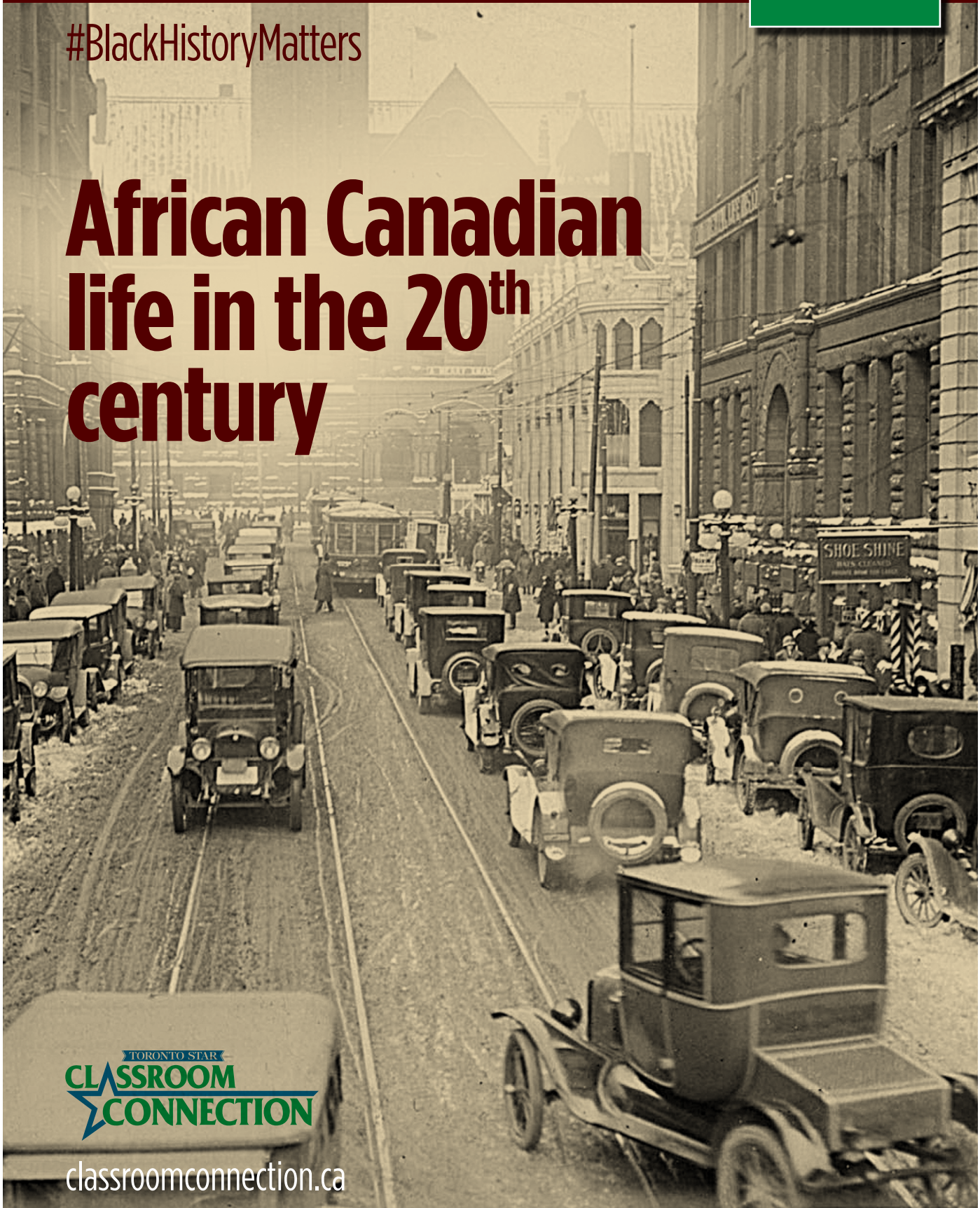


BLACK HISTORY MONTH – Week 3



#BlackHistoryMatters

African Canadian life in the 20th century



TORONTO STAR
**CLASSROOM
CONNECTION**

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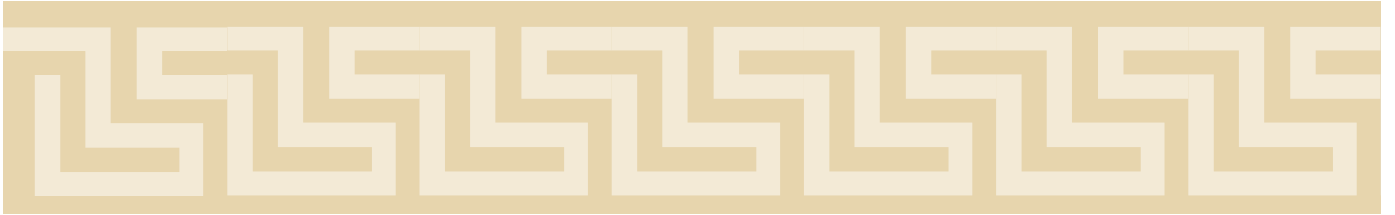
WEEK 3: AFRICAN CANADIAN LIFE IN THE 20TH CENTURY

Thousands of African Canadians resided in Canada after the abolishment of American slavery. Contrary to the myth, not all of the African Americans who fled north to Canada for freedom returned to the US after 1865. Black men and women had established families, built homes, and formed communities. They contributed to the development of the provinces they lived in as well as to the newly formed Dominion of Canada.

Going into the 20th century, Blacks in Canada continued to struggle for equal rights. Individuals filed court cases to challenge segregated public schools and the refusal of businesses to serve Blacks because of the colour of their skin. African Canadians spoke publicly against the racial discrimination they experienced in their daily lives and marched through the streets to protest racial inequality. African Canadians wrote petitions to ask the government to intervene and address racial discrimination. They also lobbied for legislation to support human rights. Black Canadians have a long history of fighting for social justice. Their brave actions were influential in shaping human rights legislation in Ontario and helped to forge the labour and human rights movements.



