other provincial organizations pursued their aims by functioning within established government relations. BUF Enterprises Ltd. functioned as a provincial body under the ‘umbrella’ of BUF that worked towards economic self-determination and Black business growth across Nova Scotia by negotiating grant funding through the federal or provincial government. BUF Enterprises Ltd. aimed to utilize this funding to support Black businesses and business ventures in an economic system that was self-deterministic in nature by removing the racially prejudiced business decisions of banking institutions, government funding negotiations, or established White businessmen.⁵⁰ Economic opportunities and employment opportunities for Black Nova Scotians were heavily impacted and reduced by anti-Black systems and institutions across the province, which was reinforced by existing government bodies. George Elliott Clarke recalled,

in the spring of 73, this gentleman from Canada Manpower as it was then called, came to our math class and again we’re basically working class, military brat kids, also children of immigrants of all colors. This guy comes in, and he’s got the authority of the state behind him. He’s an employee of the federal government of Canada. And so he comes into our working-class classroom to tell us all to sign up for our Social Insurance Numbers. And of course, I’m happy to do it. I’m eager to do it, and he explains to us that now we can go out and we can work. And there is an unstated implication. Remember, this is grade 7 math class. We’re 12, 13, 14. Some of us have failed a

⁴⁹ *GRASP*, October 1970, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

⁵⁰ *GRASP*, October 1970, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

couple of grades. So we're 15 or we're 16, and he's letting us know that it's OK if we want to drop out of school and go to work. And of course he is not informing us that without a high school diploma, at least, we are definitely going to be a part of the reserve army, of the lesser employed or even the unemployable.⁵¹

Government institutions, programs, and agencies that were supposed to offer equitable opportunities regarding economic opportunities and employment opportunities evidently had a direct role in the anti-black, white-centric systems that reinforced a Nova Scotian economy in which only White citizens were among the most financially successful. Organizations such as BUF Enterprises Ltd. attempted to provide self-deterministic financial and economic services to Black Nova Scotians to counteract these institutionalized issues. While BUF Enterprises Ltd. negotiated funding options with government bodies and functioned within the established structures, they were also in both practice and philosophy openly addressing and opposing the government's racially motivated economic decisions towards development in both past and present decisions.

The growth of provincial, regional, and communal advocacy groups between 1970 and 1973 under the 'umbrella' of the BUF gave significant power to the BUF in two ways. Firstly, more organizations meant an increase in applications to grant programs. Secondly, it helped BUF's image and relations with Black communities by giving organizations direct links to government institutions. Instead of BUF being the sole communication with government apparatuses, each organization was given the facilities to advocate collectively and/or separately with MPs, MLAs, and grant-pertaining government offices, often with the support of BUF staff.

The collective power of multiple grant applications became most apparent in February 1972 when community organizations' grant applications across the province

⁵¹ George Elliott Clarke, Interview with Author, April 12th, 2023.

were approved for over \$256 000 from federal grant programs. This helped multiple Black communities across Nova Scotia construct day cares, community centres, playgrounds, church halls, and youth centres in their respective areas. These projects not only offered recreational facilities, but offered community specific recognition, places for regional culture, and active locations for Black self-determination meetings, discussions, and decisions.⁵² While these grant applications were done independently for each advocacy group, BUF Field Organizers were instrumental in providing foundational support, information on the grant application process, and publicity through *GRASP* publications and regional meetings.

The reception of government grants by BUF and Black communities at large was not acceptance of government policies or actions, nor were they understandably believing that these funds would have arrived had they not pressured the government into providing just and equitable funding to Black communities. As stated by a *GRASP* writer, “We must not be disillusioned by the ‘benevolence’ of the government; they do not do us a favor by funding our projects... government funding for communities is merely tax benefits and ‘pittant retribution’ for historical treatment of Black Nova Scotians.”⁵³ The recognition for this funding was rightfully attributed to the pressure committed to government agencies, as well as the self-determination practices of the BUF in educating community level organizations on grant applications and processes for securing funding. These grants as forms of funding were also viewed as part of a larger development of reparations due to Black Nova Scotians for the previous negligence and injustices

⁵² *GRASP*, February 1972, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

⁵³ *GRASP*, May 1972, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

committed by the varying levels and agencies of government; reparations that through Black self-determination would be controlled, administered, and rightfully expected by Black Nova Scotians. While government grant finances were being accepted and successfully applied through Black organizations, ingrained attitudes and expectations for current and future Canadian governance had not been altered from the White-centric, Black displacing governments of previous interactions.

Many Canadians did not view the federal funding of BUF in the same light as the government itself. Reeling from the media publications on the Black Panther and Jones's 'threats' to White Canadian society, the federal office of Health and Welfare Minister John Munro was flooded with letters that were strongly against the BUF and the decision to fund it. Many of these letters targeted specifically Jones' ties to the organization despite the reality that Jones's had left the BUF. One such letter stated a "deep concern as there are signs this organization is itself racist, revolutionary and under the manipulation of communists. Apparently 'Rocky Jones', who publicly advocates violence against our society, is the leader of the organization".⁵⁴ There were those who supported the grant, such as the writers at *The 4th Estate*, who viewed the grant as both necessary and long overdue.⁵⁵

Economic Development

The federal decision to not fund the BUF on the grounds of social development and Black culture, instead providing funding through the Department of National Health

⁵⁴ The letters are detailed in James W St. G Walker, "Black Confrontation in Sixties Halifax," in *Debating Dissent: Canada and the 1960s*, ed. Lara Campbell, Dominique Clement and Gregory Kealey (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012): 186-187. They are specifically found in LAC, RG 29, vol. 1513, file 201-6-7, vol. 4.

⁵⁵ "The BUF Grant", *The 4th Estate* 1, no. 11 (Halifax, 4 September 1969): 4.

and Welfare immediately created a dynamic in which the state officials did not recognize the BUF in the same way that the organization positioned itself. This decision also created a federal agenda and use for the organization that conflicted with BUF's existential aims. Viewing BUF as merely a welfare-based organization stalled the progress of the organization to develop comprehensive programs and reforms for Black education, Black cultures, Black employment, and Black business development. Instead, the agenda by state officials for the BUF focused entirely on infrastructure, housing, welfare, and health issues. This is evidenced in the programs developed by BUF that were more easily approved than others, as economic organizations such as BUF Enterprises Ltd. were consistently pushed aside by government funding opportunities.⁵⁶ Meanwhile, programs such as the Winter Warmth Program, or the Black Health Project received funding on the basis that they were welfare-based projects that addressed housing or health related needs in Black communities across the province.⁵⁷

An important component of the BUF's objectives was the development of greater economic opportunities for Black Nova Scotians through equalized workplace education, job opportunities, and the development of Black owned business and capital across the province. The primary method for achieving this was BUF Enterprises Ltd., which aimed to utilize government funding to review and accept Black business applications for starting or improving upon Black businesses to help further employment more community members.⁵⁸ BUF also utilized numerous educational workshops to help equalize educational experience for Black Nova Scotians applying for certain positions.

⁵⁶ *GRASP*, April 1972, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

⁵⁷ *GRASP*, June 1972, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

⁵⁸ *GRASP*, October 1970, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

Numerous classes were organized with the Nova Scotia Technical School with the goal of enabling Black Nova Scotians to receive technical training requirements for certain job positions.⁵⁹ As opposed to projects involving Black welfare that were more likely to receive grant funding through applications, projects such as those stated above involving long-term economic improvement either relied on general BUF funds, or required a strenuous level of pressure and discussion with government offices to receive necessary funding. While being prepared and organized for economic expansion in October of 1970,⁶⁰ BUF Enterprises Ltd. continuously sought proper funding opportunities through to 1975 when the organization was forced to disband due to a lack of consistent funding avenues.⁶¹ Despite numerous attempts to organize funding opportunities and display to governing bodies the economic success the program could achieve with Black communities across the province, BUF Enterprises Ltd. was eventually shuffled from federal programming to the Department of Regional Economic Expansion (DREE), a federal department created in an attempt to address economic disparity between regions by coordinating with provincial governments to mutually discuss and support economic programming.⁶² When funding opportunities were discussed between BUF Enterprises Ltd., DREE, and the provincial government, funding eventually fell through as the federal department and provincial government both argued that a federal-provincial cost sharing economic development project with BUF Enterprises Ltd. was not feasible as

⁵⁹ *GRASP*, January 1972, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

⁶⁰ *GRASP*, October 1970, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

⁶¹ *BUF: An Evaluation Report*, 1975, Volume 2002-066, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

⁶² P. E. Bryden, "The Limits of National Policy: Integrating Regional Development into the Federal Agenda," *The American Review of Canadian Studies* 37, no. 4 (2007): 479–480.

funds could not be secured.⁶³ Despite a “lack of cost-sharing funding,” in recent years the DREE program and Nova Scotia provincial government had reached a consensus on funding Michelin Tire job creation and economic developments in Port Hawkesbury. As the BUF noted:

[These job creation projects] reinforced the feeling of alienation among Blacks... BUF must anticipate socio-political eruptions if the increasing alienation of Blacks persists as a result of economic expansion programs by DREE and provincial government. BUF is in the position of developing and administering a comprehensive experimental social adjustment package if the provincial government and DREE will recognize the human resource potential of Blacks by appropriate funding for such programs as BUF Enterprises Ltd.⁶⁴

As previously discussed, the cost-sharing agreement between the state department DREE and the provincial government was not reached, and Black community focused economic development continued to be alienated and unsupported by governing bodies.

While welfare-based programs promoted and supported by BUF with federal and provincial financial support were valued by both the BUF and Black community members at large, they served as inefficient long-term solutions to existing economic issues facing Black Nova Scotian communities as they did not fully address the racial barriers and government racialized negligence that had created both economic and social disparity. The BUF was successful in addressing immediate welfare issues through community specific grant applications, but both the federal and provincial government let the organization down by refusing to commit to the BUF's larger long-term goals that disturbed the governments' established White-centric systems. As discussed by Jones, the federal approach to the BUF was also heavily influenced by 1969 White Paper on Indian Affairs, as Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau opposed removing Indigenous

⁶³ Baglole, “All the Messy Details,” 193.

⁶⁴ *GRASP*, July 1971, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

distinctions while promoting Black self-determination. Ultimately, they “give their proposal a new purpose. As Munro said when he announced the grant, it was to help solve a poverty problem, not a race problem. This argument was accepted by the full cabinet, because it didn’t contradict the government’s integration policy”.⁶⁵ Regardless of the rationale for refusing to support Black self-determination, only viewing and funding the BUF as a welfare organization displays a problematic approach. Governing bodies both at the provincial and federal level showed that they were more concerned with Black Power’s “threat” to White Canadian society status-quo and reinforcing a forced dependency of state welfare intervention than they were seriously interested in addressing racial barriers and problems within the status-quo. Instead of addressing and supporting BUF as a political, cultural, economic, and social reworking organization, state authorities problematically viewed the organization and ‘supported’ the organization only as a welfare institution: shifting Black community and provincial organizing away positions of political or economic authority.⁶⁶ With this approach to the BUF established during the funding discussions and followed during early organizational stages, the shift towards welfare based programming only became more reinforced through the provincial government in later years.

The question of BUF leadership did not cease once Jules Oliver was established as the organizations first Executive Director. While Jones and other radical BUF organizers saw Jules Oliver as a moderate continuation of William Pearly Oliver’s work,⁶⁷ once established in the position Jules was actually receiving backlash for being

⁶⁵ Jones and Walker, *Burnley “Rocky” Jones*, 142-143.

⁶⁶ Calliste. “The Influence of the Civil Rights and Black Power Movement in Canada,” 134-135.

⁶⁷ Jones and Walker, *Burnley “Rocky” Jones*, 133.

too ‘radical’ in his philosophical approach to Black self-determination and Black Power. Oliver established early into his role as Executive Director that his direction for the BUF would not be based in welfare based actions, but rooted in the political and economic activism that conflicted with the agenda of government involvement with BUF. When questioned on the role BUF would play for Black communities, Oliver highlighted,

BUF is not a welfare organization. It doesn’t want to be, it is not going to be. We must have the pride and determination amongst our race to free ourselves from dependency situations. Having dignity and strength does not mean that you will lose welfare assistance. Many Blacks in communities have been told this. It is not true. This game is used to keep us divided, and to try and delude you into thinking BUF is competing with other agencies. Again, an old game of making Black people the issue so we can fight amongst ourselves. Many agencies would like to see Black people remain dependent upon them.⁶⁸

While some Nova Scotians felt Oliver was too radical, there were those who felt Oliver and the BUF were not radical enough. As discussed by Elliott Clarke, “BUF itself was constantly in turmoil around its leadership, especially given the fact that the group of Black kids who collected around Rocky Jones and especially those attending the Transition Year Program at Dalhousie, who would be older youth and even young adults, kept demanding that the BUF be more radical.”⁶⁹ The fracture between Jones and the Interim Committee of BUF, as well as the divide between first and second wave Black activism in Nova Scotia, led to issues within BUF leadership where differences of philosophies and methodologies led to dissatisfaction among community members.

While government funding was a necessity at this stage for community-based welfare applications, Oliver was acutely aware of government agencies opposing BUF’s political and economic agendas and actively opposed attempts to shift the organization towards the subdued version the government supported. The support and securing of

⁶⁸ *GRASP*, October 1970, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

⁶⁹ George Elliott Clarke, Interview with Author, April 12th, 2023.

funds for BUF groups that opposed the status quo was therefore quite important to Jules Oliver while he directed the organization, with BUF Enterprises Ltd. being particularly useful in his attempts to address and dismantle established economic systems across the province that alienated Black economic development.

