


Inside This Issue

- 2 **A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT**
- 3 **YOUTH**
-Taking Hold
- 4 **YOUTH & HERITAGE**
-Standing on Their Shoulders
- 5 **HERITAGE**
-Nelson Mandela Park
- 6 **COMMUNITY**
-Still I Rise
- 7 **LEISURE CLUB**
-Spring into these Reads !!!
-Stay Tuned for these Movies!!!

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Quebec's Marginalization: The Black Experience in Any Tongue

By Dr. Dorothy W. Williams

On March 27, 2015 the Executive Director of BCRC, Dr. Dorothy W Williams, had the opportunity to speak about the historical Black community and some of the issues of language in the province. Sponsored by Laval University, the conference titled: Ambiguous Encounters: Anglophone-Francophone Relations in Quebec from the Conquest to the Quiet Revolution, was put together by their Centre interuniversitaire d'études québécoises, better known as CIEQ. The Morrin Centre in Québec City hosted this 2 day event which brought together several dozen researchers and writers on the subject of language.



The title of Doctor Williams presentation that day was Quebec's Marginalization: The Black Experience in any Tongue. In a room filled with several dozen researchers and writers this was a unique take on the subject because her speech explored the issues of language and its intersect with race in Quebec-two subjects not often combined when talking about the province's linguistic matters. No matter, the presentation was well received and created a buzz in the room.

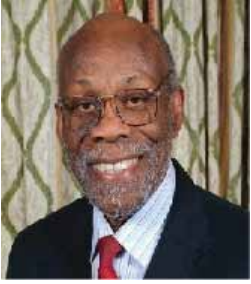
Some highlights from her speech included:

- >An exploration of the multiple languages spoken by Blacks in Québec at the time of the Conquest (1760),
- >The mid-19th century influx of African American fugitives and the subsequent porter class,
- >The temporary sojourn of French West-Indians about 1910,
- >The English-speaking Caribbean

population that straddled the WWI and the 1920 jazz era -->Blacks from the Maritimes whose impact was felt from the Depression to the post-war -->Today's West Indian ascendancy, which began with the Second Domestic Scheme in 1955. Its English roots now include French, Creole-speakers, and most recently Spanish-speaking Blacks, and finally, -->The trickle of multilingual Africans in the 1980s today now dominates Black immigration into this province.

The one thread that brought together this diverse linguistic meld over two centuries, was the racial and discriminatory obstacles faced at each turn. The point was well made that Montreal is and always has been a mosaic, a multi-lingual, multi-cultural community--a major racial and linguistic crossroads, where Blacks, despite challenges, have played an integral part in the mix.





Standing On Their Shoulders **By Clarence S. Bayne**

Derek Walcott in a poem once wrote, "I am seventy and half my friends are dead." And he longed for his old friends "just as they were." A very good and dear friend of mine, Ken Davis, died two weeks ago. At the funeral service the pastor said, "He is not gone, he is with us in our memories our lives." That is one of the important purposes of history. Ken Davis went to school in Montreal at Sir George Williams University. He lived and "feted" with us in Montreal in the McGill student ghetto in the sixties and seventies. He was for a short period of time, President of the Black Theatre Workshop, but so few lives in Montreal shed a raindrop of a single tear at his departure. However, they honoured him in Trinidad and Tobago and loved him in a little Ontario town. And it occurred to me that here in Montreal another one of us from the sixties, Dr. Elrie Tucker, died a few weeks ago and as in so many other cases here in Montreal this year, the silence at their departure is deafening. But it also occurred to me that the Government of Canada gave Lincoln Alexander a state funeral, and the silence in the Black community of Montreal was just as deafening. So I am coming to believe that this community is a place where the misfortunes of our lives are underscored and exaggerated, but the goodness and contributions are scattered with our torched bones. So there is no history because we deny ourselves a history. But there is hope. So let us rejoice! And I quote the Reverend: "God is Good. Always good."

