

## MARKED BY EXILE: TRAUMA AND THE GRAND DÉRANGEMENT

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### Abstract

This essay explores the possibilities and pitfalls of viewing the *grand dérangement* through the lens of the emerging field of trauma studies. Drawing on insights from disciplines as diverse as psychology, social work, biology, and neuroscience, trauma studies has been applied to history only haltingly, and most often in relation to modern events for which first-person accounts are plentiful—the Holocaust, for example. Although early modern people such as eighteenth-century Acadians endured violence and displacement, the limited number and nature of sources that reflect personal experiences makes the application of trauma studies precarious. Recent scholarship on contemporary refugee crises, however, suggests the potential relevance of trauma studies for understanding the impact of the *grand dérangement* on the Acadian exiles who endured it. With special attention to the influence of divergent “ecologies of displacement” on the *grand dérangement*’s victims, this essay argues that when carefully delimited, trauma studies can yield a richer portrait of the Acadian diaspora’s impact on an individual scale.

### Résumé

Cette étude explore les possibilités et les risques que comporte la perception du Grand dérangement dans l’optique du domaine émergent des études de traumatismes. S’appuyant sur les connaissances des disciplines aussi diverses que la psychologie, le travail social, la biologie et la neuroscience, les études de traumatismes dans l’histoire n’ont pourtant été mises de l’avant que de façon intermittente. De plus, ces études se rapportent surtout aux situations récentes pour lesquelles des témoignages personnels sont nombreux, tels que ceux portant sur l’Holocauste. Bien que les peuples contemporains tels que les Acadiens du dix-huitième siècle aient subi des actes de violence et des déplacements, le caractère et le nombre restreint des sources d’expériences personnelles rendent précaire la mise en œuvre des études sur les traumatismes. Toutefois, l’érudition récente sur la situation critique actuelle des réfugiés suggère la pertinence d’étudier les traumatismes afin de mieux comprendre l’incidence troublante du Grand dérangement sur les Acadiens exilés qui l’ont subi. La présente étude prête une attention toute particulière à l’influence des diverses ‘écologies des déplacements’ sur les victimes du Grand dérangement, de sorte à soutenir une étude délimitée des traumatismes et esquisser un portrait plus précis de l’expérience percutante de la diaspora acadienne sur l’individu.

Of all the points of entry into the history of the Acadian diaspora, Joseph Godin *dit* Bellefontaine’s autobiographical *mémoire* ranks among the most chilling. On January 5, 1774, the seventy-six-year-old Godin recounted his life’s story to a scribe in the French port of Cherbourg, where he had lived in exile for over a decade. Born and raised in the tiny Acadian settlement of Pointe Sainte-Anne, Godin had served France’s interests well as a young man, engaging in trade and diplomacy with the kingdom’s indigenous allies while leading the parish militia against its opponents. The Seven Years’

War, however, changed everything. In February 1759, more than three years after the initial Anglo-American assault on the Acadians of the Bay of Fundy, a party of New England rangers sacked his village. After capturing Joseph and his son Michel, the rangers tied the two men to trees and demanded they swear allegiance to George II. Like good Frenchmen, they refused. Enraged, the New Englanders “massacred” Godin’s daughter Nastasie, beat two of his other children and one grandchild to death with rifle butts, and split the skull of Michel’s wife with an axe. Kept alive because the rangers hoped to trade them for Anglo-American prisoners, Joseph and Michel were eventually reunited with kin who had fled into Pointe Sainte-Anne’s woods. Shuttled to Annapolis Royal, Halifax, Boston, England, and eventually Cherbourg, the Godin family had endured more than its share of tragedy by 1774, when the aging Joseph told his story in an effort to convince Louis XV to augment the pension that kept him and his wife fed, clothed, and lodged.

Surveying the grand *dérangement*, stories such as this are everywhere. What to do with them? My own scholarship has focused primarily on the ways in which the Acadian diaspora allows us to better understand the wider Atlantic world in which exiles lived and circulated in the years after 1755. Joseph Godin’s narrative hints at some surprising aspects of that world. In 1774, Godin and his wife lamented that their age and failing health had “forced them to give up the advantages that will result from a settlement as favourable as that which has been offered to the other Acadians” who remained capable of “cultivating the earth.” The couple had indeed missed out. By early 1774, recruiters had made offers to hundreds of Acadians across France, keen on luring them to pre-planned agricultural villages in the province of Poitou. Inspired by the school of economics known as physiocracy, new agricultural methods, and Enlightenment critiques of overseas conquest, this bizarre colony implicated Acadians not only in an expanding Atlantic market for labour, but in the recalibration of imperial politics that led directly to the age of revolutions. Following Acadians into the Atlantic world illuminates that world’s contours like nothing else.<sup>1</sup>

While I stand by my work and what it reveals, I confess to lingering guilt at having, well, *used* eighteenth-century Acadians—not viciously, like the Anglo-Americans who hunted them out of Nova Scotia, or the French and Spanish officials who later dispatched them as cut-rate labour with which to build new settlements, but as intellectual tools with which to build new interpretations. Although Acadian suffering frames the story I’ve told, that story’s payoff has little to do with the impact of suffering on Acadians. Perhaps, however, there is a way, albeit a necessarily multidisciplinary, provisional, and even speculative one, to deploy evidence such as Joseph Godin’s *mémoire* in the service of a humane understanding of the grand *dérangement*. One route to such an understanding may run through the still-developing study of trauma. The danger, of course, is that an emphasis on Acadian misery will generate little more than moral arguments masquerading as historical ones. If, however, we are to better understand what the grand *dérangement* did to its victims, and how their experiences echo in our own day, braving a little danger is probably warranted.

Godin’s *mémoire* does place the fate of Pointe Sainte-Anne within a larger narrative that encompasses colonial, imperial, Atlantic, and ultimately global concerns. Led by Moses Hazen, the New England rangers’ attack grew out of the decades-old conflict between Great Britain and France, and of disputes over sovereignty and borders associated with the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht, which had turned the French colony of Acadie into the British province of Nova Scotia. In 1755, fuelled by anti-Catholicism and land-hunger, a group of officials in Halifax, Boston, and London devised and implemented a plan to round up and deport as many of Nova Scotia’s fifteen thousand Acadian colonists as they could. That fall, an Anglo-American military force captured some seven thousand Acadian men, women, and

children, placed them aboard converted slave ships, and dispatched them to ports from Georgia to Massachusetts. Before hostilities in North America ended in 1760, military operations from Île Saint-Jean to the Restigouche River emptied the Maritimes of Acadians almost completely.