Oliver also heavily promoted BUF as an umbrella organization that supported community-based organizations as sources of Black Power. The more community level organizations present under BUF's umbrella gave the BUF more structural power, yet Oliver's organization did not centralize this power within the main structure, instead utilizing BUF Field Organizers, the *GRASP* newspaper, and BUF resources to support the power of these organizations as a connected network of Nova Scotia Black Power. Fifteen community-based organizations were revitalized or newly created during the leadership of Jules Oliver, and six province wide organizations as well (see figure 1). The power of coalitional organizations supported by Oliver's approach as Executive Director helped with welfare-based applications as outlined above, but also gave political power to collective, province-wide Black Power.

BUF (GRASP Mentioned) Umbrella Groups 1970-1973

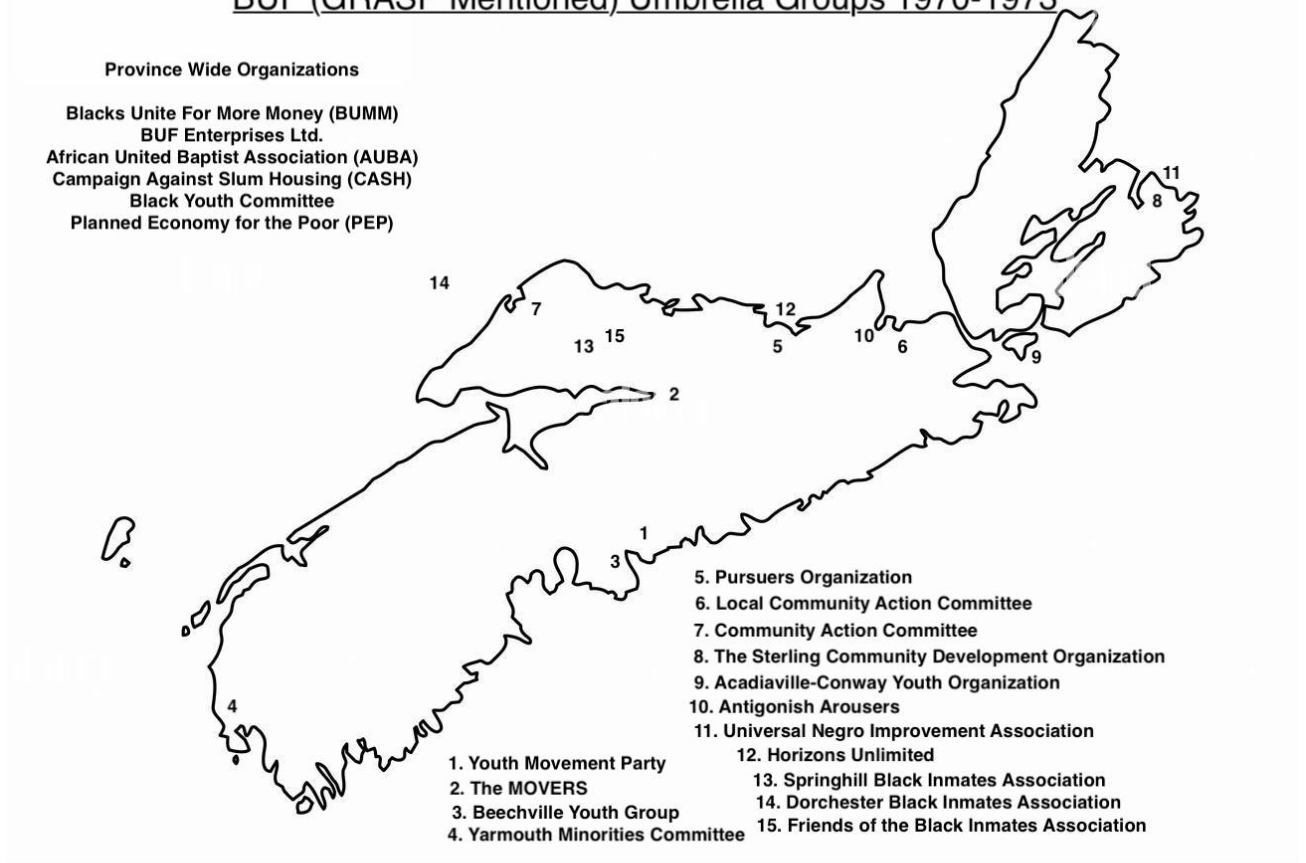


Figure 1. Black United Front Umbrella Groups (1970-1973)

The BUF Tri-Function Conventions were held annually and served as an excellent forum for Black Nova Scotians to voice concerns and unify provincial Black Power against provincial government inaction. The first Tri-Function Convention, held November 7th, 1970, served mostly as a forum to gather recommendations from Black community members on what issues should be prioritized in BUF meetings with provincial and municipal officials, the most noteworthy of which were Black political representation, action on Black economic projects, cultural programming, and voter

education.⁷⁰ Elliott Clarke noted that his first interactions with the organization were through community engagement in schools, as BUF held group discussions in his junior high.⁷¹ As the organization became more established through 1971, and community groups emerged, the second annual Tri-Function Convention was held on June 25th and 26th of that year with over one hundred representatives present that represented numerous communities across the province. As political Black Power was greatly supported by multi-layered community-based and provincial organizations, and united through the BUF, the provincial government was unable to remain negligent, and was pressured into discussing and meeting Black community issues head-on through a convention forum that was attended by the Premier Gerald Regan, and Scott McNutt, the Minister of Public Health and Housing.⁷² A series of demands were placed forth by numerous community representatives to the provincial ministers, including the increase in Black representation in the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission, that ten thousand dollars for each Black Nova Scotian be put into Black-focused projects and programs as reparation payments, a provincial commitment to meetings pertaining to funding BUF Enterprises Ltd., equal justice in the Nova Scotia judicial system, a provincial inquiry into Black student education, and a commitment to improve road signage and services from the Department of Highways in multiple Black communities.⁷³

The provincial response to these propositions were deflating and non-committal. In an attempt to appease without full commitment, both Regan and McNutt discussed planning meetings with the BUF and stated that legislative voting and discussion would

⁷⁰ *GRASP*, November 1970, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

⁷¹ George Elliott Clarke, Interview with Author, April 12th, 2023.

⁷² *GRASP*, July 1971, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

⁷³ *GRASP*, July 1971, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

be necessary on any issue that required financial components. When questioned about similar proposals brought before the provincial government in March, Regan merely stated the items were still under provincial review.⁷⁴ Well aware of provincial government negligence through numerous previous interactions, BUF organizers and multiple community members criticized the Premier shortly after the convention for not yet scheduling the proposed meetings, and for refusing funding for Black Youth programming.⁷⁵

In discussing Indigenous recognition in regard to the colonial state and issues confined in seeking state recognition, Coulthard highlights that “Indigenous society will tend to come to see the forms of structurally limited and constrained recognition conferred to them by their “colonial masters” as their own”.⁷⁶ Coulthard’s influence by Black self-determination and state recognition is displayed greatly in his analysis of Fanon’s work, and can be reimaged to discuss the BUF as well. Between 1970 and 1973 the combination of secured long-term funding and multiple community organizations helped the BUF hold government accountable and reduce the BUF’s role as a buffer between Black Nova Scotians and the state. Community-based organizations were supported by BUF to have a direct grant relationship with the state themselves, which therefore helped BUF not be viewed as the limitations and constraints when the state interfered with Black self-determination. When the Federal Council met to discuss the original funding for the BUF, they are adamant in the recognition of credit for themselves through funding BUF yet highlighted when issues occurred as to create a

⁷⁴ *GRASP*, July 1971, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

⁷⁵ *GRASP*, July 1971, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

⁷⁶ Glen Coulthard, “Subjects of Empire: Indigenous Peoples and the ‘Politics of Recognition’ in Canada,” *Contemporary Political Theory* 6, no. 4 (2007): 448.

system in which state negligence and mismanagement was instead viewed as BUF shortcomings.⁷⁷ Supporting a system in which Black Nova Scotians had direct interactions with government agencies helped alleviate this issue for BUF, but did not entirely remove the issue. For example, on February 5th, 1973, multiple objects in a BUF office were destroyed in an act of frustration by two individuals stating they acted on behalf of Planned Economy for the Poor (PEP), an organization which aimed to enable Black Nova Scotians access to greater economic opportunities which had previously been denied to them. PEP had been working with BUF to find government funding opportunities through grant programs or government agencies, similar to other groups supported by the BUF. Frustrated with the lack of funding available, these two PEP members viewed the BUF as the constraining and limiting organization. This was not an isolated incident in which BUF was targeted due to government actions, as argued by a BUF editor who stated,

BUF was often used by many White organizations as a means of scapegoating when Blacks pressured them for assistance. “Go to BUF.” “They have plenty of money.” “That’s what it is for, to help you fix your roof, to pay your bills, to operate your program...”, and on and on and on”.⁷⁸

Once again there was a misconstrual by government agencies that BUF was a welfare-based organization, but there was also a buffered attempt to place BUF between government decisions and Black Nova Scotians. There was a government supported system being put forward in which the government shortcomings in terms of funding opportunities and negligence were being thrust upon the BUF to be seen as being their constraints and limitations. This scapegoating worsened heavily after the departure of

⁷⁷ *Black United Front Meeting*, 1969, Government of Canada Archives and Collection, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.

⁷⁸ *GRASP*, March 1973, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

Executive Director Jules Oliver in March 1973, and the shift to provincial funding after 1974.

Organized Black Power pressure on the provincial government through the BUF became less feasible after federal funding for the BUF ceased in 1974. Funding for the BUF shifted from a multi-year federal grant commitment to a yearly negotiated grant through the provincial government; a shift that did not commit to long-term investment, reduced the operational cost of the organization, and greatly increased provincial control over the organization's actions.

“The Last Vestiges of Africville”: The Role of Space Regulation in Early BUF

The foundational years of BUF were heavily influenced and shaped by the fallout from the Africville relocation that occurred primarily between 1963-1970, ending right as the BUF was being established. As the establishment of BUF with secured funding did not occur until 1970, the organization itself did not influence or have a voice regarding the relocation but greatly felt the results of the destruction of Africville ripple throughout Nova Scotian Black communities. While the regulation, relocation, and destruction of Africville has been discussed at length by a number of historians, little attention has been paid to the influence that the destruction of Africville had elsewhere in the province. The destruction of Africville was not a siloed situation, and Black Nova-Scotians became increasingly concerned with attempted regulation and ownership of their land and space. For the BUF, which was attempting to situate itself within the framework of Black communities across the province at this time, this was an area of immediate focus.

A primary objective for BUF upon its establishment was to garner a sense of what issues concerned Black Nova Scotian communities most strongly. Initial meetings with Black residents in Cherrybrook, Lake Loon, Yarmouth, Lincolnville, New Glasgow, Tracadie, and Beechville revealed that property ownership, property security, and property rights were the biggest concerns and resulted in much of the community-level organization that worked with BUF Field Workers during this period.⁷⁹ To be fully informed on the situation of Black housing in Nova Scotia, BUF commissioned a housing report that was finalized in 1973 detailing ownership and housing standards across each major Black community. The information was gathered between July and November in 1972, finding that a large portion of Black households fell below both the average yearly Nova Scotian income of 3500\$, and existing government housing programs that required a yearly household income of at least 3500\$.⁸⁰ A major concern for Black landowners was securing legal documentation to protect Black spaces from government interjection. Communities such as Lincolnville and Sunnyville worked in close relation with BUF in attempts to secure deeds, which proved to be a difficult task for the newly founded organization as provincial authorities refused legal documentation without increasing property tax levels.⁸¹ The unwillingness of state authorities to support Black special security and landownership records became an area of contention for BUF, which noted that “BUF has been banging its fist against that heavy wall of government to open new ways for us to solve this problem. Ottawa officials have been approached many times.”⁸²

⁷⁹ “GRASP, August 1970, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

⁸⁰ V. Wayne MacKinnon, *Report of Housing Survey of Black Communities in Nova Scotia*, Halifax: Black United Front, 1973, 2.

⁸¹ GRASP, February 1971, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

⁸² GRASP, January 1973, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

In relation to housing (as the state only funded welfare-based BUF projects), housing improvements such as the Winter Warmth Program were the only areas in which BUF could rely on adequate funding opportunities and cooperation to ameliorate Black housing conditions. As state authorities funded BUF merely as a welfare-based organization, community concerns surrounding the legality of space, property ownership, and government encroachment were difficult issues to address for the BUF.

A common thematic occurrence in the historical analysis of Africville is the observance of Africville and the fallout of its destruction as siloed and isolated within the experiences and impacts on Africville residents. Recent scholarship on the destruction of Africville has broadened the context and impact of Africville on a national and transnational level,⁸³ but particularly regarding the actions of BUF, an understanding of the impacts of the Africville relocation on a provincial level to Black communities is necessary. The self-deterministic actions and political organization occurring within many Black communities at this time is responsive to the interference and forced relocation of a Nova Scotian Black community. Prior to the forced relocation of Africville's residents there was little concern over the necessity for property protection from government authorities. What became apparent through the destruction of Africville to Black communities was that the White-centric legal system of Canada gave government agencies a large level of power in affecting Black property and security.⁸⁴ The destruction of Africville also showed Black communities across the province that

⁸³ The analysis of Africville on National and Transnational levels is available in Tina Loo, "Africville and the Dynamics of State Power in Postwar Canada", *Acadiensis* 39, no 2 (2010): 23-47; Tina Loo, *Moved by the State: Forced Relocation and Making a Good Life in Postwar Canada*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2019); Ted Rutland, *Displacing Blackness: Planning, Power, and Race in Twentieth-Century Halifax*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018).