Photo from atlas published in 1879 in Great Britain.



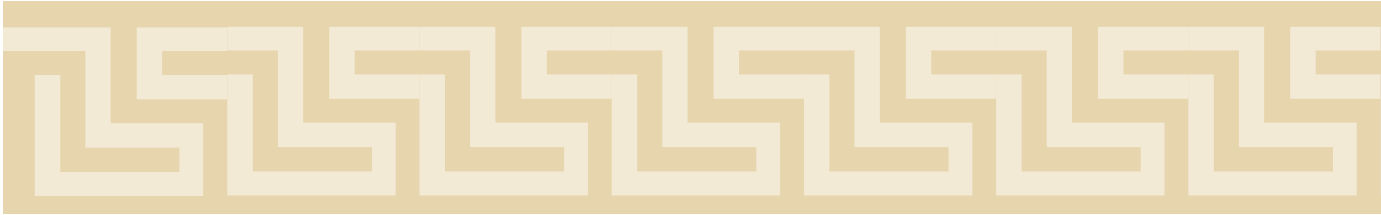
SORRY, YOU CAN'T SKATE HERE

When Harry Gairey Jr. was fifteen years old in 1945, he and his friend Donny Jubas decided to go skating at an indoor ice rink in Toronto. However, when Donny, who was white, ordered two admission tickets, he was told that Harry, who was Black, could not get a ticket, because they did not sell tickets to “Negroes.” The friends left and Harry told his parents what happened. His father, Harry Gairey Sr., worked as a railroad porter. He helped to organize Toronto branch of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, an all-Black labour union, who fought for the rights of Black railroad workers and to improve their working conditions. Gairey Sr. went to see his city councillor, who arranged for him to address the Mayor and the city council at a meeting the next day. He argued that if his son could be conscripted to fight in the next war like other Canadians, that he should then also enjoy everything else all Canadians are entitled to. Two days later, Gairey Jr. was interviewed by the Toronto Daily Star about the incident and the following day, students from the University of Toronto protested in support of young Gairey in front of the ice rink. These actions led to the City of Toronto passing an anti-discrimination law in 1947. In 1996, the ice rink in Gairey’s and Jubas old neighbourhood was renamed the Harry Ralph Gairey Rink to honour the activism of Gairey Sr.