For the next few months heading into the summer, BCRC will engage young Blacks in a project of discovery. The purpose of the study is to match the youth with senior contributors to the development of the English-speaking Black communities of Montreal. In videotaped interviews and conversations they plan to learn about and reveal the history of the Black community from the perspective of the Little Burgundy community. However, while the stories start with English-speaking Blacks in Little Burgundy they expand outward to create a network of organizations and individuals far beyond the civic Burgundy's boundaries. The importance of this project cannot be underestimated in a society that is governed as a multicultural society where every group has the right to

A Word From The President

choose and express its culture. Multiculturalism means that you have a right to a culture and you are responsible for it. We can share cultures but you have to have a culture to share. In the Black community we have been very poor at recording our history or singing praises about the achievements of those that have fought to create opportunities for successive generations of Blacks. History will reveal that there has been significant progress since 1760 (Articles of Capitulation), and again since 1960. History will also show that there has been, within the community, a levelling process which has contrived to suppress the recognition of achievers. The hope is that "Standing on Their Shoulders" will help to correct this; that our youth will discover by doing their own research that we do have a history of struggle here in Montreal of which they can be proud.

It is appropriate that having stated the above that I pause to offer on behalf of the BCRC condolences to the family of Dr. Elrie Tucker and to recognize his contributions to those in our community seeking careers in the medicine and related fields. Dr. Tucker was one of those immigrant students from Trinidad and Tobago in the sixties who succeeded in a system that had quotas for Blacks and Jews. He was successful both in his practice and as a private entrepreneur. In that sense, he is a role model whose story should be told and held up as exemplary in the social and economic circumstances of the time; and given the barriers of the "Colour Line" that all Blacks faced in Montreal in the sixties. He admired the radical who did more than he talked. Through his personal struggle, he became a social entrepreneur determined to give back in pragmatic, matter-of-fact measurable terms. He created the QBMA and was its President, except for a very brief period of time, until his recent death. He was instrumental in financing the careers of at least two generations of young Black medical practitioners, health-care managers and medical researchers from Montreal. He did this by convincing CEOs in the pharmaceutical and financial sectors to channel hundreds of thousands of dollars into the education of Black and minority scientists, nurses, health administrators and doctors. He represents a model of social enterprise that many of our Black medical practitioners should consider and emulate. We at BCRC join friends and family to celebrate his life. This is a story that we must tell. Maybe the Quebec Black Medical Association will consider calling the QBMA Awards "The Dr. Elrie Tucker Awards."

Semaji

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*If you have any comments or requests please contact Dr. Dorothy Williams
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Youth

Taking Hold Project: A Success

On March 19th, 2015, Taking Hold and nine selected girls from Marymount Academy spent the day at Planet Studios in order to record a song. We did this with a grant from Girls Action Foundation, and in tribute to their National Day of Action. This event is an action dedicated to refocusing February 14th from romantic love to shining the light on women making impact in their community. Taking Hold was able to create a song with the girls of Marymount Academy with help from singer/songwriter Sarah MK and DJ/producer, RYAN Playground.

Nadine Collins and Tessa Star, the Taking Hold animators, met the girls at Marymount Academy at 11am. By 11:30 we departed to Villa-Maria metro and headed to Metro Fabre. The girls were excited for the day ahead and anxious to arrive at the studio though unsure of what was to come. From Fabre we walked to Planet Studios. We met Ryan, the woman who produced the song track and will finish the song with the lyrics, and Jesse who was our sound engineer for the day.

As soon as we arrived the girls were ecstatic. We were all led into the large studio where we were told famous female artists such as Rihanna, Lauren Hill and Erykah Badu had recorded. Though the girls were not so familiar with the two latter women, the thought of Rihanna having recorded two songs in that room was enough to make them feel as though they were someplace special.



We decided it would be best to first record the chorus which involved all nine girls singing together. The chorus states, "It's just a bad day, not a bad life" and goes with the songs' overall theme of getting over life's hurdles. Ryan and Jesse had them record it in multiple ways and it got the girls feeling comfortable in the space and united as a group. After two of the girls recorded their solos we ordered and ate pizza, wings and juice which gave us energy to continue the day.



