



CONGRESS OF BLACK WOMEN OF CANADA  
LE CONGRES DES FEMMES NOIRES DU CANADA



P.O. Box 32027, Sobeys R.P.O , 612 Main Street, Dartmouth Nova Scotia B2W 5M2

LAW AMENDMENTS COMMITTEE

Presentation

RE-VIOLA DESMOND DAY ACT BILL NO.15

May 4, 2010

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and all members of the Law Amendment committee. First I like to thank you for this opportunity to chair our views with you this afternoon. I come representing the Congress of Black Women of Canada and the Preston/Cherry Brook/Lake Loon/Westphal & area Chapter.

I come today with mix feelings; I want to thank Afie MacLeod of Cape Breton West for this excellent thought and for having the insight of a day for Viola Desmond. I some with mix emotions today, as an African Nova Scotian Woman, I don't feel that Viola Desmond did anything wrong. She was a tax payer and believe she had the right to go to the theatre, enjoy a movie and sit we she wanted to. But we all know that is not what happened, being a visitor from Halifax and believing she could go to the movie and enjoy some free time while her vehicle was being repaired that broke down on her.

Mrs. Desmond was from Halifax and had no idea of this a law that discriminated against where you sit in theatre, because of the colour of your skin. She purchased her ticket and sat down on the main floor of the theatre. The staff approached her and informed her you cannot sit there you must go up the balcony. The story is told she went back to the Ticket desk and asked for a more expensive seat for the main floor, they refused to sell her one. The staff insisted she should sit up in the balcony up stair and area where Black people had to sit because the Main floor of the theatre was for Whites only. Being a tax payer and citizen of Nova Scotia she felt she should be able to sit wherever she decided. We all know how she was arrested and dragged from the theatre violently by large white police officer and arrested.

Viola did what I would have done going to a theatre you sit where you enjoy the seating and the atmosphere. She was denied that right. She was not guilty of anything; she had the right to sit where she wanted to.

We thank you for this Bill No 15, but it does not go far enough and it exclude us from the decision making process. We as African Nova Scoitan believe the apology to be a great one but you must give us the opportunity to decide on the day. We thought of many ideas on being March 8<sup>th</sup> International Women Day, During African Heritage month, and can be during October Women History Month.



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Definitely not on November 8th, that was a day she was arrested assaulted and demeaned by the town of New Glasgow, this day to us as Black women is saying that yes she guilty and let celebrate this day, no she was innocent and that day will reflex negativity not he positive and professional Business women and owned her own business she was not a criminal and not guilty of anything except the freedom she thought to sit where she wanted to sit in a theatre.

Viola Desmond stood up for her right as a Black Woman she did it with dignity and with respect, but she intern was treated like a villains and thrown into jail. She was falsely accused and mis treated by the Justice system of that day and as you are aware we are still have many of those issues in Nova Scotia and across Canada when it come to the African Nova Scotian compare to that of the large non-black society. We have Schools in Nova Scotia that are still and won't celebrate African heritage month, so that should tell us something. We still have away to go be and be recognized and respected as equals in this province.

You the Politicians will have to give us the African Nova Scotian a voice and let us tell you what our views are in this process. We want to thank Minister Percy Paris for his excellent input on this Act. As African Nova Scotian he knows why the community input Is very Important in this decision making process. You will have to stop making decision for us and asking us for input after it is completed. We are tired of this process that you follow, give us our own voices and we will tell you what we want. Please stop making decision for with no input from us.

We want to see this Bill No. 15 tabled until we the African Nova Scotian can speak on this, we have many that are very capable on speaking for themselves.

As Black Women of Nova Scotia we feel that we need a Solid Legacy of Viola Desmond but again as I stated decided by us for by ourselves, we have children who can gave input into this, we need our voice back. We trust that you will hear what is being said here today. Thank for the time given to us to give our opinion thank you all for listening. Please hear us.

Thanks you

Dolly Williams

Nova Scotia Representative  
Congress of Black Women of Canada