



# EMANCIPATION DAY EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

## CONTENTS

1. Recommended Online Resources.....	2
2. Singing Historically Black Music .....	3
3. Terminology.....	3
4. Local Historical and Other Resources .....	4
5. Recommended Books, with descriptions .....	5



## **1. Recommended Online Educational Resources: What is Emancipation Day in the Canadian Context?**

The links below are to useful resources that help to explain and to provide educational resources around Emancipation Day in Canada:

Government of Canada Emancipation Day resources:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/emancipation-day.html>

The Canadian Encyclopedia Explanation Day background:

<https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/emancipation-day-in-canada>

The Black History Awareness Society Emancipation Day historical overview and resources:

<https://bcblackhistory.ca/emancipation-day-in-canada-past-present-and-future/>

For children and young people: a resource on Emancipation Day from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation:

<https://www.cbc.ca/kids/articles/august-1st-is-emancipation-day-a-day-to-celebrate-freedom>

Slavery and Remembrance: A guide to sites, museums, and memory:

<https://slaveryandremembrance.org/articles/article/?id=A0079>

From “Tough Convos”: Emancipation Day: Lessons from Caribbean Heroes of the Past:

<https://www.toughconvos.com/post/emancipation-day-honouring-heroes-of-the-past>

United Church of Canada resources for Emancipation Day:

<https://united-church.ca/worship-special-days/emancipation-sunday>

Government of Canada – Parks Canada – Celebrations of Emancipation Day National Historic Event:

<https://parks.canada.ca/culture/designation/evenement-event/celebrations-emancipation>



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## 2. Resource List – Singing Historically Black Music in Predominantly White Congregations

Should predominantly white choirs or congregations sing historically Black music such as spirituals? What are important considerations?

<https://nowtoronto.com/music/the-traditional-spiritual-must-be-freed-from-racial-confines/>

<https://baptistnews.com/article/is-there-a-balm-in-singing-the-spirituals-and-if-so-who-should-sing-them/>

<https://baptistnews.com/article/is-there-a-balm-in-singing-the-spirituals-and-if-so-who-should-sing-them/>

<https://bargeeseworship.com/2021/09/09/singing-black-spirituals-in-mostly-white-congregations/>

## 3. Terminology

Language matters. Describing people who lived in slavery as “enslaved” rather than as “slaves” emphasizes their humanity and the fact that servitude was a condition forced on them. Describing those who proactively fought for their liberty as “freedom seekers” emphasizes their agency, while describing them as “fugitives” or “runaways” assumes the point of view of those who profited from their labour and criminalizes the universal human instinct to be free. Referring to those who enslaved others as “enslavers” emphasizes that these individuals made a choice to hold others in captivity, while identifying them as “masters” or “owners” implies legitimate authority or ownership and reduces the enslaved to property.

“There is debate about the terms enslavement and enslaved people, on one hand, and slavery and slaves on the other. Many authors and historians use both sets of terms, which have similar meanings but can represent different perspectives on historical events. For example, slave is used to describe a person’s property. It is a noun that critics of the term say reduces a person to a position they never chose to be in. The term enslaved describes the state of being held as a slave. Historians who prefer enslaved person explain that it makes it clearer that enslavement was imposed on people against their will. They also mention that adding the word person brings forward the humanity of the people the term describes.



“Some historians continue to use the terms slave and slavery, without adding person, arguing that the terms are clearer and more familiar. They argue that adding the word person implies a level of autonomy that enslavement took away from people.”

Source: Nathan Baker, <https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/anti-slavery-society-of-canada#:~:text=American%20Civil%20War.-,Terminology,enslavement%20took%20away%20from%20people.>

Additional resources to aid in selecting appropriate terminology:

<https://commonplace.online/article/reparative-semantic/>  
<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/undergroundrailroad/language-of-slavery.htm>

#### **4. Resource List - Black heritage organizations, history societies, and museums to whom parishes can reach out for guest speakers or local/regional resources**

It is recommended that parishes reach out to local Black history content experts if community engagement is desired. A fairly comprehensive list of Black historical organizations can be found at <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/black-history-month/resources.html>

Additional organizations include:

<https://mobaprojects.ca/> Mapping Ontario’s Black Archives (MOBA)  
<https://bcspei.ca/> Black Cultural Society of Prince Edward Island  
<https://www.bhmwinnipeg.com/> Black History Manitoba Celebration Committee  
<https://blacksettlers.ca/> Black Settlers of Alberta and Saskatchewan Society  
<https://www.cwblackcommittee.ca/> Centre Black Wellington Black Committee  
<https://www.facebook.com/NunavutBlackHistorySociety/> Nunavut Black History Society



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## 5. Recommended Books

*Emancipation Day: Celebrating Freedom in Canada, 2010*

*Talking About Freedom: Celebrating Emancipation Day in Canada, 2012,*  
by Natasha L. Henry-Dixon

Canadian author Natasha L. Henry-Dixon has written several books addressing Emancipation Day. Discover the main features of Emancipation Day celebrations, learn about the people of African ancestry's struggle for freedom, and the victories achieved in the push for equality into the 21st century.

