

Black history is our national history

Toronto was the first municipality in Canada to proclaim February as Black History Month; a month dedicated to commemorating the contributions of African-Canadians to our culture and community. That was 38 years ago.

It was because of the diligent pressure and persistence of the Ontario Black History Society which succeeded in having the city formally recognize the month — and now it's proclaimed right across the country.

Black History Month is, frankly, Canadian History Month and it's important we know the compelling facts of our heritage.

African-Canadians have struggled for equal opportunity and freedom from discrimination for far too many years. It began with the anti-slavery movement and evolved into the fight for basic civil and human rights. African-Canadian leaders of that time led with courage and determination.

They include people like Viola Davis Desmond, a Halifax-born business woman. It was 1946 when she went to the movies in New Glasgow, N.S. while her vehicle was being repaired. She bought a ticket and sat on the main floor — not realizing this theatre had segregated seating. She refused to leave when staff demanded she go to the balcony. She was dragged out by police and spent the night in jail. She was fined \$20 and charged and eventually convicted with defrauding the government of one cent — the tax difference between the balcony and main floor seat. Her challenge of the tax evasion charge brought national and international attention and raised awareness of racial segregation in Canada. Desmond was posthumously pardoned in 2010 and next year, she will be the first African-Canadian and first woman, aside from the Queen, to appear on a Canadian bank note.

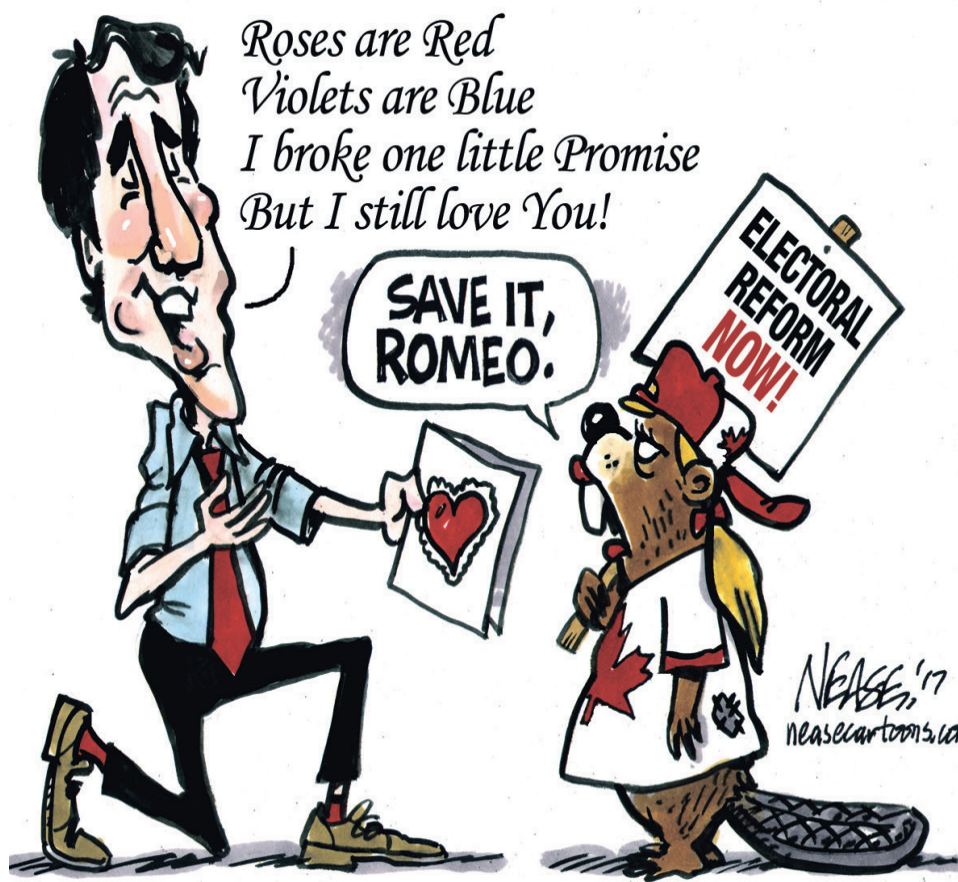
Others led with their entrepreneurial spirit. Carrie Best was the first African-Canadian to own and publish a newspaper.

Elijah McCoy invented and patented a type of lubricating cup that dripped oil onto moving parts of trains while in motion. He also invented and patented the first portable ironing board at his wife's request.

African-Canadians have roots which date back to the 1600s. Let's educate ourselves about the contributions African-Canadians have made to our society — for the better.

The Independent & Free Press

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Letters to the editor

Community will miss Links2Care

Re: Halton Hills offering free activities in revamp of youth services program, Feb. 7, by Graeme Frisque.

I am a parent who has been very grateful to have the services of Links2Care in recent years for my teenage child.

I have been blessed that the Links2Care youth team is dedicated, caring, and empathetic to the youth who need them and the parents who often aren't sure where to turn.

The youth in the northern part of Halton are falling through the cracks; there are few programs for them that can meet the often one-on-one needs of kids with a variety of differentiations and struggles.

My child has a unique set of challenges. Meeting within a wide-arc group setting is not going to address her needs.

We have tried multiple approaches in the last five years and the one that fit her needs the best was the one-on-one "talking" relationship that she was able to establish with Links2Care.

What they have offered is customized

"help" to meet the need of the individual, and the ability to help the kids network with other like-minded youth.

What my teen needed was just someone she could talk to who would not judge and who could offer another avenue outside of home, family and friends. And of judgement. She has needed validation. She has received that from Amanda.

How disheartening to read that Links2Care is no longer offering services.

How difficult to hear that our daughter's friend and confidant will no longer be available. It is great to hear that there will be new services offered. But as one mother pointed out — the ages are too varied, kids won't be able to "get" to these spaces, the programs are not appropriate for all.

My teen may want to go swimming now and then, so thank you for that. But she will not be able to sit and "talk" to someone who "gets her" and help her navigate these horrible teen years.

There are not enough programs for teen-aged kids with learning disabilities in this growing community.

They are the highest risk group. Please don't cut this invaluable service out.

We need Amanda and Josh, and the kids need them.

RIP Links2Care Youth Services. Parents and teens who rely on them are in mourning.

Karen Gasbarino-Knutt

Diversity makes us stronger

In response to the letter: What about Christian beliefs?, my son in JK spent the month of December doing all things Christmas: readings, songs, crafts and a concert. In December, we also celebrated the birthday of Prophet Muhammad. To be able to celebrate the birthdays of two incredible prophets of God in our home was not only exciting but truly special and blessed.

Remember Easter and other Christmas holidays are also celebrated in schools. To fulfil the accommodation of a few Muslims for a few minutes each week does not take away from the religious or Canadian values any of us hold.

It only makes us united, strong and respectful.

Zaib Abbas