This was not the first time that Acadians had been displaced against their will. As the dispute over the exact location of the border between British Nova Scotia and New France heated up in the late 1740s, agents of Louis XV, notably the much-feared priest Jean-Louis le Loutre, engineered a campaign of persuasion, intimidation, and ultimately arson designed to drive Acadians west across the Missaguash River, where new dykeland farms might support Fort Beauséjour. What Anglo-Americans did to them during the Seven Years' War, however, dwarfed these earlier forced migrations in scale and brutality. At the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1763, several thousand Acadian refugees remained in and around the port cities of British North America; upwards of three thousand more, most of them victims of secondary expulsions in the years after 1755, lived in squalor in English, Cornish, and French coastal towns. Some who had evaded capture in the Maritimes turned up in Quebec and Montreal, while hundreds of Acadians haunted makeshift settlements in what is now eastern New Brunswick. The conduct of the Seven Years' War and the new realities of the peace, however, ensured that the Acadian diaspora would widen and accelerate.<sup>2</sup>

Although victory had come at a steep cost in money and lives, Great Britain emerged from the Seven Years' War in possession of perhaps the greatest, most far-flung empire the world had ever known. British gains came at the expense of French losses. In a turn of events that made the Bourbon king prone to crying jags at court, Louis XV lost New France, mainland Sénégal, the Mediterranean island of Minorca, and territory in India to his kingdom's most hated rival, ceding Louisiana to his Spanish allies in a separate agreement. France did retain the sugar-producing colony of Saint-Domingue while recovering the islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe, both of which had been occupied by the British during the war—a win for French negotiators, to be sure, but one that came with its own concerns. In 1759 on Guadeloupe and 1762 on Martinique, planters had capitulated to British forces too quickly for Versailles's liking. Critics such as the Abbé Raynal blasted Caribbean slave owners for favouring their fortunes over patriotic duties, and imperial officials regarded them with suspicion as they re-entered the fold after 1763.

No less than their masters, slaves came in for renewed scrutiny at war's end. In 1757 and 1758, officials in Saint-Domingue had scrambled to halt what appeared to be an organized campaign of poisonings that killed thousands of cattle, dozens of slaves, and a few whites. The gruesome execution of Makandal, a runaway slave who supposedly led a network of poisoners, brought an end to the immediate crisis, but French observers worried that “these epidemic crimes [had] so corrupted the hearts of the slaves that...in vain do we tell ourselves that they will die out on their own.”<sup>3</sup> In addition to threatening the internal security of France's colonies, slaves also invited invasion from the outside. The prospect of claiming human property, wrote one official in 1759 from his post in the struggling South American colony of Cayenne, offered “an object too attractive to hope for any mercy” from France's rivals.<sup>4</sup> There is little doubt that only the most radical and marginal figures in post-Seven Years' War France considered doing without slaves or the profits they generated for the kingdom. And yet after 1763 it had become clear that the imperatives of slavery and the demands of French subjecthood were, on some level, at odds.<sup>5</sup>

As Acadian refugees stepped into an uncertain postwar future, then, the French Atlantic was primed to value people precisely like them—free, white, and clearly loyal subjects whose presence

might offset that of troublesome Caribbean planters and their slaves. The 1760s are remembered for many things: in the Anglo-American world, the imperial crisis that would become the American Revolution, and in France as a moment of Enlightenment-inspired reflection and abortive reform. The decade was, however, also characterized by a flurry of imperial projects designed to solve the problems and leverage the opportunities created by the great reshuffling that accompanied the Treaty of Paris. Even as Great Britain attempted to raise revenue and assert sovereignty over British North America via tax measures, it also approved a bizarre scheme that recruited hundreds of Greeks, Minorcans, and Corsicans to settle New Smyrna in newly British East Florida.<sup>6</sup> On the French side, some proposals did feature slaves. In 1764, for instance, Pierre-François-Guillaume Poncet de la Grave, the postwar governor of Gorée Island, a forty-five-acre island off the coast of modern Dakar that remained French even as the rest of Sénégal became British, offered up a plan to renew Louis XV's dominance in West Africa. It involved using enslaved sailors to seize trade along Senegambian rivers, founding sugar plantations on Île de Boulam off the coast of what is now Guinea-Bissau, and marching an army of African soldiers inland to claim the rich gold fields of Bambouc, resulting in a colony "as rich as Brazil" in just a few years.<sup>7</sup>

The king's ministers turned Poncet down, but looked favourably on similarly ambitious ideas anchored by white colonists. In 1763, for example, Versailles approved the most dramatic of these imperial experiments: the attempt to create an agricultural colony on French Guiana's Kourou River populated by fifteen thousand free white migrants. The next year, roughly that number of would-be settlers, including German Catholics, impoverished French subjects, and hundreds of Acadian refugees headed west in a great convoy—still the largest one-shot Atlantic migration in early modern history—only to find a fledgling colony ill-prepared to receive them. Within another year, as many as ten thousand of those migrants had perished of disease, malnutrition, or exposure, leaving the survivors to straggle back to France, or to nearby Cayenne. Although Kourou became a byword during the 1760s and 1770s, deployed by critics to denote the incompetence and cruelty of the ancien régime, imperial experiments much like it flourished across the French Atlantic. There is no better way to shed light on them than to follow the Acadians so often forced to become their shock troops.

Take Jean-Jacques Cyr and his wife Marie Hébert. Once tavern-keepers at Pont à Buot, not far from the present-day border between Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, the Cyrs and their eight children fled to Île Saint-Jean to escape marauding Anglo-Americans on the Bay of Fundy in late 1755. Three years later, they were captured on the island and shipped to the Breton seaport of Saint-Malo, where they subsisted on charity and government assistance until November of 1763. With winter closing in, the Cyrs boarded one of two specially outfitted ships, the *Aigle* and the *Sphinx*, and set out to begin the southernmost European settlement on Earth.

