

# A STORY OF LOVE AND HOPE

**Tina Madani Kia**

Port Moody Secondary School,  
Coquitlam, BC

\$500 Winner

*"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." - Martin Luther King, Jr*

The history of African Canadians cannot simply be defined by one idea; rather, it is a patchwork of stories, all of them connected by passion, vitality and love. Black Canadians made an innumerable amount of contributions to the social, political and cultural fabric of Canada. The driving force behind these achievements can always be found in the character and life story of those who chose to make a difference. Mary and Henry Bibb were an unbeatable team in the face of racial oppression. The journey of these two can be viewed in many ways: a fairy tale romance, an epic adventure or simply a meaningful coexistence motivated by a passion for equality. Regardless of which perspective you take, the significance of these two individuals is reflected in their story.

Henry Bibb was bound to slavery as soon as he came into this world. Born in Kentucky as the illegitimate son of a senator in 1815, he was from sold from plantation to plantation, deprived of any moral, mental or religious support. Henry attempted escape numerous times, falling just a few inches from freedom each time. After decades of turmoil and following the disintegration of his family, Henry escaped to the Northern states, where he gained an interest in dismantling the institution of slavery. Soon he began to lecture on abolitionism. In 1847, Henry met Mary Elizabeth Miles at an anti-slavery gathering in New York. Mary, born and raised in a free black family, was a teacher and champion of women's rights. The love between them was established in the roots of revolution and the strings of fate. They married in 1848 in Dayton, Ohio.

Shortly after the passing of a Fugitive Slave Law that endangered Henry's freedom, the couple resettled in the village of Sandwich, Canada, where they would make irrevocable changes to black Canadian history. Together, they established *The Voice of the Fugitive*, the very first Canadian newspaper to promote anti-slavery. It became an important voice for Canadians of colour and a part of journalistic history. Mary also opened a private school for black children who had been denied education due to their skin colour. Their impacts on the community were often illustrated in the literacy and political education of the black population.

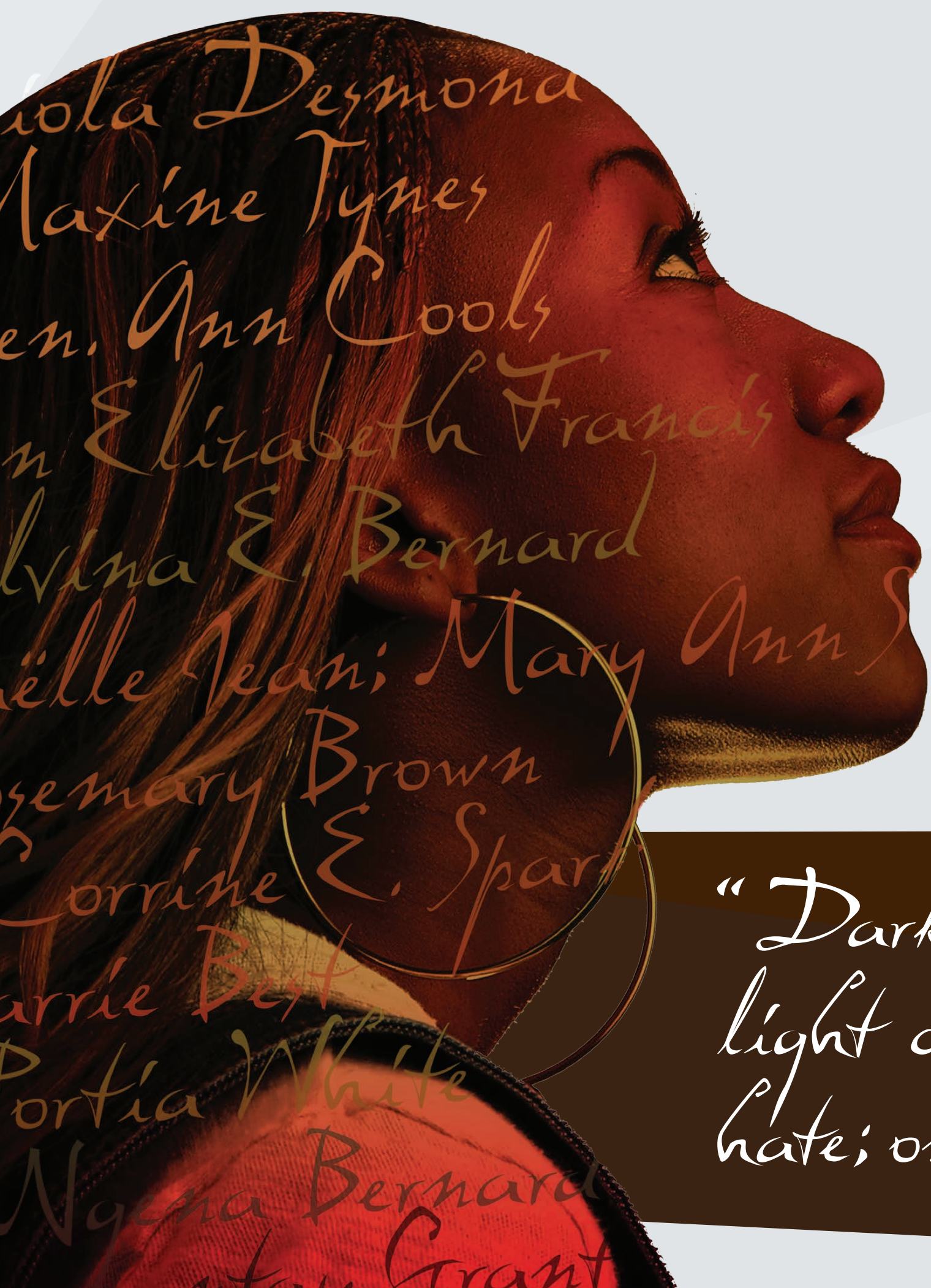
Through the newspaper, Mary and Henry were known for their activism in the community and were often reached out to by the formerly enslaved. They were partially responsible for founding the "Refugee Home Society", an organization which advocated for Canadian land to distribute to the formerly enslaved. With the Underground Railroad, Mary and Henry helped many former slaves settle in Canada. Their compassion for the lives of their peers knew no bounds and their dedication to the safety and happiness of black Canadians knew no limits. Through journalism, activism and love, Mary and Henry managed to create a voice for black Canadians that lasted for decades. The couple continued to support and help blacks until the mysterious arson of their paper's offices in 1953 and Henry's death in 1854. Even after these tragedies, Mary continued to live in much the same selfless way as she had before. The story of these two kindred spirits provides a rare glimpse into the struggle and incomparable excellence of black Canadians. Their resilience, spirit and character remains ingrained in the landscape of Canadian history.

2016  
RBC  
BLACK  
HISTORY  
MONTH  
STUDENT  
ESSAY  
COMPETITION

[www.rbc.com/essay/](http://www.rbc.com/essay/)



RBC Royal Bank



*"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."*