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Charles R Foy

Eastern Illinois University, USA

Abstract

The Royal Navy has been portrayed as an institution that embodied liberty, regularly employing and relying upon blacks to keep its vessels afloat and to implement Britain's blue water policy. Despite the critical role black naval seamen played, their employment was shaped more by regional practices than by Admiralty edicts. The result was that blacks were often treated inequitably. Black seamen had less access to pension benefits and were not promoted in the same numbers as working-class white seamen. In England and New York, blacks were largely kept out of royal dockyards and received less favourable compensation than whites. In contrast, while blacks were employed in great numbers in the slave-based economies of Antigua and Senegambia, they were largely barred from highly skilled maritime artisan work. In sum, blacks' experiences in the Royal Navy were varied and were more influenced by local conditions than by edicts from London.

Keywords

Atlantic history, black mariners, employment discrimination, naval dockyards, naval history

The Royal Navy has often been portrayed as an institution that embodied liberty. N. A. M. Rodger has posited that regulations prohibiting slave naval seamen demonstrated the navy was 'a little piece of British territory in which slavery was improper', while Vincent Carretta has argued the navy was 'free of institutional racism'.¹ Whether

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1. N. A. M. Rodger, *The wooden world: An anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (London, 1986), 160; Vincent Carretta, 'Naval records and eighteenth century black biography, with particular

Corresponding author:

Charles R Foy, Early American and Atlantic History, Eastern Illinois University, 600 Lincoln Avenue, Charleston, IL 61920, USA.

Email: crfoy@eiu.edu

Rodger and Carretta's contentions are accurate or, as this article will demonstrate, the facts belie their assertions, blacks employed by the Royal Navy were undoubtedly more concerned with whether the navy treated them similarly to whites than if the navy intended blacks to be inequitably treated. Many contemporary courts have recognized that the application of a disparate treatment standard can uncover employment practices that discriminate between classes of people, although an employer may not have intended to discriminate.² Simply stated, disparate impact analysis serves to uncover acts that were 'fair in form, but discriminatory in operation'. An employer's 'motive is irrelevant' as disparate impact 'is premised upon unjustified disadvantage caused by an employment device that disproportionately affects a [protected] group'.³ By shifting the focus from whether the navy intended to treat blacks inequitably to determining if naval employment practices did in fact adversely affect blacks, this article seeks to emphasize the lived experiences of blacks in the navy. It does so based on the understanding that just as naval administrative practices were influenced by local conditions, the Royal Navy's employment of blacks was shaped more by regional practices than by Admiralty edicts.⁴ To answer the question whether black seamen and maritime workers were treated inequitably, be it in pay, pensions or promotion, and if so why, this article analyses employment practices on Royal Navy vessels and in naval repair facilities across the Atlantic basin.

reference to the case of Olaudah Equiano (Gustavus Vassa)', *Journal of Maritime Research* 5 (2003), 143–158, 145.

2. *Bouvier v. Northrup Grumman Ship Systems, Inc.*, 350 Fed. Appx. 917 (9th Cir. 2009), Lexis 23619; *Whitmire v. Kvaerner-Philadelphia Shipyard*, 340 Fed. Appx. 94 (3rd Cir. 2009), Lexis 15540; and *Jones v. Horizon Shipbuilding, Inc.*, 116 FEP 599 (SD AL, 2012), Lexis 150567; Equality Act of 2010. Available online <https://www.gov.uk/equality-act-2010-guide> [accessed 20 July 2015].
3. *Griggs v. Duke Power*, 401 U.S. 424 (1971); Elaine W. Shoben, 'Discrimination: What's *Griggs* still good for? What not', *Brandies Law Review* 42 (2004), 600–1. To establish a labour practice's disparate impact one must demonstrate both a significant statistical disparity between its impact upon a protected class and the general labour pool and that the disparity was the result of an employer's employment practice. An employer can refute this by demonstrating a 'business necessity' for the challenged employment practice. Reva B. Siegel, 'Race-conscious but race-neutral: The constitutionality of disparate impact in the Roberts Court', *Alabama Law Review* 66 (2015), 656–7. In 2015, The United States Supreme Court has upheld the validity of disparate impact analysis as a means to determine the existence of institutional racism. *Texas v. Inclusive Communities Project*, 576 U.S. ____ (slip opinion 2015).
4. Scholarly works on the Royal Navy's administration include: N. A. M. Rodger, *The command of the ocean: A naval history of Britain 1649–1815* (London, 2005); Clive Wilkinson, *The British Navy and the state in the eighteenth century* (Woodbridge, 2004); Roger Morris, *Naval power and British culture, 1760–1850: Public trust and government ideology* (Aldershot, 2004); Duncan Crew, *Yellow Jack and the worm: Naval administration in the West Indies* (Liverpool, 1993); Daniel Baugh, *Naval administration, 1715–1750* (London, 1977).

The relationship between Britain's sea power and empire in the eighteenth century has been extensively documented.⁵ Historians have recognized that Britain's Atlantic empire was built on the labour of seamen and dockyard workers. As Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker have noted, a central challenge for the British government was how to 'organize, maintain, and reproduce the sailing proletariat in a situation of labour scarcity and limited state resources'.⁶ Manning the navy was, as Daniel Baugh has observed, 'the most serious problem' facing the British government in the eighteenth century.⁷ While Rodger, Baugh, and Nicholas Rogers emphasize administrative hurdles the navy faced in manning during the wars of the eighteenth century, and Linebaugh and Rediker highlight the class struggle between seamen and the navy, the connection between Britain's blue water policy and the Royal Navy's reliance upon black maritime labour in the Americas has been largely unappreciated.⁸

In the years between 1754 and 1783, the British government's blue water imperial policy called for retaining a vigorous mercantile fleet at the same time that Great Britain undertook significant expansions of the Royal Navy. The navy's ability to employ hundreds of black mariners and maritime workers across the Atlantic, particularly in the Americas and West Africa, while fighting multiple enemies was an essential component to Britain's military successes.⁹ As John M. MacKenzie has noted, British power was

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5. See Joshua D. Newton, 'Slavery, sea power and the state: The Royal Navy and the British West African settlements, 1748–1756', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 41 (2013), 171–93; Keith P. Hertzog, 'Naval operations in West Africa and the disruption of the slave trade during the American Revolution', *The American Neptune* 55 (1995), 42–8; Ty M. Reese, 'Liberty, insolence and rum: Cape Coast Castle and the American Revolution', *Itinerario* 28 (2004), 18–37; Nicolas Tracy, 'Gunboat diplomacy of the government of George Grenville, 1764–1765: The Honduras, Turks Island and Gambia incidents', *Historical Journal* 17 (1974), 711–31.
 6. Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The many-headed hydra: Sailors, slaves, commoners, and the hidden history of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston, 2000), 150.
 7. Daniel A. Baugh, *Naval administration in the age of Walpole* (Princeton, 1965), 223. Edlie Wong makes a similar point with regards to European nations' reliance on black maritime labour in the early nineteenth century: see Edlie Wong, 'Anti-slavery cosmopolitanism in the black Atlantic', in *Victorian Literature and Culture* 38 (2010), 451–66. In the eighteenth century, other European nations focused their maritime resources in wartime on their naval operations, resulting in a decrease in their mercantile shipping sector. Denver Brunsman, *The evil necessity: British naval impressment in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world* (Charlottesville, 2013), 33.
 8. Denver Brunsman and Jeffrey Bolster have noted the navy's use of blacks to 'maintain its control of the Caribbean waters'. See Brunsman, *The evil necessity*, 120–2; W. Jeffrey Bolster, *Black Jacks: African American seamen in the age of sail* (Cambridge, 1997), 31.
 9. Daniel A. Baugh, 'Great Britain's "blue-water" policy, 1689–1815', *The International History Review* 10 (1988), 33–58; H. V. Bowen and Agustin González Enciso, eds., *Mobilising resources for war: Britain and Spain at work during the early modern period* (Navarra, 2006), 84–5.

hardly uniform throughout its empire.¹⁰ The Royal Navy's manning needs on land and at sea were subject to varied local social and political conditions. As a result, the navy's reliance upon black maritime labour and the disparate circumstances in which it operated provided blacks with opportunities for liberty in some locales, and in certain instances, particularly during wartime, gave black seamen and maritime workers leverage to obtain better working conditions. Naval personnel also occasionally assisted blacks in obtaining liberty.¹¹ However, the navy's primary focus was not freedom for blacks but to keep its fleet at sea. To accomplish this goal the navy accommodated local practices that often resulted in blacks being treated less equitably than whites.¹²

Black seamen and maritime fugitives on Royal Navy vessels

Between 1754 and 1783, the Royal Navy often acted as a liberator of blacks. During the American Revolution, 'many' runaway slaves 'concealed themselves on board' Royal Navy vessels with hundreds of fugitive slaves being transported to New York.¹³ When

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10. John M. MacKenzie, 'The British Empire: Ramshackle or rampaging? A historiographical reflection', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 43 (2015), 103.
 11. Charles R. Foy, 'Unkle Somerset's freedom: Liberty in England for black sailors', *Journal of Maritime Research* 13 (2011), 21–36.
 12. Many of the conclusions presented in this article are based upon the *Black Mariner Database (BMD)*, a dataset containing records for more than 26,000 black mariners and maritime fugitives. The *BMD* contains 53 fields of data: age, ethnicity, place of birth, ships served on, etc. It includes references from ship musters, court records, fugitive and slave sale advertisements, newspaper dispatches, merchant records, governmental records and a wide variety of miscellaneous documents from more than thirty archives across the Atlantic. Originally developed to support my 2008 doctoral dissertation concerning how North American fugitive slaves used the maritime industry to obtain freedom, the *BMD* has been expanded to include black mariners and maritime fugitives from other regions and nations within the Atlantic basin. The strengths of the *BMD* are that in contrast to Harold D. Langley's observation forty-eight years ago (see 'The Negro in the Navy and Merchant Service, 1798–1869', *Journal of Negro History* 52 (1967), 275) that he had 'uncovered no particular evidence of Negro sailors' at the end of the eighteenth century, the *BMD*'s size (it is the world's largest dataset on black mariners) and comprehensiveness enables us to trace the movement of blacks around the Atlantic and in doing so to determine if an individual black sailor's life was unique or commonplace in the time and region where he was employed. The central weakness of the *BMD* is that it is not a static dataset; given the paucity and nature of records concerning black mariners, it is anticipated that, over time, conclusions regarding individual sailors will be modified as new information is obtained and integrated into the dataset. Thus, unlike tax or land records from which one can make definitive conclusions (e.g. X% of Y city's landowners were black), the numbers generated by *BMD* analysis may in the future be modified. However, as one scholar has noted, the *BMD* provides 'information we need to assess the typicality' of black life in the Atlantic. Geoffrey Plank, 'Sailing with John Woolman', *Early American Studies* (hereafter *EAS*) 7 (2009), 51, n15.
 13. 'General orders, 25 October, 1781', Founders Archives. Available online <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/99-01-02-07264> [accessed 20 July 2015].

Cornelius, Cyrus, and thirty-four other runaways came aboard HMS *Brune* in Virginia on 1 February 1777, they, as well as scores of other maritime fugitives, saw the navy as a means to find freedom.¹⁴ And although most of the runaways finding safe haven on Royal Navy vessels during the Revolution came from areas south of the Delaware River, a not insignificant number entered British fighting ships at northern North American ports.