After we ate the girls were quite comfortable in the space. We had the entire floor to ourselves which included the large studio, a smaller studio, a kitchen area and a washroom. The girls were able to roam around. They used the second studio as a writing and practice space, and where they could take snacks and drinks as they pleased. So although we were being led by the amazingly helpful Jesse and Ryan, the girls were also independent in the space. Occasionally the girls would remark about how much better it was to be spending the day in the studio as opposed to school (even though they did not have school that day due to it being a Professional Day), and how cool it was to be living their dreams of becoming singers and rappers.

There were three girls who participated in singing the chorus at the beginning of the day but did not have lines to sing or rap themselves. With an hour left, Tessa approached the girls and asked if they would like to participate. Though they were reluctant at first, they were eventually persuaded to write some lines along with Tessa and record them together. The day was a success and everyone was able to record and some

even helped on the engineering side.

By the end of the day the girls had to be persuaded to leave and did not want the day to end. One girl had said that when she grows up she wants to work in a studio just like that, in New York City. We thanked Jesse for all his help in being patient and instructive with the girls and started our walk back to the metro. The girls looked like they were floating above the pavement. They were asking Ryan about her experiences producing music and being a fashion model. They were singing the chorus to the song, and taking pictures and videos. We dropped the girls off at their respective metro stations and were excited for the next week when we would see each other again and be able to relive the experience.

Though the day felt both completed and yet it could last forever, it was not the end of the experience. The group will soon be visiting CJLO, Concordia University's radio station to debut their song on Wednesday April 15th from 6 to 7pm. The girls will be able to talk about their experience in the studio and program the hour with their favourite songs. The Taking Hold project has opened up these young girls to exciting possibilities. We could see that they were beginning to believe in their own dreams.



Presenting One of Our New Youth Projects: "Standing on Their Shoulders"

Youth and Heritage

BCRC proudly presents "Standing on Their Shoulders", a unique approach to capturing, preserving and highlighting the history of the Black English-speaking community of Little Burgundy. Funded by the government of Canada, Standing on Their Shoulders is supported by a host of organizations including Tyndale St. Georges, Youth In Motion, Desta Black Youth Network, Aspire Canadian Cultural Alliance & Foundation, Centre for Ethnographic Research and Exhibition in the Aftermath of Violence, Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network and The Round Table on Black History Month.

Everyone can see change is coming to Little Burgundy, what with the demise of the NCC building, the opening of the CHUM down the road and the revitalization of housing around the neighbourhood. So, the goal of BCRC's project is two-fold: 1) to promote the rich history of this community before it is gone forever, and 2) to

create a new generation of cultural interpreters. It is a great time to teach our youth what the community was like.

BCRC's team is developing a series of workshops, discussions, and creative explorations that will bring the memories of our community's elders to Black youth in Little Burgundy, as well as Black youth around the city. They do not remember, but many of you do remember what it was like growing up or visiting friends, family or the centers there.

Our most promising youth will also have the chance to create their own short 2 minute video on some historical tidbit about Little Burgundy's important sites and figures. We are currently looking for youth under 35 years old to embark on the exciting journey of becoming the community's new storytellers.

Standing on their Shoulders will be around over the next year and

will be showcased during next year's Black history Month at City Hall. To find out how you can get involved or to stay up-to-date with the events, activities and progress of this project, follow us on Facebook at Standing on Their Shoulders or contact BCRC at 514-342-2247 and ask for Jennifer or Pharaoh.



Heritage

Nelson Mandela Park

By Ashlie Bienvenu; Edited by Dr. Dorothy W. Williams

At this point in our journey through Montreal's Black history, follow me to a lovely park in the Cote-des-Neiges district; Nelson Mandela Park. Although Mandela was not a Montrealer, he definitely plays an important role in the Black community's history. In turn, Montreal's Black community also played an important role in Mandela's life and in his fight against apartheid in South Africa.

