

## — BLACK — HISTORY MONTH

THE CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS JOINS YORK UNIVERSITY  
IN CELEBRATING THE ACHIEVEMENTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS  
OF PERSONS OF AFRICAN DESCENT TO THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIETIES WORLDWIDE.

Left to Right: SAM LANGFORD, MARY ANNE SHADD CARY, HARRIET TUBMAN, JOSIA HENSON  
ALL IMAGES ARE PUBLIC DOMAIN; Source: Wikipedia

### DID YOU KNOW...

In 1979, Toronto became the first municipality in Canada to proclaim Black History Month through efforts of many individuals and organizations such as the Ontario Black History Society. In 1995, Toronto Area MP Jean Augustine introduced a motion which was passed unanimously by the House of Commons to recognize Black History Month across Canada.

# CANADIAN HISTORY – STORIES OFTEN NOT TOLD...

## MONTREAL'S COMPUTER RIOTS OF 1969

Source: <http://www.blackhistorycanada.ca/>

In the spring of 1968, six Black Caribbean students at Sir George Williams University (now part of Concordia University, Montreal) accused a lecturer of racism. They complained that the teacher was handing out failing grades to all his Black students, regardless of the quality of their work. The students wanted the university to set up a committee to investigate the charges and they demanded that the students themselves be represented on the committee.

On January 29, 1969, as a result of the committee determining that racism was not a factor, all of the complainants as well as about 200 other students walked out of the hearings in protest and occupied the Computer Centre in the Henry F. Hall Building.

The "sit-in" continued until February 10, when representatives from both sides appeared to have negotiated a settlement. The administration agreed to set up a new committee if the students would end the occupation. About a hundred students were left in the building later that night, when the whole agreement fell apart at the last minute. The protesters barricaded the stairwells and shut off the elevators and telephones. The university then turned the whole matter over to the police.

When the police arrived on February 11, the peaceful sit-in exploded into a full-scale student riot, the most violent in Canadian history. Protesters threw the computers out the windows, set fires and destroyed student records. The police arrested 97 people, White as well as Black. On the following day the accused teacher was reinstated and the committee dropped the complaint of racism against him.

**What happened to the student protesters?** Roosevelt "Rosie" Douglas, a McGill graduate, was labeled the ringleader

and served two years in prison. He was deported back to his homeland Dominica in 1975. Another participant, Anne Cools, originally from the Island of Barbados, was sentenced to four months in prison but was later pardoned. She moved to Toronto in 1974 and founded Women In Transition Inc, one of the first shelters for abused women in the country. Later she became the first Black person to be appointed to the Canadian Senate.

The events that led to what is now known as the **Sir George Williams Riot** forced university administrators to re-evaluate how they deal with complaints of racism. In 1971 the administration adopted a new set of regulations and rights. Students finally became part of the university's decision-making process, and the ombudsman's office was created to hear students' concerns.

In his speech on his return to Montreal in 2000 Roosevelt Douglas summed up the affair this way: **"It was a fight for Black people to have an equal stake in the nation. We had no malice in our heads—we just wanted justice."**



Image source: [www.cbc.ca](http://www.cbc.ca)

## AFRICVILLE

<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/northern-star/033005-2601-e.html>  
<http://rabble.ca/toolkit/rabblepedia/africville>

Located near the Bedford Basin, the land of Africville started off with a population solely comprised of indigenous people. In the late 1800s the land was largely sold off to black families, (by white landlords) many of whom were slaves who had escaped to Canada or black loyalists from the war of 1812. The houses in the community ranged from small houses to shacks. Poverty was common due to racism, allowing only for low wage jobs. 65% of residents worked as domestic servants. There was little access to education in the community. Africville was denied many of the basic needs of a community by the city, such as proper roads, street lamps or electricity. Residents were constantly protesting, trying to get simple services like water and sewage lines running in the community. Despite the lack of services, the community continued to pay municipal taxes.

Though unwilling to help the community get access to basic necessities, the city of Halifax was interested in developing the land of Africville; a slaughterhouse and a port facility for handling coal completed the first ring of encirclement. In the 1850s, railroad tracks were laid straight through the community, and land was expropriated from Africville residents for this purpose. They learned to live with this intrusion, even though the railroad failed to put up crossing signals where the residents had to cross the tracks to get from one side of the community to the other.

