



Black, Brown & Green Voices

Diversity in Irish America

*Report on a research project supported
by the Emigrant Support Program from
the Consulate General of Ireland in New York
and the Department of Foreign Affairs.*

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GLUCKSMAN | 
Ireland House, NYU

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Introduction

In 2018, Glucksman Ireland House, New York University's Center for the study of Ireland, Irish America, and the Irish Diaspora, with the support of Ireland's Department of Foreign Affairs' Emigrant Support Program, initiated a documentation strategy to capture aspects of the diversity of Irish America in the twenty-first century. Led by NYU's Dr. Miriam Nyhan Grey, the scoping phase of the project, including an Open House at NYU, took place throughout 2019. Interviews were recorded between spring 2019 and spring 2021.

The Black Brown and Green Voices project seeks to ascertain the extent to which Americans of African *and* Irish ancestry engage with sites of Irish and Irish-American connectivity. It seeks to capture fresh, first-person narrative data useful to scholars, activists and policymakers in the United States and in Ireland, as well as in other hubs of the Irish diaspora, especially the United Kingdom. The project is envisioned as a type of feasibility study, with the expectation that the outcomes would inform an expanded more ambitious phase of engagement with this specific community. This phase of fifteen oral history interviews in the field comprises digitally audio-recorded interviews for inclusion in New York University's Archives of Irish America. It is the first research project of this nature in the American context and internationally.

The project was conceived in response to two main spheres of influence. In the United States, the topic of multi-racial identity and the evolving demographics of Irish America have percolated and become more and more topical as the U.S. population moves ever closer to becoming a "majority minority" population. The 2020 census demonstrated that the population is much more multiracial and much more racially and ethnically diverse than has ever been measured in the past. Sociologists would describe Irish America as being at "late ethnicity" or "late generation ethnicity" as the group reaches back many generations, at this point, and the group has seen significant drops in replenishment from the homeland in comparison with historical patterns. Discourse on race, in Irish American settings, is typically limited to framing Irish experiences of discrimination in the nineteenth-century. The study also emerges at an inflection point in American and world history as discussions around anti-racism frame the space in which people of multiracial identity locate themselves or are located by others.

This research draws on the methodology used in building the Archives of Irish America Glucksman Ireland House Oral History Collection. Established in 1997 as part of New York University's Division of Libraries and with the support of Glucksman Ireland House, the Archives of Irish America is a repository of primary research materials that assists students, faculty and visiting scholars in evaluating the Irish impact on the history of American social and cultural development, as well as the evolution of a specifically Irish-American identity. Since 2005, the

central research initiative of Glucksman Ireland House, the Center for Irish Studies at New York University, has been an Oral History of Irish America Project. The primary goal is to record the experiences of a wide range of Irish Americans towards an understanding of the durability and elasticity of ethnic identity over time. More than 350 interviews form this collection, capturing a cross section of memories from individuals whose life histories intersect with culture, education, religion, media, business, government and the professions, whether the individual is an immigrant or removed by several generations from Ireland. The digitally recorded oral histories are deposited in New York University's Division of Libraries as part of the Glucksman Ireland House Oral History Collection (AIA030) in the Archives of Irish America. The Archive of Irish America is physically located at NYU's renowned Tamiment Library & Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives.

Often the names of high-profile Americans of African/mixed ancestry and Irish background are invoked as a shorthand to conjure up the diversity of the Irish experience in North America. Rarely, however, does the dialogue drill down more deeply in the way the interviews for the project attempt to. We can speculate, for example, how someone like President Barack Obama might relate to being Black *and* Irish in the context in which a direct link to a well-documented Irish immigrant can be presented alongside that of his father's African immigrant background. Many people of Irish descent took immense pride in Obama's Irish link while celebrating his blackness. However, the narrative of his wife's family history pushes us into more thorny territory. Michelle Obama's Irish lineage, it is believed, derives from the brutality of slavery and what we understand to be her Irish ancestor's advantage, if that is what one can call it, in a system that elevated foreign-born white immigrants over native-born Americans of African ancestry. The Obamas are an interesting example of the tensions that are at play when we look at family history, in the instances in which we can actually document lineage as many Americans of African descent cannot do so easily if at all. And it must be made clear that from the outset the aim of this project was to capture the voices of less famous individuals than the Obamas. So, while these interviews are being done in the twenty-first century, the details and connections they uncover resonate with the past very much and serve to complicate our portrayal of the Irish American past and how race framed American experiences.