HMS *Rose* offers a striking example of a naval ship in northern waters providing refuge to runaway slaves. While the twenty-gun frigate was stationed at Newport between 1775 and 1777 black runaways regularly came aboard. Characterized as ‘friend[s] of the Government’, men such as Tall Wheeler, a thirty-seven year-old Guinea-born man who entered the *Rose* in November 1775 as a ‘friend’, later became an Ordinary, then an Able Bodied Seaman, and who in October 1779 died at sea, regularly served on the frigate. No less than twenty-five black maritime fugitives, impressed seamen and volunteers, or between 21.55% and 26% of the frigate’s crew, served on the *Rose* between 1775 and 1777. This may have been due to Captain Wallace’s pressing need for sailors. It is also likely, given that blacks averaged two years’ service on HMS *Rose*, that Wallace had displayed a welcoming attitude making service on the vessel an attractive proposition for blacks.¹⁵ In providing refuge for runaways Captain Wallace and other naval officials cemented for many slaves the belief that the British government was their liberator.¹⁶

The view of some naval officers that blacks were entitled to equal treatment in the period between 1754 and 1783 reflected a growing compassionate humanitarianism among Britons. In his 1772 *Somerset v. Steuart* decision, Lord Mansfield decreed slavery in England was ‘so odious that nothing can be suffered to support it but positive law’. Slaves in the Americas, blacks in England, English barristers and judges, and naval officers, all mistakenly assumed that slaves who reached England could no longer be enslaved. In fact, Chief Justice Mansfield had merely ruled that slave masters in England lacked the power to deport bondsmen without their consent.¹⁷ When the disabled merchant ship *Lawrence* docked in Portsmouth in 1776 with four black slave seamen, naval personnel believed that the blacks, being ‘in this Country’ were ‘emancipated

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14. The National Archives, Kew, London (hereafter TNA), ADM 36/7756–7, HMS *Brune* Musters, 1777–1779; Cassandra Pybus, *Epic journeys of freedom: Runaway slaves of the American Revolution and their global quest for freedom* (Boston, 2007); Charles R. Foy, ‘Seeking freedom in the Atlantic world, 1713–1783’, *EAS* 5 (2006), 73; Cassandra Pybus, ‘Jefferson’s faulty math: The question of slave defections in the American Revolution’, *William & Mary Quarterly* (hereafter *WMQ*) 62 (2005), 247–63.
 15. J. J. Colledge, *Ships of the Royal Navy* (Annapolis, 1987), 345; TNA, ADM 36/7947–49, HMS *Rose* Musters, 1775–1777. Wallace was not as accepting of black pilots. Kevin Dawson, ‘Enslaved ship pilots in the age of revolution: Challenging notions of race and slavery between the boundaries of land and sea’, *Journal of Social History* 47 (2013), 72.
 16. Hilary McDonald Beckles, ‘The Wilberforce song: How enslaved Caribbean blacks heard British abolitionists’, *Parliamentary History* 26 (Supp. 2007), 124–5. While at Newport the *Rose* bore between 96 and 116 men, although the ship’s complement called for between 130 and 160 men.
 17. David Waldstreicher, ‘The Wheatleyan moment’, *EAS* 9 (2011), 534; Foy, ‘Unkle Somerset’s freedom’, 22.

from [their] Slavery'. And when the *Lawrence's* master shackled a black sailor to prevent his fleeing onto English soil, naval officers described the seaman as 'an object of very great compassion', empathetic language typically associated with abolitionists such as Granville Sharpe.¹⁸

In providing refuge for runaways the Royal Navy acted similarly to other European nations that utilized the labour of runaway slaves.¹⁹ To mention just two of the plethora of such instances: in the eighteenth century the Dutch and French made alliances with groups of black maroons who had escaped the Spaniards, while Spain provided refuge for slaves from British colonies.²⁰ Thus while the commencement of the American Revolution provided Lord Dunmore the opportunity to issue his November 1775 proclamation offering freedom to slaves 'willing to bear Arms' against the American rebels, he was hardly the first European governmental official to offer freedom to slaves to undercut enemy military efforts. English efforts to undermine the American rebellion broadened what had been a trickle of maritime fugitives crossing the Atlantic into a stream of hundreds of black seamen migrating to England.²¹

Blacks were attracted to the Royal Navy because it was a world in 'which a man's professional skill mattered more than his colour' and they found opportunities for independent lives.²² Contemporaneous statements of naval personnel support this view. In 1786 captain John Smith observed Africans 'particularly take easily to sea life, and become carpenters, caulkers, and very excellent seamen'.²³ Two decades earlier after impressing masterless blacks in the West Indies Admiral Colvill described them as having 'shared the same Fate with such freeborn White Men, as we could pick up'.²⁴ But were these observations in fact supported by the actual numbers of blacks who served in the Royal Navy and their treatment when employed by the navy?

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18. TNA, CO 5/148, f. 70–1, W. Cooley and W. Stiles to the Commissioners of Customs, 17 May 1776. The story of the *Lawrence's* enslaved mariners is detailed in Foy, 'Unkle Somerset's Freedom'.
 19. Mark A. Burkholder and Lyman L. Johnson, *Colonial Latin America* (8th edition, Oxford, 2012), 77; Jane Landers, 'Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose: A free black town in Spanish colonial Florida', *American Historical Review* 95 (1990), 9–30.
 20. David Brion Davis, 'Introduction', in Christopher Leslie Brown and Philip D. Morgan, eds., *Arming slaves: From classical times to the modern age* (New Haven, 2006), 1–13; Landers, 'Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose', 9–30; 'Neighbours at St. Augustine are very unkind in protecting and giving freedom to all slaves from South Carolina', *New York Evening Post*, 28 August 1749.
 21. Foy, 'Unkle Somerset's' freedom', 22–3; Pybus, *Epic journeys of freedom*, 9 and 22; Foy, 'Seeking freedom in the Atlantic world, 1713–1783', 75.
 22. Rodger, *Wooden world*, 159. American ship masters also recruited 'with more of an eye to muscle than complexion'. See W. Jeffery Bolster, '"To feel like a man": Black seamen in the northern states, 1800–1860', *Journal of American History* 76 (1990), 1179.
 23. J. S. Smith, *Letter from Capt J. S. Smith to the Revd Mr Hill on the State of the Negro Slaves*, ed., James Ramsey (London, 1786), 35.
 24. TNA, ADM 1/482, Alexander Colvill to the Admiralty, Spithead, 29 October 1762.

The *Black Mariner Database (BMD)* demonstrates the commonplace presence of blacks in the Atlantic and in the Royal Navy. The *BMD* contains information on more than 1300 black Royal Navy seamen. They include the twelve blacks among HMS *Lark*'s 100-man crew who died when the frigate sunk on 20 October 1743 during a storm off Jamaica.²⁵ Despite such instances of sizable number of blacks on naval ships, blacks did not comprise the 25% of eighteenth-century naval seamen that some historians have claimed.²⁶ Given that careful analysis has demonstrated approximately 3% of Bristol and Liverpool merchant crews in the late eighteenth-century were black mariners, claims that naval vessels carried eight times this number of black seamen should raise scepticism, and recently have.²⁷ Consideration of *BMD* data has led both Philip Morgan and Gordon Sayre to note that the 25% figure is not supported by careful review of Royal Navy records and was, in Morgan's terms, a 'fanciful estimate'. The *BMD* indicates that at no time during the American Revolution did seamen who could be readily identified as black, typically through their names, constitute more than 5% of Royal Navy crews (see Figure 1).²⁸ When one takes into account that prior to 1764 naval musters did not indicate places of birth and even thereafter did not always systemically note racial information these figures are undoubtedly low. Despite likely undercounting due to these factors, even if one were to double the percentages indicated in the *BMD*, blacks found on Royal Navy ships would not have exceeded 10% of naval crews in North America at any time during the American Revolution.²⁹ Thus, while it is clear that the navy offered blacks

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25. TNA, ADM 36/1692–1693, HMS *Lark* Muster Rolls, May 1743–October 1744; TNA, ADM 36/1699, HMS *Lark* Muster Rolls, May 1744–July 1750; TNA, ADM 33/387, HMS *Lark* Pay Book, May 1743–October 1744; TNA, ADM 33/413, HMS *Lark* Pay Book, May 1744–July 1750. Review of the *Lark*'s muster indicates that at least eleven other blacks had served on the vessel in the months preceding its demise.
 26. Scholars on both sides of the Atlantic have cited the 25% figure. James Walvin, *Black and white: The negro in English society 1555–1945* (London, 1973), 51–2 (Walvin indicated the figure should be treated with 'skepticism'); F. O. Shyllon, *Blacks in Britain*, 79–8 (Oxford, 1977); Ira Dye, 'Physical and social profiles of early American seafarers, 1812–1815', in Howell and Twomey, eds., *Jack Tar in history* (Fredericton, 1991); Paul Gilroy, *The black Atlantic* (London, 1993), 13; Kathleen Wilson, 'Citizenship, empire, and modernity in the English provinces, c. 1720–1790', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 29, No. 1 (1996), 69–96; Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many-Headed Hydra*, 311.
 27. Stephen Behrendt, 'Human capital in the British slave trade', in David Richardson, Suzanne Schwarz and Anthony Tibbles, eds., *Liverpool and transatlantic slavery* (Liverpool, 2007), 78–9.
 28. Philip D. Morgan, 'Black experiences in Britain's maritime world', in David Cannadine, ed., *Empire, the sea and global history: Britain's maritime world, c. 1763–c. 1840* (New York, 2007), 131, n25; Gordon Sayre, 'Renegades from Barbary: The transnational turn in captivity studies', *American Literary History* 22, No. 2 (2010), 357–8.
 29. Time and location greatly affected blacks' presence in naval crews. They comprised increasingly greater percentages of crews in the later decades of the eighteenth century and were far more prevalent in American than European waters. *BMD*; Jerney Popkin, 'Sailors

Figure 1. Blacks on Royal Navy ships, North America, 1775–1783.

Sources: Muster Rolls, Pay Rolls & Pay Tickets (TNA, ADM 33, 34 and 36) from two randomly-selected vessels each year.

considerable opportunities for independent lives, particularly in the western Atlantic, it also needs to be noted that the percentage of blacks in the navy while generally higher than for merchant ships was in many instances not significantly greater. With identifiable blacks at that time generally not comprising more than 5% of naval crews on the North American station, one needs to be cautious about claiming that the Royal Navy was an ‘island of liberty’ for blacks as opposed to reflecting racial attitudes common among British subjects in the regions the navy operated.³⁰

The Admiralty’s desire to keep slaves off the decks of its ships led it to order naval officers to discharge slaves to their ‘proper’ masters.³¹ This did not keep individual officers from profiting from slave labour. Admiral Peter Warren, who owned at least nine slaves while in North America, employed them on his New York farm and to perform a wide variety of other tasks. He purchased slaves from naval officers, used them as security for debts and exported some when he moved from port to port.³²

and revolution: Naval mutineers in Saint-Domingue, 1790–93’, *French History* 26, No. 4 (2012), 465.