Old friends Don Jubas, left, and Harry Gairey Jr. recall the day as kids when Gairey was denied entry to a Toronto skating rink because of his skin colour.

COLIN MCCONNELL/TORONTO STAR



ACTIVITES

After reading *Sorry, You Can't Skate Here*, complete these sentences.

Fifteen year old Harry Gairey Jr. and his friend Donny Jubas went

Harry could not get a because of the colour of his skin.

Harry's father worked as a

The was an all-Black labour union.

Students from the protested in front of the ice rink in support of Gairey Jr.

In, Toronto passed a law against

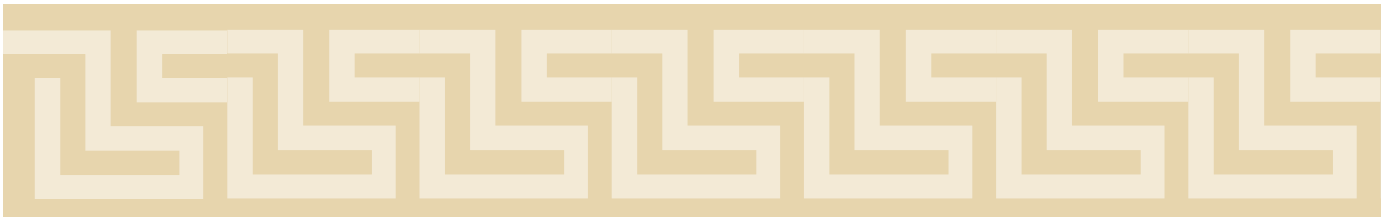
The Harry Ralph Gairey Rink was named in

of



KEN FAUGHT/TORONTO STAR

THE WAY IT WAS: Harry Gairey Jr. tells students at Frankland Community School yesterday that blacks could be barred from city swimming pools in the '40s.



African Canadians established community groups to address issues that were important to the Black community and to provide a space for social activities.

HUGH BURNETT AND THE NATIONAL UNITY ASSOCIATION

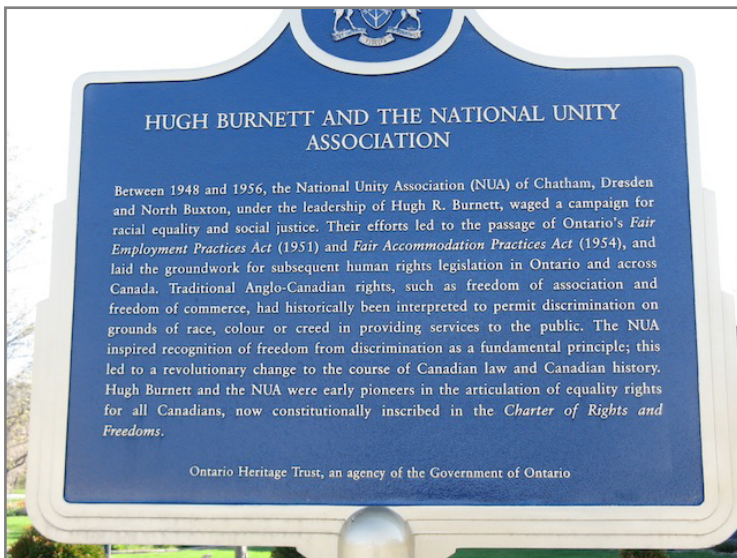
The National Unity Association (NUA) was established in Dresden, Ontario in 1948 by brothers William, Percy and Bernard Carter. The organization had members from Dresden, Chatham, and North Buxton. Their nephew and carpenter Hugh R. Burnett, was elected secretary and would go on to play an important role in NUA's campaign for racial equality and social justice. Burnett was eager to take action against racial discrimination after experiencing it himself many times. In 1943, shortly after returning from serving in Europe during WWII, Burnett ordered a cup of coffee in a restaurant in his hometown of Dresden, but was refused service because of his skin colour, even while wearing his military uniform. The efforts of Hugh Burnett and the NUA led to the passage of two important laws in Ontario: the Fair Employment Practices Act (1951) and Fair Accommodation Practices Act (1954). Their perseverance laid the foundation for future human rights legislation in Ontario and across Canada.

Use the information on the background page on Hugh Burnett and the National Unity Association to answer these questions.