Simultaneously this project relates to the contemporary debate over what Irishness means in an Ireland in which more than one in every hundred residents are foreign-born. Migration in the Irish context is no longer only about *emigration*, but also about *immigration*. How will future Irish immigrants to the US, who may well also be of African ancestry, encounter Irish America

and Americans who more often than not equate Irishness with whiteness? How do historical narratives of anti-Irishness, discrimination and stereotyping inform how immigrants are responded to in Ireland *and* in Irish settings in the United States? How do we encourage empathy based on awareness of historical othering of a group and translate that in the 21st century?

When compared with earlier phases of collecting oral histories, the key difference in the approach for the Black, Brown and Green Voices interviews was a dearth of networks or spaces in which Americans of African and Irish ancestry connect. The Black, Brown and Green Voices research has been much more demanding in terms of simply identifying and securing participants and it is therefore more dependent on snowball sampling than the collecting that could draw on the robust topography of Irish American connectivity especially in places like New York City. In other words, Black and Brown Irish Americans are not well represented in Irish American spaces and networks and an early challenge was understanding that dynamic and overcoming it. The foundation of the African American Irish Diaspora Network (AAIDN) in 2019 has been a welcome addition in this respect. The primary investigator of the project, Dr. Miriam Nyhan Grey, is a founding board member of the network and the AAIDN founder, Mr. Dennis Brownlee, was a contributor to the Black, Brown and Green Voices project. In fact, some of the energy and synergies around the formation of AAIDN percolated from the interactions related to the interview for the Black, Brown and Green Voices collection.

In the spring of 2020, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and a need to move public programs online, Glucksman Ireland House added a public humanities component of the Black Brown and Green Voices project which has since run in parallel with the oral history collecting. Immediately popular with an engaged and loyal audience, this series involves online public conversations about intersections in the experiences of peoples of African and Irish descent in the United States and beyond. The Black, Brown and Green Voices Series has served to draw attention to the research being done in this sphere at NYU and beyond and has yielded connections to contributors to the oral history collection. The series also serves as an important virtual gathering opportunity at a time when discussions around race were ever more pressing in the aftermath of the brutal murders by law enforcement of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor and the internationalization of the Black Lives Matter movement; which was itself prominently reflected in Ireland itself, especially with the emergence of the Black and Irish initiative there.



Lenwood Sloan, narrator for the Black, Brown and Green Voices series. Photo taken at Glucksman Ireland House in November 2019.



Launch of the African American Irish Diaspora Network in February 2020: Samantha Haddad, AJ Prophet, Jonathan Mulhern and Deirdre Harkins.



Meghan (Jordan) Carey contributed an oral history to the Archives of Irish America in 2011 when she was interviewed by Virginia Ferris.



"Agitate!" Frederick Douglass and Ireland: A conversation about history, solidarity, and racial justice in Ireland and the US with scholars Edna Greene Medford, Christine Kinealy, Maurice Jackson and Miriam Nyhan Grey. Hosted by Georgetown University.

Sources & Methodology



Oral histories with Americans of African *and* Irish ancestry form the basis of this study. As noted, an aim of the collecting in this phase was to augment the diversity of voices represented in the Archives of Irish America. Participants were identified through snowball sampling whereby contributors were asked if they could suggest others who might be interested in participating. Interviews were structured life-histories on themes of connections to Ireland, cultural

