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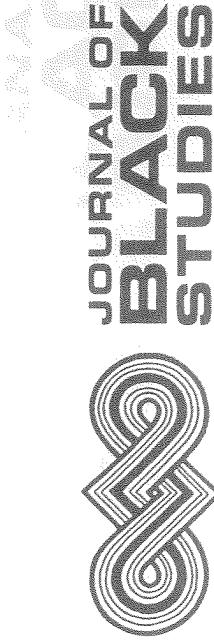
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**SPECIAL ISSUE: Blacks in Canada: Retrospects,
Introspects, Prospects**

GUEST EDITOR: Esmeralda M. A. Thornhill



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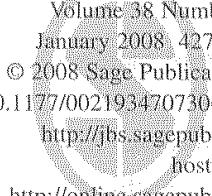
Blacks in Canada: Retrospects, Prospects

GUEST EDITOR: *Esmeralda M. A. Thornhill*

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HARAMBEC!

Quebec Black Women Pulling Together

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North of the Canada–U.S. border, conditions, attitudes, and behaviors toward Blacks practiced during the time of slavery have continued sometimes in crude displays of racism, sometimes in more subtle forms. No Black is exempt—male or female, adult or child. Advocacy is unavoidable; proactive interventions are necessary. This exposé deals with the little-known story of Black women challenging the Canadian system in an ongoing bid for quality life for themselves and their families. This valiant, ongoing encounter can only result in some modifications favorable to an improved quality of life for Canadian Blacks. In essence, Harambec opens a window on Black women organizing in Quebec under the aegis of the Congress of Black Women of Canada—a vibrant national organization intent on changing behaviors, perceptions, policies, and practice across the Canadian social, political, and economic landscape.

Keywords: *Black women; Canadian Black women; Black women's organizations; Quebec Black women; Congress of Black Women of Canada (CBWC); Black women's history in Canada*

A comprehensive record of the tradition of Black women organizing and strategizing in Canada, particularly in Quebec, is sadly lacking. The little-known reality is that for many years Black women have been very busy doing just that, continuously and untiringly organizing. The information in

Authors' Note: The title "Harambec," minted by Shirley Small, is a coinage that locates Harambee, the African principle of self-help, in a specific geographic area, the lives of Black women and their families in Quebec, Canada. This word is minted to connote the ethos of African-descended women as they struggle to emerge from various burdensome controls and barriers they and their families encounter daily.

this article—although not exhaustive—will focus on one such group of Black women: The Montreal Regional Committee of the Congress of Black Women of Canada (Congress).

Congress is a community-based group focused on addressing deficits that adversely affect the “material reality”¹ of every moment of the daily life of people of African descent. This exposé will briefly locate the organization, trace its genesis, pinpoint its goals, articulate its challenges, and assess its impact.

Congress proudly takes its place on the continuum of fearless Black freedom-fighting foremothers in Canada. Three examples of such foremothers must include:

1. Québec’s Marie-Joseph-Angélique,² who defied slave master, legal system, and death to assert her autonomy. She exemplified the will to challenge White claims of entitlement over Black mind, body, and soul;
2. Harriet Tubman,³ the famed American antislavery fighter who dodged heavy-handed American injustice to escape north to Canada and to conduct multiple rescue missions on which she led hundreds of her enslaved brothers and sisters to freedom; and
3. Mary Ann Shadd⁴ of Loyalist Canada, reputedly Canada’s first female newspaper editor for *The Provincial Freeman*, who resorted to education and use of the media among other strategies to fight against slavery and injustice.

Following in the footsteps of these illustrious women and others, the Quebec daughters of Nefertiti continue to step up to the plate in their struggle for justice, rights, and inclusion for themselves and their families.

Blacks in Canadian Society

Blacks who had fled north—even though they were legitimately on Canadian territory⁷ For several decades, freedom remained precarious, and even elusive, for many Black refugees. With the passing of time, the incidence of recapture dwindled but diehard bigotry and racial discrimination—a direct legacy of slavery—persisted. In many instances, promises of rewards of land to Black Loyalists (*Ministère de l’Éducation du Québec [MEQ], 1996; Pachai, 1987; Walker, 1992; Winks, 1971*) who supported the British Crown were not honored; in those instances when grants did materialize, the rocky, infertile terrain grudgingly given to Blacks⁸ rendered the land useless for any agricultural development (Walker, 1992; Winks, 1971); and in yet other instances, White authorities officially rezoned the land so that new Black owners soon lost title to their property (MEQ, 1996).

