

# THE ROAD TO DIVERSITY

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\$500 Winner

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Representing a visible minority group can be a challenging task. Some black individuals have proven to be a beacon of light for their community, looking past discrimination and imagining a better future for everyone. With perseverance and determination, they were able to bring that vision to life and make Canada what it is today: a diverse and accepting country. Individuals such as Mary Ann Shadd Cary and Senator Anne Clare Cools have had a major impact on our society in an incredible way. Although they come from different eras, their courage and determination stem from their desire for a better, more equal world.

Born free in the slave state of Delaware from abolitionist parents, it was only natural that Shadd follow their footsteps as a social activist. However, her method of propagating this message was different. Rather than to provide her home as a station for the Underground Railroad like her parents, Shadd used journalism and knowledge to help her fellow people. Upon her arrival in Upper Canada, she created the first non-segregated school, accepting every color and race. Strong-willed and passionate, her honesty and promptness would often get her into trouble when facing male leaders in the community. However, this did not stop her from voicing her opinion. On March 24, 1853, Mary Ann Shadd became the first black woman in North America to be the founder and editor of a newspaper. *The Provincial Freeman* was founded on her belief that “self-reliance is the true road to independence”. By presenting the successes of the black community, Shadd enticed motivation and hope in many of her readers, qualities that were not as prominent during that era of discrimination. An inspiration for her community, she brought down the barriers and limitations that were instilled in the identity of a black woman. Mary Ann Shadd embodies the values of our great country by demonstrating that every individual, whether black or white, has an equal potential for success. Her model of tolerance is the foundation of the Canadian mosaic that characterizes our society of today.

Another black individual who has changed the course of Canadian history is Senator Anne Clare Cools. Born in Barbados during a period of political uncertainty, Cools and her family moved to Canada when she was only 13 years old. Growing up in a political family, the young girl was influenced by the work of many abolitionists. Her desire to serve society and give back to the community enticed her to become the executive director of Women in Transition Inc., a shelter for victims of domestic violence, the first of its kind in the country. Anne Clare Cools made history in 1984, when she became the first black individual to serve in the Canadian Senate. Learning her story in history class has opened my mind to the world of politics and instilled in me the desire to help others selflessly. By “doing things and acting in the name of human justice”, Cools was able to demonstrate her abilities as a strong leader and political asset, proving that race and ethnicity does not define success. Although she has described herself as being a “lone-soldier” at times in the House of Commons, Cools has continued to help society. She exemplifies the notion that with courage, hard work and determination, any individual can make history. Her historical accomplishments contribute to Canada’s diverse heritage and are a source of inspiration for the youth of today. Both Mary Ann Shad Cary and Senator Anne Clare Cools have pushed barriers and proven that societal norms must be unsettled at times for positive change to occur. Through their bravery and dedication to the cause of social equality, they have proven to be limitless and have strongly contributed to the mosaic that is Canada. Their stories inspire me to not only persevere in my future plans, but to truly appreciate Canada’s heritage and the people of different backgrounds who have made this country great. In an astringent society, the strong personality, will and effort of black individuals have provoked great change in Canada, leading this country on the road to diversity and acceptance.



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