

CANADA: A PAINTING OF DIVERISTY

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The British Imperial Act abolished slavery in Canada on August 1, 1834. Though slavery was no longer legal in the years that followed, the struggle of black Canadians persisted for many decades afterwards; no new laws preventing discrimination and prejudice arose. The ill-advised treatment of segregated individuals in Canadian society forced black Canadians to rise to new heights in order to surpass the barriers built by the societies around them -- this ultimately led to the growth of Canada as a nation. Black Canadians became, and are, a crucial part of Canada's multicultural identity. Calvin Ruck is one of many black Canadians that sculpted Canada into the country it has become.

Calvin Ruck was born in Sydney, Nova Scotia, to immigrant parents from Barbados. He worked as a labourer for Dominion Steel and Coal Corporations, after having worked as a sleeping-cart porter for Canadian National Railways. The position of sleeping-cart porter was the only railway job offered to individuals of various ethnicities, and Ruck had come to the harrowing realization that higher positions, easily accessible to his white colleagues, were not available to him. Ruck stated that "[he] felt obliged to protest" for basic human rights, but feared that his actions would prompt his loss of position at CNR. In 1954, Ruck and his wife were able to purchase a plot of land in the white suburbs of Westphal, Halifax, where local residents had previously protested to exclude the black minority from the community. It was at this moment that Ruck was able to see his entire life as a black Canadian in a new light. He knew that he was capable of achieving greatness, and his strength and resilience led him to be appointed to the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission, where he further defended the rights of black Canadians. Ruck received a multitude of awards concerning his work in anti-racist activism, and his legacy continues to this day. A strong sense of identity allowed Calvin Ruck to brave the seemingly unyielding path to equity, and rise above former Canadian confinement.

Canada is a mosaic of culture and identity; every individual plays an important role in forming the final image. If those who were repressed by Canada's past oppressive system had not risen up against the injustice of their time, then the culture of Canada would have remained an empty canvas, devoid of the contrasts that define an image and make it unique.

The courage and undying ambition of Calvin Ruck led to the acceptance and incorporation of many ethnicities into the formerly unwavering idea of Canadian culture. His actions gave strength to other oppressed groups, and therefore encouraged the disadvantaged to take a stand and express their identities. The contributions of black Canadians helped Canada become a country known for its accepting communities and its diverse population, allowing Canada to develop into a nation in which people are not afraid to reveal their true identities.

Canada grew as a country that uses peoples' differences to help everyone strive further.

Young people in modern society can learn that there is no limit to defining who you are. Regardless of where a person starts in life-- whether or not differences in race, ethnicity, sexuality, social class have built barriers between individuals and opportunities-- the proper mind-set will make possible the difficult, allowing people to achieve personal goals. In a world where discrimination and prejudice remain a real issue, what we can take from the experiences of Calvin Ruck is that, in order to achieve greatness, we have to establish a strong sense of identity and define who we are as people. As times change, and the future continues to transform the world around us, the idea of expressing our identity and speaking out for ourselves will continue to lead us through our lives, regardless of the conflicts we encounter.

Calvin Ruck, a man whose righteousness paved the path to equality for various ethnicities, taught that sometimes life will not be in our favour, and that it should not stop us from prospering and becoming the individual we aspire to be. Ruck rose above limitations in order to empower himself and others, and, in doing so, taught everyone that an ambitious mentality can lead an individual through the most inauspicious paths-- a lesson that will continue to take effect for years to come. Without the contributions of black Canadians such as Calvin Ruck, Canada would lack diversity -- and its canvas would remain blank.

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