⁸⁴ Tina Loo, "Africville and the Dynamics of State Power in Postwar Canada," 39.

state authorities refused Black Nova Scotians the right to individual identity and Black community culture within the framework of a larger provincial space. As Black Power philosophy was developing in Nova Scotia, and Black self-determination was becoming a foundational element of the BUF, to Black Nova Scotians, the Africville relocation was not only a forced physical relocation but an attempt by White societal systems to remove Black community-based identity and spatially ingrained Black culture. This reflects the state's attempt to not only assimilate Africville residents, but overall Black Nova-Scotian culture as well. The destruction of Africville was,

More than simply a refusal to invest in its growth...the City's destruction of Africville was the culmination of a moral panic at any possibility of an independent, sovereign blackness. The nation makes itself not through exclusionary practice alone, but through, to borrow Sibley's term, "geographies of exclusion". Through the desecration of space as black, the appropriation of space as white, the suppression of the story of this violence and the denial of accountability, the life of Africville is grounded upon a geography of racism, and its discursive organization.⁸⁵

The destruction of Africville as an independent Black space signaled a requirement for other Black communities to protect their space from regulation, destruction, and upheaval as Africville had experienced. The self-deterministic basis for the BUF and the accessibility of Field Organizers gave Black communities the ability to create politically active committees and organizations to directly interact with state authorities and ensure their voices were heard and respected in any policy decisions involving Black spaces and Black homes.

The destruction of Africville as a physical space certainly did not destroy the existence of Africville as a space of Black culture and pride. Africville became a landmark for Black self-determination and helped urge the creation of a many Black

⁸⁵ Jennifer Nelson, "The Space of Africville: Creating, Regulating, and Remembering the Urban 'Slum,'" *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* 15, no. 2 (2000): 183.

community-based organizations that protected community interests and promoted Black Nova Scotian culture. In the words of Black poet and activist George Elliott Clarke,

The death of Africville necessitated its resurrection—in folk art (family photos, home movies, stories, songs), and especially in the neo-nationalism of the “militant” Black United Front of the early 1970s. Nova Scotia’s own Black consciousness movement began, it seems, just as the last vestiges of Africville were being reduced to rubble... insurgent intellectuals like Burnley ‘Rocky’ Jones and partially radicalized pastors like Reverend Dr. W. P. Oliver began to articulate a new pride, a collective sense of identity, and the need to empower ‘the people’... simultaneously, Africville itself was transformed into a cultural myth, the product of romanticism and nostalgia, a *pays* to mourn, a source for collective rituals, a focus for communal politics. The Africadian Cultural Renaissance and its conscious nationalism are the dry bones which have put on flesh and walked from the dust of Africville.⁸⁶

The destruction of Africville by a combination of municipal, provincial, and federal action demonstrated that state authorities did not value Black identity and Black self-determination, while also failing to support Black communities to the same extent as White communities. This demonstration highlighted the requirement for Black political organization and activism through an avenue of Black self-determination which was manifested and created through the BUF.

⁸⁶ George Elliott Clarke, “The Death and Rebirth of Africadian Nationalism”, *New Maritimes* 2, no. 5 (May/June 1995): 27-28.

Chapter Three - "A New Organization": 1974-1983

1974 marked a shift in the organizational structure and direction of the BUF in multiple capacities. The majority of BUF's staff from the previous five years shifted out of the organization; between August 1973 and January 1974 six office positions in BUF had shifted, including the newly hired Assistant Executive Director (Frank Boyd), a new Office Manager (Pamela Suttle), and a new Housing Officer (Richard Dawson).⁸⁷ Art Criss, the new Executive Director of the BUF noted the major changes in his message to *GRASP* readers across the province,

This is a time for change, a movement away from the politics of confrontation and the adjustment to the implementation of programs oriented to solving the issues fundamental to existence in the Black communities of Nova Scotia... I think it appropriate at the beginning of the New Year to point out the fact that BUF has undergone changes, which, for all intents and purposes, one might consider BUF to be a New Organization. There has been a 99% change in staff in the past year, a modification in project design has taken place, and there has been a complete change in approach to the solution of the problems affecting Blacks in Nova Scotia. I should point out, however, that the basic philosophy on which BUF was founded is still and will remain our overriding source of direction. What has happened is a change in interpreting the best method of carrying out that philosophy.⁸⁸

The confrontations of BUF's previous actions that were shifted by the new administration were primarily based in the utilization of community organizations as a conglomerate to pressure government action on issues affecting Black communities. As discussed earlier, this was utilized with the establishment and support for numerous Black community groups across the province between 1969-1973. As the government was unwilling to commit to non-welfare-based projects on multiple occasions with the previous administration, reports done by the newer administration in late 1973 and early 1974 discussed employment, education, and housing issues as still being large scale issues

⁸⁷ *GRASP*, January 1974, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

⁸⁸ *GRASP*, January 1974, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

affecting multiple Black areas across Nova Scotia. The survey report completed in January 1974 displayed that of 177 Black individuals located in the Digby area who were available for employment, only 40 were given employment opportunities; of which opportunities which were also not as the same economic level as White Nova Scotians in the same region.⁸⁹ The yearly renewed, provincially-funded iteration of the BUF was therefore both unable and unwilling to utilize a community focused “confrontation” system to approach meaningful, self-deterministic, long-term changes for Black Nova-Scotians.

While funding limitations and provincial guise are major limitations to the community-focused “confrontation”, the findings of the new administration and their approach to BUF’s organizational direction also highlights the shift away from community organizations towards a centralized BUF. In a response to questions raised pertaining to the strength of Nova Scotia’s Black leaders by a *GRASP* contributor, Criss stated,

One of the biggest frustrations to BUF has been the petty jealousy and back biting that exists in the Black Community. If there is one negative characteristic in our culture that we can do without it is “tribalism”. Our Black community is getting to the point where we have so many organizations that we have more chiefs than we do indians. Despite this increase in community oriented organizations, unfortunately a great number of needs are still going unmet in the Black community. Until a coordinated attack comes about, progress is going to be minimal.⁹⁰

With the findings that educational, economical, and social issues in Black communities were still as pertinent as they were during the conception of BUF, Criss viewed the numerous community-based organizations as more conflicting with a centralized BUF “attack” on these issues than supportive. This directional change for the organization is

⁸⁹ *GRASP*, January 1974, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

⁹⁰ *GRASP*, April 1974, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

directly shown in the decrease in community-based organizations, as 15 community focused organizations were developed between 1970-1973, and zero new organizations were created after 1974.

Negotiation through state channels was the primary approach utilized by BUF's new centralized administration. In April 1974, the Federal Winter Warmth grants were supported by local, community-driven applications, but the centralized BUF office played a much larger role in the administration and negotiation of the project. A project through the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation and Manpower's Local Initiatives Program, the Winter Warmth Program aimed to support necessary construction on Canadian homes to ensure winter warmth and safety where residents would be otherwise unable to afford repairs. When the Guysborough County Committee, a separate regional group, received a large amount of funds for community repairs a deal was negotiated with the BUF in which funds were made available for Black community members from the Guysborough County Committee through BUF, "their agreement is that Black County residents would receive a certain amount of support from both the County committee and BUF, but only if BUF is successful in supporting the County Committee for more funding from the Provincial government and extend their LIP grant."⁹¹ The cooperation and negotiation with an outside organization in this instance provided BUF with a larger pool of resources and support for necessary repairs to Black Nova-Scotian homes in which BUF itself had not received enough funding to perform itself. To state agencies, this series of discussions was part of a larger mandate to force BUF away from self-determination activities and towards welfare-based support. This specific instance also

⁹¹ *GRASP*, April 1974, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

forced BUF to put resources and energy towards actions that did not directly support an agenda of Black self-determination and a focus on Black Nova-Scotians, as their support and resources in securing additional funding for the Guysborough County Committee was support for an organization that was not Black community organized or focused.

With federal funds ending in 1974, the BUF turned to the provincial government for future funding opportunities. The grant applications were done on a yearly basis, and the Department of Social Services funded BUF on the basis of a yearly application that was either created by the Executive Director or the BUF Council Chairmen. While the postwar economic growth rate declined significantly at this time, it should be noted that the federal government expenditures did not cease in other capacities. While unemployment rates and inflation rising were a federal concern, federal expenditure between 1973 and 1996 grew from 25.2 billion dollars to 158.6 billion dollars.⁹² The decision to cease federal funding for the organization was not a financial decision, but a decision of policy and control.

The shift from a multi-year federal funding program to a yearly renewing provincial grant that required yearly provincial budgetary overview and was open to yearly changes resulted in a major shift as to how BUF was able to address and criticize government funding, decisions, and agencies. During the tenure of Jules Oliver as Executive Director which overlaid with the federal grant period, federal, provincial, and municipal organizations could be openly addressed for their discriminatory practices and issues as it was key to BUF's organizational practice and would not affect the organization's ability to fund itself and its programs. When the Halifax Police

⁹² Livio Di Matteo, *A Federal Fiscal History: Canada, 1867-2017* (Fraser Institute, 2017), 58.

Department and the Halifax Housing Authority forcibly entered the home of Mary Lucas in 1971 to evict her, for example, BUF was open to address and criticize the agency's discriminatory actions against Lucas. "The Halifax Housing Authority used immoral and sneaky methods in its dealing with Mrs. Lucas," they wrote.⁹³ There was also the ability to pressure government agencies into fulfilling their required duties to Black Nova Scotians. In 1970, for example, BUF pressured the municipal and provincial governments in Nova Scotia for effective welfare reform, as "the municipal authorities tell you, however, that they are not equipped to implement the Canada Assistance Plan to its fullest. However, what one spends money on is solely related to what one values."⁹⁴ The ability to make government agencies accountable for racial inequality prevalent in their systems was vitally important to the success of BUF as it related directly to the organization's objectives towards addressing prevalent discrimination in Nova Scotia's systems and apparatuses. While the Human Rights Commission was a vital tool for BUF, it could be utilized to support BUF during this period, whereas after the shift in funding occurred there was a required reliance on the Human Rights Commission to undertake this role as BUF risked losing its funding support. To Black Nova Scotians, the Human Rights Commission therefore became the institution for addressing systematic issues instead of BUF. The loss of this connection with Black Nova Scotians meant a shift in the recognition for these actions away from BUF, and towards other government agencies.

At a council meeting February 14th, 1974, it was decided that as the shift to provincial funding occurred, the BUF Provincial Council would undergo structural

⁹³ *GRASP*, January 1971, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

⁹⁴ *GRASP*, October 1970, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

changes in positions and would also begin an election process for Council Members.⁹⁵ It was decided that the Provincial Council Election would occur June 8th, 1974, with council terms being two years before elections would be held again. The results of the first provincial election were not as successful as BUF members hoped, as the new Executive Director Art Criss noted in a letter following the election, “[There is] the need to call a Bi-Election for some time this summer... As you know, several Black communities did not elect Council Members and several other communities elected only one Council Member. It will be necessary to decide upon a means to get representation from these areas and this will be the responsibility of the Provincial Council Election Sub-Committee.”⁹⁶ While Black community members across Nova Scotia were heavily involved in local community groups under the umbrella of the BUF, engagement from the same communities for Provincial Council elections was much less engaged, a situation which is arguably created by the stark differences each form of activism provides. What made community-driven group engagement so high was that it directly linked systematic community issues with larger provincial systematic racism through the network of community organizations but maintained community members direct actions and primary focus within homegrown, grassroots activism; activism that received support from the BUF and pushed for government funding without falling under the guise and control of state entities. Provincial Council elections and positions required a level of provincial bureaucracy and control that was unappealing as it was the same systems that

⁹⁵ “Black United Front Provincial Council Meeting,” 16 February 1974, Accession 2002-066/001, Microfilm #23 596, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

⁹⁶ Letter from A.E. Criss to Edy Guy, 8 July 1974, Accession 2002-066/001, Microfilm #23 596, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

was both actively and historically alienating Black Nova Scotians and conflicting with Black self-determination.

The root cause for the problematic shift in Black community engagement was not the Provincial Council itself, as it had existed prior, but a shift to yearly provincial funding that came with its own renewing provincial stipulations. The original grant deal between BUF and the Federal Government formed in 1969 was initially opposed by the Provincial Government on the grounds that the organization had no provincial regulation, representing a view from the Provincial government that Black self-determination through a Black-led organization required provincial control in some facet.⁹⁷ The compromise reached was the creation of the Provincial Council, whose supportive role initially in the organization was discussed above. By 1974, concerned with the reports, actions, and the self-determination of the BUF, the provincial decision to fund BUF on a yearly basis pushed for larger provincial control through a reimagined Provincial Council. While elections were one difference, the role of the Provincial Council changed drastically as well, as Provincial Council members became “the policy making arm of BUF... the means by which BUF hears the needs and views of Black Nova Scotians regarding programs and policies they feel are most important”.⁹⁸ The Provincial Council also took charge of hiring all BUF office staff, including the Executive Director, and electing Executive Board Members. The Executive Board of the BUF was created to oversee funding, public relations, and functional decisions for the organization.⁹⁹ What started as a supportive, adjacent structure to the primary BUF office became the

⁹⁷ Jones and Walker, *Burnley “Rocky” Jones*, 142-143.