Well throughout the colonial period, this sort of denial, displacement, and exclusion was practiced in every sector of society by the highest officials in the land. Churches restricted the participation of Blacks in worship and even in the matter of burial (Winks, 1971). Employers confined Blacks to marginal jobs that required unskilled labor. Domestic work or menial low-paid jobs in laundries, factories, or clubs were the fate of Black women. Black entrepreneurs were denied the licenses necessary to establish and operate businesses, and those who did persist were hounded by the police. Housing was very restricted and substandard (Thornhill, 1979).⁹ Community efforts to address these needs were of necessity reactive rather than proactive and often were distressingly unproductive. But the community remained undaunted in its efforts to confront and combat injustices. The need for advocacy and representation was great.

Coloured Women’s Club of Montreal: Progenitor to Congress

A little-known Canadian secret is that slavery of Black and Aboriginal peoples existed de jure and de facto in colonial Canada under both the French and British regimes.⁵ Although it did not flourish on the massive scale of the United States, the institution of slavery was nevertheless countenanced, condoned, and entrenched as a part of Canadian life by Canadian authorities (Cooper, 2006; Trudeau, 1960; Winks, 1971), and despite the 1833 British Imperial Parliament’s *Emancipation Proclamation*, which abolished slavery throughout the British Empire,⁶ American bounty hunters were free to cross the Canadian borders and seize self-liberated and already-free

By the turn of the 20th century, although slavery had long been abolished, the backdrop of racist attitudes and policies persisted . . . as they still do. The social, political, financial, and religious climate for African-descended peoples in the Dominion of Canada continued to be exclusionary and debasing. In essence, Blacks were socially marginalized, excluded from all but slave-associated jobs meant to keep them “in their place,” and denied privileges and participatory rights. Further victimized by the courts, they often were subjected to arbitrary justice and penalized with unjust punishments¹⁰ by courts that offered them neither remedy nor relief (MEQ,

1996; Thornhill, 2003; Winks, 1971). Such were the prevailing conditions that led to the formation of the Coloured Women's Club of Montreal (CWC),¹¹ a Black women's collective that was determined to make a difference in the lives of Quebec Blacks.

This pioneer group of mixed membership—Canadian and American Black women—gave themselves an ambitious but challenging mandate that included providing community services, engaging in advocacy, and exploring avenues that would expand employment opportunities for Blacks, and they forged ahead with raising funds to finance their projects. Within the first decade of its existence, the CWC became the progenitor of a number of Black community institutions. Because many churches in Quebec (and Canada) enforced a *de facto* color bar, stipulating where Blacks could sit in church and restricting how they could participate in worship rituals, the CWC became actively involved in establishing Union United Church¹² (Church) in 1907. Later, it also was instrumental in the formation of the Negro Community Centre (Centre) in 1928.

Both the Church and the Centre became pivotal institutions in the Quebec Black community. They provided social services, education opportunities, recreational activities, career training, personality development, social programs, and most important, they became acknowledged advocates for people of color. Personal and ethnic pride and dignity were a prime concern, and the development of youth became an important focus of their programs.

The first four decades of the 20th century saw the CWC actively involved in the establishment of many other groups. Among them were the Universal Negro Improvement Association—affiliated with the International Black Movement of Marcus Mosiah Garvey—literary clubs, the Porters' Mutual Benefit Society, and fraternal orders (Warner, 1983). All organizations were, to some extent, involved in social, cultural, educational, and advocacy activities and were particularly helpful during the Great Depression. With the Depression years came a further cut in Black immigration, while life for the existing Black population of Montreal became exceedingly difficult, as is the established pattern when economies slump. The ladies of the CWC founded a Community Soup Kitchen that they operated throughout the Depression years; for members of the community stricken with serious illness or in need of hospitalization, they maintained a bed in Grace Dart Hospital. They also provided a cemetery plot for those who died destitute (Thornhill, 1987).