During the years of apartheid rule and Mandela's many years in prison, the Montreal Black community was quite a force in the struggle against the South-African apartheid government. Community members strongly agitated for the City of Montreal to take a stand and support the boycott put forward by the National African Congress. The community rallied—they prayed, marched, convened multiple meetings, chal-



lenged politicians and major institutions to support Mandela's efforts, to make resolutions and spread the word. Their persistence worked. Montreal convinced both Quebec and Canada to refuse to do business with companies with interests in South-Africa. The City of Montreal was even given the authority to discriminate against these companies on their own, even if they were the lowest bidders.

The efforts of its residents did not go unnoticed. During Mandela's 1990 trip to Montreal he said that, "even while we were in prison, we came to know this city as a home of the struggle against apartheid, a friend of our people, an enemy of racist tyranny and a source of



strength to us, because the position you took served as assurance to all our people that nobody could deny us freedom." Montreal was not on his original plans for his Canadian tour, but he took the time to stop in this beautiful city that had aided him so much in his struggles.

He delivered his speech in Champs-de-Mars to 15,000 eager listeners. Even though he didn't have much time in Montreal he felt that he needed to

attend a service in the Union United Church, which had been key in the community's fight against apartheid. The Church was filled to overflowing. The crowd even spilled out into the street. Everyone hung on his words that day with great anticipation. Everyone wanted to hear, to see and touch the man they had grown to admire and champion. The community could not contain their pride in their achievements.

Twenty-four years later, Mandela is still an important part of the community memory. Recently, in December 2014, a pavilion erected in Mandela's name. Located in Cote-des-Neiges on Victoria Avenue, this pavilion will offer community services for teens, as well as families and seniors. A fitting tribute, some believe, for a man who adopted the City and called Montreal his second home! There are many who still look back with pride and joy to Mandela's visit as it was "a moment where people were able to vindicate themselves for what they did or what they didn't do and things like that....It was a great moment for us and I suppose for society as a whole."



STILL I RISE

By Clarence S. Bayne

Community

Almost two years ago, some friends got together to drink and enjoy Caribbean and African-American type foods, and to argue various points in an atmosphere of mutual respect and camaraderie. The group called themselves the "bouyz." It soon became clear from the inebriated "palabra" that we could transfer some of the debate to a public forum. So we decided to invite the public to the UNIA Hall. We were surprised by an attack from a Community Contact columnist who accused us of engaging in verbal "masturbation" and self-congratulatory dialogue. We responded appropriately and went on to plan a second session to celebrate the Centennial of the UNIA movement and Marcus Garvey's birthday. The event on 15 August 2014, was at the UNIA Hall, 2741 Notre-Dame West. Concerned about the persistent and virulent attacks by two columnists, we were careful to state in the e-vites and general publicity:

"It will be a friendly, welcoming, environment where ideas are explored in terms of the situations and experiences that produced them... In particular, we intend to initiate a debate based on mutual respect between generations represented by those attending."

We felt that Black youth were denied a relevant history, not simply because of the White Man but because "Blacks" did not value those among them that dared to "search the landscape" for new possibilities. Some amongst us have become gatekeepers in the after-life of "Hotel California." For them, the ills of slavery have become a culture. We wanted to address that by fast-tracking back to the teachings of Marcus Garvey. We wanted to make the point that symbols are important to the peoples of any nation-state. Symbols speak to the heart through the stories of success and failure, and by the myths that inspire us to be excellent. We wanted to get the message re-circulated that in Montreal, as elsewhere, Blacks have a history of struggle for rights and freedom, and against racial discrimination and exclusion; that the road is marked by sign-

posts signaling many strategies, significant successes and valuable lessons. But too often we struggle with self-hatred. In Garvey's words: we show "...malice, prejudice and hate to each other; and the result is that while other races have made progress ... you still stand fighting yourself, showing no disposition towards a higher life, so that you would be abundantly blessed." He advised that we "reflect and think that [we] were created for some purpose other than exhibiting malice towards [our] neighbours or fellow men of [our] own race."