The passage of the Abolition of Slavery Act took effect on August 1, 1834. It ushered in the end of slavery throughout the British Empire, people of African descent celebrated their newfound freedom. Now African-American fugitive slaves, free black immigrants, and the few remaining enslaved Africans could live unfettered lives in Canada – a reality worthy of celebration.

These two books provide insight into the creation, development, and evolution of a distinct African-Canadian tradition through descriptive historical accounts and appealing images. The social, cultural, political, and educational practices of Emancipation Day festivities across Canada are explored, with emphasis on Ontario, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, and British Columbia.

“Emancipation is not only a word in the dictionary, but an action to liberate one’s destiny. This outstanding book is superb in the interpretation of “the power of freedom” in one’s heart and mind – moving from 1834 to present.” –  
Dr. Henry Bishop, Black Cultural Centre, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia

*The Black Christ, by Kelly Brown Douglas, 1994.*

In *The Black Christ*, a United States-based theological reflection first published in 1994, Kelly Brown Douglas offers a compelling portrait of who Jesus is for the Black community. She identifies the Black Christ not strictly in terms of race or theological constructs. The “Blackness” of Christ has more to do with commitment to Black freedom than appearance.

Beginning with the early testimonies of the enslaved, through the writings and thought of religious and literary figures, voices from the Civil Rights and Black Power era, through the contemporary work of Black and Womanist theologians, Douglas presents a living tradition that speaks powerfully to the message of our day: Black Lives Matter. In a new introduction, she offers a moving account of the questions that motivated her work, and an overview of where those questions have since led her.



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## *Emancipation Still Comin'* by Kortright Davis, 1990

*Emancipation Still Comin'* is a powerful theological reflection that challenges both Church and society to confront the lingering legacy of slavery and systemic racism in the Americas and the Caribbean. Drawing on his experience as an Anglican priest, theologian, and Caribbean native, Davis constructs a liberative theology rooted in Black identity, postcolonial critique, and Christian hope.

At its core, *Emancipation Still Comin'* argues that the proclamation of emancipation in the 19th century did not mark the end of slavery's consequences, it merely changed its form. Davis insists that true emancipation must be ongoing, spiritual as well as social, and must address the deep-seated injustices that continue to marginalize Black people globally.

Key themes include:

- **Post-Emancipation Theology:** Davis challenges triumphalist narratives that treat abolition as a completed project. Instead, he frames emancipation as an unfinished journey, calling for continued vigilance and action in the face of persistent oppression.
- **Liberation and Identity:** He explores the intersection of Christian theology with African and Caribbean identity, urging a reclamation of dignity through theological affirmation of Blackness and cultural rootedness.
- **The Role of the Church:** Davis offers a critical yet hopeful vision of the Church's role as an agent of justice, reconciliation, and truth-telling. He critiques the Church's historical complicity in slavery and colonialism while envisioning a renewed mission centered on solidarity with the oppressed.
- **Theology of Hope and Resistance:** Influenced by liberation theology, Davis sees God as deeply invested in human freedom. Emancipation becomes both a divine promise and a human responsibility.

The book weaves together historical analysis, theological reflection, and cultural commentary, with a voice that is scholarly yet accessible. It is rooted in the lived experiences of African-descended peoples in the Caribbean and the diaspora, making it a vital contribution to postcolonial and liberation theologies.

- **Contextual Theology:** One of the book's greatest strengths is how it contextualizes theology within the socio-political realities of the Caribbean and the African diaspora. Davis resists generic or abstract theology, insisting that theology must be responsive to the cries of the marginalized.
- **Historical Awareness:** Davis brings to light the ways in which colonial Christian theology was used to justify slavery, and how reinterpretation is essential for authentic discipleship today.
- **Vision of Reparation and Healing:** Without reducing Christianity to activism, Davis articulates a vision of reparative justice that is spiritual, economic, and communal.



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The book assumes some prior knowledge of Caribbean history and postcolonial theology, which might make parts of it dense for readers unfamiliar with those areas. However, the clarity of Davis's moral and theological argument ultimately makes it an accessible and compelling read.

*Emancipation Still Comin'* remains deeply relevant in today's global conversations about race, justice, and the role of the Church. In a world still shaped by the aftershocks of slavery, Davis's call to a deeper, ongoing emancipation is both urgent and profoundly hopeful.

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