In which towns did the NUA operate?

What two occupations did Hugh Burnett hold?

Name the two laws the NUA helped to get passed



The National Unity Association Plaque located in the Municipality of Chatham-Kent, Dresden Ontario.

Photo credit: Ontario Heritage Trust

THE UNIA

The Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) was founded in 1914 in Jamaica by Pan-African leader Marcus Garvey. Hundreds of branches opened across the globe, including fifteen in Canada. The Toronto branch was opened in 1919 at 355 College Street in a special event that Garvey attended. The organization was part of a global movement to connect Blacks in the African Diaspora in the struggle against racial oppression and to unite based on their past to forge a united future. The international group promoted the economic development of people of African descent, encouraged racial pride, and advocated for education on African heritage.

The UNIA published two weekly international newspapers, the *Negro World* and the *Black Man*, to help educate their readers and keep them informed about happenings related to Blacks around the world. All UNIA branches opened halls that served as a political meeting place as well as a community and social centre. UNIA regional conferences were held in Toronto in 1936 and 1937. While in Toronto in 1937, Garvey launched the School of African Philosophy where he taught summer classes on Black history and to train future UNIA leaders. In 1938 the eighth and last International Convention of Negro Peoples of the World was also hosted in Toronto. These gatherings were attended by supporters in Canada, from the United States, and the Caribbean. Garvey also toured several places in Canada. He gave speeches at the chapters in Windsor and Toronto in Ontario, and in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The Toronto UNIA branch organized the annual Emancipation Day celebrations in St. Catharines, Ontario called the "Big Picnic" from the 1920s to the 1950s. The UNIA is an example of grassroots community and global mobilization by Black men and women with the aim of improving the conditions for Blacks worldwide.

Read about the UNIA. Use the information to help analyse these quotes by Marcus Garvey. Explain what each quote reflects about the philosophies of Marcus Garvey and the UNIA.

A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots.

– Marcus Garvey

Liberate the minds of men and ultimately you will liberate the bodies of men.

– Marcus Garvey



Pan-African flag

THE TORONTO DAILY STAR, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 1928

Negro Potentate Arrives in Toronto

COST OF BUYING LAND IS TO BE SURVEYED

(Continued from Page One.)
ing the expropriation, and of suggesting to the city planning commission that it take the matter under advisement. He was not in favor of placing the board on record as recommending the work at present, feeling that more information was necessary.

SECRETARY OF MISSION BOARD LEAVES \$14,799

Seven Grandchildren Each Receive \$100 in Will of Henrietta M. Guy

Henrietta M. Guy	26,230
Rev. John H. Robinson	24,790
George St. Mason	14,557
Charlotte T. Graydon	11,184

Marcus Garvey, Toronto Daily Star, November 1, 1928

DID YOU KNOW?

The 1944 *Ontario Racial Discrimination Act* prohibited “the publication or display, on lands, premises, by newspaper or radio, of any notice, sign, symbol, emblem or other representation indicating racial discrimination.” It was the first anti-discrimination legislation in Ontario. Ontario was the first province to enact a law against racial discrimination.

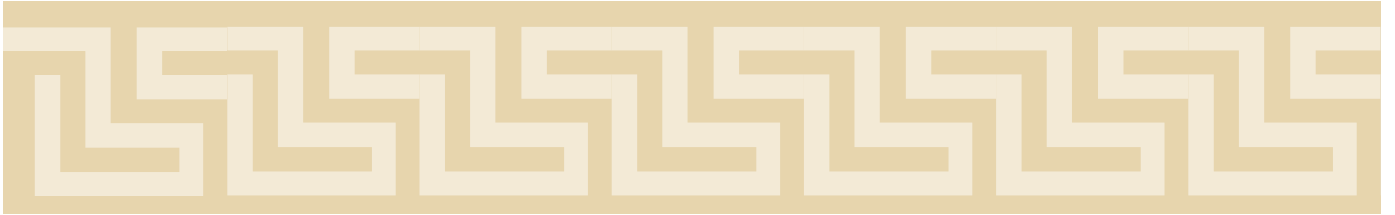
NO.2 CONSTRUCTION BATTALION (CEF)

