

[Online Event: Carbon Boom: 9/29 African American History and Environmental History Seminar at the MHS](#)

Discussion published by Cassie Cloutier on Monday, September 12, 2022

[Carbon Boom: Barbados and the Plantationocene](#)

Author: Eric Herschthal, University of Utah

Comment: David Silkenat, University of Edinburgh

Thursday, September 29

5:00 PM

Free, Virtual Event - hosted by the Massachusetts Historical Society

[Register](#)

Nothing had quite the carbon impact of the Barbados sugar boom. Within a half century of the colony's transition to sugar production in 1643, Barbados was almost entirely deforested. The average Barbadian sugar plantation emitted almost twice the amount of carbon as the average enslavement-based rice plantation, and ten times the amount of carbon as commercial wheat farms in colonial Pennsylvania, which relied on family labor. The Barbadian sugar plantation set the model for all other enslaved plantations in the New World, and emerged from a confluence of innovations: ecological, financial, political, and racial. Though Barbados' importance to the development of the plantation complex is well known, this chapter argues for the colony's importance to the emergence of anthropogenic climate change. It uses new plantation emission calculations to tell a human story about the emergence of a carbon-intensive economy rooted in racial capitalism. It is a working draft of a first chapter for a new book project on enslavement and the origins of climate change.

[The African American History Seminar](#) and [Environmental History Seminar](#) invite you to join the conversation on **Thursday, September 29 at 5:00 PM**. The seminar brings together a diverse group of scholars and interested members of the public to workshop pre-circulated papers. After brief remarks from the author and an assigned commentator, the discussion is opened to the floor. All are encouraged to ask questions, provide feedback on the circulated essay, and discuss the topic at hand. Our sessions are free and open to everyone.

Register above to attend, and you will receive a confirmation message with instructions for attending the virtual session. Please check your junk mail if you do not

see this message, or contact the MHS for assistance.

Subscribers for the current year may now [login](#) to access the paper. All others who register will receive the paper by email the day before the seminar.

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Related date:
September 29, 2022