Their destination was the Falkland Islands, identified by the expedition's leader, naval officer and classical scholar Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, as the key to "giving to [France] in the Southern Hemisphere what she no longer possesses in the northern."<sup>8</sup> Bougainville held that *terra australis incognita*, a heavily populated and as-yet-undiscovered continent, stretched from the South Pole toward the equatorial Pacific. Along with a group of Acadian families—among them Augustin Benoit, his wife, Françoise Thériot, and their two year-old son, Nicolas-Jean Sébastien—and single men such as François Henry, Paul Babin, and Félix Breau, the Cyrs constructed a no-frills village at Accaron Bay in East Falkland early in 1764. Bougainville hoped to use it as a base for his exploration of the South Pacific, but dynastic politics prevented him from doing so. In a concession to their closest ally, the French abandoned the Falklands to the Spanish in 1767. Although he never discovered *terra australis incognita*,

Bougainville did become a celebrity thanks to his encounter with the Tahitians; the Cyrs and many of their children, some with spouses and children of their own, held out until 1772, when they appear to have returned to Saint-Malo.<sup>9</sup>

Like the Cyrs, Alain Daigre's grand dérangement saw him caught up in an ambitious imperial project. In 1766, a decade after his expulsion from the Bay of Fundy, Daigre found himself in a tropical forest near Môle Saint-Nicolas, Bombardopolis, and Jean-Rabel, a triad of settlements just then under construction in the French colony of Saint-Domingue, now the modern nation of Haiti. Saint-Domingue was populated mainly by African slaves—perhaps 250,000 of them in the mid-1760s, possessed and driven to work on sugar, coffee, and indigo plantations via tortures spectacular and banal by some of the colony's twenty thousand whites and twenty thousand free people of African or mixed-race ancestry. Daigre and several hundred Acadians, however, had been plucked from exile in British North America by Saint-Domingue's governor to help build an oasis of free, white labour in the midst of this profitable yet unstable slave society. Daigre and his fellow exiles reached Môle Saint-Nicolas in 1764 and began work on a dual-purpose naval base and agricultural colony intended to both protect and surveil Saint-Domingue's potentially disloyal planters and slaves. The experiment failed. Acadians died in droves, prompting survivors to abandon Saint-Domingue for Spanish Louisiana. A surprising number, however, stayed in the Caribbean. For his part, Alain Daigre became a part of the slave society the Acadians had been recruited to temper. He led twenty-five or so government-owned slaves, including Mabilia, Timothée, and Coffy, who cut timber; enslaved women such as Soco, Biry, and Guanbary hauled water, while the child Henry beat time on a tambourine.<sup>10</sup> The records are silent as to the hardships Daigre endured, and as to those he inflicted on his charges.<sup>11</sup>

By his lights, Augustin Doucet knew the hardships of the grand dérangement all too well. Like the Cyr family, Doucet had vegetated in the port of Saint-Malo since the late 1750s. By the early 1770s, he had seen imperial plans come and go; the Cyrs had been to the Falklands and back, while veterans of the doomed Kourou colony haunted the town as well. All of which made what Doucet saw on July 29, 1773, so tantalizing: thousands upon thousands of acres of farmland in the French province of Poitou, all of it blessed with "six or seven thumbs of topsoil, dewy and light" and reserved exclusively for Acadian refugees just like him—but not like Joseph Godin *dit* Bellefontaine, whose most productive days were clearly behind him.<sup>12</sup> Inspired by a vogue for scientific farming and the tenets of the agrarian-leaning school of political economy known as physiocracy, an ambitious nobleman named the marquis de Pérusse had talked the monarchy into funding what amounted to an internal colony on his vacant lands. Work on the model villages (one named for Marie-Antoinette, ominously) had already begun when Doucet toured Pérusse's project. Along with some fourteen hundred Acadians from across France, he and his family signed on, arriving in Poitou later that fall.

While its boosters believed Pérusse's experiment to be truly revolutionary—capable of "conquer[ing] new countries without making any victims," thus enriching the state through agriculture while meeting the moral challenge of the Enlightenment—it fell apart in less than two years.<sup>13</sup> Wracked by factional violence and abandoned by a budget-slashing administration at Versailles, most of the Acadian colonists fled back to the seaports by late 1775, driven to leave by a cadre of leaders eager to migrate en masse to Spanish Louisiana. That left Doucet and a few hangers-on to work Pérusse's fields. In the summer of 1776, with his crops failing, Doucet begged Louis XVI for a renewal of his protective "graces" toward the Acadians' Poitou colony, a cry of dependence that stood in stark contrast to simultaneous events on the other side of the Atlantic.<sup>14</sup>

The stories of the Cyr family, Alain Daigre, and Augustin Doucet reveal the ways in which ancien régime France, far from turning toward domestic concerns in the wake of its humiliating defeat in the Seven Years' War, unleashed a torrent of proposals to revitalize and re-envision empire. Acadian refugees were not simply made to participate in these ventures; they inspired and shaped them. As "vassals to be desired" for projects that required loyal, mobile, hardy, and (crucially) white populations, Acadians allowed the Bougainvilles and Pérusses of the kingdom to imagine new colonial forms better suited to a world in flux.<sup>15</sup> Those projects in turn changed the way Acadians understood themselves. While there can be no doubt that the reunification of families was a key concern, it is also the case that the marketplace for Atlantic labour imposed its own demands on refugees and their communities. Acadians stuck together (or, in the case of the Poitou colony, came apart) along lines traced by their perceived value to desperate empires in an age of rapid change.

What this narrative of imperial innovation and labour markets cannot capture, however, is the impact of so much displacement, disillusionment, loss, and pain on Acadians themselves. At the scale of oceans and empires, the grand dérangement's effects can be observed and measured. Is there a recoverable internal history of the Acadian diaspora to match? Recent events have brought such questions to the fore. In 2005, for example, Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast of the United States, killing some two thousand people and driving over one million refugees from southern Louisiana and Mississippi to relatively nearby cities such as Baton Rouge, Houston, and Little Rock, as well as far-flung destinations including Vermont, Alaska, and Arizona. In terms of sheer numbers, Katrina triggered the largest single migration in North American history—it was as if the entire Dust Bowl exodus or the migrations associated with the American Civil War had occurred in a fortnight.