engagement, educational experiences, socio-political matters, and views on race and ethnicity. Most interviews took place at NYU and therefore the interviews are skewed geographically in providing mostly a North Eastern perspective. Interviews were audio-recorded digitally and ranged from about 90 minutes to 3 hours in duration. Approximately, two-thirds of the way through the collection process the Covid-19 pandemic made its impact and in-person interviews were paused. The interview phase recommenced in autumn 2020 with a video-conferencing interview strategy to maintain the safety and well-being of the interviewee and the interviewer. Nine interviews took place in person. One interview was conducted by phone and five interviews were conducted by video conference (one of which was undertaken in a public interview format). Each participant was provided with a consent form and a clear pathway of communication with the research team. A photograph of each contributor was captured and participants were invited to submit photographs and ephemera to accompany the archival record of the interview. An unexpected outcome was just how engaged participants were in literally giving voice and feeling welcomed into a community which had heretofore felt somewhat off limits. In that sense, the interviews, coupled with the related interaction, framed by a greater sense of significance and weight than would have been experienced in the past with different cohorts of contributors to the Archives of Irish America. The interviews also highlight the privilege that is involved in knowing or being able to accurately research family ancestry which slavery, in particular, interrupted.

Primary Investigator



Miriam Nyhan Grey is a historian who trained in Ireland, Italy and the United States. She has an interest in the intersections of migration, race and ethnicity and she focuses on immigrant and ethnic experiences in comparative frameworks. She has been on faculty at New York University since 2009 teaching an array of classes on Irish history and migration, oral history and comparative migration. She is a collaborator on the oral history collection at NYU's Archives of Irish America and has recorded oral histories in Ireland, Britain and the United States for over two decades. She hosts the weekly *This Irish American Life* public radio hour on WNYE 91.5 FM. In 2018, Miriam initiated the Black, Brown and Green Voices project to amplify the voices of Black and Brown Irish Americans. She sits on the board of the African American Irish Diaspora Network. Presently, Miriam is editing a collection of essays on Jewish and Irish American experiences in the United States with Hasia Diner. She is the Associate Editor of The Glucksman Irish Diaspora Series at NYU Press. Miriam is also the mother of two young Black Irish New Yorkers. In fall 2021, she is co-convening a major international conference, with NYU's Dr. Kimberly McClain DaCosta, "Where Do We Go from Here?" Revisiting Black Irish Relations and Responding to a Transnational Moment.

Key Findings

- A cluster of fifteen oral history interviews generate innovative, fresh commentary on what it means to identify as being of Irish and African descent in the United States in the twenty-first century. This is the first such study of Americans of this background and it comes at a critical juncture in terms of conversations around multi-ethnic identity and race, both in the United States and in Ireland.
- The diverse ways, including connections to American and Afro-Caribbean slavery, in which people in the United States are connected to African and Irish ancestry, both generationally and ancestrally.
- Interviews show the pervasiveness of race as a defining feature of multi-ethnic families and in how permissive Americans are in terms of who is given space or permission to identify as being “Irish.”
- The interviews show how disruptive a force race can be in the way in which people of color are permitted to relate to being of Euro-American, especially Irish, descent in the United States.
- Connectivity to Ireland is patchy from individual to individual and there is significant scope to reach out to Americans of African ancestry in a more engaged way and in a way that transcends “Irishness” only being framed by what people perceive through the lens of associations with the meaning of “Irish American” is.
- Proximity to the Irish immigrant generation is very influential in shaping participants’ connectivity with Irishness.
- Amongst those interviewed there is significant interest in being more connected with nodes of Irish activity and this project has elicited unanticipated expressions of goodwill towards NYU’s Glucksman Ireland House for taking this initiative. The engagement was seen to open up a space of Irishness, literally in terms of the physicality of Glucksman Ireland House, which was novel, welcomed and unexpected for participants, at least initially. There is significant interest in becoming connected with others of similar background and the advent of the African American Irish Diaspora Network is a welcome emergence in this context.
- There can be some tension in perceptions of how participants wish to celebrate their Irishness so that they are not seen as celebrating their Irishness at the cost of pride in self-identifying as Black or Brown.