30. Edward Trelawny letter to Lords of Admiralty, TNA, ADM 1/3917, 21 December 1743; Charles R. Foy, ‘Ports of slavery, ports of freedom: How slaves used northern seaports’ maritime industry to escape and create trans-Atlantic identities’ (PhD dissertation, Rutgers University, May 2008), 350–1. British seamen often considered blacks ‘servile and inferior’. Arne Bialuschewsk, ‘Black people under the black flag: Piracy and the slave trade on the west coast of Africa’, *Slavery and Abolition* 29, No. 4 (2008), 469.
31. Maria Bollettino, ‘Slavery, war and Britain’s Atlantic Empire’ (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Texas, 2009), 167, quoting TNA, PRO 30/20/2, f. 136, Rodney’s ‘Order to Captain McCleverty’, 23 February 1762.
32. Julian Gwyn, *An Admiral for America: Sir Peter Warren: Vice Admiral of the Red, 1703–1752* (Gainesville, 2004), 168; *Boston Evening Post*, 31 July 1749.

Warren was hardly the only naval officer to own slaves. Service in the Americas offered naval officers opportunities to profit from black labour in a variety of ways. Some, including James Douglas, Commander of the West Indies fleet during the Seven Years' War, were known to have used slave mariners in their private ventures. When Douglas was short of seamen for his private sloops, he employed blacks, including free seamen captured as prisoners of war and condemned by British Vice-Admiralty Courts as prize goods.³³

Other officers, either through marriage to planters' daughters, their own ownership of plantations or hiring slaves to work on naval ships, had reasons to support enslavement of blacks. Officers' support of slavery resulted in circumstances such as those of Samuel, an able bodied seaman, entering onto HMS *Ludlow Castle* at English Harbour, Antigua on 11 March 1745. Three years later he died on board the naval vessel. Samuel's wages were paid to an 'Executor', indicating a willingness by some naval captains to hire slaves.³⁴ The Royal Navy also returned runaway slave mariners to their masters in the Americas. After New York slave John Incobs fled his master and made his way to England in 1763 he entered onto HMS *Garlands* as an able-bodied seaman and sailed west to Canada and then to New York. When the vessel arrived at New York Incobs was discharged, presumably into the hands of his former master, for 'being a slave'. In returning Incobs to his slave master naval officials acted no less harshly than colonial officials in the region, as well as British army officials, who ignored blacks' claims to freedom and returned runaways to their masters.³⁵ Similarly when the American ship *Confederacy* was captured in 1781 Black Jack was not treated as a prisoner of war along with his shipmates. Instead, six days after being captured the black seaman was discharged as 'Property of L. Marque'. The Incobs and Black Jack cases stand as reminders that the Royal Navy respected and felt bound by local customs and accordingly varied treatment of blacks within the British Empire. While

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33. Rodger, *Wooden world*, 159–60; Foy, 'Unkle Somerset's freedom', 23–4; S. D. Smith, *Slavery, family, and gentry capitalism in the British Atlantic: The world of the Lascelles, 1648–1834* (Cambridge, 2006), 117; Charles R. Foy, 'Eighteenth-century prize negroes: From Britain to America', *Slavery and Abolition* 31 (2010), 379–93; *Boston Gazette*, 13 September 1743 and 3 May 1773; *Federal Gazette and Philadelphia Daily Advertiser*, 25 December 1792. Naval personnel continued to own slaves until emancipation when forty naval officers received more than £92,000 for 6,800 emancipated slaves. Naval officers resisted calls for manumission and were insistent in quickly receiving compensation for emancipated slaves. Legacies of British slave-ownership. Available online <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs> [accessed 20 July 2015].
 34. TNA, ADM 36/1867, HMS *Ludlow Castle* Muster Rolls, 1748, 160. Slave masters in the Americas were known to have enlisted their slaves on naval ships. Kathleen Chater, *Untold histories: Black people in England and Wales during the period of the British slave trade, c. 1660–1807* (Manchester, 2009), 235; Marika Sherwood, 'And again, more on the Royal Navy', *Black and Asian Studies Association Newsletter* 39 (April 2004).
 35. Richard Newman, *The transformation of American abolitionism: Fighting slavery in the early Republic* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2002), 62; Donald F. Johnson, 'Failure of restored British rule in revolutionary Charleston', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 42 (2014), 25 and 28 (British officials appointed overseers to round up runaway slaves).

Incobs may have been 'free' in England the navy did not oppose his being re-enslaved on his return to New York.³⁶

Whatever the precise percentage of blacks among Royal Navy crews in the eighteenth century, the question remains whether these men received treatment equal to white sailors. Not inconsiderable numbers of black seamen were employed by the Royal Navy. Blacks' presence on naval vessels should not, however, be equated with them receiving equitable treatment. A close analysis of naval labour practices demonstrates that black tars were not treated similarly to white seamen when it came to positions assigned, promotion or pension benefits.³⁷

Black maritime workers, including skilled artisans such as shipwrights and ship carpenters, were commonplace in the western Atlantic. They worked in ports from Boston to Cartagena and were critical to Britain's and its European enemies' abilities to operate in the Americas. Their presence was regularly noted. Similarly, Virginian officials' glum observation in 1775 that many slaves who fled to British forces were 'pilots and other maritime workers', was but one of many such references to black mariners and maritime workers.³⁸ Yet despite the considerable numbers of black ship carpenters in northern ports there is not a single black ship carpenter among the 1300 identified black naval crew in the *BMD*.

The black Jamaican John Perkins served as a lieutenant commanding the schooner *Punch* in 1778–1779 and became a post captain in the 1790s. Perkins turns out to be exceptional amongst eighteenth-century black seamen; the *BMD* does not evidence another single black obtaining the rank of post captain and only two who were midshipmen.³⁹ Reasons other than race might explain this: high levels of illiteracy among black seamen, their lack of social connections and education 'appropriate for a gentleman',

36. TNA, ADM 36/7390, HMS *Garlands* Muster Roll, 1757–66; TNA, ADM 36/9578, HMS *Jersey* Muster Roll, 1781, 112. In contrast, in 1758 when a Maryland slave owner claimed William Stephens as his property, the Admiralty refused to release Stephens from naval service, perhaps an indication of the seaman's value during war: see Rodger, *Wooden world*, 113–37.

37. White sailors' race-based rhetoric may have resulted in black seamen being subjected to whippings by naval officers due to their perceived inferiority. Isaac Land, 'Customs of the sea: Flogging, empire and the "true British seaman", 1770–1870', *Interventions* 3 (2001), 183.

38. Jane G. Landers, *Atlantic creoles in the age of revolutions* (Cambridge, 2010), 250; G. Douglas Inglis, 'The Spanish naval shipyard at Havana in the eighteenth century', in Department of History, U.S. Naval Academy, eds., *New Aspects of Naval History: Selected Papers from the 5th Naval History Symposium* (Baltimore, 1986), 47–58; Evelyn Powell Jennings, 'War as the "forcing house of change": State slavery in late-eighteenth century Cuba', *WMQ* 62 (2005), 413; Foy, 'Ports of slavery, ports of freedom', 18, 28, 30, 143 and 253; Philip D. Morgan, *Slave counterpoint: Black culture in eighteenth-century Chesapeake and Low Country* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1998), 342; TNA, ADM 1/3917, Edward Trelawny Letter to Lords of Admiralty, 21 December 1743.

39. The most recent scholarship on midshipmen contains no references to blacks: see S. A. Cavell, *Midshipmen and quarterdeck boys in the British Navy, 1771–1831* (Woodbridge, 2012).

black tars typically being not well-versed in navigation, and their relatively short naval tenures.⁴⁰ Each of these factors greatly influenced naval promotions. Thus it may be that the lack of black officers was not due to their race. However, when one looks at the numbers of white working-class men who became officers there is a considerable disparity between the percentages of such whites and blacks who became officers, raising questions as to the paucity of black officers.

In a random sampling of 556 officers who passed the lieutenant's examination from 1775 to 1805 Evan Wilson found that 2% were of working-class background. Had a similar percentage of blacks passed the lieutenants' exam or been junior officers, we should have found twenty-six black officers in the *BMD*, rather than the seven we do find.⁴¹ And even though those from working-class backgrounds were promoted to post captain at a rate only 65% that of all officers, considerable numbers of working-class white seamen did move up the naval hierarchy. In contrast, Perkins, Barlow Fielding, two midshipmen, and three Senegalese junior officers are the only examples of identified black naval officers and none were commissioned after taking the lieutenant's exam.

Barlow Fielding serves as a good example that limits for black sailors in the Royal Navy were not solely due to illiteracy or lack of navigational skills. Fielding was a boatswain on HMS *Orepheus* off the Kent coast. In 1780 he requested a transfer. Captain Colpoys explained the request was due to the ship's crew having 'taken a Dislike to the man's Colour'. The captain further believed it was 'very difficult, and even impossible ... for me to remove a Particular Prejudice' among the ship's crew. Instead of the requested transfer two months later Fielding entered Haslar Hospital. While their talents enabled Fielding and John Perkins to become officers, being black clearly acted as a bar to their progress in the officer ranks.⁴²

40. Antonio Bly, "'Pretends he can read": Runaways and literacy in colonial America, 1730–1776', *EAS* 6 (2008), 269–271; Michael Lewis, *A social history of the Navy, 1793–1815* (London, 1960), 38–47 and 202–27; Ellen Gill, "'Children of the service": Paternalism, patronage and friendship in the Georgian Navy', *Journal of Maritime Research* 15 (2013), 161; Evan Wilson, 'The education and careers of naval officers in the eighteenth century: An international perspective', *Journal of Maritime Research* 17 (2015), 30. Admiral Collingwood believed 'interest' resulted in 'a great many indolent, half-qualified' officers: see William Clark Russell, *The life of Admiral Lord Collingwood* (London, 1891), 93. Recent scholarship suggests that the navy was more of a meritocracy than either Lewis or Collingwood would suggest: see Evan Wilson, 'Social background and promotion prospects in the Royal Navy, 1775–1815' (paper presented at 'Navy and Nation' conference, National Maritime Museum (NMM), Greenwich, United Kingdom, 25 July 2013). Few blacks served in the Royal Navy for the decade or more typically required for one to progress from lieutenant to post captain. *BMD*; Thomas Nigel Ralph Wareham, 'Frigate captains of the Royal Navy, 1793–1815' (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Exeter, 1999), 51–2.

41. Wilson, 'Social background and promotion prospects'.

42. Morgan, 'Black experiences in Britain's maritime world', 122–3. The correspondence of MP Henry Brougham indicates that the Admiralty issued a directive early in the nineteenth century 'to dismiss from the service all Midshipmen, surgeons etc. of colour': Henry Brougham Papers, Duke University Rubenstein Library. I thank Marika Sherwood for this reference.