Katrina may well represent the dawn of an age of climate refugees, but in the years since its landfall, most such crises have come about the old-fashioned way: through violence. In 2018, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that the number of displaced people worldwide has risen to an all-time high of almost 70 million. Nearly 25 million of these unwilling migrants are classified as refugees, meaning that they have been forced to abandon their home countries. This category includes 5.4 million Syrians in flight from civil war, some 700,000 Rohingya Muslims driven from Myanmar in a Buddhist-led pogrom, over 3.6 million citizens expelled from the famine- and war-torn states of central Africa, and victims of similar events from the shores of the Mediterranean to Yemen to the Venezuela-Brazil borderlands.<sup>16</sup> No analogy is perfect, but the contemporary world offers no shortage of cases approximating the grand dérangement as well as anything can.

Perhaps the most promising pathway into the connections between the refugee crises of the present and the Acadian past runs through a multidisciplinary body of scholarship known as trauma studies. The term "trauma" has its own history. Originally little more than a synonym for "wound," trauma gained expanded currency beginning in the 1860s as a means of describing the emotional and psychological after-effects of what was then a quintessentially modern experience: the train wreck. Later in the nineteenth century, trauma became mired in the muddy ground of Freudian psychoanalysis, with its insistence on "infantile sexual fantasies" as explanatory devices; it re-emerged in the age of total war as the impetus for the diagnoses of shell shock, battle fatigue, and, many years later, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).<sup>17</sup>

The Holocaust extended trauma's reach like nothing before. As Dominick LaCapra has argued, the Third Reich's attempted extermination of Europe's Jewish population produced trauma not just among survivors, but among witnesses who, faced with the insufficiency of language to describe and

thus process the Holocaust's horrors, had little choice but to relive them psychologically in an endless loop.<sup>18</sup> By the 1990s, scholars attuned to the compounding indignities imposed by racial and gender hierarchies seized on trauma as key to the condition of the subaltern more generally. Migrants and refugees bridged the interpretive gap between war and the subaltern experience. Many, after all, had been driven from their homes on grounds of difference, continuing to face persecution on those same grounds in new contexts, with women and children often bearing the brunt. In the eyes of its proponents, the field of trauma studies has simply arisen in tandem with modernity's many traumas.

What have scholars gained from trauma studies? First, and most obviously, we have a better understanding of the depth and breadth of trauma in the everyday lives of those who endure it, and in the lives of their descendants. Whether rooted in war, sexual violence, or some other terror-provoking event, trauma has real physiological consequences. As one researcher puts it, trauma "compromises the brain area that communicates the physical, embodied feeling of being alive," leading to hypervigilance, an overabundance of stress hormones, and a host of destructive psychological compensations for trauma's physical toll. Trauma is especially severe and enduring, it appears, when in the heat of some terrifying event a person is prevented from acting as an "agent in [their] own rescue." Removal of the ability to self-defend ensures that moving forward, the sensations of trauma will be re-experienced not as artifacts of the past, "but as disruptive physical reactions in the present."<sup>19</sup>

Trauma also runs in families. By the 1960s, researchers had marked the telltale signs of trauma transmission to the post-Holocaust "second generation" of Jews in Canada and the United States. Likewise, scholars have documented an impeded ability "to develop a benign worldview about others and the self" as well as "intense psychic pain caused by having to carry emotional memories....from generation to generation" among survivors of the Armenian genocide and their children.<sup>20</sup> Explanations of intergenerational transmission range from common sense to cutting-edge. Studies have demonstrated, for example, that traumatized refugee parents tend to act in ways that increase the likelihood of traumatizing refugee children. Research has also suggested, if tentatively, that via a mysterious epigenetic process known as "molecular memory" parents may pass the negative effects of trauma to children in utero.<sup>21</sup> In addition to these insights on trauma over time, recent scholarship has expanded our sense of the ways in which trauma extends across space. When initial traumas are delivered through an instance of forced migration or expropriation, victims are then forced to navigate a hostile "ecology of displacement." In our era, this ecology encompasses the physical reality of refugee camps and other unwelcoming destinations as well as the nightmarish legal netherworld of statelessness. Taken together, this constellation of such "post-migration stressors" generates as much trauma as "prior war exposure" or any other initial violent event.<sup>22</sup>

While trauma studies could, if read and understood by the right people in power, shape policy in our age of mass displacement, its value for historians remains uncertain. Exchanges between historians and those directly implicated in trauma studies—psychology, most importantly—are unfortunately rare. The wave of Freudian "psychobiographies" peaked and fell in the early 1970s, diminished by withering critiques. Since then, psychology has increasingly abandoned Freud in favour of neuroscientific approaches unappetizing to most historians. The nature of historical evidence presents even thornier problems. While scholars of the recent past have leveraged their ability to interview Holocaust survivors and their children or Southeast Asian refugees in the United States, the early modern period offers few such opportunities. That said, there have been remarkable forays into the deep past from within trauma studies. Some have focused on specific or local phenomena. One study makes the case for the transmission of trauma from Union soldiers imprisoned by the Confederacy during the American Civil

War to their children; others have considered the fourteenth-century veneration of Saint Delphine as a form of trauma management for French subjects battered by the Hundred Years' War.<sup>23</sup> Others have focused on epochal processes: the Atlantic slave trade, African slavery itself, and the destruction of indigenous peoples in the post-Columbian New World.<sup>24</sup>

