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Viola Desmond's Legacy Lives On

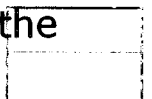
(Sydney, NS)- When Viola Desmond refused to give up her seat in a racially segregated theatre in 1946, she likely had no idea the legacy she would leave. Now Dr. Graham Reynolds, the Viola Desmond Chair in Social Justice at Cape Breton University (CBU), and Viola's youngest sister, Wanda Robson will host a special assembly addressing racial prejudice and the historical segregation in Canada on February 26, 2014.

The event, Viola Desmond's Canada, will take place at Riverview High School (RHS) at 12:20 p.m. and feature powerful presentations by both Reynolds and Robson. The event will also include a student panel and roundtable discussion with RHS students Michael Kennedy, Brianna Campbell, Tanner Mosher and Hannah MacCormack. The roundtable discussion will focus on a variety of social justice issues that currently affect the global community, from bullying to racism.

"I believe that Viola Desmond, together with her younger sister Wanda Robson, serve as excellent role models for our young people," says Reynolds. "Wanda enjoys speaking to school age students and she easily forms a special connection to all her audiences. I feel that their story, one that is still so relevant today, will leave a lasting impression on the audience and participants at this special presentation."

Most recently Viola Desmond has been recognized through the naming of a new provincial holiday. Viola Desmond Day will occur in 2015, and will be the first mid-February holiday to honour a different prominent historic Nova Scotian each year.

Reynolds adds, "Many people in our province and most Canadians do not know the story of Viola Desmond and have little or no awareness of the history of racial segregation and the struggle for civil rights in Canada. Viola was a black businesswoman who was wrongfully arrested and went on to become a civil rights activist, proud to share her story so that it could bring more awareness to the issue of racial injustice."



Wanda Robson graduated from CBU with a Bachelor of Arts in 2004 at the young age of 77 and since then has been active in raising public awareness about racial prejudice and the infamous incident involving her sister Viola. She is the author of the book *Sister to Courage: Stories from the World of Viola Desmond*, Canada's Rosa Parks. As result of Robson's' efforts in April of 2010 the Nova Scotia Government granted, posthumously, a free pardon to Viola Desmond and offered an official apology to her family and all those in the African Nova Scotia community.

The event is free and open to the public.

To learn more about the Viola Desmond Chair in Social Justice please visit: <http://www.cbu.ca/desmond>

About Cape Breton University

Cape Breton University is an Atlantic Canadian post-secondary leader, with a growing national and international reputation. Currently home to around 3500 students, CBU's vision of higher education allows students to pursue contemporary fields of study that are ideally suited for graduate success in liberal arts, business, health, education and science and technology.

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