In the 1940s, the city began discussing revitalization projects with the province that would relocate residents of slums and redevelop those areas. Between 1965 and 1970, the community of Africville was bulldozed. The first building to be destroyed was the community church—and this happened at three o'clock in the morning. Some residents had their homes demolished while they were ill in the hospital. Others were given only a few hours to pack their belongings before the bulldozers roared in. Africville disappeared and its people scattered—some into public housing in Halifax, and others to different areas of the province. Lives would never be the same again.

Residents resisted the eviction for as long as they could. The city, who had promised to assist with the move, used the municipal dump trucks. This image stuck with residents as a final form of degradation on top of the eviction and shows how poorly the people of Africville were treated before, during and after the relocation. The last house was destroyed on January 2nd, 1970.

Where Africville once stood, there's now a highway. A small park was created after protests in the 1980s brought attention back to the community. It wasn't until 2002 that the federal government declared Africville a historical site, which was a bittersweet victory for descendants. In 2005, NDP MPP Maureen MacDonald introduced a provincial bill named the Africville Act. The proposed bill, though not passed, included compensation and a formal apology.

Finally, in 2010 Halifax mayor Peter Kelly officially apologized for the eviction as a part of a \$4.5 million compensation deal. At the following annual reunion at the park, past residents and descendants renamed the park Africville.



*Image source: www.cbc.ca*

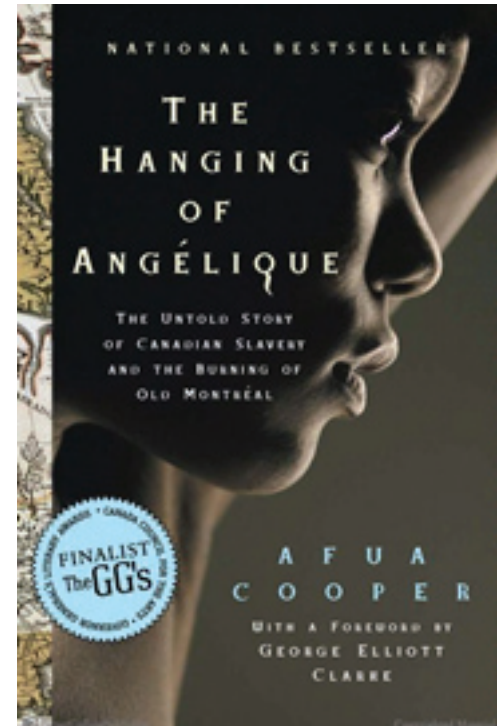
## ANGELIQUE AND THE BURNING OF OLD MONTREAL

<http://activehistory.ca/2012/09/marie-joseph-angelique-remembering-the-arsonist-slave-of-montreal/>

<http://montrealgazette.com/entertainment/fiery-new-doc-of-slave-marie-joseph-angeliques-trial-for-the-burning-of-old-montreal-in-1734>

On Saturday, April 10, 1734, Montreal burned to the ground. Some tried to save their personal belongings, others passed buckets of icy water hand to hand from the St-Lawrence River as burning, flying shingles set fire to neighbouring buildings. That night in 1734, angry Montrealers assembled in the hospital's courtyard and roundly accused 29-year-old slave woman Marie-Joseph Angélique. The French wanted to make an example of Angélique, so Montreal Judge Pierre Raimbault found her guilty on circumstantial evidence and sentenced her to death. 22 persons - rich and poor, men and women - testified against Marie-Joseph Angélique. All admitted that they did not see Angélique start the fire, but they were unanimously convinced of her guilt.

Historians such as Denyse Beaugrand-Champagne, author of the *Le Procès de Marie-Josèphe Angélique* (Beaugrand-champagne, 2004), believe it is clear that Angélique did not start the fire. They argue that she was just the unfortunate victim of incriminating circumstances, rumors and discrimination. But for others, like historian and poet Afua Cooper, who wrote *The Hanging of Angélique: The Untold Story of Canadian Slavery and the Burning of Old Montreal* (University of Georgia Press, 2007) and who dedicated 15 years of her professional life to research on Marie-Joseph Angélique, the woman undoubtedly started the fire in a gesture of rebellion and her actions were a cry for the freedom of African American slaves.