- For participants who were the children of a racially mixed union, the ethnic marker (Irishness) was more often than not subsumed by the racial marker (whiteness) in favor of being seen as Black/Brown. But this process typically felt more imposed (external) than inherently self-selected (internal).
- The public humanities dimension, mounted in Spring 2020 in the form of the Black, Brown and Green Voices Series, elicited significant interest in exploring the interconnectedness of these groups. This interest is rooted in the United States but is also drawing on Irish and British audiences.
- The oral histories underscore the power of giving voice, literally and metaphorically, and to creating space for individuals to bear witness. Creating these spaces and listening are the essential first steps creating empathy and building alliances.
- This phase of the project proved the viability and importance of this work and, if anything, the surrounding political and cultural climates in the United States and in Ireland, have made the activity even more pressing and necessary. It is also clear that Ireland is at a critical juncture in terms of conversations around race and while the histories of Ireland and the US are clearly different, there are lessons to be learned from the American setting on matters around multicultural identity and race. With the above points in mind, NYU scholars Dr. Miriam Nyhan Grey and Dr. Kimberly McClain DaCosta made a submission in summer 2021 to Ireland's National Plan Against Racism.
- All of this engagement has elevated the position of NYU as a major resource for the study of peoples of Irish and African descent. There is much scope to build on this work in the spirit of how we address inequalities and social justice. The positioning of NYU in this realm is all the more timely with the inauguration of the NYU Press Glucksman Irish Diaspora Series, edited by Professor Kevin Kenny and the upcoming conference at NYU in fall 2021: "Where Do We Go from Here?" Revisiting Black Irish Relations and Responding to a Transnational Moment.

Interview Excerpts

“[Westchester] was a very homogeneous community, mainly Irish and Italian...So like in my fifth grade picture there is only me and one of my best friends and we are the only two black people in the entire school, like with our graduating class. And I never realized that until I went back, like to the school and saw the picture in a trophy case in the hallway and I was like, ‘wow, we’re the only two tanned people in this entire picture’. So growing-wise, it was kind of hard because it’s like I am two things and people only see me as one. So like, honestly St. Patrick’s Day was like my only day to be like ‘yes! I am two things’, which I should never have had to do. But I felt like I had to prove to everybody that I wasn’t just one thing because they treated people in a bad way. I’m not going to say I experienced a lot of racism, maybe unconsciously. But growing up as biracial [in] Westchester people would just always think I was Hispanic, which is fine. I understand... But I always felt like there was an underlying tone all the time, especially from teachers who would be unnecessarily mean to me, when I was like the quietest person in the class! Or, I don’t know, it was just like slight microaggressions that I would experience”. (DH)

“I’ve always been sort of proud of my Irish heritage. And like I said, I was always very interested in Northern Ireland but I don’t know where my family is from. But I was always very interested in that and read a lot about it...But nobody’s made an Irish joke around me, that I can think of, in my life....But I am sure that nobody has ever thought I’m Irish until I tell them. You know what I mean? Until I tell them”. (BF)

“I think my dad just kind of always looked at himself as like a white guy from [New] Jersey. It was my grandmother, his mother, who is more tied to her Irishness, I would say. So, Irish Catholic, like really tied to her Catholicism and the Catholic Church. She had all of her like Irish recipes and her cookbooks, some of which I still have”. (AS)

“I actually was born there [in Ireland] yet, you still don’t see me or view me as being Irish.... I remember somewhere, somebody saying that I was African American. And I was like, I mean, that just doesn’t even make sense. Like, I’m not even from America. I’m from Ireland, African Irish... I’m not African American..Like I didn’t actually fit in a box, which is another like, brings us to a whole bigger conversation...Like why do we have to have people in boxes? Why do we have to have labels on everything? You know?” (GO)

“Certainly, you know, the Irish came over as indentured servants, which was ... several levels below slavery...in terms of the severity of the treatment. But the disrespect that the Irish had [faced] when they first came to this country, and how they were able to work their way out of that, because they were white, but slaves remained chained and in servitude. And how the relationship developed between blacks and Irish as they were both at the bottom of the ladder. But then how the Irish were able to move forward and blacks were not and how that resulted in conflict between the two. But then how, you know, the union movement also brought them back together for a certain period of time and then they separated again have different agendas and different missions. And even something like the riot of New York around the time of the Civil War Draft and what happened there. And up to the current time, where we have political reasons for Irish and black people to work together. So just so you know, I’m just interested in the entire dynamic of the relationship between Americans of Irish descent and American Americans of African descent. I have an intense interest in learning more about the history of Ireland and Irish people and culture. I feel very connected now that I’ve done the research and now that I’m, I really embrace the fact that that’s part of my tradition. And I want to learn more about it.” (DB)