For seamen, one of the benefits that naval service offered that other types of maritime work often did not was retirement and disability benefits.⁴³ The need for such benefits is apparent from Princess Caroline's remark upon being greeted by Greenwich pensioners: 'Are all Englishmen missing an arm or a leg?'⁴⁴ John Thurston's drawing of a black Greenwich pensioner along the Thames might lead one to believe blacks regularly received benefits under the Seamen's Sixpence Program. In fact, this unnamed pensioner and Briton Hammond, an American black seaman who wrote of receiving a pension from the hospital, were exceptional.⁴⁵ Blacks are conspicuously absent from pension registers: there is not a single identifiable black among the Chatham Chest's 3320 pension entries for 1780.⁴⁶ As Mary Beth Norton has observed, black applicants seeking compensation for service during the American war faced scepticism on the part of British officials who often believed there were 'Suspicious Circumstances' behind blacks' pension applications. British officials believed that many black applicants evidenced 'very ill grace' as it was presumed they had gained their liberty by fleeing onto naval vessels. The handful of blacks granted pensions were, as was Shadrack Furman, having been whipped five hundred times by American forces, able to demonstrate extraordinary service.⁴⁷

To receive pension benefits a seaman had to submit an application in London. Most British black seamen resided in the western Atlantic and were rarely able to travel to London to claim their benefits. Just as New England fishermen in the pre-Revolutionary era believed they would never be admitted into the Greenwich Hospital, blacks with naval service were

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43. British seamen had six pence deducted monthly from their wages to support the Greenwich Hospital. Historians disagree as to the benefits merchant seamen received. Conrad Dixon contends the Seamen's Sixpence program was a 'successful confidence trick' whereby merchant mariners' contributions underwrote benefits for naval seamen, while N. A. M. Rodger believes 'most professional seafarers could establish some naval service without difficulty'. See Conrad Dixon, 'Seamen's Sixpence', *Mariner's Mirror* LXX (1984), 433–4; and N. A. M. Rodger, 'Seamen's Sixpence', *Mariner's Mirror* LXXI (1985), 232–3. Ralph Davis believes that in the first half of the eighteenth century merchant sailors 'received no appreciable benefits from Greenwich Hospital'. See Ralph Davis, 'Seamen's Sixpences: An index of commercial activities', *Economia* XXIII (1956), 328–43. See Charles R. Foy, 'Sewing a safety net: Scarborough's maritime community, 1747–1765', *International Journal of Maritime History* XXIV (2012), 1–28 for an analysis of the benefits the sixpence programme provided for one port's sailors.
 44. 'Greenwich Hospital in the distance and the "Augusta" royal yacht, 5 April 1795', NMM Collections. Available online <http://collections.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/106349.html> [accessed 20 July 2015].
 45. NMM, PAH3303, John Thurston, 'Greenwich Pensioners', c. 1800; Briton Hammond, *Narrative of the uncommon sufferings and surprizing deliverance of Briton Hammond, a negro man, servant to General Winslow of Marshfield, in New-England; who returned to Boston, after having been absent almost thirteen years, etc.* (Boston, 1760), 12.
 46. TNA, ADM 73, Greenwich Hospital Entry Books, 1775–1783; TNA, ADM 82/95–96, Chatham Chest Registers, 1775–76, 1780, 100.
 47. Mary Beth Norton, 'The fate of some black loyalists', *Journal of Negro History* 58 (1973), 407–9; TNA, AO 12/99/85, Memorial of George Miller; TNA, AO 12/99/93, Memorial of John Jackson and Decision; TNA, AO 12/99/83, Memorial of John Jackson and Decision, 3 September 1783.

also largely excluded from Greenwich and Chatham Chest benefits; from 1749 to 1763 only four out of 3002 Greenwich pensioners were from the Americas.⁴⁸ For the many British mariners on both sides of the Atlantic who worked far from London, there were considerable practical hurdles to maintaining pension benefits. When Rhode Island sailor Anthony Holden received an eight pounds annual pension for the loss of his right arm the pension was conditioned upon Holden 'appear[ing] in Person once every Five Years, at Expence, to Receive the Same'. Destitute, Holden was compelled to apply to the Rhode Island legislature to pay the five to eight pounds cost to travel to London to renew his pension.⁴⁹

The pension system also disparately impacted black dockyard workers. In 1763 to bolster naval dockyards' efficiency John Perceval, the First Lord of the Admiralty, undertook to ensure that adequate numbers of shipwrights were employed. To encourage artificers to work in the naval dockyards despite lower wages than those offered by private shipyards, Lord Egmont established a system of superannuation under which dockyard employees could receive pensions based on good service.⁵⁰ While this system increased the number of shipwrights, blacks were rarely employed in naval dockyards in the United Kingdom, and thus almost never were the beneficiaries of Egmont's pension reform.

If opportunities for blacks aboard naval ships were restricted and inequitable, were employment opportunities for blacks any better ashore in naval installations? Analysis of operations of naval installations in Great Britain, New York, Antigua, and Senegambia indicates that the Royal Navy's treatment of black maritime workers differed significantly based on local conditions and practices.

Royal dockyards in the United Kingdom

Naval dockyards were large industrial enterprises. In the 1770s their total work force exceeded eight thousand, making them the largest employer in the British Empire and

48. Martin Wilcox, 'The poor "decayed" seamen of Greenwich Hospital, 1705–1763', *International Journal of Maritime History* XXV (2013), 72; Christopher P. Magra, "'Soldiers ... bred to the sea": Maritime Marblehead, Massachusetts and the origins and progress of the American Revolution', *New England Quarterly* 77 (2004), 543–4.

49. Isaac Land, 'The many-tongued hydra: Sea talk, maritime culture, and Atlantic identities, 1700–1850', in Glenn Clark, Judith Owens and Greg Smith, eds., *City limits: Perspectives on the historical European city* (Montreal, 2010), 414–15; Rhode Island State Archives, Reel 8, p. 90 and Reel 11, pp. 4–5, Petition of Anthony Holden, 1748; Gary M. Walton and Hugh Rockoff, *History of the America economy* (Fort Worth, 1998), 28; Farley Grubb, 'The transatlantic market for British convict labour', *Economic History Association* 60 (2000), 98–9. Difficulties accessing pension benefits were not limited to seamen in the western Atlantic. 'The location of the majority of aged and infirm seamen' resulted in inequitable distribution of benefits even among sailors in the British Isles. Conrad Hepworth Dixon, 'Seamen and the law: An examination of the impact of legislation on the British Merchant Seaman's lot, 1588–1918' (Unpublished PhD thesis, University College London, 1981), 22; Wilcox, 'Poor "decayed" seamen', 72–3.

50. Wilkinson, *British Navy and the state*; Roger Morriss, 'The government and community: The changing context of labour relations, 1770–1830', in Kenneth Lunn and Ann Day, eds., *History of work and labour relations in the royal dockyards* (London, 1999), 22.

the backbone of British imperial power.⁵¹ Given the considerable numbers of black seamen and maritime workers in the British Isles, blacks' maritime experience elsewhere in the Atlantic, and the importance of dockyards to operate at peak efficiency, one would have expected to have found considerable numbers of black maritime workers in royal dockyards in the United Kingdom. This however was not the case.

Precise data concerning blacks' occupational backgrounds between 1754 and 1783 is unavailable, as most official records did not note individuals' skin colour, race or place of birth. But available information does indicate a considerable number of British blacks had maritime experience. Kathleen Chater has found that 'most black people' migrating to England entered as domestic servants or as sailors and blacks were 'strong[ly] represented' among British seafarers.⁵² Norma Meyers' review of the Proceedings of the Old Bailey and Newgate Calendars indicates that 26% of black males whose occupation was noted were seaman. In many American ports from which black Loyalists fled 'demand for seamen and for maritime artisans always outstripped supply' resulting in a considerable black maritime workforce. Moreover, 'about half' of those who after the American Revolution received benefits from London's Committee for the Relief of the Black Poor had sea experience. The widespread presence of black seamen in England is also apparent from chapbooks' references to these men.⁵³

John Thomas and other blacks regularly worked on British quays and shipyards. Despite the maritime background of many blacks few of them worked in naval dockyards in the United Kingdom.⁵⁴ For example, a review of Portsmouth pay records discloses only a handful of blacks among the more than 2000 workers in the yard during the American Revolution. This is surprising given that difficulties hiring sufficient numbers of workers led naval officials to 'not to be too scrupulous' in hiring dockyard workers.⁵⁵

51. John Brewer, *The sinews of power: War, money, and the English state, 1688–1783* (London, 1989), 28; Rodger, *Command of the ocean*, 189.
52. Cassandra Pybus, 'Interrogating the book of negroes: Reconstructing an enslaved family in pre-revolutionary Virginia' (paper presented at McNeil Centre, Philadelphia, PA, 14 November 2012); Kathleen Chater, *Black people in England, 1660–1807* (Manchester, 2009), 68 and 80. Chater has found that of 212 blacks appearing in Old Bailey Proceedings, forty-three 'were, or appear to have been mariners'. Email from Chater to author, 15 August 2013.
53. Norma Myers, *Reconstructing the black past: Blacks in Britain 1780–1830* (London, 1996), 68; Isaac Land, 'Bread and arsenic: Citizenship from the bottom up in Georgian London', *Journal of Social History* 38 (2005), 89; 'The African widow', in *Chapbooks: A collection of religious and moral chapbooks, published at one penny each, including many of the Cheap Repository and the Religious Tract Society* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1800), chapter 40.
54. Old Bailey Online. Available online <http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?id=t17861213-27-defend283&div=t17861213-27#highlight> [accessed 20 July 2015]; 'Wapping Bristol', Nicholas Pocock, NMM BCM, c. 1760 (Black maritime workers in Bristol's Sydenham Trust's shipyard); TNA, ADM 36/3023, HMS *Rose* Muster, 1740 (no blacks among forty-five caulkers repairing the *Rose*).
55. J. M. Haas, 'Work and authority in the royal dockyards from the seventeenth century to 1870', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 124 (1980), 421; R. J. B. Knight, 'Sandwich, Middleton and dockyard appointments', *Mariner's Mirror* 57 (1971), 178; R. J. B. Knight, 'The Royal Navy's recovery after the early phase of the American Revolutionary War', in George J. Andreopoulos et al., eds., *The aftermath of defeat: Societies, armed forces, and the challenge of recovery* (New Haven, CT, 1994), 13.

It is likely that the lack of blacks at the Portsmouth dockyard was due to a number of its workers coming from smaller dockyards, the dockyard's failure to effectively utilize resources, close working relations and an apprenticeship with an artisan being key to becoming a dockyard worker, and whites' resistance to working alongside blacks.⁵⁶ British ports also often imposed occupational limitations on blacks, such as barring free-men hiring black apprentices. In doing so local authorities reinforced white workers' perceptions of racial differences.⁵⁷

Blacks also appear to have been employed in small numbers in other Royal Navy dockyards in Britain. Thus, in August 1745 when 102 workmen from the Deptford yard came aboard HMS *Norwich* to assist getting the ship from Woolwich to Longreach, not one was a black. Similarly when thirty-two riggers came on board the *Norwich* from Deptford the same month none was black and two months later when thirteen caulkers came on board not a single caulker was black.⁵⁸

Did the Royal Navy in its operations in the Americas and Africa similarly not employ black maritime workers? An analysis of the dockyards and naval operations in New York, Antigua and Senegambia demonstrates that black maritime workers were employed in all three. But in each of these regions blacks were treated differently than whites. Differences in the total numbers of blacks, the positions they were assigned, how they were treated when employed and the inequities in their treatment resulted mainly from local conditions and cultural practices that the navy did not challenge, and from the navy's desperate need for maritime labour in wartime and in locations where white artisanal labour was not readily available.⁵⁹

New York dockyard

Prior to the American Revolution, New York lacked a royal dockyard. With the British occupation of New York in 1776 the Admiralty ordered the creation of a dockyard in the city to become the navy's principal North American repair facility.⁶⁰ Although critical to British military operations, the dockyard, located on the East River below Colears Hook, suffered from a lack of resources. When Admiral Graves brought his fleet to New York in September 1781 the dockyard 'proved utterly unable' to quickly repair the vessels, as it lacked 'almost every article of vital necessity'.⁶¹ Notwithstanding these shortcomings,

56. TNA, ADM 1113-5, Portsmouth Yard Pay Books, 1776-79; R. J. B. Knight, 'The dockyards in England during the American War of Independence' (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 1972), 4; Knight, 'Sandwich, Middleton and dockyard appointments', 180.