This successful session encouraged us to plan an event for Black History Month, February, 2015. We wanted to say that despite the levelling attacks, the residual effects of colonial and capitalistic systems of slavery and oppression, that we have survived and continue the "struggle." Several performing artists were invited to perform in response to Mayo Angelo's theme, "Still I Rise." It succeeded beyond our imaginations. Nearly 150 people came. There were no self-deprecating, cussing voices in the Hall. The tongue of the abusive social critic was silent. Ten year old Miquela, undaunted by her audience, opened with the song, "We Shall not be Moved" which touched the hearts of the audience. When Mervyn Weekes, acting as the master poet for the event, said in a welcoming voice, "Still We Rise!" the audience responded "Still We Rise." Then, Coco Thompson, accompanied by Jonathan Emile, took us into the silence of the soul with a rendition of "Redemption Song." At the end, the narrator poet, Weekes, punctuated "Still we rise" and everyone responded, "Still we rise."

Clarence Bayne performed his poem, "Tell Them." He exhorted everyone to strip themselves of pretences and non-essentials and to look into their souls, going back in time beyond the junk-yard of the universe, beyond Sagittarius' bow adorned with the dust of broken stars, to reflect on life and origins. The poem called on all men and women, no matter where, to recognize that they

carry the gene-seeds of Africa corrupted by greed and hatred.

To the sound of Julian McIntosh's throaty sax, the poet urged us to stand up for all rights, and never surrender to the shackles of hate or submit to policies which deny us our rights. Odessa Thornhill then seduced us with the healing rhythm of her poetic drum song, soothing our agitation with her chi-ki chi-ki da chi-ki da rhythms. And Fred Anderson bore witness to all this by performing a poem which stated elegantly that notwithstanding the drudgery of life, the oppressiveness of poverty in the tracks of slavery, Still We Rise. And we are taken back to the lines in "Tell Them," "We feel the pain and fall but rise to feel the pain again," and the cycle of the struggle goes on, for that is life, hope and struggle. As Bayne's poem continued to echo, "we must move on before death sends it squadrons of flies to buzz their eerie songs and hang our dusty stretched leathery skins from these tortured racks of bones... we must move on to tell the stories." And the closing hymn for the evening was the Black Theatre Workshop's incredible performance of Mayo Angelou's poem, by two talented and beautiful youthful actresses, Liana Montoro and Saraah-Ellise Hicks, "Still I rise."

The event was sponsored by CJLO, the UNIA, Black Theatre Workshop, and the "Bouyz"



Leisure Club

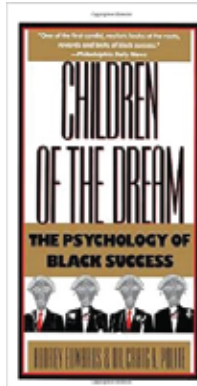
Spring Into These Reads!!!!



Jazz Masters of the Twenties By Richard Hadlock.

The jazz decade saw the emergence of many of the great figures who defined the music for the world: Louis

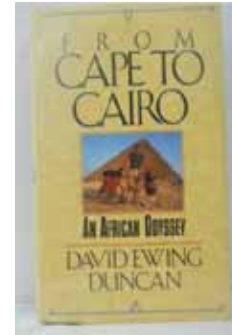
Armstrong, Bessie Smith, Earl Hines, Bix Beiderbecke, Fats Waller, Jack Teagarden, Fletcher Henderson—these giants set the standards for blues singing, big band arrangements, and solo improvisation that are the foundations for jazz. Richard Hadlock has chapters on each, with a discography and descriptions of all the players who made the '20s swing.



Children of the Dream: The Psychology of Black Success By Audrey Edwards.

Edwards and Polite focus on African American baby-boomers who have grown up possessing something no

generation of African Americans has ever before experienced—entitlement. Surprising and often controversial, this groundbreaking book stands as vivid testimony to the increasingly complex world in which African Americans strive to succeed.