“We were learning about the Irish and Montserrat and, for me, I’m pretty sure I was the only person of black descent in the class. So and specifically within the in the sense so when I, when we were learning about this, I was, you know, I was a little taken aback because I didn’t even know that the Irish and had even crossed paths with the West Indies that early on like. I just wasn’t aware of that. And it was actually [in] that class that I raised my hand and I was saying, ‘I’m kind of having a bit of an identity crisis right now ‘cause I’m half West Indian, half Irish’. And of course, everybody turned and looked at me and I was like, ‘oh, gosh, no’. But ...it was actually my professor... who emailed me after that and she was... just making sure that I knew that she was grateful that I shared and she was [said] ‘you need to write your final paper on [that topic]. You have such a unique experience’. So, just being seen like that. I would have never expected taking this class that I would be that connected, you know,? And although obviously the story of the Irish and Montserrat it’s not always a happy one... It was hard [history] to hear and I wasn’t aware of that, but it’s ironic to me that out of that, that’s where my need to know more about my Irish descent and my West Indian descent and how they intersect from that place something, at least for me, [something] beautiful came out of that. So, I was grateful for that and I would have never even really pursued this much investment in my culture if it weren’t for my Irish class, you know? Not only on my Irish side, but also my West Indian side, you know?” (CE)

“The Jamaican tends to get thrown aside because of my name. I look Arab. I don’t look Jamaican. And the people who kind of only identify me as Irish tend to be people that I know from school/ academic settings because I studied history in school. All my research interests are Irish. I share very strong...political beliefs on Ireland and I tend to stay more engaged with Irish politics and current affairs than I would in America or Jamaica or Lebanon. So people who know me only associate me with being Irish [and] people who don’t know me only associate me with being Arab....I’m so vocal and invested in Ireland. People can only see me as Irish but never both [Jamaican and Irish].” (SH)

“I will tell people, always on the Irish tour, but on other tours too, but always on the Irish tour I will say to them look ‘I’m a Nigerian Senegalese Irishman.’ Because I am! I’ve had DNA testing done so I know...I’m Bubi tribe, Equatorial Guinea. I’m from the Ebo tribe, Nigeria. I am Mendi tribe, Senegal; which was practically discriminated by the slave trade, by the way. And then I say, ‘but I’m also very, very Irish.’ And then I go on to tell them a little bit about my Irishness and I will say to them I’m like the late great Muhammad Ali; because I want to give them someone that they know that they can connect to understand that there are many... black folks like me. So I will say, ‘here’s what Muhammad Ali and I share in common: we’re both the great grandsons of Irish immigrant men. And Muhammad Ali did not know Irish great grandfather, Abraham Grady. I know my family. This is what I know.’” (DH)

“My parents, they were living in New York City. They were living in a small studio apartment. However, my mom didn’t know that she was going to have twins. So we didn’t end up staying in New York for that long. We ended up going to Greenberg in Westchester County. And we lived there for about 10 years or so. And then when I was about in the third/fourth grade, we moved to Yorktown Heights, New York, where I attended middle school and high school. And it was a very different experience. I remember in Greenberg, I had developed a lot of friends and that’s when I started to really love math. They had this small program for kids that loved math, and it was an early-morning program to which you would go before school started and you would do problems and then all of a sudden we shifted [moved]...And that was a very different experience. I was the only person of color in my classes in middle school, if not maybe one of three. But even so, typically I’d be the only one... Greenberg was more diverse...You would have people of all different ethnicities and nationalities in one classroom. And they wouldn’t be a dominance of one of one racial group or ethnic group. So when I moved to Yorktown Heights it was predominantly white, and it was predominantly people of Italian and Irish descent, as well. And at some points, I would feel a little bit isolated because [I would get asked] ‘why do you have such an Irish sounding name but don’t look Irish?’ I did have a couple of people say that to me, whether that be blunt or passive aggressively.” (JM)