⁹⁸ *GRASP*, November 1974, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

⁹⁹ *GRASP*, November 1974, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

overseeing entity of the entire organization, which over the coming years became an entity of persuasion by the provincial government.

By state ministers both at the provincial and federal level, the engrained racism and White-centric problems of Nova Scotia in 1974 were, misleadingly, considered to have been greatly ameliorated in comparison to years prior. The inability and unwillingness to view and address racism as an issue deeper than laws and welfare had led to a system in which discrimination was unacceptable, but racist attitudes still were. An encounter by Roy States in New Glasgow discussed in *GRASP* highlights the issue, as he discusses how he is not refused service at local establishments where he had previously been refused. In a discussion with Harry Sutherland, the Editor of the local newspaper the Evening News, Sutherland states, “well, Roy, your people are much cleaner now.”¹⁰⁰ States goes on to highlight the issue created by the state’s approach to combatting racially engrained discrimination across the province, “That statement to me was by a racist, and a dangerous one at that—he is, Editor of a newspaper,” he noted. “Later I was informed that the Human Rights Bill of Nova Scotia prevents discrimination in restaurants and hotels: in other words—the law is in force, but the attitudes are the same.”¹⁰¹ State officials viewed racial issues in Nova Scotia as merely being based in laws and welfare. This meant that with laws in place to combat commercial racial discrimination, and welfare programs pushed through the BUF, ministers and officials viewed racialized discrimination in the province as a diminishing issue, despite the reality of Nova Scotia’s racial discrimination being quite different.

¹⁰⁰ *GRASP*, January 1974, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

¹⁰¹ *GRASP*, January 1974, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

Chapter Four - “If the BUF Goes Under, Who Knows How Long It Will Take Us to Make Up Lost Ground?”: The 1983-1984 Incident

The survival of the BUF was jeopardized when provincial funding was removed following a financial investigation that revealed the misuse of provincial funding. The issue arose during an internal inspection into the purchasing of car rentals and transportation fees which led to a Council Meeting discussion in August, 1983, and RCMP interference with BUF as an undisclosed BUF member had given BUF financial documents to both the RCMP and Provincial government.¹⁰² After a period of questioning the expenditure decisions of the Executive Director, Hamid Rasheed¹⁰³, the BUF Provincial Council decided to create a committee to investigate the financial expenditures of Rasheed fully, and the Executive Director was placed on vacation leave until the situation was fully explored. While Rasheed was on paid leave, BUF staff members spoke out against the expenditures, as BUF staff member James Francois wrote to the BUF Provincial Council Chairman Clyde Bishop and the Chairman of the Personnel Committee Michael Tynes,

It is without prejudice but with a deep sense of outrage that I write this letter to you and Mr. Bishop- chairman of BUF Provincial Council... My understanding was that the Executive Director was asked to explain the expenditure of approximately \$17,000.00 which covered the cost of rented Avis cars for the period June 1981 to August 14, 1983. The Executive Director by way of an explanation stated the car/s were used as staff car/s to conduct BUF business. If what I have just stated is true record of this discussion and if it is also true that Council in its wisdom have accepted this given explanation I must state that I find it extremely difficult if not impossible to accept such a whitewash... So you see while I may be wrong to speculate, and I do have a strong opinion as to who used the so called Staff Car, I know for a fact that I did not and no other member of the central office knew about it or had access to that car.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² “Black United Front Provincial Council Meeting,” August 27, 1983, Accession 2002-066/001, Microfilm #23 596, Black United Front Fonds, (Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

¹⁰³ During his tenure as the Executive Director, Art Chriss changed his name to Hamid Rasheed.

¹⁰⁴ “James Francois to Michael Tynes and Clyde Bishop,” September 13, 1983, Accession 2002-066/001, Microfilm #23 596, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

While divisions were arising within the BUF Provincial Council as to the handling of this financial situation and the financial authority of the Executive Director, there was also a divisive issue arising between the BUF staff members and the Executive Director that had previously been unobserved. While the situation was critical to the financial management of BUF and the internal power structure, there was no rationale to believe that this issue required outside inspection or outside criticism and was entirely and rationally a self-contained issue.

The internal concerns as to the direction and management of BUF in relation to this incident were large enough to result in the dismissal of a staff member and the resignation of multiple BUF members, most notably the Provincial Council Chairman Clyde Bishop who had lost the confidence of the Provincial Council. The divisions that arose within the BUF stemmed from the questioned severity of the actions of the Executive Director, as the Provincial Council had notified the Department of Social Services stating that the issue was resolved, while other BUF members believed the issue remained unresolved. As stated by the ex-chairman Clyde Bishop,

a letter has gone forth to the Minister of Social Service Department, Edmund Morris on your behalf, setting out the directive given by Council that allegations towards the Black United Front have been dealt with and the issue is dismissed... Many allegations have been brought forth which have a definite effect on the Black United Front and its administration. Each and every Councillor must ask themselves in examination of the facts presented- have I acted in the best interest of the black people of Nova Scotia whom I am an elected representative for?¹⁰⁵

While the BUF Provincial Council assured the provincial agencies that the issue was internal and resolved, BUF members such as Clyde Bishop questioned the legitimacy of these decisions and claims in light of the Council's role and the impact these decisions would have in relation to BUF fully supporting Black communities across the province.

¹⁰⁵ "Memorandum to BUF Provincial Council from Clyde Bishop," September 16, 1983, Accession 2002-066/001, Microfilm #23 596, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

While the rationale for external investigation and a larger discussion on the affair is entirely valid, it is equally important to recognize that the BUF Provincial Council was operating at this time in a difficult funding situation with the provincial government. Funding was approved on a yearly basis and was often lower than the proposed budgetary requirements needed to fully achieve the organizational goals. Raising the requirement for an external spotlight and investigation would potentially give the provincial government the excuse they had been looking for to cut funding to the organization. At the same time, they would be saving themselves by stating it was entirely related to poor internal management.

Under the Executive Directorship of Rasheed, firings and internal disputes were an issue that occurred more frequently than under Jules Oliver, which did not help the organization or the Executive Director when the incident occurred. Elliott Clarke notes the influence Walter Borden had on him as a teenager, as he often spent time at the BUF offices while Borden worked there, “soaking up all the information I could about great black civilizations.” Elliott Clarke noted, “Walter, like everybody else who worked for the Black United Front, got fired by the director then, Hamid Rasheed, and for probably trying to undermine Hamid Rasheed’s leadership. And Rocky was there on the outside also trying to undermine Hamid and replace him with somebody who would be far more of an activist.”¹⁰⁶ As discussed earlier, the departure of Jones from the BUF Interim Committee to create the ACLM was rooted in the acceptance of federal funds, and the lack of second wave activism within BUF. Jones and likeminded activists, including those that worked for BUF opposed the methodology of the organization, and the

¹⁰⁶ George Elliott Clarke, Interview with Author, April 12th, 2023. Elliott Clarke also noted the influence of Frances Mills and Lloyd Furbert as positive BUF employees and activists.

leadership under Rasheed. Rasheed's moderate and centralized leadership of BUF represented a roadblock for Jones and likeminded activists. "I liked him," noted Elliott Clarke, "but I knew Rocky and Walter did not like him. They saw him as being an accommodationist tool of the government. So they distrusted him."¹⁰⁷

The resignations and removals of BUF members resulted in both the provincial government and media having larger accessibility to the internal affairs of the BUF, as evidenced by the Daily News receiving an anonymous submission of the BUF audit observations.¹⁰⁸ The ex-BUF members formed their own organization named the Concerned Citizens Committee which called for an entire redesigning of BUF. With the situation becoming more externally visible, Nova Scotian and National media outlets published material pointing at the mismanagement and poor leadership of BUF and argued the requirement for outside intervention into the organization. A Halifax *Mail-Star* article stated that "along with charges of financial mismanagement from several Black citizens' groups, government and opposition leaders, BUF's purpose and direction has been brought into question".¹⁰⁹ While the Department of Social Services had largely seen the issue as internal to BUF until this time, pressure from public attention on the issue led to the freezing of all funding in December, 1983.

The removal of funding evidently had major impacts on the functionality of the BUF throughout 1984. Funding amounts over previous years had already been so low compared to the required amounts necessary to run a fully effective organization, that

¹⁰⁷ George Elliott Clarke, Interview with Author, April 12th, 2023.

¹⁰⁸ "Memorandum to BUF Provincial Council from Hamid Rasheed," October 27, 1983, Accession 2002-066/001, Microfilm #23 596, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

¹⁰⁹ Robert Gordon, "'A House Divided': BUF's Public Disputes Spark Speculation", *The Mail Star*, November 1983, 1-2.

savings from previous years and other sources of funding were nearly non-existent. The Council advised BUF personnel that travel expenses could not be funded, and many organizational activities, actions, and goals relating to community-based interactions were being cut as funds to pay any field workers were virtually non-existent.¹¹⁰ While funding eventually resumed the following year after reorganizations were made, the impacts and implications of this incident were major and long-lasting for the organization. Firstly, a full year without direct relations with communities and media attention on the incident severely hurt the relations BUF had built with Black communities over the past 15 years. Many community members became divided over the ability of the organization to represent their best interests, and felt the negative attention the organization received potentially reflected poorly on the entire Nova Scotian Black population. As one concerned community member stated, “I think there is a definite need that the BUF be restructured, with new people on council. But I hope these hard times do not stigmatize the whole black community. Quite often that happens— something goes sour, and the whole race is labelled”.¹¹¹ Secondly, Rasheed was removed as Executive Director which necessitated the hiring of a new Executive Director and the restructuring of the Executive Director position. Prior to this incident, the Executive Director played a major role in BUF as they oversaw the BUF staff, organized community interactions, and also had a major voice in both the legislative and executive portions of the BUF Provincial Council. As observed with Jules Oliver’s time as the Executive Director, an effective Executive Director had a large level of authority and power in terms of affecting

¹¹⁰ “Notice of Meeting, Edith Cromwell (Council Chairperson) to Council, Emergency Meeting,” January 31, 1984, Accession 2002-066/001, Microfilm #23 596, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

¹¹¹ Michael Clugston, “A Disunited Front in Nova Scotia,” *Maclean’s* (Toronto), January 1984.

the direction and objectives of BUF. As the financial issues in 1983 were directly related to the financial decisions of the Executive Director and highlighted the requirement to observe expenditures more closely, the position of the Executive Director was greatly diminished post Rasheed's departure and the restricting of the organization. The authority of the Executive Director had previously been equal to that of the Provincial Council during the tenure of Rasheed. The role had previously been even more powerful under Jules Oliver, but was diminished to be beneath the guise of the provincial council following the restructuring and removal of Rasheed.

Thirdly, and finally, the incident and the removal of provincial funding for a year drastically changed the relations between the BUF Provincial Council and the Provincial government agencies by which BUF relied upon for funding. While the previous provincial budget restraints were difficult for BUF to rely upon as they were yearly renewed and often lower than necessary; they were ultimately based upon a necessary foundation that had been built by the funding commitment of the federal government between 1969-1974. When the federal grant expired in 1974 the expectation was created of the provincial government to fund the organization as a voice for Black Nova-Scotians despite the provincial government being opposed to many aspects of the structure and objectives of the BUF. The removal of funding in 1974 and the reorganization of BUF before reinstating BUF changed the foundation on which the funding for BUF was given; instead of funding based on necessity, funding was instead displayed as being based on Provincial benevolence. While seemingly small and insignificant as funding was restored, the shift in the funding relationship had major implications for the future of BUF's organizational direction, hiring, and existence.

While the removal of a controversial Executive Director was applauded by those who opposed Rasheed, the whole situation bore concern for the future of both the organization and the role it served for Black communities. Elliott Clarke notes,

we have to keep in mind that as much as some black Nova Scotians were disgruntled with what the Black United Front was doing or had done, and didn't like its leadership and didn't like its kind of bureaucratic, conservative approach to things, I think we also should have been worried that what would happen did happen, which is that the whole organization is eventually dissolved, and then you are left with nothing. And so, while , on the one hand, it was "good" –in quotation marks –"good" that someone who was seen as a regressive figure by some progressive black people was removed, it also put the organization itself on a kind of death watch because now it was very clear that the Ministry of Community and Social Services or Social Services –just generally –was now going to be in charge.¹¹²

Despite another twelve years of existence for BUF, the incident and removal of Rasheed placed the organization firmly on the edge of dissolution since it now functioned entirely under the guise and control of the provincial department of Social Services without the established and rooted original federal grant to support its existence. While the organization had seemingly removed problematic elements according to certain activists, it had certainly entered a period of decline and decay.

¹¹² George Elliott Clarke, Interview with Author, April 12th, 2023.