Although the obstacles to a trauma studies approach to the grand dérangement are significant, so are the potential benefits. To be sure, sources that speak directly to Acadians' experiences during the eighteenth century are scarce. The most traumatic moments of the grand dérangement are marked by incompleteness and silence broken only by the reflections of observers. Take, for example, the case of Paul Landry, exiled to Annapolis, Maryland, in 1755 with his wife but without his two children, ages seven and five. Along with their grandfather, the two boys had ended up in Woodbury, Connecticut, where the local overseer of the poor, Elisha Stoddard, sent them to school and apprenticed them to local artisans. Over a year later, Landry and his wife staggered into Woodbury in the dead of winter, having journeyed by sea and land from Maryland to find them. Permissive at first, Stoddard cut the reunion short, removing the Landry children from their parents "by force" and returning them to their Anglo-American hosts—an action he believed pleased the children while allowing the "business" of child labour to continue. Concerned about expenses, Stoddard sent Landry and his wife a dozen miles down the road to New Milford, a village which had yet to welcome any Acadian refugees. Four months later, the couple petitioned Connecticut's General Assembly to be reunited with their children, at which point the record of their case ends. Buried deep in Connecticut's state archives, the episode reaches us primarily through the words of Elisha Stoddard, who for his part regretted tasting "the Sweets of having to deal with any of said people." To judge by the "X" by Paul Landry's name on the petition he likely dictated to a scribe in New Milford, he was illiterate—thus whatever feelings he, his wife, and their children may have had, and however their emaciated bodies may have reacted, we cannot fully know.<sup>25</sup>

Looking at the Landrys through the lens of trauma studies does, however, allow us some educated guesses. Exposed to the violence of expulsion, they also endured the steady depletion of "coping resources" associated with post-migratory "stressors," which they encountered from Maryland to Connecticut.<sup>26</sup> Their children fared no better. Some of the earliest trauma research found that young people evacuated from Blitz-era London without their parents had far worse psychological and physical outcomes than those whose families stayed together, nerve-racking nights in bomb shelters notwithstanding. One can only imagine the Landry children's state of mind after a dizzying year in Woodbury.<sup>27</sup>

Unfiltered (or less filtered) Acadian voices do call out from the grand dérangement, but infrequently. As in the case of Paul Landry, appeals to authorities were often written on behalf of Acadian refugees by Anglo-American, French, or British scribes. In Philadelphia, petitions presented to the Pennsylvania Assembly from that city's refugee community bear the authorial traces of Anthony Benezet, the Quaker anti-slavery activist who became an Acadian ally in 1756 and 1757.<sup>28</sup> More rarely, observers reported on what they heard Acadian refugees say. Thomas Hutchinson, the ill-starred future governor of Massachusetts, rushed to Boston's docks when news hit of the Acadian refugees' arrival late in 1755. He there encountered a man, fresh off the boat from Nova Scotia and still reeling, who declared that his predicament was "the hardest...since our Saviour was on the earth." This nameless Acadian may have spoken some English; Harvard-educated and a veteran of treaty negotiations with Native Americans in the borderlands of Massachusetts and New France, Hutchinson surely understood French. What he recorded, then, is probably some approximation of real Acadian speech in the heat of the grand dérangement—speech that resounds with deep mental and emotional distress.<sup>29</sup>



Equally rare are writings by Acadian refugees themselves. One such took the form of a letter penned by Joseph Leblanc to his brother Charles late in 1757. The pair had probably been shipped first from the Bay of Fundy to Virginia, and then from Virginia to England. Joseph and his wife had ended up in Liverpool, while Charles, along with an uncle and aunt, Charles Richard and Marguerite Comeau, had been sent to another British seaport. In the crabbed hand of a peasant unaccustomed to writing, Joseph informed his brother that his “dear wife...had left this world to go to the other” after an eight-week illness, but not before receiving “all the care that can be given to one in agony.” Joseph then asked Charles to embrace his other family members, along with his friend Jean-Jacques Thériot before signing off: “I am, in tears, your servant and brother.”<sup>30</sup>

Although dictated to a Liverpool scribe, Claude Pitre’s first-person lament from that same year echoes Leblanc’s anguish. Having ferried a detachment of Anglo-American soldiers across the Bay of Fundy during the campaign of 1755, Pitre had believed that his loyal service to “his Britannic majesty” would allow him to remain safely at home in Cobequid. He was wrong. “Surrounded by miseries,” separated from “my country, my belongings, my wife, and my children,” and clothed in rags, Pitre offered a “summary of his misfortunes” to authorities in London, begging for “some relief.”<sup>31</sup> These bits of Acadian self-expression, culled from but one of the many destinations associated with the grand *dérangement*, give some sense of the depth and breadth of the refugees’ trauma.

To be clear, these faint voices do not suggest that the trauma of the grand *dérangement* turned all Acadian refugees into helpless victims. The case of Jacques-Maurice Vigneau demonstrates otherwise. Exiled to Georgia, Vigneau leveraged his personal history of British loyalty and his considerable skill as a fast-talking self-promoter to secure passports from the colony’s governor for his “family,” which soon ballooned to as many as a hundred Acadians. He then led them on a canoe journey up the Atlantic coast; hoping to reach Nova Scotia, they made it as far as Barnstable, Massachusetts, before being captured by locals.<sup>32</sup> In South Carolina, brothers Pierre and Michel Bastarache likewise tried to reverse the grand *dérangement*, engineering a dramatic escape from Charlestown, South Carolina, through the backcountry of British North America. Captured by the Iroquois near Lake Ontario and redeemed by a French fur trader, the pair picked their way back to the Gulf of Saint Lawrence, reunited with their wives and children, and lived out their days in what is now Tracadie, New Brunswick.<sup>33</sup>

Acadian grit in the face of catastrophe, however, was not confined to exceptional cases. Marie and Magdalene Leblanc, for example, spun over thirty yards of cloth and then sold it to the congregationalist minister of Westborough, Massachusetts, hustling to feed their aging parents in 1756; the British seizure of the French ship *Copinambou* in 1777 uncovered a crew composed almost entirely of ordinary but rough-and-ready Acadians recruited in the French seaport of Nantes for risky duty on the wartime high seas.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, the lives of these and thousands more Acadians suggest, as contemporary research on refugees has shown, that in certain conditions a “recovery repertoire” of traits and practices may be passed from generation to generation, just as the effects of trauma may be.<sup>35</sup>