Blacks attempting to register for military service during World War II were systematically and systematically rejected, and this caused great outrage and protest, drawing prompt action from community advocates such as Church ministers (Bertley, 1976; Winks, 1971). In spite of government and public biases, the war effort opened up new employment opportunities. With World War II inflicting untold hardships on countries, provinces, communities, and families, immigration into Canada was relaxed but still remained tightly regimented for Blacks who were deemed unacceptable because of “climatic unsuitability.”¹³ In the years following the war, immigration into Canada and Quebec from the English-speaking Caribbean was stepped up. In Quebec, the French nationalist agenda further filtered English-speaking applicants through a “points system”; with the 1960s, the doors to Black francophone immigrants started to open up somewhat. In this new wave of immigration, some arrived as students whereas others came as workers in low-end jobs that majority-population Canadians refused to consider. Under new government policy, many Caribbean women were brought in as domestics if they fulfilled the requirements that applicants be single and without dependents (Calliste, 1989). Some fully qualified registered nurses also were admitted and a token quota of professionals was allowed in. For Black people, plagued by obstacles to equal participation, the problems of social integration in society continued, and even worsened. The need for organized, concerted interventions as a response to an undeniable collective problem grew more and more acute. In addition, many newcomers were educated, middle-class Caribbean immigrants who were more demanding, articulate, and assertive in claiming their rights. They insisted on inclusion and organized together so as to ensure that their voices were heard (Warner, 1983, pp. 11-12). Both in Canada and particularly in the Quebec Black community, the climate was ripe for the emergence of a catalyst, and one did emerge: The Congress of Black Women of Canada (CBWC).

Genesis of the CBWC

In 1973, the Canadian Negro Women's Association hosted a momentous Congress of Black Women. This auspicious coming together of more than 500 Black women from across Canada was conceptualized by Kaye Livingstone, whose cherished dream was to convene a gathering of women of African descent on a national scale. This convention had such a powerful

impact that it inspired the CWC of Montreal to organize and host a second Congress of Black Women in 1974 under the theme "The Black Woman and Her Family" (Thornhill, 1991).

Again, the participation of English and French-speaking Black women was overwhelming. The combined effect of these two successful national conferences provided the impetus for Black women to embark on laying the groundwork that led to the 1974 establishment, under the aegis of the CWC, of the Montreal Regional Committee of the Congress of Black Women (Congress). This was a case of the birth of the first "child-chapter" predating the parent organization that was legally established later in Winnipeg in 1980. In 1975, one year following the Montreal Congress, African Nova Scotian women in collaboration with a number of church groups convened the third Congress of Black Women, which was held in Halifax under the theme, "Crisis of the Black Woman." Here, because of participants' enthusiasm and the momentum generated, an ad hoc steering committee was struck. This committee, composed of women from the CWC and the Negro Women's Association, was mandated to explore the feasibility of a national organization and to report back to the fourth Congress, which was to be convened in 1976 by the Hour A Day Study Club of Windsor, Ontario. Indeed, at the 1976 conference, the steering committee tabled its report recommending that a national organization be established to represent Black women across Canada. To this effect, a national secretariat with regional representation was elected with the following four-pronged mandate:

- to structure the national organization,
- to draft a constitution,
- to set up a network of communications, and
- to convene the fifth and founding Congress.

Given the scope of this mandate and the extent of the Canadian territory, progress in the development of the organization took time. As such, it was not until 4 years later, in 1980, at a national conference convened in Winnipeg that the constitution was ratified and the national parent organization, the Congress of Black Women of Canada, was established as a legal entity.

Since that first Toronto coming together of Black women in 1973 and ratification of the framework for the national body in Winnipeg in 1980, the CBWC has grown, at its peak in 1991, to more than 25 chapters across Canada, with Ontario boasting the greatest number of chapters (Thornhill, 1991). In addition to the Montreal Regional Committee, Quebec also has to

its credit a Ville Marie Chapter in Montreal, comprised mainly of French and Creole-speaking Black women.

Congress Philosophy and Praxis

From 1974 to 1980, the theoretical underpinnings and praxis of the national body were articulated, tested, and put into application within and by the Montreal chapter, which in 1980, willingly ceded much ground to the parent body. In essence, although regional chapters target local problems affecting every aspect of individual, family, and community life, they keep their focus trained on similar issues of national impact and all units work in sync as a national body.