Chapter Five - The Final Period: 1985-1996

With the dismissal of Rasheed, the Executive Director position saw a large amount of turnover and a lack of consistency. George Borden was hired as the interim Executive Director until a new permanent director could be found. The Executive Director that was hired towards the end of 1985 was Rick Joseph, who was replaced by Gerald Taylor in 1986. Taylor resigned from the position in 1989 and was replaced by Winston Ruck, who in turn was replaced by Ogueri J. Ohanaka in 1990. The turnover was not limited to the Executive Director position, as an election was required in 1985 to refresh the provincial council. This likewise saw a large amount of turnover. Direct communication with communities through *GRASP* was minimal in 1985 and was replaced with *THE RAP* in 1986 which promoted BUF as a different organization. In its reorganization with the provincial government, BUF was restructured from a multifaceted self-deterministic organization to an advocacy agency, “which means that we work on behalf of Blacks who require assistance.”¹¹³ While earlier iterations of BUF resisted state attempts to reduce its mandate to only supporting Black welfare-based projects, the reorganization done by the provincial government transformed BUF into an organization whose objective was focused on welfare-based support for Black Nova-Scotians. While this was resisted by BUF members who wished to avoid becoming a “mini Human Rights Commission,” the removal of much of the funding necessary to

¹¹³ *The RAP*, December 1986, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

fully operate BUF meant other aspects of the organization were not financially feasible.¹¹⁴

When the organization or its leadership did resist the provincial agenda imposed upon them, they were subjected to increased control through financial inspection. In discussing the tenure of Gerald Taylor as the Executive Director, Elliott Clarke notes, “he did grab some headlines in early 1987 when he described Nova Scotian racism as being ‘apartheid without the guns.’ That likely pissed off the government.” Elliott Clarke continued, “Very soon after that, the Ministry sent in auditors –white guys with white shirts and grey suits –to directly question BUF workers about their salaries and expenditures. I think it was payback, a reminder to Jerry about who was really the boss.”¹¹⁵ Due to the financial issues that occurred in BUF’s past, the provincial ministers and agencies that directed BUF were able to utilize financial audits and examinations as a method of reprimanding and suppressing the organization.

Funding for the organization only allowed for a staff of nine members which meant that BUF increasingly had to rely on financial and organizational support from external sources to support Black community needs. When Sunnyville community members required assistance securing land records, BUF was required to become members of the Joint Consultative Committee alongside multiple other organizations such as the Watershed Association Development Enterprises to support the Sunnyville residents.¹¹⁶ While the issue does not lie in cooperation as cooperation between these organizations helps the community itself greatly, the shift from BUF as a self-

¹¹⁴ “Provincial Council Meeting Minutes,” March 22, 1985, Accession 2002-066/001, Microfilm #23 596, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

¹¹⁵ George Elliott Clarke, Interview with Author, April 12th, 2023.

¹¹⁶ *The RAP*, December 1986, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

deterministic umbrella organization to an organization of nine staff members displays the extent to which the provincial government forced the BUF to change its organizational standards to receive their financial support. The lack of funding was noted heavily by the organization as holding back their aspirations and being able to effectively address community issues and they echoed these sentiments to community members, “residents who attended recent public meetings in Halifax said they want the BUF to become an organization that is alive with the rage that most Black people feel when confronting the poverty and injustices to which we are still subjected... however, the BUF cannot address these problems without increased funding”.¹¹⁷ The insecurity of funding at this time impacted the ability of BUF to effectively collaborate with other organizations. BUF had previously been able to effectively collaborate and exist as an umbrella organization due to its knowledge that funding would be consistent and constant. When the Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia (BCCNS) was established in 1983, the organization aligned greatly with BUF and operated jointly with BUF at multiple instances. When the BCCNS faced funding issues itself in 1985-1986, the BUF helped the Black Cultural Centre receive further funding support to stay operational.¹¹⁸ The operations of the two organizations became so intertwined that a joint letter between Iona Crowley, the Chairperson of BUF’s Council and Doris Evans, the Corporate Secretary of the BCCNS was sent multiple provincial ministers in January 1986 expressing wishes to formally integrate the two organizations into one governing organizational body called the Black Cultural Society. The letter expressed,

¹¹⁷ *The RAP*, December 1986, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

¹¹⁸ “Statement of Role or Mandate, 1985-1986,” Accession 2002-066/001, Microfilm #23 596, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

that this merger consist of the Province paying out the current debts of the Black Cultural Centre, including the mortgage and accounts payable and bank loan; that the Province provide a second mortgage on the building to be repaid interest free; the grant allocation be sufficient to operate the joint function efficiently; that a guideline salary be paid, be established so as to not have professional staff underpaid.¹¹⁹

As provincial funding and funding relations had changed considerably from prior to 1983-1984, the BUF council understandably feared reduction of funding or the sudden loss of funding if it did not cooperate with the provincial government exactly as it wished to be interacted with. Much to the dissatisfaction of the provincial government, the merger did not occur as BUF understandably feared the implications that would occur with provincial funding opportunities and amounts. The provincial pressure to merge the organizations displayed a misunderstanding by the province as to how these two organizations operated.

Someone had the bright idea that the two organizations should merge into one. Black United Front and the Black Cultural Center. And because of that, they tasked the Executive Director's of both those institutions... Rick Joseph who was the director at that time and he was charged to join the institutions that will then have funding from the same source that was then funding the Black United Front, which was Social Services. You know, it's a, it's a remedial type of idea, you know, social community service, social services, that sort of thing... Eventually there was an impasse. They just could not come up with the formulation for this thing to happen. Now at that time, I picked up my phone and called Louis Stephen... And I said, "Louis, there's something, there's something not quite right. The Black Cultural Center, it's about culture. It's got no business in Social Services. Your department, Louis, it should be your department's responsibility".¹²⁰

The push to merge the Black Cultural Centre and the BUF was motivated by a provincial agenda to conserve funding, and the problematic view of Black organizations as being social service-driven instead of culturally and socially driven institutions. While the failure of the merger frustrated government officials, it arguably saved the Black Cultural Centre from being siloed into a social service role instead of its vital role as a cultural

¹¹⁹ "Black Cultural Society letter to Minister of Education, Minister of Social Services, Minister of Municipal Affairs," January 21, 1986, Accession 2002-066/001, Microfilm #23 596, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

¹²⁰ Anonymous, Interview with Author, April 19th, 2023.

resource for Black Nova Scotians. Elliott Clarke noted that the merger between the BCCNS and BUF was all but finished before community intervention ended it. As Elliott Clarke notes,

Because of the way the structure of the merger was going to be set up –the way the government wanted it to be set up –all funding for anything involving Black Nova Scotians would be funneled through a fifteen person, unelected, government-appointed Board of Directors who would decide what got funded, who got funded and what would not be funded. And a lot of us progressives understood that this was an extremely dangerous move.... When the details started to come out about what was really at stake, Rocky was also one of those people who forthrightly condemned the merger scheme.¹²¹

To the dismay of provincial ministers, the opposition to the merger was strong enough to halt the operation and keep the institutions separate. While the lack of success for the merger helped in the areas highlighted by Elliott Clarke, the dissatisfaction of provincial ministers and officers certainly negatively impacted the funding and support for BUF. The failure of the merger itself was not pushed for within BUF, but instead by an anonymous, community-driven newsletter distributed under the name of the *8th of June*.

The impact of interactions about funding with the provincial government on BUF Council members is displayed in the Council’s response to potentially funding the Weymouth Falls Justice Committee. “The Council members were then asked if it were legal for BUF to donate monies to other organizations,” it was noted. “Apparently, this was done in the past and was questioned by the Department of Social Services. It was decided that each member of Council would donate monies to the Justice Committee.”¹²² While state funding was a contentious topic from the creation of BUF onwards, and funding through the provincial government had never been nearly as effective and

¹²¹ George Elliott Clarke, Interview with Author, April 12th, 2023.

¹²² “Provincial Council Meeting,” March 22, 1986, Accession 2002-066/001, Microfilm #23 596, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

supportive as necessary the potential loss of funding hanging over each BUF Council decision had major implications for how the organization was able to operate.

The provincial government's influence on BUF Council members influenced the hiring for positions as well. In 1988, it was revealed that Jones had applied to be the Executive Director of the BUF but had been rejected by a 10-2 vote by BUF's Council. The knowledge of Jones and his philosophy was well documented by the Provincial government and it can be seen that the Nova Scotia government would have greatly opposed Jones's application due to his history of openly opposing state attempts to control Black affairs in Nova Scotia. After his application was rejected, Jones stated, as quoted by George Elliott Clarke:

“clearly, the people making that decision are extremely conservative and intimidated by what they perceive to be the need for the (provincial) government's permission”. Jones states that Council member Gordon Warrington of Liverpool stated “I spoke with my MLA (John Leefe) who said that if we hire Jones our funding will be cut off”, Warrington denies making that statement, but Council Secretary Lila Fowler says she remembers that statement being said, but didn't take it in the minutes. John Leefe denies the statement and says he wouldn't get involved in BUF's affairs.¹²³

Despite Leefe's assertion, there is ample evidence to suggest that Jones's claim about provincial interference with his hiring was accurate. The interference of the Provincial government in the hiring of Jones displays that the government opposed the self-determination and activist side of BUF that sought to change societal aspects and aimed to utilize its funding of the organization to forcibly remove this aspect of BUF and force it to act merely as a welfare-based organization. Through controlling funding and directly influencing the BUF Provincial Council, Provincial government agencies and ministers

¹²³ *Daily News*, Accession 2002-066/001, Microfilm #23 597, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

aimed to directly control the actions, objectives, and direction of the BUF to ensure the status quo of Nova Scotian society was secured.

Referencing his article above, Elliott Clarke reflected on the application of Jones and its lack of approval by BUF Provincial Councillors and MLAs alike. On the topic of Provincial Councillors, Elliott Clarke noted, “it was essentially a rubber stamp organization. And so if the word came from on high or from other leaders outside in the black community, that Rocky would be simply unacceptable, or quietly, the provincial government may have also spoken to people in the black community. They could have suggested that, if Rocky Jones gets in there, the funding is going to stop.”¹²⁴ While BUF Provincial Councillors were given the authority to oversee vital aspects of the organization, the guise and surveillance of Provincial Ministers severely impacted their operation. Coupled with the lack of accountability placed on BUF Provincial Councillors, the management of BUF became problematic, and by no means truly self-deterministic.

The BUF Provincial Council was not without its own major issues as well. While the Provincial Council garnered significant authority within the organization following the departure of Rasheed as the Executive Director, the position was still in charge of approving BUF expenditures which included those of the Provincial Council. With the growing authority of the Council, there has seemingly been the pressured expectation that the Executive Director would approve of all Provincial Council expenses despite the questionability of their expenditure being BUF related. This issue led to any strong, impactful, and moral Executive Directors to choose between compromised values or alienation from Council support. Winston Ruck, an Executive Director who, given the

¹²⁴ George Elliott Clarke, Interview with Author, April 12th, 2023.

correct circumstances and support had the experience and expertise to help the organization significantly was forced to make this exact decision. While working as the Executive Director, Ruck discussed his frustrations with a friend and ex-BUF employee:

[Ruck] said, look, "I've decided I'm going to quit". I said, "Winston what?" He said, "we have to talk". So, we agreed to talk, to meet over, you know, have dinner, I think a day or two after that. And he was the one that told me that there were these claims coming across his desk from council members... the claim would come, and let's see, on this date was this activity, whatever and he would pick up the phone and call the claimant, one of these members from whatever community, and would say, "on such and such a date, was there a meeting? Who called the meeting? What was it about? Give me details" ... And the response he got was, "Oh just sign the thing" ... And Winston said, "I couldn't". He couldn't do that... that got the Council to turn on Winston. And when Winston realized that... he said, "I don't need that. I don't need that, so I'm sending my resignation".¹²⁵

These actions by the Provincial Councillors not only threatened the image and reputation of the organization, but it severely weakened the ability of BUF to benefit from strong leadership within the Executive Director position as they were forced to comply with morally and financially wrong decisions and operate entirely within the power of the Provincial Council. A strong leader within Black Nova-Scotian communities, and unwavering in his moral accountability to Black residents across the province, Ruck sadly passed away shortly after his resignation from the BUF in 1992.

The ultimate downfall of BUF in 1996 was directly related to the diminishing of provincial funding and therefore the BUF being forced to play a smaller and smaller role in Black communities. The gradual reduction in funding slowly reduced the organization's ability to operate at a provincial level and ultimately forced it to operate only within the Halifax region. Between 1991 and 1995 five rural offices were forced to close as funding could not support operating at a provincial level.¹²⁶ In 1992 particularly the BUF expenditures resulted in being approximately \$50 000 over budget, which would

¹²⁵ Anonymous, Interview with Author, April 19th, 2023.

¹²⁶ "Black United Front Not So United (Nova Scotia)," *Canadian Press Newswire* (Toronto), June 1995.

not be supported by the provincial government. The over-expenditures and debt could not be dealt with as the provincial government put all liability on the organization itself. The debt and low funding resulted in the last six offices closing and 11 staff being laid-off in early 1996. Community Services Minister Jim Smith “informed BUF by letter on Jan. 17 that his department wouldn't provide additional funding for this fiscal year and plans to establish a task force of black leaders to advise the department on providing social services and community development to the province's black communities.... Smith indicated that any decision on future BUF funding will depend on the task force report”.¹²⁷ Despite the open-endedness of the closure of BUF’s offices and the situation of supporting Black Nova Scotians, the BUF never reopened and thus an organization that promoted Black self-determination, visibility, identity, economy, housing, justice, among a multitude of other affairs concluded both quietly and inconclusively. The slow corrosion of community support for the organization seemingly left many Black Nova Scotians indifferent to the organizations demise, “I don't know for sure, but my sense is that most of the people either shrugged their shoulders and said good for them or that type of thing,” stated one former BUF employee. “I am not so sure. But I don’t believe too many people shed tears over the end of BUF, but I could be wrong”.¹²⁸ The slow suppression of the organization coupled with the silent and inconclusive conclusion left many community members arguably feeling unaffected and indifferent to the organizations demise. It is important to note that Black Nova Scotians still felt the lack of a self-deterministic organization driven to support them, but by 1996, this organization was not the BUF.