57. Jeremy White, *A great and monstrous thing: London in the eighteenth century* (London, 2012), 223.

58. TNA, ADM 36/2281, HMS *Norwich* Musters, 1745.

59. The inequities in the Royal Navy's treatment of blacks appear to have also extended to its victualing practices. Admiral Stewart noted that blacks in the Port Antonio naval yard 'complain that allowances is too small': TNA, ADM 106/3544, Letter from Rear Admiral Stewart, 9 June 1731. I thank Vincent Brown for this reference.

60. Julian Gwyn, *Ashore and afloat: The British Navy and the Halifax naval yard before 1820* (Ottawa, 2004), 23.

61. David Hannay, ed., *Letters written by Sir Samuel Hood (Viscount Hood) in 1781-2-3* (vol. 3) (London, 1895), 301 and 319-22.

as the navy's main North American dockyard New York's dockyard was critical to the Royal Navy's operations against the American rebels.

During the Revolution the New York dockyard's monthly workforce averaged 244 employees. In a typical month there was only one black worker, and in many months no blacks worked in the yard. From 1777 to 1783 a total of ten blacks, or 0.4% of the yard's workforce, worked in the dockyard, all of who appear to have been free. Did blacks comprise only 0.4% of those qualified in New York City and nearby communities to work at the dockyard? While a definite answer to this question cannot be given due to the lack of an occupational census for this period, several factors persuasively indicate that black maritime workers were significantly under-represented in the dockyard's labour force.⁶² First, prior to the Revolution blacks comprised 14.3% of the city's population and between 10% and 20% of New York's maritime workforce. Advertisements for the sale of slave ship caulkers and carpenters were commonplace.⁶³ Second, upon British forces occupying New York considerable numbers of white artisans fled the city. During the Revolution many employers, including the British military, noted their reliance upon black workers. And third, maritime workers and mariners were one of the largest occupational groups among the hundreds of fugitive slaves who fled to New York during the Revolution.⁶⁴ Thus, blacks appear to have been statistically under-represented in the dockyard's workforce and there is no readily apparent business explanation for such low levels of black employment. The experience of the black naval seaman John Mosley appears to have been typical of blacks in New York. Although Mosley had worked for 'many years' in New York shipyards he never worked in the King's dockyard.⁶⁵

The inequitable treatment of blacks in the dockyard was not limited to their under-representation in the yard's workforce. Black workers in the dockyard also did not receive regular work, were generally assigned only low skill jobs and were denied less strenuous work that enabled whites to work longer hours. Dublin Negro was the sole black worker employed in the dockyard for more than a year. Cicero, Benjamin and the handful of other black workers in the dockyard were only employed for several months. Thus, in contrast to white workers who were regularly employed for extended periods of time, blacks could not rely upon dockyard work to sustain themselves.

62. In assessing claims of disparate impact, courts compare an employer's workforce with the numbers of available protected class workers within a relevant labour market. Thus, when considering if the practices of a New York sheet metal union had a disparate impact upon non-whites, courts looked to the percentage of non-whites within the New York Metropolitan Statistical Area who had sufficient skills to enter the trade. *EEOC v. Local 638 ... Local 28 of the Sheet Metal Workers International Union*, 532 F. 2d 821 (2d. Cir. 1975), 831–2.

63. Foy, 'Ports of slavery, ports of freedom', 27–9; *New-York Mercury*, 11 July 1763; *New-York Gazette & Weekly Mercury*, 20 and 27 June, 4 and 11 July 1768, 29 October and 5 November 1770.

64. Judith Van Buskirk, *Generous enemies: Patriots and loyalists in revolutionary New York* (Philadelphia, 2002), 151; Foy, 'Ports of slavery, ports of freedom', 353; Foy, 'Seeking freedom in the Atlantic world', 47–9; Graham Hodges, *The Black Loyalist Directory: African Americans in exile after the American Revolution* (New York, 1996).

65. Pybus, *Epic voyages*, 85; TNA, ADM 42/2341–2, 1777–1783, New York Dockyard Pay lists.

In the Chesapeake, from which large numbers of fugitives fled to New York, blacks had been regularly employed as sawyers. Despite the presence of this experienced black sawyer workforce in New York not a single black sawyer was ever employed in the dockyard. Instead, black sawyers such as the twenty-year-old Joseph were forced to find work elsewhere.⁶⁶ High demand for their skills resulted in sawyers working the longest hours and receiving the highest pay among all New York dockyard's workers, an average of more than eleven pounds per month, double the wages of most local artisans. Blacks' exclusion from service as sawyers in the dockyard kept them from work that held a strong possibility of transforming their lives.

The absence of blacks in the dockyard was most notable among the yard's caulkers. In many other Atlantic ports, including Charleston, Antigua, Port Royal and Senegambia, large numbers of blacks were among caulkers and carpenters temporarily assigned onto naval vessels to make repairs. It is therefore remarkable to find not a single black among the caulkers and carpenters sent 'from the [New York] Yard' to do repairs on naval ships. Instead, white caulkers, such as members of the Harbour family who were among a group of eleven white caulkers who came aboard HMS *Fowey* in 1775 to make repairs, were hired instead.⁶⁷

As a labourer Dublin Negro made slightly more than four pounds per month, a living wage but less than 40% of sawyers' pay. Dublin's wages for his daily shift were, however, similar to white labourers' wages. He also worked a number of extra shifts similar to that of whites, an indication that black workers may have been treated equitably. However, analysis of which labourers received night watch work indicates that total wages blacks received is a misleading statistic. Watchmen, although not provided guns, had authority to control access to the yard in the evening. They were also paid two-thirds wages for work that did not entail the manual labour of daytime work. While blacks were never assigned night watches whites averaged more than five night watches every two months. As a result, whites not working extra workdays often received pay on level with Dublin's without the hard physical labour he performed.⁶⁸

What caused blacks' unequal access to jobs at the dockyard and inequitable treatment? In the absence of records in which white workers and naval officials indicated their intent in maintaining a largely white workforce in the dockyard firm conclusions as to the reasons for the workforce's imbalance cannot be reached. However, circumstantial evidence does indicate that three factors appear to have caused the disparate treatment of black maritime workers: a desire of New York maritime artisans to maintain a monopoly over dockyard work; white workers' desire to resist blacks encroaching on their trades; and the lack of external economic forces that might have compelled dockyard officials to hire blacks.

In the decades preceding the American Revolution, New York building-trade workers regularly attempted to bar outsiders from working in the city. In 1747 they petitioned

66. 'Black loyalists'. Available online <http://www.blackloyalist.info> [accessed 20 July 2015].

67. TNA, ADM 36/7506, HMS *Fowey* Muster, 1775–76.

68. TNA, ADM 42/2341–2, New York Dockyard Pay lists, 1777–1783. Night shift assignments were also regularly offered in other royal yards: see Lunn and Day, *History of work and labour relations in the royal dockyards*, 14.

Governor Clinton to take action against Jersey workers offering to work at lower wages. In 1763 New York ship carpenters refused to work on transports unless the mayor limited licenses for such work to city residents. Six years later carpenters complained to the Common Council of country carpenters creating unfair competition. This desire to maintain a monopoly over artisanal work continued after the war. In 1784 ship carpenters complained that non-New York competitors were 'hurtful'.⁶⁹ In the dockyard during the Revolution this desire for monopolistic control over maritime occupations appears to have been effectuated by an informal referral system. Dockyard pay records list more than sixty separate groups of white family members. It therefore likely that similar to many twentieth-century construction unions, whose members relatives received preferential access to well-paying jobs, whites in the dockyard referred their relatives for jobs in the yard and naval officials relied upon such referrals in hiring new workers.⁷⁰ Thus, it appears white maritime artisans may have used their economic power to exclude outsiders, including blacks, from jobs at the dockyard during the Revolution. If they had done so it would have been consistent with their pattern of conduct over the preceding thirty years.⁷¹

Municipal regulations limiting access to artisanal work also helped shape white labourers' ideology of racial superiority. In the decades prior to the Revolution white workers undertook to resist black encroachment into their trades. For example, as early as 1691 New York's Common Council decreed 'no slave be suffered to work ... as a porter'.⁷² In 1737 artificers complained that the 'pernicious custom of breeding slaves to trades' resulted in white tradesmen being forced to leave the city. Coopers complained that merchants' slaves built barrels for sale to others.⁷³ And in the aftermath of the 1741 slave conspiracy trials in which slave water carriers were deemed to have played central roles in the alleged conspiracy, legislation barring blacks from obtaining water at any well other than the closest neighbourhood well was enacted. As a result whites soon dominated the water transport trade.⁷⁴

69. Richard B. Morris, *Government and labor in early America* (New York, 1965), 150–1.

70. 'Guild-like' referral systems were the means by which some New York construction unions excluded blacks from membership until the 1970s. *EEOC v. Local 638*, 532 F. 2d 821 (2d Cir. 1976); *Rios v. Enterprise Ass'n Steamfitters Local 638 of U.A.*, 501 F. 2d 622 (2d Cir. 1974).

71. Gary S. Becker, *The economics of discrimination* (Chicago, 1971), 40.

72. David Roediger *The wages of whiteness: Race and the making of the American working class* (New York, 1991), 13; Herbert Levi Osgood, Austin Baxter Keep and Charles Alexander Nelson, eds., *Minutes of the Common Council, 1675–1776* (New York, 1905), 1 and 136–7; Milton M. Klein, *The Empire State: A history of New York* (Ithaca, 2001), 155–6; Foy, 'Ports of slavery, ports of freedom', 353.

73. Morris, *Government and labor in early America*, 183; Hodges, *Root & Branch*, 83. Similar petitions were submitted in Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Barbados, and Nevis. Graham Russell Hodges, *Root & Branch: African Americans in New York and East Jersey, 1613–1863* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1999), 83; *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial* (London, 1860), vol. 10, 607 and vol. 11, 248.

74. *New-York Weekly-Journal*, 29 June 1741; William Ingraham Kip, *Historical notes of the family Kip of Kipsbury and Kip's Bay* (Albany, 1871), 27; Jill LePore, *New York burning: Liberty, slavery, and conspiracy in eighteenth-century Manhattan* (New York, 2005), 144–5.

Although prior to the Revolution one out of every five New York whites owned a slave the war appears to have provided maritime workers with a unique opportunity to break white masters' reliance upon enslaved maritime labour. Rather than finding work in other colonies, as some coopers had been compelled to prior to the war, white workers were able to preserve their privileged place in the maritime marketplace. Their ability to exclude blacks is particularly noteworthy when contrasted with other whites' efforts to do so. In the same time period blacks were being largely excluded from the dockyard, fifty blacks were able to obtain carting licenses, an occupation whites traditionally fought black participation in, due to scarcity of white labourers in the city.⁷⁵ Thus, while over the course of the eighteenth century New York tradesmen's claims for special privileges diminished, during the Revolution white maritime tradesmen were able to maintain status by separating themselves from black labourers. In doing so, New York white dockyard workers acted in a manner similar to that of their counterparts in Halifax who enforced a 'race and colour bar'.⁷⁶

Although British military authorities in New York were willing to hire blacks to serve as wagoners and seamen they were apparently unwilling to take affirmative steps to employ blacks at the dockyard. As the sole naval dockyard in the region and New York lacking a shipyard in which a largely black artisan workforce was efficiently utilized, there was no external pressure on dockyard officials to hire blacks or to pay them equal wages.⁷⁷ As a result, although many blacks fled to New York and found freedom there very few were employed in the King's Dockyard and those that did received lesser pay than their white colleagues.