## REFLECTIONS ON BLACK HISTORY MONTH FROM THE MEN'S TEAM

By Nathan Kalman-Lamb

The Men's Team focus tends to be preoccupied with issues of masculinity and violence. That is, we are interested in starting discussions about the ways in which hegemonic forms of masculinity feed into gender-based violence -- particularly violence that men perpetrate against women. Yet, this is not the only connection between masculinity and violence. In fact, for men inhabiting racialized identities -- particularly blackness -- the possibility of experiencing violence is dramatically heightened.

This is largely because black masculinity has become associated with violence in the popular imagination. Histories of colonialism and slavery have produced the idea that Black men are naturally predisposed towards physicality and violence. This notion is a complete fabrication, one that has been used as a justification for the entrenchment of white power and privilege. During U.S. slavery, the idea that black men were more animal than human legitimized the existence of a system that demanded their forced labour. Later, after the U.S. Civil War into the first half of the 20th century, it became common practice for black men to be accused of raping white women and then lynched as a consequence. These were contrived accusations designed to justify the terrorization of a population suddenly free to pursue social mobility.

Today, the association of black masculinity, physicality, and violence persists in the way that black men are generally perceived to be naturally athletic and predisposed to success in sports. More insidiously, it has also become the justification for the murder of black men by security and police forces across the United States. Trayvon Martin. Michael Brown. Eric Garner. Ezell Ford. John Crawford III. The list of unarmed black men killed because of the 'threat' they ostensibly posed to armed law enforcement officials grows at an alarming rate.

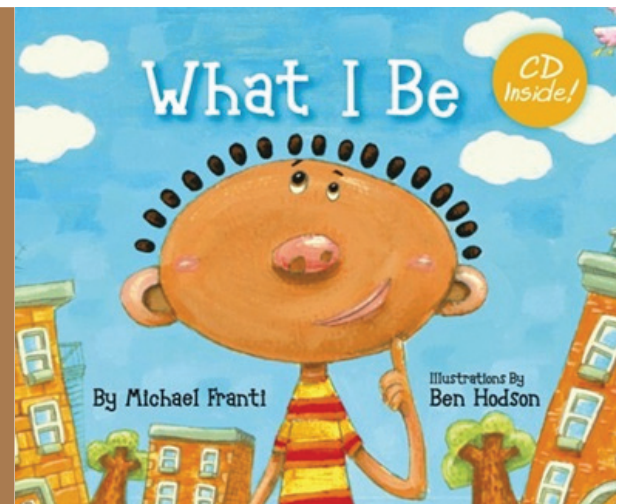
Black History Month offers us a moment to reflect on why black parents have to worry about the safety of their sons in a way that white parents do not and who benefits from that. More importantly, it forces us to ask what we are going to do about that disparity.

In 2015, it's finally time we started to take the fact that #BlackLivesMatter seriously.

## ANNOUNCEMENT

In celebration of Black History Month, the Centre for Human Rights will be donating a number of Children's books, reflective of Toronto's racial diversity, to York's on-site Daycare Centre!

More details coming soon!



***UofMosaic Talks Peace:***

*In the Aftermath of War Discussion Series Presents*

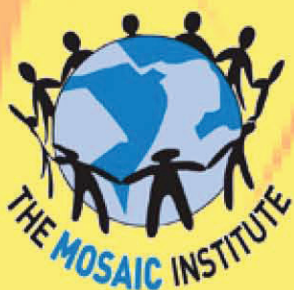
# **South Sudan Three Years On: Current Challenges and Opportunities**

Since becoming an independent country in 2011 South Sudan has been rocked by a brutal civil war, environmental catastrophe, and economic instability. This has resulted in a significant refugee crisis with security, public health, and human rights implications. This session will focus on various efforts to respond to these challenges, including an innovative Canadian program to train south Sudanese journalists in techniques of human rights reporting, and the various efforts of the South Sudanese diaspora in Canada to advance the cause of peace and development.

## **Speakers Include:**

**Danny Glenwright** | Journalists for Human Rights

**Joseph Madak Wuol** | South Sudanese Community Peace Building Taskforce



**Tuesday February 24, 2015 | 5:00pm - 7:00pm**

**RSVP to [info@mosaicinstitute.ca](mailto:info@mosaicinstitute.ca)**

**York University | York Lanes 305L**