“So I think it’s incredible, you know that it comes together like that for [President Obama] and then as the first president, black president of the United States, and it turns out that he’s Irish as well. But you know who I think about when I think about the Obama’s and my story, because my story is connected to women? I think about Obama’s daughters, Sasha and Malia, and how they didn’t know Obama’s mother. A white woman! In fact, I wrote a letter to Michelle Obama telling her about me and saying that this would be the kind of book ‘your daughters would be writing’. This is kind of their story; needing to find out about this white woman in their family, this matriarch who made it all happen.” (DB)

“We knew by the mid 1960s that we had Irish ancestry. And we knew that Grandpa Moore was Daddy’s grandfather, and that all the aunties were mixed-race children. And we knew that their children, some passed [as white]; some didn’t; some were high-toned and [had] privileges....In my neighborhood there were blacks, negros, and coloreds, you know...So we knew that America in general and our neighborhood in particular, had a stratification of black that was not talked about, but practiced, you know?” (LS)

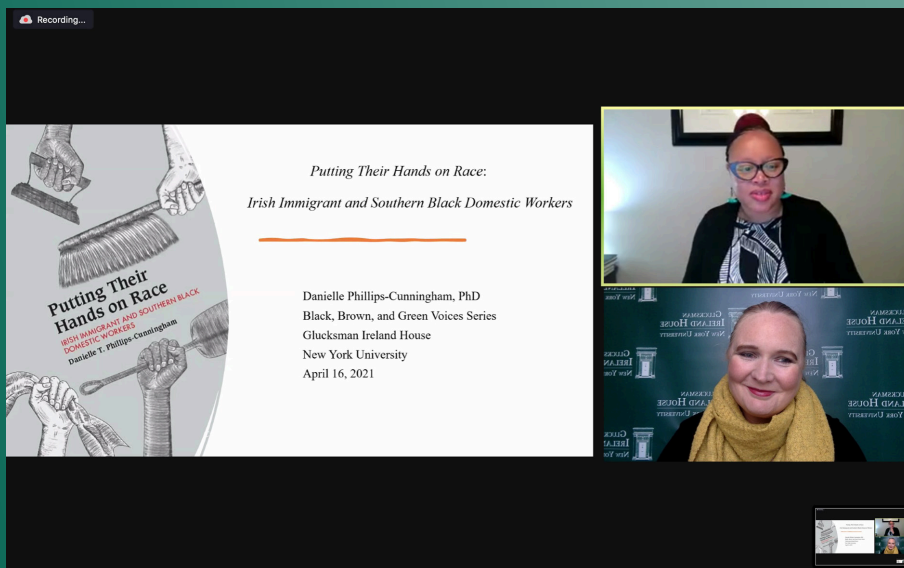
“There’s a thing there, you know, that part of me and Irish people suffered something that was wrong. And yet some of them joined in something else that was wrong, equally wrong. Well, that’s wrong. That’s wrong and that sort of thing it’s done all around. It’s not just America. It is not just Irish and it’s not just some other groups I might bring up. It’s not just it’s all over, it’s human nature unfortunately...But as far as Irish America, and Ireland, Irish people can do well to recognize that wrongdoing and I see people do it, like you. I am very impressed by you. And I was impressed by people I met at the talk[open house]. You know, join your brother, your progressive brothers, you know, realize the wrongs of hate and the wonderment of variety.” (RG)

“So called ethnics have to choose between their heritage and whiteness. I think the problem in our country is that ethnics have chosen whiteness, which is like a construct...But I mean, you know so what [Danny] Cassidy and [Bob] Callahan and others were trying to do was to remind the Irish Americans of their heritage and he had a thing [journal] called *Callahan's Irish Quarterly*...[To] remind Irish Americans who become white of their background, and even hint at the possibility of an association between blacks and Irish, is to make them less white. That's the problem". (IR)