This nationally constituted organization embraces every Black woman regardless of whether she is a paid-up member. Membership is automatic for all Black women regardless of linguistic affiliation, ethnic, social, marital or financial status, or sexual preference. Congress serves Black women, belongs to Black women, and is directed by Black women. In preference to merely assuming the misnomer and rhetoric of "sisterhood," Congress strives after the ideal of "living" sisterhood—a raison d'être aptly summarized in the *National President's 1991 Report*:

In Congress we must make time and take time for each other. We must value each other more. For, to utter the words "Black Woman" is an act charged with political significance. It is a self-affirming act predicated on the stance that **We Black Women Exist Positively**. Therefore, let us consciously act, interact and react with each other positively! (Thornhill, 1991, p. 8)

In keeping with this philosophy and these very simple but human goals, and after critically assessing our Black woman's material reality, Congress realized that as an organization we owe it to our members to create safe spaces where we can love, nurture, and honor ourselves. To do so, Black women in Congress chose as our symbol the charismatic, widely varied cactus—a hardy and beautiful plant that epitomizes the strength and resilience of Black womanhood:

The Congress of Black Women of Canada chose the cactus as a symbol to show the strengths and resiliency of Black women. It is of a family of plants that thrives under adverse conditions. No matter how arid the soil,

no matter that no care or attention is given,
the cactus survives, multiplies, flowers and bears fruit.
A fitting symbol.
With or without assistance, the Black woman
manages to educate herself;
tends to her sick and aged;
labours both inside and outside her home.
She survives and the race survives.¹⁴

In Quebec, the Congress's logo, a cameo depiction of mother and child, appropriately represents the focus of the organization because Black women have the residual responsibility for family. Consequently, our feminist praxis must calibrate the empowerment of ourselves as Black women at the same time that it targets the empowerment of our family—nuclear as well as extended. In this vein, Congress has always tried to adopt a discourse that is not only critically grounded in the historical trajectory of Black women but, more significantly, a discourse that also is accessible to our men folk—boy-children, sons, fathers, brothers, male partners, spouses, and grandfathers.

Self-affirmation is one very important part of the mandate of Congress, whereas addressing systemic racism is yet another that Congress approaches with a slant far different from that formerly adopted by community organizations. Congress so changed the analyses and strategies for addressing affronts and offenses that the mode of its responses to ongoing problems also changed. For example, as National President Thornhill neatly summed up in 1991,

As an organization, it is not so much the individual aberrational behaviour of the single police officer which we must target, but more significantly, how Law as a social institution offers little or no protection to Black people and other non-White people, particularly in the matter of colour. As an organization, we do not expend our energy so much on the individual professor, teacher or day-care instructor whose prejudices make a mockery of education and force our youth into either defensive rebellion, protective withdrawal, or "don't-careish," "dropout" behaviour. More significantly, our real target is Education as a public service and publicly supported institution whose clear contractual obligation is to foster and develop healthy self-concepts in Black students through the use of non-racist materials and the creation of an anti-racist learning environment. It is not so much the isolated and wrenching examples of overt harassment or flagrant firings in the workplace that arrest our organizational attention, but more significantly, the entrenched structural

barriers—access to training, recruitment policies, promotion patterns, networking ladders, colourblind union subculture—that operate to keep Black workers collectively on the periphery of gainful employment, bereft of efficacious recourse or protection against discrimination. (Thornhill, 1991, p. 5)

Mission, Breadth, and Depth of CBWC

To effect the radical change that is needed to ameliorate the quality of life for Black women and their families, Congress co-operates in limited ways with other marginalized ethnic groups as well as with mainstream White organizations. Such collaborators comprise church and community organizations, educator groups, university faculties, labor unions, government ministries and departments, school boards, university students' associations, professional associations, seniors groups, activists groups with local and international concerns, mainstream women's organizations, international women's groups, and communications media, including public and Crown organizations such as the National Film Board of Canada. These coalitions and liaisons have helped to broaden the platform of Congress, extend its outreach, and expand its sphere of influence. However, it must be noted that commensurate with its priorities, Congress is steadfast in conserving its autonomy to move in and move out of coalitions and eschews any alliance that threatens to dilute, trivialize, or dismiss the gravity of its issues, as articulated from an Afrocentric perspective. In other words, for Congress, the following rights are nonnegotiable:

- the right to locate Black people as full-bodied subjects and free agents;
- the right to name our reality as we live it;
- the right to speak in our own "voices of authenticity" (Thornhill, 2001);
- the right to signal the direction needed for transformative change, and
- the centrality of race and racism in our lives as Black women.