¹²⁷ “Black Organization Shuts Its Doors,” *Canadian Press Newswire* (Toronto), January 1996.

¹²⁸ Anonymous, Interview with Author, April 19th, 2023.

What can therefore be observed from the experiences of the BUF, and its total relationship with state funding? Through analyzing and observing the full scope of the existence of BUF a multitude of both thematic and vital trends can be noted and discussed in relation to the successes of the organization in opposition to the ways the organization was failed by both state control, and the status quo of White Nova Scotian societal systems. The 27 years of existence of the organization when regarded in its entirety leads to observances and discussions regarding the reliability of Federal and Provincial funding, the organizational objectives that were successful and also the BUF's objectives that were negatively influenced by both state guise, and White Nova Scotian elites.

The Pressure for Black Consensus

A continuous expectation that is observed throughout BUF's existence from is the "necessity" for Black consensus from both the White centric provincial authorities and media. While the BUF was created as an encompassing and united organization for Black Nova Scotians, the functionality of the BUF as an umbrella organization meant that consensus was not necessary and difference was accepted; the umbrella organizational structure functioned as a mosaic, not a melting pot. Yet, to White Nova Scotians, media outlets, and state agencies, the organization was forcibly characterized as a singular and total vocalization of Black consensus on all matters and was therefore failing as a Black organization when it had separations, debates, and differences. Pressure from these outside sources for Black consensus was confronted and opposed at different intervals for

BUF, while at other periods the organization felt pressured to conform to outside pressures and create a total Black consensus.

Early into the structural development and establishment of the BUF, Jules Oliver noted the increasing pressure from outside apparatuses for Black consensus. Oliver disagreed with claims that the BUF had to have Black consensus and also argued that conflict was necessary periods of activism to enact discussions and change. Oliver stated:

It is also recognized that social reform only comes through organization and that Black people must develop organizations that have institutionalized conflict. That is, in essence, a recognition that conflict is positive, not negative. Issues only come when there is disagreement. Prior to that, all that exists is a plight. Once having a disagreement, you have friction. Friction produces heat, heat produces movement, movement is change.¹²⁹

Oliver viewed the institutionalized conflict that came with BUF operating as an umbrella organization as not an area of weakness or negativity, but an area of strength.

Institutionalized conflict created space for different approaches to Black activism and Black self-determination to manifest and create societal change. Just as the BUF had been created through conflict between first and second wave Black activist approaches, the umbrella structure and institutionalized conflict made differences in approach, philosophy, and action a structural strength instead of an institutional weakness.

The lack of understanding of Blackness and Black activism from White Canadian society leads to a problematic view of institutionalized conflict and the promotion of conflicting philosophies. The Canadian state itself and the state apparatuses present in postwar Canada viewed Blackness and Black activism as unitary and one-dimensional without grasping the intricacies of Black philosophy, anti-Blackness in Nova Scotia, or Black identity. For the state and the functionality of state apparatuses, an organizational

¹²⁹ *GRASP*, March 1971, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

structure that promoted institutionalized conflict was broken as it did not promote the individual, controlled structure that was expected from organized groups. This problematic understanding of the BUF's structure is compounded by the many rooted anti-Black sentiments present in Nova Scotian systems and apparatuses as institutionalized conflict in spaces of Black organization are instantaneously labelled as evidence of lacking Black leadership, and the inability to self-govern without the control of White agencies. This institutionalized and problematic aspect of Nova Scotian systems was apparent in the conflict that arose during the BUF financial issues in 1983 as many sources of media and other state apparatuses instantly pointed to BUF's public conflict as resulting from an inability to self-govern, this embodying a negative White societal response to Black self-determination. While many systems in Nova Scotia contained conflict, conflict between White Nova Scotians did not garner the same level of scrutiny and calls for consensus as Black spaces did. Jones noted this during the media's focus on the BUF in 1984, noting that "there is an assumption that is very unfair to blacks and that is that we are a homogenous group. Whites don't agree on everything; there are left wingers, religious freaks and all sorts of groups. When blacks reflect the same diversity it's seen as a split."¹³⁰ Had a similar situation arose within another government funded organization there would not have been the same scrutiny and arguments created. Systematic racism within Canadian state apparatuses led to instantaneous questioning of Black leadership, Black self-determination, and Black governance whenever organizational conflict arose, despite conflict being a necessary and vital component of activism and social reform. White centric Nova Scotian systems viewed BUF as only a

¹³⁰ Gordon, "A House Divided", *The Mail Star*, 1-2.

welfare-based organization, which removed this vital component of social reform. These systems vehemently opposed meaningful social reform as it uprooted the aspects of Nova Scotian society that were white centric and systematically set up to only support White Nova Scotians.

The pressure for Black consensus within the BUF did lead to periods in which the organization felt required to represent a total consensus of Black thought and activism for the entire province, especially as funding concerns and provincial control grew. In a brochure rotated at a Canadian Black Studies Conference in the early 1980s BUF noted that its first organization objective was establishing a Black consensus in Nova Scotia.¹³¹ Under the Executive Directorship of Rasheed there was a notable change in the organization of BUF as both an umbrella organization, and as an organization that benefited from internal conflict and differences. Rasheed's approach to managing the BUF was instead rooted in a philosophy of coordination and consensus, as Rasheed argued for less widespread discussion, and more centralized authority.¹³² The requirement for Black consensus became a larger concern for the BUF following the public divisions caused by the financial issues in 1983-1984 as the media attention and provincial withdrawal of grant funds impacted the organization so severely that potential future instances of conflict and difference without consensus were viewed as being severely detrimental to the success of the organization.

While the BUF practiced different approaches to Black consensus between 1969 and 1996, a constant element in this regard was the pressure from both state authorities

¹³¹ *Social Change Through Self-Determination Brochure*, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

¹³² *GRASP*, April 1974, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

and state apparatuses for Black consensus. The constant pressure on the organization for Black consensus reveals a combination of problematic elements within postwar Nova Scotian society, namely a refusal to view the BUF and Blackness in Nova Scotia as multi-dimensional and multifaceted. This also involved a racially prejudiced approach to consensus in organized bodies, and a lack of understanding for the positive aspects of conflict within organizations rooted in social reform. The period in which BUF operated structurally as an umbrella organization is also directly correlated to the period in which BUF's beliefs promoted institutionalized conflict and promoted differences as a strength. The period in which BUF did not operate as an umbrella organization was directly correlated to a shift in the organizations mandate which instead promoted consensus and unified approaches to activism, philosophy and identity across the province.

Finances

Perhaps the most overt thematic occurrence throughout the history of the BUF is a lack of adequate funding. While the initial federal grant financially established the organization and gave it a five-year plan, the transfer to provincial funding and the mismanagement of placing BUF under the grants of the Department of Social Services/Public Welfare constantly plagued the organization with low grants, and limited funding opportunities. The shift from federal to provincial funding can arguably be attributed to the shift in 'radical' influences on the BUF between 1969 and 1974. The federal decision to fund the BUF was rooted in a national agenda of halting Black 'radicalism' and fears of violence caused by Black Panther and Black Power activists. When those elements were reduced and removed, the federal government could then

transfer the financial and governmental responsibility of the organization to provincial authorities.

The impact of renewing a yearly grant with the Department of Social Services that required yearly provincial insertions into BUF's objectives displays a key rift between the structures of Canadian government systems and the progression of social reform. In governing bodies, and in particular the provincial government of Nova Scotia, short term actions and renewals are planned with observable results being available within the timeframe of elections, platforms, and the agendas of government-organized committees. The timeframe of these government aspirations and expectations directly opposed the objectives and actions of socially reforming organizations such as BUF as the necessary long-term goals of the organization were forcibly removed as yearly funding was never guaranteed. The status-quo of ingrained racism in Nova Scotia could not be confronted through BUF actions as long-term actions and plans were unavailable since the funding in coming years was never known. When the BUF did attempt to establish their own long-term budgetary requirements in their budget submissions to the Department of Social Services, they were instantly notified that their grant would be much smaller and changes to their budget would be necessary. When the BUF was notified that the budget would be tight in 1980, Rasheed noted,

It is likely therefore, that we can expect to receive funding at or about the \$180,000.00 level received last year. Should this be so, the organization will have to make some decisions as to how it is to proceed...the anticipated costs of the programs included in this outline exceed last years budget by some \$98,000.00. Either we will have to scale down or eliminate some of the programs previously approved or find alternate sources of funding.¹³³

¹³³ "BUF Fiscal Report," Accession 2002-066/001, Microfilm #23 596, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

What can be observed from these budget cuts and lack of budget growth is that BUF was not only forced away from certain organizational aspirations, but also had to actively cut back existing actions and efforts. Rasheed noted a vital requirement for other sources of funding, yet since provincial funding is unreliable, yearly, and heavily influential on the actions of the organization, the ability of BUF to pursue other avenues was severely hampered.

While the end of BUF as an organization is argued by the provincial government to be rooted in financial mismanagement, the death of the organization was not internally caused but rather was rooted in the budgetary decisions of the provincial state. The argument put forward by Community Services Minister Jim Smith was defined in a Canadian Press report: “Smith defended his position, saying BUF was given plenty of warning about the consequences of going over budget. ‘We haven't treated BUF any differently than we have treated any other organization,’ he said. ‘They found themselves apparently unable to function.’”¹³⁴ The source of the BUF’s financial issues was thus alleged to be entirely internal, despite the organization dealing with a small budget every single year. Between 1981 and 1995, the largest BUF budget in relation to provincial expenditures was 1983, in which the BUF grant totaled 0.01% of the total provincial expenditures. In 1995, the last grant year for the organization, the BUF grant was 0.008% of the total provincial budget.¹³⁵ While the BUF grant was by no means the only expenditure of the provincial government and did not call for a large portion of the

¹³⁴ “Black Organization Shuts Its Doors,” *Canadian Press Newswire* (Toronto), January 1996.

¹³⁵ “BUF Financial Statements 1980-1989,” Accession #2002-066/023, no. 12, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, Nova Scotia; “BUF Financial Statements 1990-1995,” Accession #2002-066/023, no. 13, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax Nova Scotia; “Government Sector Revenue and Expenditure, Provincial Economic Accounts, Annual, 1981-2009”, 2012, Statistics Canada, Ottawa, Ontario.

provincial budget, the budgetary increases the organization required to function fully would have not demanded any major actions by the provincial government as they would have been minute changes in a large provincial budget. The \$100 000 difference that resulted in the closure of the BUF in 1996 was also not a budgetary amount that would have significantly affected the overall provincial budget. While the provincial government consistently argued that the BUF budget was the result of “all they could provide” or “internal mismanagement of funds”, was is evidently observable as the actual rationality for the provincial government is an unwillingness to fund the organization. Throughout the funding period the BUF was given enough funding to create a positive image for the provincial government yet not enough funding in any capacity to operate effectively in relation to organizational aspirations.

The discussion of financial reparations that continues to permeate today across Canada was also a concern raised by the BUF. Reparations made by government agencies to Black Nova-Scotians represented a major point for BUF members in the foundational years of the organization. At the Tri-Function Convention held in June, 1971, Pearleen Oliver called for reparations to be paid to Black Nova-Scotians for more than 300 years of government wrongdoings. The reparation demand called for \$10 000 invested in Black community initiatives for each Black Nova-Scotian, totalling approximately \$300 000 at the time. The Premier’s response stated the requirement to look at American actions towards reparations, and to consult with provincial ministers.¹³⁶ As discussed in Dr. Afua Cooper’s “On Reparations: Canada and the Case of the Sir George Williams University

¹³⁶ *GRASP*, July 1971, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

Affair”, the conversations surrounding reparations for Black Canadians and Black Americans continue presently.

**“But You’re Canadian, You Don’t Need a Black Culture”¹³⁷: Social
Citizenship, Being “Canadian”, and “Foreign” Influence**

The postwar Canadian notion of social citizenship had major implications as to how non-Black Nova Scotians and state institutions viewed and approached the BUF agenda of promoting and encouraging a Black focused culture and identity. As discussed by historian Tina Loo, social citizenship strove towards equal access to social services and a “good life” for all Canadians regardless of location, economic status, social status, or race.¹³⁸ While at face value social citizenship appears to be only positive, the reality of social citizenship was much more forceful of white centric “Canadian” values, and suppressive of identities and cultures outside the “good life” of White Canadian society. The uniformness created through social citizenship created a mindset in which proud Black Nova Scotian community cultures opposed the growing sense of a “Canadian identity”.

In the context of other areas of Canada, other historians have noted the strange and ironic duality of “Canadian identity” in which Canadian Black leaders attempting to shape Black identity were pushed aside for Black leaders south of the border, while, when promoting and discussing Black identity in Canada, the same American Black leaders are marked as negative foreign influences that are harmful to the fabric of

¹³⁷ *GRASP*, January 1974, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

¹³⁸ Loo, *Moved by the State*, 8.