In the two or three decades after 1755, it may be that those Acadians who did manage to function, even in a limited sense, as “agents in their own rescue” enjoyed better outcomes than their compatriots who did not. This ability to act, and thus to avoid at least some of the worst effects of trauma, was in large part dependent on the particular “ecology of displacement” they encountered. In the Anglo-American south, refugees such as Vigneau and the Bastarache brothers arrived in sparsely populated British colonies whose governors had no idea the refugees were coming, only the most general sense of who they were, and few institutions capable of receiving them in a time of tension

between the British and French empires. Thus Georgia governor John Reynolds was more than happy to approve Vigneau's departure, even providing canoes and rations for the Acadians' trip up the coast. Reynolds's replacement, Henry Ellis, found the Acadians who remained encamped near Savannah "very useful to the Colony," encouraging them to continue crafting oars and other implements useful to the town's sailors.<sup>36</sup>

Contrast their experience to that of the Acadians sent to Massachusetts. There, refugees were split up into small groups and sent to the towns ringing Boston, where overseers of the poor became responsible for them. Proximity to Nova Scotia had familiarized these provincials with the Acadians, and the combination of Massachusetts mature print culture and its religious peculiarities generated hostility that went beyond mere discontent with the expense of the refugees' upkeep. One newspaper writer, for example, fretted over the possibility that French-speaking Catholic Acadians were likely to turn terrorist by blowing up Boston's powder house. While variations existed, the scattered Acadians of Massachusetts endured poverty, hunger, and physical violence precisely because the province's infrastructure encouraged such treatment. The refugees' petitions to the Massachusetts assembly drip with tales of beatings, kidnappings, and endless stress. "For the love of God," one wrote to governor Thomas Pownall from the tiny town of Wilmington, "stop the injustice."<sup>37</sup>

Wherever Acadians were thrust into such systematized, inherently discriminatory settings, hopelessness and trauma pressed down on them. "Be pleased to tell us," wrote one group in Philadelphia to that city's assembly in 1757, "whether we are Subjects, Prisoners, Slaves, or Freemen...for we must be something, or be reduced to a State of Non-existence." This language was doubtless crafted by Anthony Benezet, and reflected his Quaker concerns about the moral trajectory of the British Empire—but fear of "non-existence" bound to their stateless condition was all Acadian. Such existential dread was hardly confined to Philadelphia's Acadians. In 1764, fresh from a previous posting on Île-de-France (now the Indian Ocean nation of Mauritius), René Magon, royal intendant of Saint-Domingue, paid a visit to an Acadian work camp at Môle Saint-Nicolas. Despite the promises of colonial officials, the Acadians had been mistreated and ill-fed, and disease had taken root in the camp. They now "cursed an existence that...they did not care to preserve," Magon wrote, after which he arrested those in charge and began the process of replacing Acadians with slaves.<sup>38</sup> The Acadians of the Falkland Islands understood the sentiments of their desperate compatriots at Môle. In 1772, with the Falklands squarely in Spanish hands, Acadian veterans of Bougainville's settlement lived in the poorest quarters of Saint-Malo, where they told anyone who would listen that the great explorer owed them something for their toil in the South Atlantic—toil that had enabled Bougainville's three-year circumnavigation of the globe from 1766 to 1769 as well as the publication in 1772 of his best-selling *Voyage autour du monde*. Led by Augustin Benoit, the Falklands settlers recounted their "misery" and "indigence" to Versailles officials they hoped might offer financial support, but had no illusions: "We are poor and he is rich...He is powerful and we are nothing."<sup>39</sup>

These eighteenth-century expressions align with those of traumatized refugees in the modern world. High numbers of such people struggle with PTSD, which in turn spirals into a feedback loop of poverty, isolation, denigration, and a persistent struggle to, as one study puts it, "develop a benign worldview."<sup>40</sup> Although scholars often balk at a straightforward "disease models" that seem to render the intergenerational transmission of trauma inevitable, it is clear that such transmission, whether by social or biological means, is common among the displaced and persecuted of our day.<sup>41</sup> The well-documented, long-term results of trauma in the present call to mind the grand dérangement past of Michel Quessy, who lived on charity with his seven adult children (including a thirty-year-old son

deemed “insane” by authorities) in Saint-Malo in 1787, four decades after his expulsion from Nova Scotia. That same year, down the Breton coast in Morlaix, a teenaged Acadian named Jean-Baptiste Hébert, poor and hungry, mourned his father, who died at sea near Guinea after taking work on a slave ship. Guillaume Gallet, mired in poverty and sickness in the port town of Lorient, simply declared himself “worn out.”<sup>42</sup> Although confined to one corner of old regime France, these lives reflect the traumatic realities that confronted Acadians across the Atlantic world as they ran the gauntlet of exile.

The many traumas of the *grand dérangement* may also be fruitfully (albeit with careful qualification) related to those associated with the most important instance of dispossession in the early modern period: the Atlantic slave trade. While they differ in scale and racial contexts, the Acadian and African diasporas are linked in a variety of ways. The expulsions that began in 1755 marked but one front in the Seven Years’ War; unlike previous wars pitting Great Britain against France, this one emerged not out of conflicts over dynastic concerns in Europe, but out of a tangle of issues related to the Americas, whose importance to the great powers was tied to the profitability of African slavery.<sup>43</sup> Although far from slavery’s Caribbean heartland, Acadians themselves understood the degree to which their fates were tied to the wider Atlantic economy and the slaves whose coerced labour drove it. When, in 1710, the Scots adventurer Samuel Vetch seized Port Royal, the settlement’s Acadians wrote to New France asking for help, complaining that Vetch considered them “mere negroes.”<sup>44</sup>

Acadians’ associations of slavery and Africans with expropriation and statelessness were cemented with the rise of Louisbourg during the second quarter of the eighteenth century. Hundreds of slaves, both African and Native American, haunted the fortress town as Acadians came to trade or visit until the outbreak of hostilities in the mid-1750s. When, in 1755, the first Acadians found themselves crammed aboard converted slave ships rented from the Boston firm of Apthorp and Hancock, those associations became more immediate and ominous. Consider again the language of Philadelphia’s refugees in their 1757 petition: Are we, they asked, “Slaves, or Freemen?” To be clear, Acadians did not and could not become slaves, as Alain Daigre’s mastery of enslaved woodcutters in the forests of Saint-Domingue demonstrates. Acadians were, however, dragged into the same regime of colonial labour as enslaved Africans, and thus were exposed to a diminished—but still devastating—fraction of its ability to dehumanize and traumatize.