As soon as the First World War began in 1914, African Canadian men, like other Canadian males across Canada, rushed to enlist in the Canadian Expeditionary Force. They were eager to join the war effort too. Some Black men were able to enlist in some regiments. But many Black men were turned away from recruiting stations because of their race. White soldiers did not want to serve beside them and white officers did not feel they had what it took to be soldiers because they were Black. Determined to fight, to be part of the overseas adventure, and to have the opportunity to earn a decent income, African Canadian men wrote numerous petitions to Sir Sam Hughes, the Minister of Militia and Defence asking him to explain why Black men were being barred from military service. J.R.B. Whitney, publisher of the African Canadian newspaper the *Canadian Observer*, also reached out to Hughes and offered to use his newspaper to help recruit 150 Black men in order to raise a platoon. He published the call and received a good response, but that suggestion was unsuccessful, because no commanding officers would accept them.

Black men in Canada continued to insist that they be treated equally and demanded that Hughes either make it public knowledge that the Canadian military does not accept Black enlistees or allow Black men to fight. Two years later, their persistence paid off. Black men would be able to enlist, but they would have to serve in a segregated unit. On July 5, 1916 an all-Black unit was authorized. The No.2 Construction Battalion, as it was called, was stationed in Pictou, Nova Scotia. Almost 700 Black men signed up. 165 were from the US and the rest came from across Canada including British Columbia, Ontario, and Nova Scotia. The unit was commanded by all white officers. Only the chaplain, Reverend William Andrew White, was Black. Rev. White was the only Black commissioned officer and the only African Canadian chaplain to serve in WWI.



Members of the No. 2 Construction Battalion based in Truro, N.S.



The No.2 set sail for Europe in 1917. When they arrived, they were not assigned combat roles. Instead the battalion was put to work building shelters, bridges, and roads. They were later attached to the Canadian Forestry Corps, helping to cut trees to provide lumber for building projects. Some men of the No.2 were injured or died because they worked near to combat zones. Fighting in Europe stopped on November 11, 1918 and the war officially ended with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles on June 28, 1919. The No. 2 Construction Battalion returned to Canada after the war in early 1919 and was disbanded on September 15, 1919.

Although these Black soldiers did not get the opportunity to take up arms, they served their country valiantly and with pride. Because of their efforts, they paved the way for Black men and women to serve during WWII alongside other Canadian soldiers. 2016 marks the 100th anniversary of the battalion. Canada Post has issued a commemorative stamp to honour the service, courage, and legacy of the No. 2 Construction Battalion.



Photo Credit: Acadia University Archives, World War One poster collection

Create a timeline image using these dates:



NEGRO GIRL STARTS STUDIES AT GUELPH NURSING SCHOOL

By WESSELY HICKS

Guelph, Oct. 7—Marrisse Scott, who was refused the opportunity of training as a nurse in her home town of Owen Sound because her skin was darker than that of her fellow townsmen, has donned the blue-and-white uniform of a probationer at St. Joseph's hospital in Guelph and started on a career of mercy.

The tall Negro girl, who has a voice as soft as cut velvet, is still a little shy and still a little uncertain. "I would have like to have stayed in Owen Sound near my family," she said. "This is the first time I have ever been separated from them, and it's a little hard for me and for them, too. But I'm very happy to be here and I'm very happy to be training as a nurse."

It will take Marrisse Scott three years to qualify as a nurse at St. Joseph's, and at the end of that time she will write her registration examinations. If she is successful, she will be entitled to use the initials "R.N." behind her name. Up until a week ago, when she was accepted at St. Joseph's, those two initials looked as though they might be fantastic day dreams to a colored girl in Ontario.

Puzzled at Refusal

Sister Paula, the soft-voiced superintendent of nurses at St. Joseph's, is a little puzzled about a hospital board refusing to admit a girl like Marrisse Scott to a nurses' training school.

"It is unnecessary," she said. "It is incomprehensible. Marrisse is a quiet, nice, intelligent girl and her qualifications are high. Why should anyone refuse to have her in their nurses' training school?"

A member of the British Episcopal Methodist church, Marrisse made her application at St. Joseph's hospital in Guelph upon the suggestion of a priest in Owen Sound. "He said there was room for a probationer at St. Joseph's," Marrisse said, "but he didn't know if I could get in. He said I should try, anyway."