Canadian identity. In analyzing Black identity and organization across the nation historically and presently, Kitossa, Lawson, and Howard argue:

On one hand White elites displace homegrown African Canadian leadership by inviting African American leaders, principally clergymen, as expert knowers in moments of crisis. There is an unmistakable irony here. While White Canadian elites implicitly enable the cultural imperialism of a segment of the Black American elite, where radical Black leaders in both countries (from the Black United Front and the Black Panther Party to the Black Lives Matter organization) make common cause across the symbolic solidity of the forty-ninth parallel, this is criticized as a tutelage and strained importation of radical African American politics. The effect is to raise emotional alarm about the danger non-conforming African Canadian leaders ostensibly pose to the Canadian “fabric”, thereby rationalizing their *a priori* exposure to an intensive regime of state surveillance.¹³⁹

In regard specifically to Nova Scotia’s Black leadership and leadership influences, the establishment of early Black community leaders through local religious leaders from Richard Preston through to William Pearly Oliver resulted in a lack of imported African American Black leaders, and yet there is a clear attempt by White Canadian elites and state authorities to divide the connections between American and Canadian Black leaders by framing American influences and “radical” Black Power philosophy as foreign and harmful.

During the establishment of the BUF and the initial Black Panther visits, perceptions of dangerous Black leadership were centered on Jones. The focus on Jones was due especially to two factors. Firstly, White Canadian’s vehement protection of a White-centric Canadian identity to which Jones was a ‘violent threat’ and secondly, the framing of Jones and his philosophy as anti-Canadian in an attempt to secure moderate Black activism and philosophy across the province and across the nation. While both factors are linked in their intentions and attempts to portray Jones and Nova Scotia’s

¹³⁹ Kitossa, Lawson and Howard, *African Canadian Leadership*, 4.

Black Power movement as foreign and dangerous, the methodology in which these two factors pursue this approach is markedly different.

Despite promoting itself as a ‘Canadian identity,’ the identity promoted and protected throughout the nation in post-war Canada was defined by White-centric focuses that viewed attempts to create other identities as oppositional instead of coexisting. When discussing her BUF calendar,¹⁴⁰ Charlotte Ryan, a BUF supporter, noted that White neighbors, friends, and colleagues opposed the necessity of a Black culture when a “Canadian” culture existed.¹⁴¹ Throughout the existence of BUF there were also numerous attempts by White Canadians to undermine the organization by highlighting the lack of united front organizations for themselves, such as a Dutch United Front,¹⁴² or the creation of a White Inmates Association. For Jones, his influence and connection with Black Power philosophy in the United States was not viewed as cultural connections across the border, but rather as an attempt to attack White Canadian identity and society. In this regard, the rationalization created by White Canadians was that not only that Jones’s Black philosophy was foreign, but that Jones himself must be a dangerous foreign influence as well. Phyllis Blakely, the Nova Scotia Archivist and Order of Canada recipient who was a strong supporter of a White-centric Nova Scotian identity, disliked Jones and Black Power philosophy so greatly that she called for Jones’s removal from the country, stating “those Black Power people down in the States... they’re just like the gangsters down there... [He is a] negro who came here from the States”.¹⁴³ Born in

¹⁴⁰ BUF material such as calendars were utilized as fundraisers, and also for their visibility to promote Black culture and identity.

¹⁴¹ *GRASP*, January 1974, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

¹⁴² *GRASP*, January 1974, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

¹⁴³ Ian McKay, “Race, White Settler Liberalism, and the Nova Scotia Archives, 1931-1976,” *Acadiensis* 49, no. 2 (Autumn 2020): 6.

Truro, Nova Scotia, Jones was every bit as Nova Scotian as Blakely was herself, yet to Blakely the Black Power philosophy and approach utilized by Jones was mentally categorized as being so implicitly foreign and incompatible with her image of Nova Scotian identity both the philosophy and the leader promoting it had to be comprehended as being an outside influence. By framing both Black Power and the Black leader promoting it as alien, Blakely and other like-minded Canadians were able to mentally rationalize state surveillance, active suppression, and vehement opposition. For Jones and the Black Power movement in Nova Scotia, state surveillance was present, known, and observed as Jones noted,

They wrote that I moved around and that I stopped to talk to this particular person, and the writer said he didn't think that there was anything sinister in the conversation but that maybe I was just passing time with somebody I'd met in the airport. That's how in-depth the surveillance was. When we were in Lethbridge they knew where I was staying, where I was speaking, who was there, what time I was leaving, so incredibly detailed and complete. I think the RCMP truly believed that there was the possibility of armed insurrection in Canada, and that threat was coming from the Black community.¹⁴⁴

While RCMP surveillance was more rooted in the state side of framing Jones as anti-Canadian, the rationalization for these actions had to be linked to Jones image in White Nova Scotian society. Part of this rationalization came through the White elites of Nova Scotia attempting to link Jones to existing 'threats' to Nova Scotian society, and to understand Black Power philosophy as something bound in violence.

In all regards, the Canadian state itself was much less concerned with Jones as a threat to Canadian identity, and much more concerned with the influence of Jones's philosophy in Black activism across Nova Scotia and Canada as a whole. Moderate Black activism was viewed as more manageable by the Canadian government, and previous interactions with moderates such as Oliver and the NSAACP fared well enough that

¹⁴⁴ Jones and Walker, *Burnley "Rocky" Jones*, 91.

Jones threatened changing the dynamics by which state authorities interacted with Black activists and Black leaders. To observe Jones's interactions with Black communities and observe his role as a Black leader in Canada, state surveillance was utilized and rationalized to Canadians by framing Jones, Black Power philosophy and Black Panther influences as foreign, anti-Canadian, and therefore requiring constant supervision.

For many White elites, there were attempts to frame and link Jones's actions as communist, anti-government, and violent – all equally 'anti-Canadian' to their Canadian identity.¹⁴⁵ For much of this framing, the focus was not on Jones himself, but more on the Black Panther influences associated with Jones in local media sources. Yet, many of Jones's open discussions on Black activism in Nova Scotia were in fact anti-violent, and much more heavily linked to economic action, as highlighted in his statement at Kwacha House in 1967:

It's about time we have some action, now you take a couple of those stores down there where these kids spend thousands of dollars and I mean thousands of dollars I think it's about time we try to get these kids some jobs, and if they don't give the kids the jobs we get all the kids in here and we say look, not one of you kids is going in there to buy one ounce of chicken and you're not going in there to buy a shirt or a pair of pants unless they start giving you jobs... this is the only way it's going to get done, these guys regard dollars to the till... An economic boycott is a very sensible thing. Now if a guy doesn't give me the service I want, I'm not going back.¹⁴⁶

While Black Power philosophy and second wave Black activism was rooted in a direct and vocal opposition to existing structures, the Black Power philosophy promoted by Jones in Nova Scotia was not violent and physically destructive; rather, it was economically and structurally impactful. Direct state surveillance displays that misunderstanding is most definitely not at play, and the state was keenly aware of Jones's Black Power philosophy being directly tied to economic action and existing economic

¹⁴⁵ McKay, "Race, White Settler Liberalism", 6.

¹⁴⁶ *Encounter at Kwacha House*, directed by Rex Tasker (1967; National Film Board).

inequality. When it came to potentially changing the economic landscape, the state arguably saw this as equally dangerous to the “fabric” of Canadian capitalism.

It is important to note that influences outside of Canada were not exclusively restricted to the Black Power movement, the Black Panthers, Jones. They were tools utilized by moderate Black activists in the province as well. Oliver himself noted, “I think in terms of non-violence; I believe in love. We haven’t reached the point of demonstrations. That’s a strategy that hasn’t even been discussed. Dr. Martin Luther King of course is sort of the ideal for BUF. You see his picture mounting the headquarters of BUF. Dr. Martin Luther King is just as much a Nova Scotian as he is American.”¹⁴⁷ While the focus of American influences was largely placed on Jones connections to create an image of anti-Canadianism, Black philosophy permeating the Canadian-American border seamlessly was both an active reality and an understandable action given the similarities in societal inequality and the growth of Pan-Africanism in the 20th century.

With the establishment of the BUF in 1969 and the securing of federal funds, the federal government became much less concerned with the regulation and control of Black identity in Canadian society. As its agenda was rooted much more specifically in counteracting Jones and the Black Power philosophy, the actual focus on Black identity was much less opposed to the agenda it attempted to support. The same cannot be said about White Nova Scotian elites, who still regarded Black identity and its promotion as dangerous, different, and anti-Canadian. As the promotion of a Black identity was paramount to achieving Black self-determination, the BUF strongly supported events,

¹⁴⁷ Thomson, *Born With a Call*, 129.

programs, and policies that helped create a Black identity in Nova Scotia. Numerous BUF events were hosted to promote Black identity and culture across the province, including a Black Cultural Day,¹⁴⁸ and a Black Cultural Conference,¹⁴⁹ among numerous other provincial and community-based projects including the Black Cultural Expo of 1974. The promotion of Black identity and Black collective culture in Nova Scotia by BUF was key to the success of organized programs in other areas of Nova Scotian Blackness, including economic programs, political organization, and self-determination as a strong sense of collective identity would help strengthen the base of Black activism. As many Black communities across Nova Scotia were geographically distanced from one another, BUF members viewed the promotion of a province-wide Black identity as essential to establishing a provincial political base of Black authority to support community-based issues instead of particular issues being reserved to specific communities. One *GRASP* article noted, “In this province Black people are not all in the same municipality. History decided that and the White people in this province are protected by the system by the fact that we as Black communities are separated so that there is no political power in one area that can demand the changes we need”.¹⁵⁰ To BUF, the changes necessary and required at the community level required a united, provincial level of political support that in turn required a promotion of a provincial identity and provincial Black culture.

Black culture and identity within the BUF were notably separated from what was occurring elsewhere in Canada and the United States once Jones and second wave Black

¹⁴⁸ *GRASP*, November 1971, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

¹⁴⁹ “Black Cultural Conference- 1976,” Accession 2002-066/014, *Black United Front Fonds*, (Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, Nova Scotia).

¹⁵⁰ *GRASP*, July 1972, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

activism was largely removed from the organization in favor of integrational approaches more in line with first wave activism. As one BUF employee noted on their arrival to the organization,

At the BUF office, I thought “I've made a mistake”. From this perspective, it didn't quite look like, the imagery. It didn't mesh with my expectations. From Ontario and the United States, I used to ply parts of the United States as well. In terms of our preferred way of dressing was with the dashiki... Which was almost like a uniform for those of us who were activists in those days. OK, so it was the dashiki, and the hairstyle was distinctive. It was the Afro hair style. And you make it up as big as possible. Sometimes, some of us would go so far as to stick an afro pick... And the greetings, for the greetings you have the power salute. That was the whole thing. So I walked into the BUF, and there were guys in three-piece suits. And not that there's anything wrong with it, but it wasn't, you know, and the atmosphere and the banter and whatnot, it didn't seem right. Okay, so that was my first impression.¹⁵¹

The promotion of Black identity in the global, more Black Power influenced manner was more in line with the activism of Jones than it was for the BUF, which created an amount of alienation for Blackness expressed in ways that did not conform to the approaches taken by the BUF personnel. It is in this aspect that Nova Scotia, and the BUF in particular, are both simultaneously apart of national and transnational Black activism and Black identity while also selectively not at the same time.

In relation to funding cultural and identity driven programming, it is once again apparent that state funding for the BUF was selectively approaching the organization as a welfare-based organization only. As previously discussed, welfare-based projects received financial support from government agencies while other key programming for the direction BUF desired to achieve were unfunded as the government funding was limited to the government view of BUF as merely a welfare-based organization. While the Department of the Secretary of State often provided funding for groups promoting cultural days, BUF was denied funding for their Black Cultural Day in 1971,¹⁵² and

¹⁵¹ Anonymous, Interview with Author, April 19th, 2023.

¹⁵² *GRASP*, November 1971, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

received little government support or officials participation in its Tri-Function Convention in 1972.¹⁵³ This once again demonstrates how state agencies' and authorities' unwillingness to fund and support BUF as anything outside of a welfare-based organization hindered the ability of the organization to promote the direction and objectives it wanted to achieve. The unwillingness to fund BUF as a cultural and identity-driven organization not only hindered BUF's ability to promote a province-wide Black identity and culture but also undermined the ability to support political, self-deterministic, and economic objectives as well.

Despite the hinderances by state officials and offices towards political, self-deterministic, and economic objectives, meaningful activism still played a role with BUF, despite being limited. Elliott Clarke recalled,

I was privy to one encounter where Art Criss called up a bunch of us, and said that we got to go help a black businessman who's being refused a loan by the Royal Bank. So a bunch of us marched down to Barrington Street or to the Royal Bank towers, the main office; we walked in the bank and demanded a meeting with the manager of the bank in Nova Scotia, and we got it. Oh, they couldn't deny this. You got a bunch of black men walking in –you know, arms crossed – looking like we mean business.... The door is open and we have an audience with the head of the Royal Bank. And I don't know if it's for the whole Atlantic region or just Nova Scotia. But I can tell you that by the time that meeting was over, he was on the phone calling the local branch and saying "you're going to give Mr. so and so the loan that he's requesting, right?"¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ *GRASP*, July 1972, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

¹⁵⁴ George Elliott Clarke, Interview with Author, April 12th, 2023.

While state agencies, officials, and systems undermined the ability of BUF to operate as a socially reforming organization, instances of activism and resistance to systematic racism were still occurring in whatever manners BUF could feasibly achieve.