In all activities undertaken, the quest of Congress is to bring about fundamental change for collective upliftment and community improvement. Such transformative change is liberating both for the marginalized and for those who perpetrate, condone, or incite such marginalization. This type of change may involve behavioral correctives or it may call for the introduction of appropriate legislation along with meaningful policy implementation and effective enforcement. Education is one tool on which Congress relies. This education is twofold:

1. to quicken the understanding and self-esteem of our people, and
2. to heighten the sensitivity and sensibilities of those that habit and history have so conditioned, either to dismiss crass and cruel behaviors as normal or to trivialize bona fide complaints as the exaggerated, emotion-driven figments of Black people's imagination.

Scope of Interventions and Activities

Throughout the years, Congress has intervened at different levels of public authority to pinpoint weaknesses, to urge and ensure modification, for example, to school policies, practices, text choices, curriculum, and staffing. As a community advocate, Congress has made representations before the courts and administrative tribunals as well as intervened with social service agencies on behalf of Black mothers threatened with loss of jurisdiction and even parental authority of their children. Congress has supported community members falsely accused—whether by state action, private firms, or individuals.¹⁵ The organization has scrutinized employment conditions, practices, and policies affecting both men and women. Concerns with Black community health and the working conditions of Black nurses and caregivers also have formed part of Congress's agenda. Lobbying in parliament, participating in constitutional charter challenges brought before the courts, as well as tabling briefs and memoranda to commissions investigating police brutality and wrongdoing have figured prominently among Congress's many submissions to state authority.¹⁶ Congress is a valid and respected interlocutor appearing for the Black community before parliamentary standing committees and boards of investigation and sitting on commissions of inquiry and consultative bodies. Ever in touch with the pulse of the community, Congress has shouldered a heavy share of participation in protest marches, rallies, boycotts, and vigils, locally, nationally, and internationally. This wide spectrum of activities attests to the fact that Congress has involved itself on every single front—wherever necessary and whenever possible—in issues that affect the rights, status, image, well-being, and progress of Black women and their families.

Even though the struggle is ongoing, many of these efforts have paid off. For example, Congress interacted regularly on policy with the Quebec Ministry of Education (see, e.g., Thornhill, 1978) and has had meaningful input into the preparation of government-sanctioned teaching materials to be used at the secondary level for the teaching of the history of Blacks in Quebec and Canada (MEQ, 1996). As early as the mid-1980s, Black women

directly confronted the then-Minister of Education of Quebec, the Honorable Camille Laurent, and held him publicly accountable for having approved material with derogatory racist content. That objectionable material in the textbook, *La Lecture sous toutes ses formes*, published by the Centre éducatif et culturel, was later withdrawn! Under the aegis of Congress, the first-ever Canadian university-accredited course on Black women's studies—Black Women: The Missing Pages from Canadian Women's Studies—was conceptualized, developed, and taught by Esmeralda Thornhill at the Simone de Beauvoir Institute of Concordia University in 1983 (Thornhill, 1983). Members of Congress have been very active in helping to bring Black history observances to the public agenda, and the organization has sponsored a series of well-received public education lectures by such internationally acclaimed authors as Beryl Banfield and bell hooks.

In addition, the Quebec women of Congress took the lead and jointly sponsored with the Chinese community a public education legal seminar that addressed reparations and the need for the Canadian government to redress historical injustices perpetrated under Canadian law on the Black and Chinese communities.¹⁷ This model seminar was subsequently repeated by Congress chapter members both in Winnipeg and Vancouver.