Acadian words in the wake of the *grand dérangement* hint at traumas also reflected the expressions of slaves and their descendants. Although early twentieth-century assertions that the horrors of slavery annihilated African culture and produced inherently stunted individuals have been refuted, new scholarship has also emphasized the physical and psychological impact of trauma on the enslaved and their descendants. Faced with the most inhospitable “ecology of displacement” of the early modern period, enslaved Africans endured torture, sexual violence, and deliberate efforts to eliminate cultural and religious practices that cut against white norms. Their words in exile speak to pain, disillusionment, and hopelessness that echo those of the Acadians. Survivors of slavery and their descendants lamented their “inheritance of toil and misery,” while others described a nightmarish “living death” of “terror, tension, and anxiety.” In the eerily prescient writing of the formerly enslaved American Hannah Crafts, these burdens had a transmissible, “hereditary character” that threatened to roll onward “forever” if slavery and white supremacy were not brought to heel—which, of course, they were not.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, from slavery to Jim Crow to the present day, people of African descent have confronted not just spectacular violence but the grinding, traumatic toll of opportunity and equality denied.

Even as the once-enslaved were made to stand out, Acadian refugees and their children managed to blend in, if at times tentatively. Those who lingered in France, for example, became little more than vaguely exotic French citizens in the same way that people from nineteenth-century Alsace or Corsica bound themselves to a burgeoning, homogenizing national culture. Positioned awkwardly between Quebec's Francophones and Canada's English-speaking majority, Acadians in the Maritimes eventually elbowed their way into Canadian society and politics, overcoming much condescension to do so. And Louisiana's Cajuns, after decades on the racial margins of southern American society, became definitively "white" in the twentieth century, joining Jews, Italians, and other one-time outsiders as that category expanded to confront the burgeoning civil rights and Black Power movements while rendering its boundaries ever-more rigid.<sup>46</sup>

And with that terrible divergence—traumatized Acadian refugees and their descendants down one path, traumatized African slaves and theirs down another—I've done it again. In an attempt to craft a framework for understanding the intimate, interior histories of Acadians in the grand *dérangement*, I've marshalled those histories in the service of an argument that links the Acadian past to a wider story of racial difference. Perhaps, then, the real value of trauma in relation to the Acadian diaspora lies precisely in the concept's capacity to at once humanize and de-provincialize the victims of 1755.

To be sure, interpretive challenges abound. The spectre of misuse is real; any simplistic equation of intergenerational trauma among Acadian refugees and the enslaved that omits the weighty variable of race will yield bad and misleading results. Trauma itself remains mysterious and, for some, suspicious. Ibram X. Kendi, whose bracing *Stamped from the Beginning* chronicles the evolution of racist ideas in the United States, lists "post-traumatic slave syndrome" among the "folk theories" that continue to buttress claims that African Americans remain hobbled by the quasi-permanent damage they had suffered under racist rule.<sup>47</sup>

Emerging, multidisciplinary research on modern refugees, however, strongly suggests both the reality of intergenerational trauma and its centrality in shaping not only dysfunction, but culture, behaviour, and outlook among the violently displaced. Informed by this scholarship, a trauma-sensitive history of the grand *dérangement* might faithfully capture the varied, deeply personal impacts of catastrophe on Acadians such as Pointe Sainte-Anne's Joseph Godin *dit* Bellefontaine. It might also bring into relief the diverse "ecologies of displacement" that shaped and reshaped the sensibilities of poor, labouring people across the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Atlantic world, illuminating in the process the many coping repertoires they devised in response. Attuned to kinship among the traumatized, such a history may well transcend the grand *dérangement* while shedding new light on the Acadians' particular position on the early modern period's great spectrum of freedom and unfreedom.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For Godin's mémoire, see National Archives of Canada, MG6 A15, série C [microfilm F 849], AD Calvados [Caen], C 1020, accessed March 6, 2020, <https://www.septentrion.qc.ca/acadiens/documents/819>. See also George MacBeath, "Godin, Bellefontaine, Beauséjour, Joseph," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 4, accessed March 6, 2020, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/godin\\_joseph\\_4E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/godin_joseph_4E.html).

<sup>2</sup> On the expulsion of the Acadians from what are now the Maritimes, see, among many others, John Mack Faragher, *A Great and Noble Scheme: The Tragic Story of the Expulsion of the French Acadians from their American Homeland* (New York: Norton, 2005); Geoffrey Plank, *An Unsettled Conquest: The British Campaign against the Peoples of Acadia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003); Ronnie-Gilles Leblanc, ed., *Du grand dérangement à la déportation: Nouvelles perspectives historiques* (Moncton, NB: Université de Moncton, 2005). On Acadian history and the grand dérangement, see Naomi E.S. Griffiths, *The Contexts of Acadian History, 1686-1784* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), Jean-François Mouhot, *Les réfugiés acadiens en France, 1755-1785: l'impossible réintégration?* (Québec: Septentrion, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> L'Huillier de Marigny, "Mémoire sur les poisons qui régissent à St. Domingue," 1762, Archives nationales d'outre-mer (ANOM), Aix-en-Provence, France, série F3, vol. 88, 280.

<sup>4</sup> Antoine-Philippe Lemoyne to minister of the Marine, March 20, 1759, ANOM, série C14, registre 24, 170v-171.

<sup>5</sup> See Christopher Hodson, *The Acadian Diaspora: An Eighteenth-Century History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 79-116.

<sup>6</sup> See E.P. Panagopoulos, *New Smyrna: An Eighteenth-Century Greek Odyssey* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1966).

<sup>7</sup> For Poncet's plans, see Poncet de la Rivière to Choiseul, May 25, 1764, ANOM, série C6, vol. 15, n.p.

<sup>8</sup> John Dunmore, ed., *The Pacific Journal of Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, 1767-1768* (London: Hakluyt Society, 2002), xx.

<sup>9</sup> See Hodson, *Acadian Diaspora*, 117-45.

<sup>10</sup> "Etat des ouvriers blancs et des nègres du Roy employés aux travaux du Môle aux ateliers, le 6 fevrier 1766," Fonds d'Estaing, 562 AP, box 15, Archives Nationales, Paris.