While neither the provincial nor the federal government openly opposed Black identity in Nova Scotia through the BUF, many White Nova Scotians attacked Black identity creation and support across the province. Not only did they question the necessity for a Black identity when a Canadian identity existed (showing little knowledge of ingrained anti-Blackness present in Canadian identity), but they also they opposed an organization for Black identity and attempted to frame the organization as ‘non-inclusive’ and ‘reverse-racism’. A prime exemplification of this behavior from White Nova-Scotians is apparent in the response at the Dorchester penitentiary to the establishment of the Black Inmates Association (BIA). Established with the help of BUF, the Dorchester BIA aimed to promote Black identity, education and programming to Black inmates while also highlighting racial discrimination faced by Black inmates and create spaces for racial inequality in prison to be addressed. The BIA highlighted targeted attacks on Black inmates which often resulted in Black inmates receiving harsher punishments from penitentiary officials than White inmates. In 1973, the BIA noted that its attempts to incorporate with other prison groups were thwarted, and they were “denied an opportunity for a common forum, hostilities and jealousies have developed and counter organizations have been set up—such as the White United Front—in opposition to the Black Inmates Association”.¹⁵⁵ In the actions of White inmates at the Dorchester Penitentiary, not only is a singular, prison-based issue observed, but an overall issue with

¹⁵⁵ *GRASP*, January 1973, Black United Front Fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS.

White responses to Black organizations promoting Blackness and addressing systematic racist issues through collective organization. There is a lack of understanding by White Canadians on Blackness and Black activism in Canada, which coalesces in a perceived “inequality” and “unfairness” as there is an inability and/or unwillingness to observe their own privilege in relation to Black organizations such as BUF and the role they play.

The American discussion on affirmative action is often viewed as nationally contained, but an analysis of White-American responses to affirmative action sheds an immense amount of insight on the situation occurring both presently and historically in Canada.

In terms of individual feelings about affirmative action, many whites and men come to perceive the prospect of actual equality as a disadvantage because they are so accustomed to having privilege that their privileged position feels normal. Because advantaged group members fail to acknowledge the privileges they receive based on their group membership, those who are experiencing a loss of or perceived loss of privilege may view their changing fortunes as discrimination. Men and whites, then, might employ discrimination explanations strategically as a means of improving how they feel about the negative outcomes they do experience, or expect that they might experience in the future. Attributing perceived or infrequently encountered negative events to discrimination may reflect attempts to protect self-esteem and to eliminate self-blame.¹⁵⁶

In the post-war Canadian context in which the BUF operated, White Nova Scotians operated with the mindset that Canadian identity and the opportunity in Nova Scotia was equal to all and merely required a certain level of “effort”, meaning their position of privilege felt so normal that they viewed BUF and its efforts as a disadvantage to themselves. Unable to view their own position of privilege, White Canadians such as those in the Dorchester penitentiary viewed their loss of privileges (in this case prison privileges) as a form of discrimination against them, and unwilling to address their own

¹⁵⁶ Kristin J. Anderson, *Benign Bigotry: The Psychology of Subtle Prejudice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 319.

issues and position of privilege they create their own organizations and actions to wrongfully frame their position of privilege as a position of loss.

The situation in Canada was compounded by the fact that many White Canadians viewed the treatment of Black Canadians as lesser than American Black individuals. The position of privilege of White Canadians was viewed as non-existent and even downplayed by arguing and discussing the racial inequality south of the border. One article argued “Canadian Negroes...have not been subjected to the waves of poison that flow from the pens of white racists in the U.S. Black men in this country have faced discrimination, and still do, but they have never faced the overwhelming degradation that is the lot of most American Negroes.”¹⁵⁷ While there were attempts present to confirm racial inequality present in Canada, the position of the White man in Canada and the presence of White privilege and racial discrimination in Canada was downplayed by pointing to the issues prevalent in the United States as worse. Not only did this create a sense of more equal opportunity that was not present, but it also created a position in which White Canadians could deflect blame and their own position of privilege.

¹⁵⁷ Robert McConnell, “Hate Literature Comes in Many Colors: We Could Face Racial Violence in Five Years,” *The Province* (Vancouver), May 1969.

Chapter Six - Conclusion

How do historians and modern social activists discuss and approach the BUF? A duality exists with the legacy of the organization that is echoed in the sentiments of George Elliott Clarke who argued,

The BUF was born of two contradictory ambitions: 1) the communal need to confront white racism aggressively and campaign for black equality and 2) the governmental desire to blunt black radicalism and revolutionary energy by turning 'activists' into social workers. These conflicting aims and mandates led to decades of strife between BUF administrators and members, and between the organization and community interests and non co-opted activists.... [Yet] The group served an important 'change' agenda, almost despite itself...no responsible account of black political insurgency during this period can be undertaken without detailed reference to its history.¹⁵⁸

The pivotal moment of receiving state funding continues to be a major historical rift affecting the legacy of the BUF. The story of government control impedes BUF from being historically framed as an entirely socially reforming organization as the state funding heavily limited the ability of the organization to challenge the status-quo and conflict with state apparatuses. The limited abilities of the BUF in relation to second-wave activist actions and Black Power philosophy leads to a view in which the BUF in its entirety is viewed as an organizational failure, but this narrowed view of BUF fails to fully encompass the legacy of BUF's actions, staff, and conflicts.

The existing historiography on waves of Black activism provides a basis for the creation of the BUF but requires further discussion pertaining to both of these waves existing in tandem. The BUF was able to receive federal funding in large part due to the institutionalized negative reaction to second wave Black activism's confrontational nature, yet, the BUF's history is neither first nor second wave, instead it is arguably an

¹⁵⁸ Patti Ryan and George Elliott Clarke, "Black United Front of Nova Scotia Records come to York University Libraries," *Library News* (Toronto), 2013.

amalgamation of the two. The first wave elements of the BUF were what helped secure funding and maintain government support for the organization, whereas the necessary second wave elements were key in the BUF's ability to address institutionalized anti-Blackness within the province. Where the historiography requires further attention and evolution is within the influence and use of both waves after their respective emergences, and how both waves factored into evolving Black activism across the province and the nation.

Despite the numerous oppositions from state agencies and media outlets, BUF supported a variety of programs and activities that focused specifically on the growth of Black identity, economy, justice, communities, and culture in Nova Scotia with an agenda of Black self-determination which would not have occurred otherwise without their organizational efforts. When BUF is historically regarded for its organizational successes instead of its forced direction from government apparatuses, it is apparent to see that BUF had an immensely important role in supporting Black identity and culture in Nova Scotia. Overcoming societal identity suppression in Black communities across Nova Scotia was a major component to postwar Canadian Black activism. Jones noted his own mentality towards Black identity in Canadian society when he visited the dentist in the early 1960s,

He comes in and says, "I'm Dr. Best." And he is Black! I think to myself, "Hold it, I've never seen a Black dentist before." He said, "Well let me look, and we'll see what the problem is." I said to him, "Yeah you take a look and let me know as I'll have to make a decision as to what I'm going to do." I knew right away I was not letting this man do anything to me. He was not putting a needle close to me, period. If he is saying it had to come out, I'd say, well, I'll be back. No matter what it is, I'll be back. Because this is the first time I've ever seen a Black dentist. I didn't have faith that a Black man knew how to be a dentist. I'd never seen it, I'd never heard of it... That is what my life in Nova Scotia had done to me. And that to me is where I was at that point. In that sense the "he" is "me". I'm looking at him and seeing myself. I am seeing myself and saying,

“You are inherently inferior because of your skin colour, and your skin colour is me, then I am inherently inferior.”¹⁵⁹

The White-centric and anti-Black aspects of Nova Scotia’s state, identity, culture and society fueled a sentiment in which Blackness and Black identity was inherently inferior to Whiteness that affected every aspect of Blackness and Black self-determination in the province. The postwar wave of Black philosophy and Black activism in Nova Scotia, in which the BUF played a pivotal role, was key in promoting Blackness and Black identity as a point of celebration and strength for Black Nova Scotians instead of systematically oppressive state apparatuses that placed Blackness as inferior to Whiteness across the province. A promotion of Black identity and the celebration of Black self-determination against ingrained White-centric Nova Scotian systems increased Black historical education, Black business development, equal justice for Black Nova Scotians, equal employment opportunities, and a multitude of other BUF initiatives that were key in creating proud Black culture and identity across Nova Scotia.

Where BUF was largely successful was in its ability to provide Black Nova Scotians with an avenue to pursue impactful government positions while maintaining activism. Elliott Clarke notes,

it basically trained a whole generation of activists on how to actually work within the system, whether we liked it or not, because that’s eventually what you had to do if you worked for the Black United Front, you were working inside the system. You were in the belly of the beast. You were inside Babylon –for crying out loud –And you had to cut yourself to mold, to go along and get along, while at the same time trying to push the organization through the Council to do more progressive things.¹⁶⁰

BUF trained its employees to operate in a manner that pushed an activist agenda within government systems that opposed any form of change. Employees became skilled at

¹⁵⁹ Jones and Walker, *Burnley “Rocky” Jones*, 140-141.

¹⁶⁰ George Elliott Clarke, Interview with Author, April 12th, 2023.

functioning successfully within these institutions while being able to slowly pursue active organizational changes.

While the BUF was in a difficult situation considering their funding situation, the promotion of Black philosophy and Black self-determination done by the organization highlighted the aspects of the Nova Scotian state and state apparatuses that were rooted in anti-Blackness and White-centric systems to Black Nova Scotians. The increase in Black philosophy and Black identity through BUF raised awareness on the systematic issues within Canadian governance and Canadian institutions which increased Black activist knowledge and public knowledge on anti-Black racism in Canada, forcing the Canadian government and institutions towards actions of self-inspection and change.

The BUF also displayed key elements about the complexity and potential contradiction of accepting state funding as a socially reforming organization. While state funding drastically increased the monetary capabilities of BUF in one capacity, it limited the social reform actions of the organization by creating an element of direct state guise. While free and active social reform is a vital aspect of any activist organization, to regard BUF and dismiss the possibility of state funding in any capacity misses the sections of state funding that were key. It is more accurate to regard BUF's history with state funding as not a blanket statement 'no-go', but instead a cautious agreement by which frequency of funding and funding inputs are vital. The issue with the BUF's funding was not state funding itself, but more specifically that the provincial government funded BUF on an unstable yearly grant system that implicitly gave the government authorities had major input on BUF's funding direction, objectives, and activities. Socially reforming organizations are potentially able to achieve a great level of success with state funding

under the right circumstances, and the historical perspective on BUF's state funding should highlight the importance of state funding properties to be able to operate at a fully socially reforming capacity. Modern Black activism can also be impacted by the unequal expectation by both the provincial state and state apparatuses for BUF to constantly represent Black consensus. While total consensus (especially in regard to social activist philosophy) is not expected from other organizations and structures, Black consensus was constantly expected from the BUF as outside input on the organization attempted to paint any philosophical divisions as organizational rifts. To return to Coulthard's "Subjects of Empire" and Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, while both the provincial and federal state promoted a recognition of BUF through financial grants, neither government truly recognized BUF. This led to a state failure in accurately supporting Black activism in Nova Scotia. For BUF, meaningful recognition from Canadian governments required the acknowledgement of Blackness as equal, societal changes being necessary, and BUF functioning as a social, cultural, and economic institution. Where the BUF succeeded as a socially reforming organization was when BUF was able to seek meaningful recognition through interactions with Black Nova Scotian communities, but state interference over time demanded state recognition from BUF, which reduced BUF's primary recognition through Black Nova Scotian communities. By shifting BUF's area of recognition from Black communities to state authorities the successes of BUF were promoted as state successes, but state failures were propagated as BUF failures. While the state funded BUF, the state attempted control of BUF displayed a lack of recognition for the BUF that ultimately opposed the underlying objectives and goals for the organization.

While there were undeniable and malign state influences on the direction of the BUF at certain organizational periods, nevertheless the BUF was a source of Black Power in Nova Scotia that should be historically regarded and treated as such. A publication from *Ebony* magazine in 1972 characterized Black Power as follows:

A black man or a black woman coping with an impossible situation by rearing children and creating a strong black family life is black power. A teacher stretching the minds of children and expanding their horizons is black power. A student getting his head and soul together is black power. An institution, guided and controlled by blacks within the perspective of the strengthening of the total black community, is black power. A child saved is black power. Something put away for an emergency, something given in love to support a black institution, something ventured, something wagered in defense of black manhood and black womanhood: these things, all of them, are the foundation of power, and they are all within your realm of responsibility.¹⁶¹

The BUF was a source of Nova Scotian Black Power, as the history of the organization should recognize. The organization overcame anti-Blackness across the province to gain state funding and promote a multitude of activities and actions that opposed White-centric Nova Scotian structures and laid a key framework for postwar Nova Scotia to respect Black identity, Black self-determination, and Black Power. The organization's history is a source of structure for modern Black activist movements across Canada, while also displaying a strong front by which Black Nova Scotian communities actively opposed anti-Black Nova Scotian institutions and systems. To dismiss the history of the organization on the grounds of state interference fails to place enough historical emphasis on the negative aspects of the postwar Canadian state and Nova Scotian provincial state, while also failing to recognize and promote the numerous positive actions of the BUF which is instead a source of historical Black Power in Nova Scotia, and nationally across Canada.

¹⁶¹ Basil O. Phillips, "What You Can do Now," *Ebony* 27, no. 7 (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Co, May 1972): 96.

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