The robust twin beliefs that (a) Black is "Color, Culture, and Consciousness" and (b) globally Black women, an endangered group, constitute an international underclass battling against the "triple oppression" of race, gender, and class have dictated that Congress's reach extend into the international arena. Congress was an active interlocutor instrumental in pressuring for political prisoners to be released from the *cachots* of Haitian dictator Duvalier. Members also actively supported African liberation and anti-apartheid struggles through rallies, vigils, dissemination of literature, and awareness-raising campaigns. Congress remained sensitive to and showed solidarity with African-descended peoples in struggle globally from South Africa to Kanaky (New Caledonia). Congress's representation on the Organizing Executive of the Third International Feminist Book Fair ensured that Black women writers were not only well and fairly represented¹⁸ but also were allocated the "Black-woman-space" to which they were entitled. In addition, the Montreal chapter provided substantive CBWC input and representation at both the Nairobi and Beijing World Conferences for Women.

Even though Congress believes collaboration to be forged in the crucible of confrontation, membership in Congress is not limited solely to confrontation and advocacy. Women enjoy self-affirming camaraderie at chapter meetings, special social events, national conferences, *vins d'honneur*, religious services, Afrocentric grooming sessions, and at opportunities to display

hobbies, expertise, and handicraft. Congress membership is well represented on other active community organizations such as the Quebec Council of Black Aging, the Quebec Board of Black Educators, The Black Literary Guild, and the Black Business and Professional Association. As part of its ongoing commitment to self-growth and self-affirmation, Congress sponsors from time to time in-group discussions and rap sessions, public lectures, forums, panel discussions, workshops, seminars, working teas, and conferences.

Congress as Transformative Agent of Change

Always working with other organizations, updating its own mandate, and expanding its involvement, Congress has, to a considerable extent, started to successfully mediate the marginalization that Black women's groups once faced, and the organization now commands the attention and respect of governmental and parallel women groups. Because most Quebec English-speaking members speak French with varying degrees of fluency, this has enabled Congress to overcome, in large measure, the hurdles of communicating in two languages and allows for direct dialoguing with government agencies.

In the more than three decades of its existence, Congress has had to remain steadfast in its stance for independence, self-determination, and self-sufficiency. This defense of its agency is absolutely necessary so as, first, to avoid being eclipsed by other groups coalescing or being convened under the opportunistic "multicultural" banner and, second, to escape becoming lost behind the "women of color" cover-all. This is a very real and constant challenge because absorption fades the focus and mutes the long-standing and pressing Afrocentric, race-driven concerns that Congress prioritizes.

The recruiting of new members, particularly youth, is the goal of every participant in Congress because the membership firmly believes that this renewal will enable the Congress of Black Women of Canada to keep its pulse attuned to the diverse and ever-changing needs of its constituency. Furthermore, prioritizing young Black women will empower and equip them to pass on to generations of women-to-come a positive sense of self and of comfort and pride in Blackness and Black heritage. In the injection of young blood lies the hope of passing on the baton of community service, self-help, and dignity both to Black women growing into adulthood and, consequently, to their families.

Conclusion

Congress is convinced that these continuing efforts, sooner or later, will bring about changes in the laws of Canada that will sensitize the Canadian public to the ills of racism and move the legislators and bureaucrats to entrench in law the necessary deterrents and incentives that would sensitize the Canadian public at large to still unexamined racism, which may be deliberate or unconscious, overt or covert. It behooves the lawmakers to summon the political will to make it abundantly clear that individual or institutional disregard and violation of such legislation will trigger meaningful penalties and sanctions on individuals and corporations alike—whether they are in the private or public sector.

In the tradition of the indomitable spirit of Black women, Congress remains strong in its determination to bring about basic institutional change and legal reform that could lead to a new day of equality in the daily lives of Blacks in Canada. The story of Congress in Quebec is merely a part of one missing chapter of the obfuscated story of Black women's history and our contribution to the Canadian reality.

Notes

1. "Material reality" means that which is real, concrete, and palpable (see Thornhill, 1995, p. 95, Note 20).