English Harbour

The naval dockyard at English Harbour could not have operated without black labour. To enable naval ships to enter the harbour Antigua's legislature annually authorized hiring slaves, typically not less than thirty per year, for 'cleaning and deepening' English Harbour. From the very beginnings of the dockyard in the 1720s black men were put to work building facilities there. They were also used to unload ships, stow stores and to serve as boats' crew for naval officials.⁷⁸ Harsh tropical conditions caused the decay of

75. Van Buskirk, *Generous enemies*, 142; Foy, 'Seeking freedom in the Atlantic world', 46–77; Morris, *Naval Power and British Culture*, 38 (shipwrights left royal yards for higher wages in merchant yards). How blacks obtained governmental permission to be carters again is not known: see Graham Russell Hodges, *Slavery, freedom & culture* (Armonk, 1998), 24.

76. Christopher Tomlins, *Freedom bound: Law, labour, and civic identity in colonizing English America, 1580–1865* (Cambridge, 2010), 294; Gwyn, *Ashore and afloat*, 120.

77. Gary S. Becker, 'The economic way of looking at life', *Economic Sciences* (1992), 40.

78. Desmond Nicholson, *The story of English Harbour* (St. John's Antigua, 1991); TNA, ADM 241/2, Leeward Station to Antigua Navy Yard, 18 February 1779, Antigua Naval Yard Correspondence (hereafter ANYC) In-Letters; 20 September 1779 letter from Thomas Collingwood to Anthony Munton, TNA, ADM 241/1, 16; Leeward Station to Antigua Naval Yard, 1 January 1780, ANYC In-Letters; 8 November 1780, Loforey Commissioner of His Majesty's Navy at Antigua to Naval Officer of His Majesty's Yard Antigua, 26. I thank Robert Wilson, University of Exeter, for providing me with the ANYC materials.

facilities requiring frequent repairs, a task largely performed by black workers.⁷⁹ This work by blacks enabled the dockyard to serve as the hub of British naval operations in the West Indies during the American War.

Although largely a plantation economy, Antigua also had a vibrant maritime sector that employed significant numbers of seamen and maritime workers. Black seamen comprised one-third of the island's mariners. The presence of black sailors was so ubiquitous that in 1722 white seamen petitioned the island's legislature to end blacks' employment on Antiguan vessels.⁸⁰ Due to a lack of white seamen the petition did not have its desired effect. Instead, throughout the eighteenth century Sir William Codrington and other Antiguan planters employed 'Negro Sailors' on their plantations' sloops. Joe, who worked as a slave sailor on a sloop in 1715, the five slave sailors employed for all of 1758 and other black seamen played critical roles in creating wealth for white Antiguans.⁸¹

Black workers were critical to the refitting of naval vessels. The limited numbers of white artificers at English Harbour reflects that Antigua was 'one of the sikliest places in the Caribbean'.⁸² Whites' reluctance to work for the navy in Antigua is evident from the dockyard's pay records. For example, in January 1756 only a solitary white blacksmith was among those employed at the careening wharf.⁸³ Officials recognized repair of naval vessels and facilities 'require[ed] the frequent Employ of Negroe Caulkers and Masons', with hundreds of blacks working in the dockyard, as well as being temporarily placed on men-of-war to reseal ships' hulls.⁸⁴ By 1780 it is estimated that seven out of ten workers in the dockyard were blacks, a few free, but the vast majority of them enslaved.⁸⁵

79. Gwyn, *An Admiral for America: Sir Peter Warren*, 49; TNA, ADM 106/1284, 20, Anthony Munton letter to Navy Board, 23 March 1765; ANYC 17690815, Navy Officers' Letters, Leeward Station to Navy Officer, Antigua, 15 August 1769; TNA, ADM 106/1284, 16, Commissioner Moutray, 10 March 1785; TNA, ADM 241/2, 24, letter to Navy Board, 31 December 1797; TNA, ADM 241/2, 7, letter of Commissioners of Navy to Navy Board, 1 August 1799.

80. David Barry Gaspar, *Bondsmen and rebels: A study of master-slave relations in Antigua* (Baltimore, 1985), 110–13.

81. Gaspar, *Bondsmen and rebels*, 30 and 287, n51.

82. Crew, *Yellow Jack and the worm*, 254. See Gabriel Bray, 'A ship hove down and burnt off', Probably English Harbour, Antigua, NMM, BHC1116 for a depiction of the largely black dockyard workforce.

83. NMM, ADM/B/152/9, Navy Board to Admiralty Board, Navy Board Out Letters, 1 January 1756. Other British West Indies colonies also relied upon black maritime labour. By 1773, approximately 15% of Jamaican slaves were engaged in maritime trades, many at naval facilities. Baugh, *Naval administration*, 328, 332, 338–9 and 394–9; TNA, ADM 36/3675, HMS *Spence* Muster Roll, 1736–38. Similarly, the navy regularly used slave caulkers in St. Lucia. NMM, ADM/B/12, 3, Admiral Davers letter to the Navy Office, 3 November 1743; NMM, ADM/B/14, 1, Admiral Davers to Navy Board, 17 January 1757; Duncan Grant Crewe, 'British naval administration in the West Indies, 1739–1748' (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Liverpool, 1978), Appendix A; NMM, ADM/L/G/127, Logbook of HMS *Grafton*, 1780–81.

84. TNA, ADM 241/1, 2, William Hotham to Officers of His Majesty's Yard, 19 February 1779; TNA, ADM 241/1, 3, William Hotham to Anthony Munston, 28 February 1779.

85. Nicholson, *Story of English Harbour*, 8.

The 'heaving down' of a naval vessel in English Harbour typically involved large gangs of workers. Two examples illustrate this. In September 1757 HMS *Amazon* came into the dockyard needing a significant overhaul. Neptune and 209 other blacks worked on the ship through the fall and into the early months of 1758. Almost all were caulkers, even the man named Carpenter.⁸⁶ When in September 1780 HMS *Suffolk* arrived with its crew 'fatigued and worn out' from long hours of manning the pumps and the ship 'very leaky', John Laforey directed 'as many Negroes to be hired as can be got until there is a sufficient Number procured for the Purposes of Pumping and assisting in cleaning her of her Guns, Stores and Ballast'.⁸⁷

In addition to the use of King's Negroes, slaves owned by the crown, dockyard officials often had to hire slaves from local planters to quickly return naval vessels to sea. Not only were black caulkers the backbone of English Harbour's workforce but during war time emergencies they were regularly required to 'work Double Time'. Such assignments of large numbers of black caulkers and labourers were commonplace between 1754 and 1783.⁸⁸

Blacks were not, however, employed in all the positions at English Harbour. Skilled artisanal positions were typically reserved for whites. Although blacks such as Alarm and Ham worked as sailmakers, and Stokes and Vulcan worked as shipwrights, the majority of skilled positions were filled by whites such as the Englishman John Baxter. Blacks were employed in such jobs only when 'white artificers [were] very much wanted'.⁸⁹ Thus, while English Harbour officials did employ black skilled artisans they did so reluctantly and generally only when whites were unavailable. With blacks dominating the ranks of caulkers and labourers there was a de facto segregation in the dockyard's workforce.⁹⁰ Yet the lack of white workers resulted in blacks being used in the dockyard's night watch. The watch typically consisted of 'six White and nine Black Men, the latter at that time being taken from the established Labourers'.⁹¹ Thus, unlike in

86. TNA, ADM 36/4823, HMS *Amazon*, 1759–60.

87. TNA, ADM 241/1, 39, John Laforey to Naval Officer of His Majesty's Yard Antigua, 17 September 1780.

89. TNA, ADM 36/9748, HMS *Champion* Muster, 1782. Examples of caulkers working 'double time' include ANYC 17790511 ANYC In-Letters, Leeward Station to Antigua Naval Yard, 20 April 1779; ANYC 17790917 ANYC In-Letters, Leeward Station to Antigua Naval Yard, 20 September 1779.

89. TNA, ADM 106/1151, Report of Adm. Tyrell, 1 November 1765, 26 July 1767, 5–5A; ANYC In-Letters, Leeward Station to Antigua Naval Yard, 7 June 1770; TNA, ADM 106/1284, List of Artificers entered, Antigua Yard, 1 July 1785; TNA, ADM 106/1151/5, 11 March 1765; NMM, ADM 354/200/261, Philip Stephens letter, 11 December 1779.

90. TNA, ADM 106/1284, List of Artificers entered, Antigua Yard, 17 January 1785. Naval maritime workers in Jamaica were also segregated. See Nicholas Rogers, 'Archipelagic encounters: War, race and labor in American-Caribbean waters', in Felicity A. Nussbaum, ed., *The global eighteenth century* (Baltimore, MD, 2003), 219; Baugh, *Naval administration*, 361.

91. TNA, ADM 241/2, 72, letter of Commissioners of Navy to Navy Board, 1 August 1799; ANYC In-Letters, Commissioner Laforey to the Naval Officer, Antigua, 30 March 1780.

New York, due to the paucity of available white workers in Antigua, blacks at English Harbour had opportunities to perform less strenuous work, an important consideration in the port's tropical environment.

Slave masters voiced complaints concerning the 'Ill treatment of their Slaves' at English Harbour. Although the Commissioners of the Navy issued an order they believed would 'tend to the prevention of such abuses', life at the dockyard was difficult for black workers.⁹² White naval seamen were not always friendly towards black Antiguans. Lieutenant Delasons 'caused a Negroe Woman to be driven throughout the Yard tarred and feathered, with her Clothes tied up round her Breast, so that her Body, below was perfectly naked, which situation ... [caused] the taking off the Artificers Attention from their Duty, and violating the Good Order of the Yard'.⁹³ The Navy called Delasons to task for such behaviour but his conduct shows that naval personnel at Antigua often perceived blacks as inferior.

This view of blacks as lesser and a desire to profit from black labour led naval personnel to purchase slaves and hire them to the dockyard despite directions not to do so. In the mid-1750s the Leeward Station Commadore wrote a series of letters complaining of the dockyard's Naval Officer, Williams Arthur, profiting from the employment of blacks he owned. Arthur's slaves were said to be 'lame and sick' and a number of his slave carpenters found to 'know nothing' of carpentry. In 1755 forty blacks were employed on the Careening Wharf 'without one single thing to do'.⁹⁴ The problems of naval personnel profiting from having blacks they owned employed in the yard did not end with Mr Arthur being replaced. At the end of the Revolution the Admiralty had to issue a directive that 'The Negroes the property of the Clerks and People belonging to the Yard, are [to be] discharged'. Charges were made against naval personnel for having hired blacks at 'extravagant prices' and the Admiralty challenged the officers' accounts.⁹⁵

The compensation individual officers received under the Emancipation Act of 1833 makes evident the extent to which naval personnel at Antigua profited from slave labour. With emancipation naval personnel on Antigua received more than £23,000 compensation for 2184 freed slaves. Some of the naval claimants, such as Norborne Thompson and John Richard Delap, received monies for more than 200 freed blacks.⁹⁶ In their desire to profit from coerced black labour, naval officers such as Delap and William Arthur fit within the mainstream of a society 'based on racism, slavery and exploitation'.⁹⁷

92. TNA, ADM 241/2, 19, Commissioners of Navy to Navy Board, 29 November 1797.

93. TNA, ADM 241/2, 3, Antigua Commissioners of the Navy to Capt. Dobree, 21 February 1797.

94. NMM, ADM/B/152/6-13, Navy Board Out Letters, Leeward Station to Navy Board, 15 October 1755; NMM, ADM/B/152/9, Navy Board Out-Letters, Navy Board to Admiralty Board, 1 January 1765.

