



Dalhousie University and University of King's College to host first international Universities Studying Slavery Conference in Canada

Tuesday, July 13, 2021 (HALIFAX, N.S.) - Together, and in partnership with the Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia, Dalhousie University and the University of King's College will host the [Universities Studying Slavery \(USS\)](#) conference in the fall of 2023 in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The conference will open on Wednesday, October 18, 2023 and conclude on Saturday, October 21, 2023. Originally scheduled for this year (2021), the conference was moved from its original date due to the uncertainty and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a major international conference on slavery's role in higher education and its legacies, which include the international movement for reparations and redress, this will be the first USS conference held outside of the United States. It will also be the first USS conference to foreground the history of slavery in Nova Scotia and Canada, and the experience of African Nova Scotians particularly. In anticipation of the conference, Dalhousie and King's will be hosting a one-day virtual pre-conference in October of this year on reparations and education, with a focus on universities. Details of that event are to follow.

Based out of the University of Virginia and comprising more than 60 universities, USS is dedicated to organizing multi-institutional collaboration on research into historical and contemporary issues dealing with race and inequality in higher education and university communities. Dalhousie was the first Canadian university to join this groundbreaking organization, followed shortly thereafter by King's. In recent years both institutions have undertaken scholarly inquiries to examine their connections, direct and indirect, to slavery in the 18th and 19th centuries. In 2019, led by Dr. Afua Cooper, Dalhousie University published its [Report on Lord Dalhousie's History on Slavery and Race](#), and in 2020, King's released the papers written for [King's & Slavery: A Scholarly Inquiry](#). Both studies documented Dalhousie and King's multiple connections with slavery and their financial dependence on the wealth created by enslaved Black people.

Further to these efforts, as joint hosts of the 2023 conference, Dalhousie and King's affirm their commitment to the work advanced by the USS, and their respective commitments to address Anti-Black racism and advance Black inclusion and achievement. The conference will focus attention on the multiple ways in which Anti-Black discrimination in and beyond universities is

rooted in historical enslavement and the perpetuation of the racist ideologies that fuelled it, while also examining the multi-generational harms and disadvantages that are its legacy. Furthermore, the conference will focus on the perseverance, contributions and triumphs of Black people and communities, in Canada, Nova Scotia and around the “Black Atlantic” world. There will be a parallel focus on the urgent calls in response to Black Lives Matter for universities to redress Anti-Black racism, foster Black inclusion and enable Black flourishing, and the work universities have undertaken in response to those calls.

“While the history of slavery has been in our curriculum, the Black Lives Movement has brought a certain urgency for us to address the lingering impact of the Atlantic triangular slave trade on people of African descent,” says Dr. Isaac Saney, chair of the organizing committee for the conference and director of the Transition Year Program at Dalhousie, whose research focuses on Cuban Affairs and African Studies. “This conference is designed to create a space for earnest and respectful conversations on this global issue and to specifically reflect on Canada and Nova Scotia’s presence in the triangle.”

“In these times of heightened awareness of race-based issues around the world, delving deeper and exploring slavery and its effects on society, economics and the racialized trauma that exists today will go a long way to developing a greater understanding of Black culture,” says Russell Grosse, Executive Director of the Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia. “Black people have made a significant contribution to the building of Canadian society and Nova Scotia’s Black community certainly has a long and lasting legacy of overcoming adversity to make society better.”

Community participation in the Conference will be one of its major features. Dalhousie, King’s and the Black Cultural Centre will be seeking input from Black communities and institutions from across Nova Scotia to ensure that the conference reflects the history, experience and future of its host location.

More information on the conference will be shared at a later date.

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About Dalhousie University

Dalhousie University is Atlantic Canada’s leading research-intensive university, a key driver of the region’s intellectual, social and economic development for over 200 years. Located in the heart of Halifax—in the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi’kmaq—with an Agricultural Campus in Truro/Bible Hill, Dalhousie is a truly national and international university, with more than half of our 20,000 students coming from outside of the province. Our 6,000 faculty and staff foster a diverse, purpose-driven community, one that spans 13 faculties and conducts more than \$194 million in sponsored research annually.

About the University of King’s College

Established in 1789, King's College is Canada's oldest chartered university. A small and extraordinarily lively academic community located in Halifax, Nova Scotia, King's is known nationally and internationally for its highly acclaimed interdisciplinary programs in the humanities and journalism, including its renowned Foundation Year Program.

About The Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia

The Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia, established in 1983 as a provincial museum and community gathering place with a mandate to Protect, Preserve and Promote the rich history of one of Canada's founding cultures. People of African descent have called Nova Scotia home since the 16th century and have made a significant impact as the birthplace of Black Culture and Heritage in Canada. The Centre features exhibit and artifact collection that shares this little known history, through programs, displays and outreach, both provincially and nationally.

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