2. Marie-Joseph-Angélique was a Black woman born in Portugal, southeast of Lisbon, who was the slave of a Flemish owner in New England; he in turn sold her to the wealthy Montreal merchant François Poulin de Francheville. After an aborted escape attempt in February 1734, Marie-Joseph-Angélique was recaptured. Weeks later, on April 21, 1734, a fire mysteriously started in the residence of her mistress and rapidly spread through the entire city, destroying more than 46 buildings, including a convent, church, and Hotel Dieu Hospital. Marie-Joseph-Angélique was accused, tried, convicted as the culprit, and sentenced to death. She was cruelly tortured, had her hand lopped off at the wrist, was hung, and then was burnt at the stake before having her ashes scattered in the wind.

3. Harriet Tubman, the most famous conductor on the Underground Railroad, made 19 trips back to the South, leading to freedom for more than 300 people.

4. Mary Ann Shadd edited the antislavery newspaper *The Provincial Freeman*; this editor, publisher, and educator later went on to study law in the United States.

5. For example, Article 47 of the 1760 *Capitulations of Montreal* stipulated that Black and Aboriginal peoples would remain in their quality as slaves, the property of their White masters (see Bentley, 1976).

6. See *The Emancipation Proclamation: An Act for the abolition of slavery throughout the British Colonies; for promoting the industry of the manumitted slaves; and for compensating the persons hitherto entitled to the services of such slaves* (28th August 1833) 3 & 4 Gulielmi IV A.D. 1833, Cap.73, CAP. LXXIII (cited in Thornhill, 2003, p. 116).

7. See "The Case of the Fugitive Slave" in Ministère de l'Éducation (1996, p. 61).

8. For example, the areas of East Preston and North Preston in Nova Scotia (see Thornhill, 2000).

9. For example, in Montreal, the Black community was for many years confined to an industrial area "below the hill and between the tracks" (see Thornhill, 1979).

10. Viola Desmond serves as one illustrative example of a Black person subjected to unjust punishment (see *The King v. Desmond* [1947], 20 MPR, 297, cited in Thornhill, 2003, p. 443). 11. Founded in 1902, the Coloured Women's Club of Montreal (CWC) is reputed to be the oldest women's organization in Canada (see Warner, 1983, p. 9). In reviewing its present status and performance, the Congress of Black Women of Canada (CBWC) proudly acknowledges the CWC and the Negro Women's Association of Canada as the inspirations that helped to bring the seminal idea of a Montreal Regional Committee into existence in 1974. It was the CWC that acted as midwife during the years when policy, mandate, and procedure of the Montreal Regional Committee were in the birthing throes. It was that venerable grandparent body, the CWC, that backed the fledgling Montreal Regional Committee's decision to promote the formation of a national Congress of Black Women of Canada, whose idea was formally launched in 1976.

12. Union United Church is the First Black Congregation of Montreal and was pastored by the Reverend Charles Este for more than 40 years. Montrealers and visitors of African descent routinely sought out Union United Church as their preferred place of worship and fellowship—little did their religious persuasion or particular denomination matter in the context of the harsh reality of de facto racial discrimination.

13. *The Immigration Act: An Act Respecting Immigration*, S.C. 1910, c.27; Article 38(c): "Prohibit for a stated period, or permanently, the landing in Canada, or the landing at any specified port of entry in Canada of immigrants belonging to any race deemed unsuited to the climate or requirements of Canada, or of immigrants of any specified class, occupation or character" (cited in Thornhill, 2003, p. 352, Note 11).

14. *Tribute Speech to Ms. Betty Riley* delivered by Mrs. Vera Jackson, President, Montreal Regional Committee, CBWC, Montreal, July 7, 1980. Reproduced in *Congress Greeting Cards*. Artist: Violet Jones. Montreal: Images Positives Production, 1989.

15. Through the intervention of Congress, expert witnesses testified at a number of court hearings involving members of the Black community.

16. Congress played an active role when Black taxi drivers were forced to confront the openly racist practices of some Montreal cab companies.

17. "Singled Out by Law for Unequal Treatment" is a Congress legal seminar initiative in collaboration with the Chinese Canadian National Council (CCNC) around the Chinese community's "It's Only Fair!" redress campaign seeking indemnification and compensation for the few remaining, fast-dying-off, original Chinese Head Tax players.

18. In fact, a unique Congress-sponsored workshop titled "Multiple Jeopardy—Silencer of Black Women" was videotaped by The National Film Board of Canada. In the interest of protecting one participant, at that time "undocumented," Congress insisted that the film not be released for public consumption.

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