95. TNA, ADM 106/1284, 9, John Mountray to Antigua Commissioners of HM Navy, 17 January 1785; NMM, ADM 359/5/10, 8, letter to Philip Stephens, 25 August 1784.

96. Legacies of British slave-ownership. Available online <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/> [accessed 20 July 2015].

97. Gaspar, *Bondsmen and rebels*, 130. Royal Navy officers stationed elsewhere in the Americas also received considerable compensation from claims filed under the Emancipation Act.

Naval operations at English Harbour stand as example of the navy's utter reliance upon black labour to operate efficiently in the Caribbean. At the same time the Antiguan dockyard also demonstrates, both through the segregation of its workforce and naval officers' exploitation of black labourers, that navy personnel often adhered to the cultural practices of the regions in which they operated, resulting in the reinforcement of the racial hierarchy and attitudes of Antigua's slave society.

Senegambia

Long before Britain established a foothold in Senegambia the region had a vibrant maritime culture in which local men worked as seamen, caulkers, rowers, pilots, and ship-builders. In the seventeenth century the French in the Senegal River basin so relied upon African mariners and maritime artisans that they accorded legal equality to many of the men. Prior to the Seven Years' War the Senegal River region was a nursery of 'slave sailors'. The French Company benefited from low operating costs, while the use of African seamen spared the lives of European sailors.⁹⁸ Upon the British establishment of a colony in Senegambia, native black mariners and maritime workers similarly came to play a critical role for the Royal Navy.

In 1758 Great Britain captured Saint-Louis and Goree from France. These possessions enabled Britain to establish a monopoly of the Senegambia slave trade and served as strategic supply and naval bases. Saint-Louis and Goree also provided British merchants ready access to gum Senegal and gum Arabic, commodities important as thickeners in textile printing.⁹⁹ Crucial to Britain's maintenance of its monopoly of the Senegambian slave trade and access to gum was its ability to repel French attempts to reclaim the area. For the British to be successful in this task the Royal Navy was indispensable. Soon after Britain's expulsion of the French in 1758 the navy began to station vessels at Senegambia and would do so until the French recaptured the region in 1779.¹⁰⁰

Upon appointing Charles O'Hara the first governor of Senegambia, the Board of Trade instructed him to employ black soldiers in the colony's garrisons as the need

For example, nineteen naval personnel filed claims for more than £44,300 for 2300 emancipated Jamaicans. The overwhelming majority of those claims were approved and paid. Legacies of British slave-ownership. Available online <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/> [accessed 2 September 2015].

97. David A. Chappel, 'Kru and Kanaka: Participation by African and Pacific sailors in Euroamerican maritime frontiers', *International Journal of Maritime History* 6 (1994), 88; Walter Rodney, *History of the Upper Guinea Coast 1545–1800* (New York, 1970), 217 and 266–8; Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, 'Historical memory, consciousness, and conscience in the new millennium', in Bradley Bond, ed., *Greater French colonial Louisiana: Atlantic world perspectives* (Baton Rouge, LA, 2005), 291–309; James Searing, 'The Seven Years' War in West Africa: The end of company rule and the emergence of the *habitants*', in Mark Danley and Patrick Speelman, eds., *The Seven Years' War: Global views* (Leiden, 2012), 264.
99. Christopher Leslie Brown, 'The providence of Senegambia in Atlantic perspective' (paper presented at McNeil Center, 2 March 2012), 10–16.
100. Joshua D. Newton, 'Naval power and the province of Senegambia, 1758–1779', *Journal of Maritime Research* 15 (2013), 129–47.

arose.¹⁰¹ O'Hara's refusal to do so stands out in a region where the lack of white labour made collaboration with native peoples an absolute necessity. In the years before the Seven Years' War the Royal Navy had already required that work ashore be done whenever possible by local workers to protect naval sailors from falling victim to disease. In short, O'Hara was one of the few Europeans in West Africa to be so short-sighted as to allow racial views to keep them from employing native workers.¹⁰² Britain did not succeed in its attempt to populate Senegambia with British colonists. Thus when Great Britain established its colony the navy was regularly compelled to rely upon local maritime workers to maintain its vessels and fortifications, and, when naval seamen became ill or died, to employ native mariners to man its vessels.¹⁰³

While Europeans such as James Hay, an English pilot, did work in Senegambia, they were far from commonplace. The limited supply of Europeans to supply, outfit and man the ships on the African coast meant that African workers became 'indispensable lubricants' to Europeans' economic activities in West Africa.¹⁰⁴ In addition to the paucity of European labour there were three primary factors for use British of indigenous seamen in Senegambia: Africans' experience as canoe men, their skill as intermediaries, and their resistance to tropical diseases.

At Senegambia the British, like Europeans elsewhere in West African, had great difficulty in navigating the surf. From the British naval forces' arrival in 1758 Senegalese canoe men were indispensable in moving men and materials between ship and shore.¹⁰⁵ Upon HMS *Pallas* arriving at Senegal in January 1775 its crew quickly experienced the coast's rough surf. Within a three-day period the *Pallas'* cutter was 'overset in the surf and two of the men drown'd' and the ship's boat capsized losing its mainsail, oars and rudder. Being unable to successfully navigate the surf the *Pallas* was compelled to rely upon Senegambians to do so. Being 'the finest swimmers', even when their canoes had difficulty in the surf, Senegalese often survived, unlike British seamen, many of whom could not swim.¹⁰⁶

101. TNA, CO 267/1, Charles O'Hara to Earl of Dartmouth and Board of Trade, [n.d.] 1765.

102. Ranajit Guha, *Dominance without hegemony* (Cambridge, 1997); Newton, 'Slavery, sea power and the state', 179–80; Brown, 'The providence of Senegambia in Atlantic perspective', 20.

103. Emma Christopher, *A merciless place: The fate of Britain's convicts after the American Revolution* (Oxford, 2010), 129–48; Ty Reese, 'Liberty, insolence and rum: Cape Coast and the American Revolution', *Itinerario* 28 (2004), 18–37; Eveline Christina Martin, *The British West African settlements, 1750–1821: A study in local administration* (New York, 1927), 80–102.

104. TNA, PROB 31/596/309, Probate Inventory, James Hay, of Senegal, pilot, 1773; Philip D. Morgan, 'Africa and the Atlantic, c. 1450 to 1820', in Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan, eds., *Atlantic history: A critical appraisal* (Oxford, 2009), 224.

105. Rev. John Lindsay, *A voyage to the coast of Africa, in 1758: Containing a succinct account of the expedition to, and the taking of the island of Goree, by a squadron commanded by the Honourable Augustus Keppel* (London, 1759), 61.

106. NMM, ADM/L/P/265, HMS *Pallas* Logbook, 1774–75; Michael Adanson, *A voyage to Senegal, Isle of Goree, and the River Gambia* (London, 1759), 243–4.

As they did elsewhere in Africa the Royal Navy employed local linguists at Senegambia. Boobo and Cooper Colour were but two of the scores of Senegambian linguists hired by the Royal Navy.¹⁰⁷ These men's linguistic skills and familiarity with European and African cultural practices permitted them to play an important intermediary role. Conversant with the commercial and cultural practices of the Atlantic world, Senegalese linguists' importance to Europeans pre-dated the British colony. A defining characteristic of Senegambia prior to the Seven Years' War was its cultural mixing and the critical role Atlantic creoles played in commercial and diplomatic engagements between French and local residents.¹⁰⁸ It is likely that Cooper Colour and other Senegalese interpreters hired by the navy came from families that had shared African and European parentage. These men's cosmopolitanism made them valuable mediators for naval officers who could not master African languages.¹⁰⁹

While linguists were important to naval operations, considerable numbers of other Senegambians were employed on navy ships despite many lacking extensive maritime experience.¹¹⁰ The manning of HMS *Goree* amply illustrates the critical role of African seamen and maritime workers on Royal Navy ships in Senegambia. Each of the *Goree*'s commanders at the Senegal River from 1761 to 1764 employed 'black natives' largely due to the ship's company 'being sick and incapable'.¹¹¹ In August 1761, when Captain John Hicks commanded the sloop, the *Goree*'s crew totalled between thirty-seven and forty-one men. In the following months the *Goree* lost a substantial portion of its white seamen. Some deserted. Many other naval seamen, such as John Green, Hugh Wright, Peter Verbolke and Thomas Dempsey, succumbed to illness and died far from their European homes. Captain Hicks himself quickly fell ill and died in Senegambia on 21 October 1761. The composition of the sloop's crew changed considerably when, upon Hicks' death, Captain William Jones assumed command. Quickly, and undoubtedly in response to the sloop only having between fourteen and twenty-six sailors, Jones hired Domingo Comma, Segha, Mary Sack, Phara, Colly, LeEveile and Mandua as Ordinaries, that is, seamen with less than three years' experience at sea. Each of these Senegalese served aboard HMS *Goree* for eight or nine months. At the same time Captain Jones also employed the Senegalese La Sagar, Richard Anthony, Philip Thomas, John Scruple, Sambo Knaar and Leveragee as able-bodied seamen, that is, mariners with more than three years' experience at sea.¹¹² In the summer and fall of 1764, due to illness among the ship's company, Captain Charles Caesar was compelled to continue employing Senegalese.¹¹³ The navy's utter

107. TNA, T1/516, Gambia Victualing List, 1775–76; William James Morgan, ed., *Naval documents of the American Revolution*, Vol. 9 (Washington, 1986) (hereafter *NDAR* 9), 986.

108. Ira Berlin, 'From creole to African: Atlantic creoles and the origins of an African-American society in mainland North America', *WMQ* 53 (1996), 254–5, 258 and 272–4.

109. Senegalese interpreters also served on British merchant ships. See *NDAR* 9, 986.

110. British slave ships also employed Senegambian sailors. Sloop *Snowbird*, Welcome Arnold Papers, John Carter Brown Library Providence, Rhode Island.

111. TNA, ADM 106/1131/52, letter from Charles Caesar to Philip Stephens, 26 December 1764.

112. TNA, ADM 36/5704–5, HMS *Goree* Muster Rolls, 1761–63.

113. TNA, ADM 106/1131/52, Charles Caesar to Philip Stephens, 26 December 1764.

reliance upon native labour in Senegambia is also apparent from several Africans having served as either boatswains or mates, something quite unusual in the eighteenth-century British Empire.¹¹⁴

Africans' role on the HMS *Goree* was not limited to service as mariners. The *Goree*'s sea-worthiness was directly attributable to the work of African maritime workers. Each year British officials hired a score of 'black caulkers' such as Nabo Modic to repair the sloop.¹¹⁵ Although some Englishmen believed European artificers could survive on the West African coast, very few English workers were willing to risk their lives working in Senegambia. Naval officers frequently bemoaned the lack of European artisans willing to work in West Africa. Thus it was Nabo Modic and other Senegalese maritime workers who kept the *Goree* afloat.¹¹⁶

The high mortality for whites in Senegambia and the lack of white seamen provided opportunities in the Royal Navy for the region's sizable black maritime community that were not available to blacks in Portsmouth, New York or English Harbour. As a result, the employment of blacks by the Royal Navy in Senegambia was distinctively different from how the navy employed blacks in other regions of the Atlantic.