<sup>11</sup> Hodson, *Acadian Diaspora*, 116.

<sup>12</sup> For quote, see Christopher Hodson, "Colonizing the *Patrie*: An experiment gone wrong in Old Régime France," *French Historical Studies* 32:2 (Spring 2009), 193.

<sup>13</sup> Abbé Gabriel-François Coyer, *Oeuvres de M. l'Abbé Coyer*, vol. II (London: 1765), 84.

<sup>14</sup> Hodson, *Acadian Diaspora*, 196.

<sup>15</sup> For quote, see Antoine-Philippe Lemoyne to intendant of Montpellier, August 15, 1772, Bibliothèque municipale de Bordeaux, MSS 1480, 136.

<sup>16</sup> “Figures at a Glance,” UNHCR, accessed April 6, 2018, <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html>.

<sup>17</sup> Bessel van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York: Penguin, 2014), 112.

<sup>18</sup> See Dominick LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), and *History and Memory after Auschwitz* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

<sup>19</sup> Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 52, 206.

<sup>20</sup> Myriam Denov, et al., “Intergenerational resilience in families affected by war, displacement, and migration: ‘It runs in the family,’” *Journal of Family Social Work* 22: 1 (2019), 22; Selina L. Mangassarian, “100 Years of Trauma: The Armenian Genocide and intergenerational cultural trauma,” *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma* 25: 4 (2016), 375-76.

<sup>21</sup> Danieli, et al., “A question of who, not if: Psychological disorders in Holocaust survivors’ children,” *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy* 9: 1 (2017), 98-106; Amy Bombay, et al., “The intergenerational effects of Indian Residential Schools: Implications for the concept of historical trauma,” *Transcultural Psychiatry* 51: 3 (2014), 320-28; Rachel Yehuda, Amy Lehrner, “Intergenerational transmission of trauma effects: Putative role of epigenetic mechanisms,” *World Psychiatry* 17: 3 (September 2018), 243-57; K. Gapp, et al., “Implication of sperm RNAs in transgenerational inheritance of the effects of early trauma in mice,” *Nature Neuroscience* 17: 5 (2016), 667-69.

<sup>22</sup> K.E. Miller and A. Rasmussen, “The mental health of civilians displaced by armed conflict: An ecological model of refugee distress,” *Epidemiology and Psychiatric Sciences* 26 (2017), 130.

<sup>23</sup> Dora L. Costa, Noelle Yetter, and Heather DeSomer, “Intergenerational transmission of paternal trauma among US Civil War ex-POW’s,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 115: 44 (2018), 11215-20; Nicola Archambeau, “Miraculous healing for the warrior soul: Transforming fear, violence, and shame in the canonization inquest for Delphine de Puimichel, 1363,” *Historical Reflections/Reflexions Historiques* 41: 3 (Winter 2015), 14-27.

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, Pier M. Larson, “Reconsidering trauma, identity, and the African diaspora: Enslavement and historical memory in nineteenth-century Madagascar,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 56: 2 (April 1999), 335-62; Michael J. Halloran, “African American health and posttraumatic slave syndrome: A terror management theory account,” *Journal of Black Studies* 50:1 (2018), 45-65; Andrew Woolford, Jeff Benvenuto, and Alexander Laban Hinton, eds., *Colonial Genocide in Indigenous North America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).

<sup>25</sup> On this episode, see Hodson, *Acadian Diaspora*, 47-49.

<sup>26</sup> Miller and Rasmussen, “Mental health of civilians,” 129-30.

- <sup>27</sup> Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 212.
- <sup>28</sup> See Hodson, *Acadian Diaspora*, 67-68.
- <sup>29</sup> Thomas Hutchinson, *The History of the Colony and Province of Massachusetts-Bay* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936), 30.
- <sup>30</sup> Joseph Leblanc to Charles Leblanc, September 21, 1757, Liverpool, ADM 97/122, Medical Department In-Letters (Miscellaneous), National Archives of Great Britain, Kew, copy at Library and Archives of Canada, Ottawa.
- <sup>31</sup> Claude Pitre to Commissioners for the Sick and Wounded, May 27, 1757, Liverpool, ADM 97/121/, Medical Department In-Letters (Miscellaneous), National Archives of Great Britain, Kew, copy at Library and Archives of Canada, Ottawa.
- <sup>32</sup> Hodson, *Acadian Diaspora*, 59-60.
- <sup>33</sup> See John Mack Faragher, *A Great and Noble Scheme: The Tragic Story of the Expulsion of the French Acadians from their American Homeland* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005), 388.
- <sup>34</sup> Hodson, *Acadian Diaspora*, 74-76; "Memoire concernant le Brigantin le Copinambou," 1777, Archives de la Marine, Paris, serie B4, vol. 130, 29.
- <sup>35</sup> Myriam Denov, et al., "Intergenerational resilience in families affected by war, displacement, and migration: 'It runs in the family,'" *Journal of Family Social Work* 22: 1 (2019), 17.
- <sup>36</sup> Hodson, *Acadian Diaspora*, 61.
- <sup>37</sup> Hodson, *Acadian Diaspora*, 72-73.
- <sup>38</sup> Hodson, *Acadian Diaspora*, 113-14.
- <sup>39</sup> Hodson, *Acadian Diaspora*, 143.
- <sup>40</sup> Mangassarian, "100 years of trauma," 375.
- <sup>41</sup> See Nancy J. Lin and Karen L. Suyemoto, "'So you, my children, can have a better life': A Cambodian American perspective on the phenomenology of intergenerational communication about trauma," *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment, and Trauma*, 2016, 25 (4): 400-20.
- <sup>42</sup> Hodson, *Acadian Diaspora*, 201.
- <sup>43</sup> See, for example, Paul Mapp, *The Elusive West and the Contest for Empire, 1713-1763* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).
- <sup>44</sup> Cited in Hodson, *Acadian Diaspora*, 33.
- <sup>45</sup> Cited in Halloran, "African American health and posttraumatic slave syndrome," 52-53.

<sup>46</sup> See, for instance, Shane K. Bernard, *The Cajuns: The Americanization of a People* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2003).

<sup>47</sup> Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (New York: Nation, 2016), 492.