“I think what shaped me really fundamentally was, you know, why were people so invested in a particular bounding of their group, right? And keeping out people who looked different from them... Like we didn't know any other people who were, like us, in terms of being from interracial families growing up in the context that we live. We understood ourselves to be black people. But we also understood that our mother was Irish. But there was a curious kind of exclusion from all kinds of, in particular, from white people. But in strange ways, also from blacks. But I was curious to try to understand why people were so invested in it. Why was it that it mattered so much that nobody came to my parents' wedding? You know, why is it that...my grandmother's lived within a couple of miles of each other and never met? What was so threatening about this boundary that, even as a very young child, I could feel that tension sort of projected on to me and projected onto us? While we were out in public, why were we literally pointed at, you know? We were odd to people for important reasons and that's why I want what I wanted to understand. I became an adult, at least going to college, it was meeting other people who experienced the same thing and finding that really kind of helpful as a way to make sense of [it].” (KD)

“I was born in 1958, in Buffalo, New York, just inside the Canadian border...My mother was born in Buffalo, as was her father. So I’m third-generation Buffalo-born. [My mother’s] grandmother came to Buffalo from Canada and was the child of an Irish woman and a black man from Virginia. But then [my great great grandfather] died before she did. She was a widow, but had several children and one of them was my great grandmother. They were all very, very light skinned and could pass for white because their father was mixed-race. He was from Virginia and was part Native American and part black. He was not really very proud of being black and had a very strong disdain for black people so he married an Irish woman, who was my great great grandmother. I don’t know her name and I don’t know where in Ireland she was from. But then my great grandmother, her daughter, I knew her well, because I was 19 when she died”. (ST)

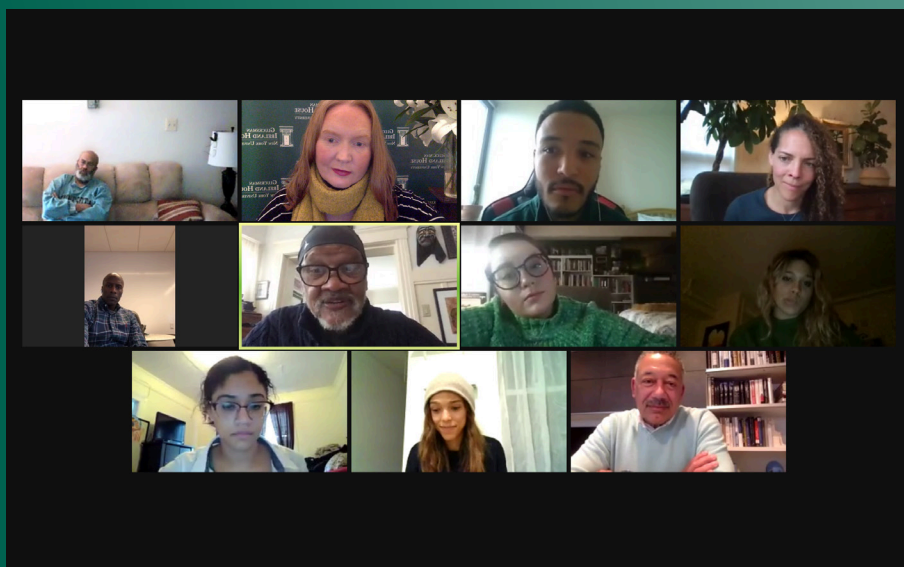
P.S. The primary investigator tracked down his Irish ancestor and this was the narrator’s response: “THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU! How in the world did you find all of this information. Yes, indeed. Now I know the first names of my great-great grandparents: Charles and Mary. This is amazing... I am literally in tears. This is amazing.”



Danielle T. Cunningham-Phillips discusses her book on Irish and African American domestic servants with Miriam Nyhan Grey in April 2021.



Kim DaCosta and Consul General for New York Ciarán Madden in conversation with Miriam Nyhan Grey, October 2020.



Black, Brown and Green Virtual St. Patrick's Day Gathering, 17 March, 2021.

