

# UBUNTU

**Aneesh Sridhar**

Glenforest Secondary School,  
Mississauga, ON

\$500 Winner

Numerous individuals in history have proven to rise above the status quo to establish themselves in the world in their own unique fashion. Time and again, modern society has to consult the 'history books' to learn from the past. African-Americans have long since been outstanding role models to a variety of people, especially the younger generation, for their perseverance and determination in ensuring a free society for all – representative through their diverse heritage and distinctive sense of identity. Equality is a natural human right and numerous black Canadians have dedicated their lives to pursue this sense of freedom and clear a pathway of glowering looks. Most notably, Elijah McCoy and Anderson Ruffin Abbott are two individuals that have greatly influenced Canada as a nation by rising above all odds to demonstrate culture, passion, courage, and goodwill.

First, Elijah McCoy was influential in ensuring the safety of young African-Americans. Born in Ontario, he worked towards a brighter future for our country and the world through a drip cup with a self-lubricating device that gradually released oil into machinery. Consequently, this replaced the roles of African-American boys, who were primarily hired for such risky jobs (risky because there was a very likely chance of dismemberment in moving machinery). By doing what he enjoyed, McCoy saved millions of lives through this invention alone. Developing his passion even further, he retains 57 other patents in North America, including common household items such as a lawn sprinkler and a folding ironing board. His life story reveals that regardless of heritage, the world will have no choice but to accept those that believe they can make a difference. The primary goal behind his most famous invention, the drip cup and self-lubrication device, was to help the visible minority during his time. By doing so, he established himself as someone who deeply cares about preserving his heritage. The unique sense of identity created through this pursuit has only continued to influence all those that see him as a role-model. As a result of McCoy's work, Canada is known on the global stage for these inventions and, more importantly, for being one of the most multicultural nations in today's developing world.

Secondly, a truly inspirational story is exposed through the life of Anderson Ruffin Abbott. This Toronto-born individual went on to become Canada's first black doctor in 1861. Apart from the denotative fact that this proves his involvement in Canada's development in becoming a multicultural and accepting nation, Abbott illustrates to all that perseverance is truly the only judge in determining one's future. Even after such a tremendous accomplishment, he felt driven to continue his passion in his field of choice by becoming a medical professional in the American Civil War. And despite receiving and accepting various honours and employment opportunities in the United States, he always returned to Canada to continue his mission of peace with determination. A relentless advocate to integrated schools, he spent the remaining years of his life writing about his heritage and culture (black history) in attempts to ensure a brighter future for a visible minority.

Personally, being a visible minority myself, these two individuals having lived more than 85 years ago, have had a profound impact on my life today. McCoy and Abbott have been the primary reason behind numerous volunteering pursuits I have undertaken to preserve my culture – retaining language, religion, and various other traditional values. Inspired to cultivate discipline in my lifestyle, I enrolled in the Royal Canadian Air Cadets to become a well-rounded citizen in Canada. By volunteering my time at a non-profit organization that teaches students about robotics concepts, I am beginning to realize that the happiness that one feels when helping those around me, as McCoy once did in this engineering field. Idolizing two historical figures that excelled in their fields to help others, I was struggling to decide whether to become a medical professional or an engineer. However, after contemplating this matter for many years, I realized that the career I choose is not related to the impact I can have on the world.

Abbott excelled in his field by helping people as a surgeon and was a relentless advocate for integrated schooling. Likewise, McCoy played a vital role in increasing the safety of young African-Americans through his ingenious invention that facilitated the growth of the industry. To conclude, accomplishments are simply symbols representative of the actions of individuals that have a profound impact on the world, while still maintaining a sense of tradition, culture and identity.

...although the colour of our skin is different,  
we all have the same intentions of making  
Canada a better place to coexist.



**RBC Royal Bank**