Conclusion

This analysis of Royal Navy employment of black seamen and the navy's labour practices at its dockyards presents a picture very different from Vincent Carretta's assertion that the Royal Navy was 'free of institutional racism'. Carretta contends that 'black sailors ate the same food as their white counterparts, wore the same clothes, shared the same quarters, received the same pay, benefits, and health care, undertook the same duties, and had the same opportunities for advancement'.¹¹⁷ The Royal Navy may have regularly employed blacks in the Atlantic basin and provided blacks with the same food and clothes as white naval seamen and have had blacks share messes with whites. Some naval officers even took steps to ensure blacks were freed from enslavement.¹¹⁸ And during both the Seven Years' War and the American Revolution the Royal Navy was often a refuge for slave runaways to be transported away from their former slave masters and/or provided them with new lives as naval seamen.¹¹⁹ However, the Royal Navy was 'brutally pragmatic' in its dealings with blacks and brutally repressive in its role in suppressing slave revolts, as in the Jamaican insurrection of 1760.¹²⁰ Such pragmatism was the

114. TNA, T1/516, Senegal Victualing List, 1775.

115. TNA, ADM 36/5704-5, HMS *Goree* Muster Rolls, 1761-63.

116. Emma Christopher, 'A "disgrace to the very colour": Perceptions of blackness and whiteness in the founding of Sierra Leone and Botany Bay', *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 9 (2008); TNA, ADM 106/1150/310, letter, 9 October 1766.

117. Carretta, 'Naval records and eighteenth century black biography', 145.

118. See, for example, TNA, ADM 36/7947-9, HMS *Rose* Muster, 1775-77; TNA, ADM 36/7756-57, HMS *Brune* Musters, 1777-79; Foy, 'Unkle Somerset's freedom', 28.

119. Foy, 'Seeking freedom in the Atlantic world', 73; Pybus, 'Jefferson's faulty math', 261; Pybus, 'Interrogating the book of negroes', 13.

120. Simon Schama, *Rough crossings: Britain, the slaves and the American Revolution* (London, 2007), 13 and 168.

function of the Navy's pressing need for maritime labour, particularly in slave societies during wartime; environmental conditions making naval officials desirous of employing black labour; of racial attitudes of individual naval officers; and of white artisans' hostility to black maritime labourers.

As this article has detailed, blacks in the navy were treated inequitably and working conditions for blacks varied greatly based on where they were employed and the navy's need for maritime labour. The very limited numbers of black naval officers indicates any desire by the Admiralty to provide equality of access for promotion was, at best, an unmet goal. A lack of 'interests', education, and navigational knowledge made it difficult for blacks to become officers in European waters. Blacks who did become officers tended to come from areas outside of Britain, places such as the Americas or Senegambia, where blacks not infrequently steered and commanded vessels.¹²¹ But even in such areas, a man of John Perkins' exemplary skills – it is believed he captured more than 300 prizes during the American Revolution – combined with the navy's need for maritime labour provided only a very narrow window for one black to obtain the rank of captain. Blacks obtaining officer status almost always did so during wartime when the navy was often hard-pressed to find sufficient manpower.

Black seamen rarely receiving pensions was undoubtedly due in part to the travel and costs involved for sailors mostly residing in faraway colonies having to come to London to apply for benefits. However, among the considerable number of black seamen in London during the late eighteenth-century, only a handful received pension or disability benefits. Thus, while black seamen in the Americas and West Africa not receiving pensions may have been due to financial factors, the hostility shown to seamen among London's black poor indicates racial attitudes played a not insignificant role in black sailors lacking a social safety net when most in need.

Blacks' experiences in naval dockyards demonstrate a mixed approach by naval officials. In Portsmouth and New York, white artisans' efforts to limit access to dockyard labour resulted in blacks having a very limited presence in both dockyards. With considerable numbers of white maritime labourers in these two ports, naval officials did not feel compelled to take affirmative steps to bring blacks into the dockyards' labour forces. And in New York the few blacks working in the naval dockyard received less favourable compensation than whites, a clear reflection of white artisans' power in the dockyard. In Antigua and Senegambia where white labour was scarce due to these areas being 'demographically deadly' for whites, the Royal Navy showed little hesitation in hiring black maritime labourers.¹²² In both of these tropical locales naval operations were utterly dependent upon black labour. Despite being employed in great numbers, black tars and black maritime workers in the slave-based economy of Antigua were largely barred from highly skilled maritime artisan work. And yet, in both Senegambia and Antigua, the absence of competing white labour provided opportunities to blacks not available in New York or Portsmouth, such as Antiguan blacks serving on the night watch and three Senegambians being naval officers.

121. Morgan, *Slave counterpoint*, 338–40; Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 23–5; Searing, 'The Seven Years' War in West Africa', 263–5.

122. Trevor Burnard, "'The countrie continues sicklie': White mortality in Jamaica, 1655–1780", *Social History of Medicine* 12, No. 1 (1999), 45–72.

The single most important factor shaping when, how and where blacks were employed by the Royal Navy in the Atlantic was war. At the commencement of both the Seven Years' War and the American Revolution the Royal Navy faced the daunting task of manning hundreds of ships with experienced seamen. Attempting to do so while still allowing merchant ships to engage in trans-Atlantic trade required the Royal Navy not only to enlist large numbers of foreign seamen and landsmen, but, particularly in the Western Atlantic and West Africa, to also employ large numbers of black sailors and black maritime workers.¹²³ With increased manning, blacks, including runaway slaves, found berths on naval ships not possible during peacetime (see Figure 1). However, white hostility towards competing with blacks for jobs meant similar opportunities for black maritime workers were not available during wartime in England and New York. Thus, while black caulkers were critical to British naval re-fittings at Antigua, in New York Dublin often found himself the sole black in the dockyard. In contrast, British privateers out of New York and the West Indies were often manned with large numbers of black mariners.¹²⁴ Thus, one cannot draw a simple conclusion and state that war created better opportunities for employment in the Royal Navy for blacks in all locales and occupations. War provided better opportunities at sea as the labour markets for seamen were more fluid and changeable than for maritime workers.¹²⁵

While the Royal Navy may have issued regulations that sought to make the navy 'a little piece of British territory in which slavery was improper' it could hardly be said to have been an unflinchingly opponent of slavery. In addition to the numerous naval officers who owned slaves or benefited from slavery the Navy was also involved in actions that reinforced the power and hold of slave owners. If slavery was seen as 'an inexhaustible Fund of Wealth and Naval Power to the Nation', naval power served to ensure the strength and wealth of the British Empire by returning runaway slaves to their former owners and helping to put down slave revolts.¹²⁶

Notwithstanding the disparate impacts of naval employment practices, the Navy's treatment of blacks should not however be considered in a vacuum; its employment

123. Daniel A. Baugh, *The global Seven Years' War 1754–1763: Britain and France in a great power contest* (New York, 2011); Paul Butel, *The Atlantic* (London, 1999), 196–7; Larry Neal, 'Interpreting power and profit in economic history: A case study of the Seven Years' War', *Journal of Economic History* 37 (1977), 21 and 27.

124. Rodger, *Wooden world*, 159–60; Van Buskirk, *Generous enemies*, 142; BMD.

125. This is not to say that some black maritime labourers did not work in more than one locale. North American slave owners were known to have sent enslaved maritime labourers to the West Indies. See, for example, American Antiquarian Society, Allen Family Collection, Folder 1, General Merchandise Ledger, 1758–66. However, the vast majority of dockyard workers spent their working career in a single port.

126. Malachy Postlethwayt, cited in David Brion Davis, ed., *The problem of slavery in Western culture* (New York, 1988), 150. During the American Revolution while some Royal Navy vessels welcomed aboard runaway slaves as 'friends of the government', British officials in Charleston and elsewhere took measures to protect the property rights of slave masters, such as imposing fines on ship captains who 'carried off' fugitive slaves. Donald F. Johnson, 'Failure of restored British Rule in revolutionary Charleston', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 42 (2014), 31–32.

practices compare favourably to the Continental Navy's. While blacks regularly sailed on North American vessels prior to the outbreak of the war in 1775 and it was 'not uncommon' for blacks such as Cuffy, Joseph Colly, Cato Jones, Cesar Landon and Cesar Sabens to serve aboard a Continental Navy vessel during the American Revolution, blacks tended to prefer service in the Royal Navy to service in the Continental Navy.¹²⁷ American naval ships were devoid of black officers. Black seamen, such as Tom, a seaman on the Continental frigate *Delaware*, often found themselves removed from American naval ships and returned to their slave masters. And during the American Revolution black maritime workers in American dockyards received lesser wages than their white counterparts.¹²⁸ Although the Royal Navy may have treated black workers inequitably, it also protected them by disciplining those who attacked or stole from blacks and permitted blacks to testify against whites in court martial proceedings, something American naval officials regularly failed to do.¹²⁹ Did such conditions equate to an absence of institutional racism in the Royal Navy or a place where slavery was improper? Hardly. If institutional racism is a societal pattern that has the net effect of creating adverse conditions for an identifiable racial group, there is little doubt that blacks such as Dublin working in the New York dockyard and the hundreds of black naval seamen who never received pensions or received promotions experienced the effects of institutional racism.

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127. Herbert Aptheker, 'The negro in the Union Navy', *The Journal of Negro History* 32 (1947), 170; L. P. Jackson, *Virginia negro soldiers and seamen in the Revolutionary War* (Norfolk, 1944), 170, n7; Eric G. Grundset, Briana L. Diaz, Hollis L. Gentry and Jean D. Strahan, *Forgotten patriots: African American and American Indian patriots in the Revolutionary War* (Washington, DC, 2008); *NDAR*, 12 and 233–5; *BMD*.
 128. Charles Oscar Paullin, 'The Navy of the American Revolution: Its administration, its policy and its achievements' (Unpublished PhD thesis, Harvard University, 1906), 60–1 and 158–9. By the early nineteenth century, both American and British officials took measures to limit blacks' presence on their naval vessels. Knox to Captain Jedediah Rogers, 7 May 1792, NYS Library, Cherry Hill Collection. Available online <http://wardepartmentpapers.org/document.php?id=42423> [accessed 20 July 2015]; McHenry to Preston, 18 July 1796, Filson Club, Preston F. P. Joyes Collection. Available online <http://wardepartmentpapers.org/document.php?id=18187> [accessed 20 July 2015]. The War Office decreed that 'no negro, mulatto or Indian is to be recruited'; Henry Brougham Papers, Duke University Rubenstein Library.
 129. An example of this is the sentencing of a white seaman to 'long confinement' for having 'broken open and robbed a Chest belonging to a Mulatto Man': *NDAR*, 8 and 720–1, Lords Commissioners, Admiralty, to Vice Admiral Richard Lord Howe, 27 March 1777.

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Author biography

Charles R Foy is Associate Professor of Early American and Atlantic History at Eastern Illinois University. His articles on maritime history include 'Maritime Populations', in Joseph C. Miller, ed., *Princeton Companion to Atlantic History* (2015); 'Sewing a Safety Net: Scarborough's Maritime Community, 1747–1765', *International Journal of Maritime History* XXIV, No. 1 (2012), 1–28; "'Unkle Somerset's" Freedom: Liberty in England for Black Sailors', *Journal for Maritime Research* 13, No. 1 (2011), 21–36; 'Eighteenth-Century Prize Negroes: From Britain to America', *Slavery and Abolition* 31, No. 3 (2010), 379–93; and 'Seeking Freedom in the Atlantic World, 1713–1783', *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 4, No. 1 (2006), 46–77.