Public and Organizational Engagement

- Black, Brown and Green Voices Open House, New York University, October 5, 2019.
- Inaugural board meeting of the African American Irish Diaspora Network, November 21, 2019.
- Launch of the African American Irish Diaspora Network, February 27, 2020. <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/us/new-york-initiative-explores-links-between-black-identity-and-irishness-1.4188095>
- Launch of Black, Brown and Green Voices Series public humanities strand, with Lenwood Sloan, April 30, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BH-Yp8Tfpq8>
- Black, Brown and Green Voices event, Dedria Humphries Barker, May 14, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PIg8THfCmHs>
- Black, Brown and Green Voices event, Christine Kinealy, June 4, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P71IdlpY6Q>
- AAIDN/Georgetown, Frederick Douglass Event, September 29, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8F5B1ve8hMA>
- Black, Brown and Green Voices event, Kimberly McClain DaCosta, October 8, 2020.
- Irish Repertory Theater events, November 9 and 10, 2020. <https://irishrep.org/event/irish-rep-online/a-beggar-upon-horseback-a-beggar-on-foot/>
- Black, Brown and Green Voice event, Brian Dooley, November 18, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LDsCCKXlnms>
- Black, Brown and Green Voices event, Rev. Herbert Daughtry, February 18, 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v87kO9JkupY>
- Virtual St. Patrick's Day Gathering, hosted by NYU, March 17, 2021.
- Black, Brown and Green Voices event, Danielle T. Phillips-Cunningham, April 20, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=49V_HW_EKBo
- Oral History Network Ireland Conference, paper delivered by Miriam Nyhan Grey, June 18, 2021.

Next Steps

- Major international conference, co-organized by NYU scholars, Miriam Nyhan Grey and Kimberly McClain DaCosta.
- Develop a next phase of documentation and public humanities plan.
- Expand the network of outreach partners and academics engaged on this topic.



**Revisiting Black Irish Relations
and Responding to a Transnational Moment**
November 5, 12 and 19

Online Conference

Conveners

Kim McClain DaCosta (NYU) and Miriam Nyhan Grey (NYU)

Sponsors

Glucksman Ireland House (NYU)
Gallatin School of Individualized Study (NYU)

Co-Sponsors

Brademas Center (NYU) | Department of History (NYU)
Center for the Study of Africa and the African Diaspora (NYU)
African American Diaspora Network; Consulate of Ireland (NY)
Embassy of Ireland (Washington DC) | Tenement Museum (NY)
NYPL Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (NY)

Where Do We Go From Here

Revisiting Black Irish Relations and Responding to a Transnational Moment

People of Irish and African descent have lived in the United States for more than four centuries. Their respective trajectories -- marked by complexity, conflict, and collaboration -- have been shaped by American conceptions of identity, hierarchies of belonging, and access to pathways of upward mobility. The aim of this conference and programing is to examine the constellations of Blackness and Irishness in the history of the United States and beyond and use their example to ponder present conundrums around race, ethnicity, inequality and identity politics. While drawing on historical, mainly American, examples, we are encouraging responses to the contemporary transnational moment, in which conversations about social justice and the Black Lives Matter Movement resonate in Ireland as much as they do in the United States and beyond.

Participants:

Sir Hilary Beckles, Vice-Chancellor, The University of the West Indies

James Carroll, journalist and National Book winner

Emma Dabiri, author of *Don't Touch My Hair/Twisted* and *What White People Can Do Next*

Kim DaCosta, New York University

Miriam Nyhan Grey, New York University

Kevin Kenny, New York University

Chanté Mouton Kinyon, Notre Dame

Ruth Negga, lead actor in *Loving* (2016) and *Passing* (2021)

Jane Ohlmeyer, Trinity College Dublin

Touré Reed, Illinois State University

Nikhil Singh, New York University

Lenwood Sloan and Mick Moloney, New York University

Stephen Small, UC Berkeley

Rachel Swarns, New York University/*New York Times*

Elisa Joy White, UC Davis

New York Tenement Museum panel on using the trajectories of Irish and African American family history to explore race and ethnicity in New York City. Panel: Annie Polland (Director, Tenement Museum); Professor Leslie Harris (Northwestern University), Dave Favaloro (Curator, Tenement Museum).

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