From Cape to Cairo: An African Odyssey By David Ewing Duncan.

Duncan's account of a modern Cape to Cairo trip, primarily by bicycle, is a very personal report on the human condition in the countries through

which he traveled. His descriptions of both the people and the environment are well crafted. The focus is on the individual men and women whom he met. These included rural Afrikaaner farmers, young men in the townships of South Africa, a white hunter in Botswana, white and black farmers and officials in Zimbabwe, a priest and the president in Zambia, a boy in a village and a paleontologist in Kenya, "reliefers" in the Sudan, and an ax maker in Egypt.

These books can be found at the Atwater Library's Black Collection

Stay Tuned For These Movies!!!!



Get Hard (2015).

Cast: Will Ferrell, Kevin Hart, Alison Brie.

When million-

aire James King is nailed for fraud and bound for San Quentin, he turns to Darnell Lewis to prep him to go behind bars.



Black or White (2015). *Cast: Kevin Costner, Octavia Spencer, Gillian Jacobs.*

A grandfather (Kevin Costner) is suddenly left to care for his beloved granddaughter. When her paternal grandmother (Octavia Spencer) seeks custody with the help of her brother (Anthony

Mackie), the little girl is torn between two families who love her deeply. With the best intentions at heart, both families fight for what they feel is right and are soon forced to confront their true feelings about race, forgiveness, and understanding. Based on real events, the movie is a look at two seemingly different worlds, in which nothing is as simple as black or white.

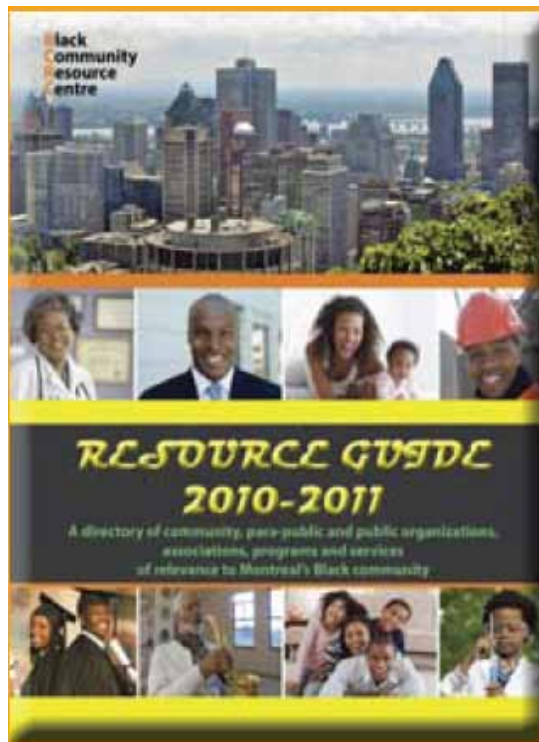


The Single Moms

Club (2014). *Cast: Nia Long, Amy Smart, Wendi McLendon-Covey.*

When their children face expulsion because of rule infractions, five single mothers must agree to organize the school's upcoming

dance and fundraiser. Although they range from alpha professional to fast-food worker, the women find they have one thing in common: a need for support and an understanding ear. They form the Single Moms Club to help ease one another's burdens and reclaim their freedom. As their stress begins to lessen, the women find that finding love may be possible again.



Our Resource Guide highlights a variety of non-profit, public and para-public organizations serving the English-speaking Black community

The Black Community Resource Centre (BCRC) is an organization that strengthens community capacity by providing professional support to organizations and individuals in need. Our team is committed to assisting visible-minority youth rekindle their dreams and achieve their full potential.

Our Funders:

- ◆ Patrimoine canadien /Canadian Heritage, Official Languages
- ◆ Agence de la santé et des services sociaux de Montréal
- ◆ Ministère de L'Immigration, de la Diversité et de L'Inclusion

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