She telephoned the superintendent at St. Joseph's one week ago and, the day after, she came to Guelph for a personal interview. Last



Friday she was accepted. Yesterday she registered and today she began her first classes.

"She will make an excellent nursing student," Sister Paula said. "She has the qualifications and the manner. And she will have an equal opportunity with everyone else."

"Wants to Go to Top"

Marrisse's fight to attain what every other Canadian girl regards as her right, once she has the qualifications, has gained her a lot of publicity. She is a little embarrassed about it. She hasn't sought it and has accepted it as necessary if she wanted to attain her ambition.

"Maybe," she said, "it will make it easier for someone else in the same position I was."

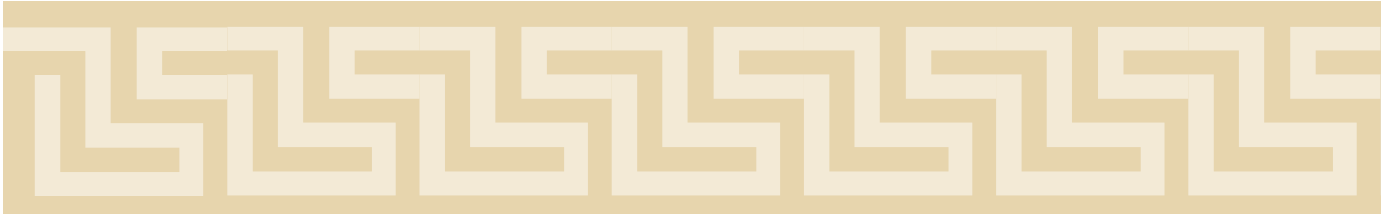
Sister Paula commented: "She will probably go on and take graduate work after she finishes here. She's very ambitious. She wants to go to the top of her profession."

Sister Paula looked up and there was a spark of fire in her eyes. "Some people say the patients may object to a colored girl nursing them," she said.

"Well, I was talking to one of our men patients this morning who had heard about Marrisse Scott and knew she was training here. Do you know what he said. He said: 'I hope I'm the first person to whom she brings a breakfast tray.'"

NOW probationer at St. Joseph's hospital School of Nursing in Guelph, Marrisse Scott, Owen Sound Negress, carries a tray. She was refused admission by Owen Sound hospital

Toronto Daily Star, October 7, 1947



Who is this article about?

Where was Marisse born and raised?

What profession did Marisse want to train for?

Which school offered her admission? Where was the school located?

What was one reason given for why people would object to Marisse and other young Black girls becoming nurses?

What other perspective does the patient's statement "I hope I'm the first person to whom she brings a breakfast tray" show?

What happened to Marisse Scott? Conduct a search of her name on the Internet. Write a brief article that describes her life after this article was published.



ACTIVITY: ANTI-DISCRIMINATION CAMPAIGN

Create a poster to raise awareness about racism, its affects, and what people can do to eliminate it.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Journey to Justice, NFB

https://www.nfb.ca/film/journey_to_justice

The Dresden Story, NFB

https://www.nfb.ca/film/dresden_story

“How a group stood up for civil rights in an Ontario town,” CBC The National

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NFlqUJlk88o>

Little Black School House, Maroon Films

Hugh Burnett and the National Unity Association

<http://www.heritagetrust.on.ca/CorporateSite/media/oht/PDFs/Hugh-Burnett-NUA-ENG.pdf>

Season of Rage: Hugh Burnett and the Struggle for Human Rights by John Cooper

My Name’s Not George: The Story of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in Canada by Stanley Grizzle

Canada’s Black Battalion: No.2 Construction Battalion, 1916 – 1920 by Calvin Ruck

<http://www.ourroots.ca/e/toc.aspx?id=8185>

Obituary: Harry Gairey Jr.’s graceful, sporting life

<http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2015/09/04/obituary-harry-gairey-jrs-graceful-sporting-life.html>

Blacks in Canadian Human Rights and Equity History Timeline

<http://www.tiki-toki.com/timeline/entry/305051/Blacks-in-Canadian-Human-Rights-and-Equity-History/>