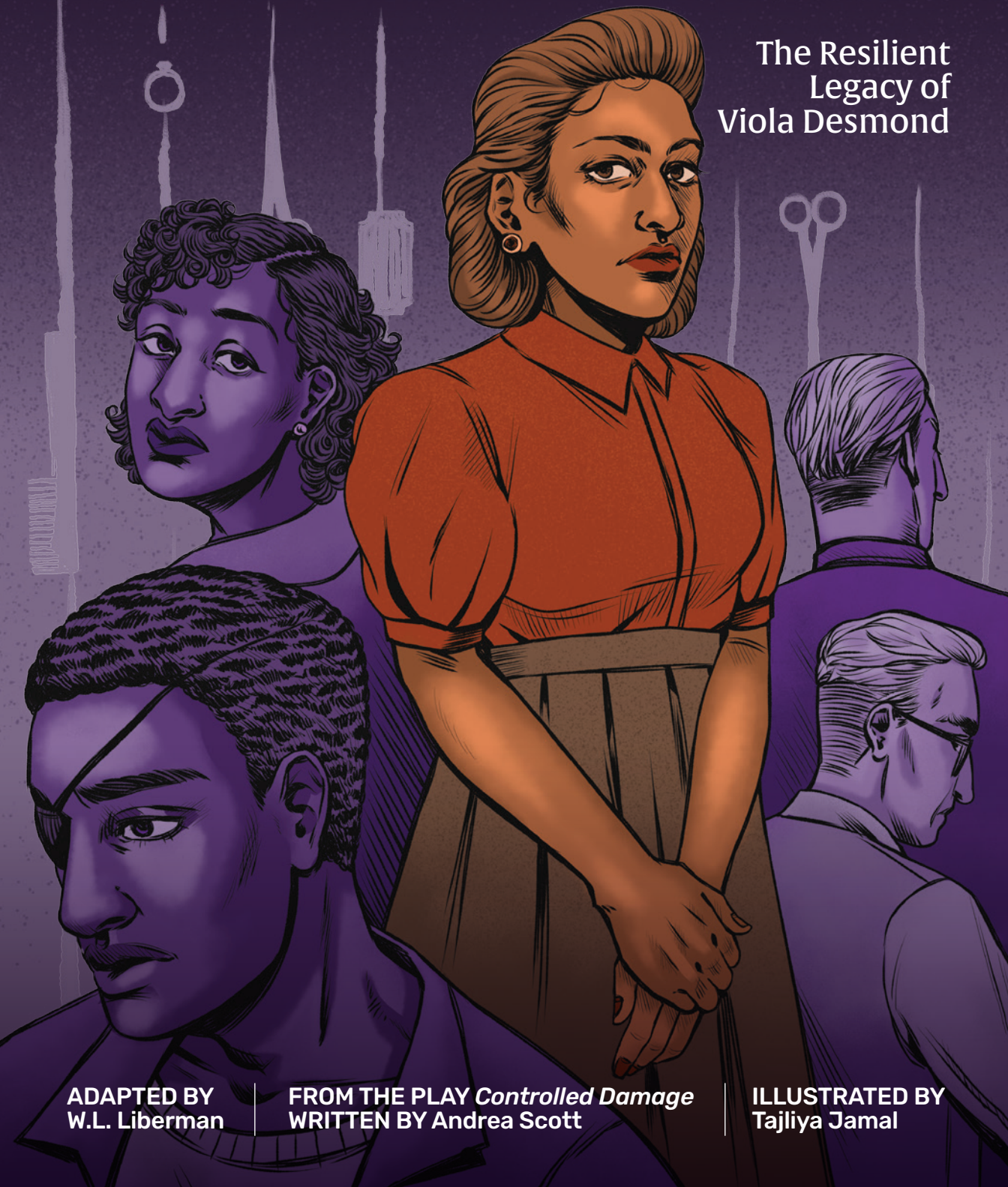


NO REASON TO APOLOGIZE

The Resilient
Legacy of
Viola Desmond



ADAPTED BY
W.L. Liberman

FROM THE PLAY *Controlled Damage*
WRITTEN BY Andrea Scott

ILLUSTRATED BY
Tajliya Jamal



NO REASON TO APOLOGIZE

The Resilient Legacy of Viola Desmond

TEACHMEDIA

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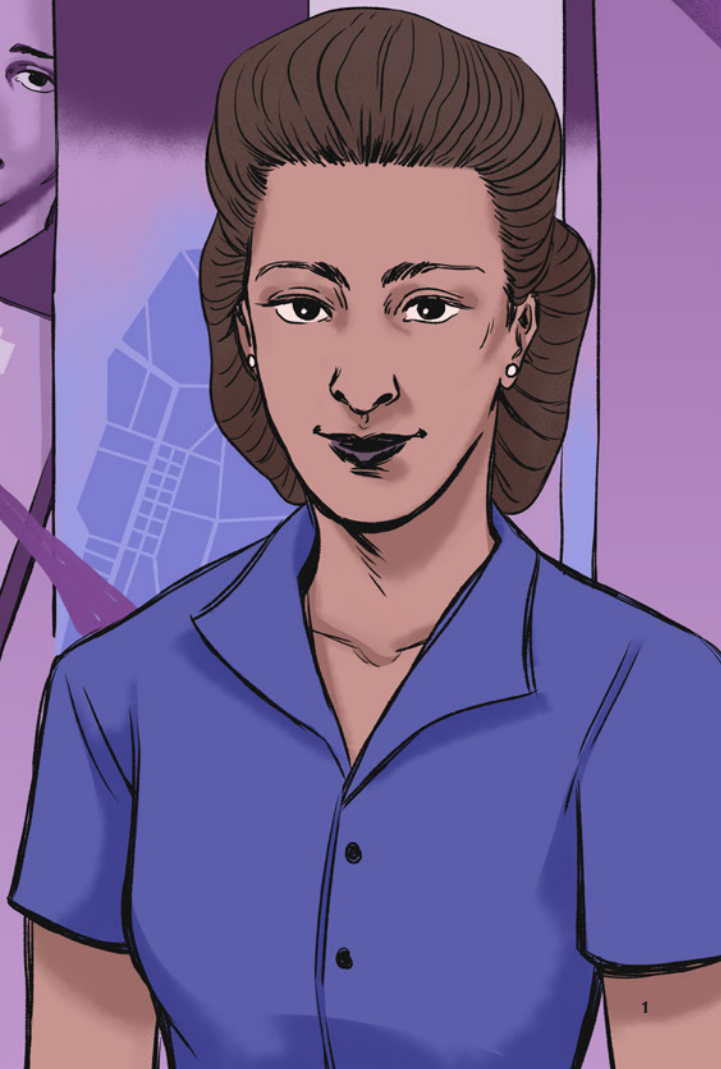
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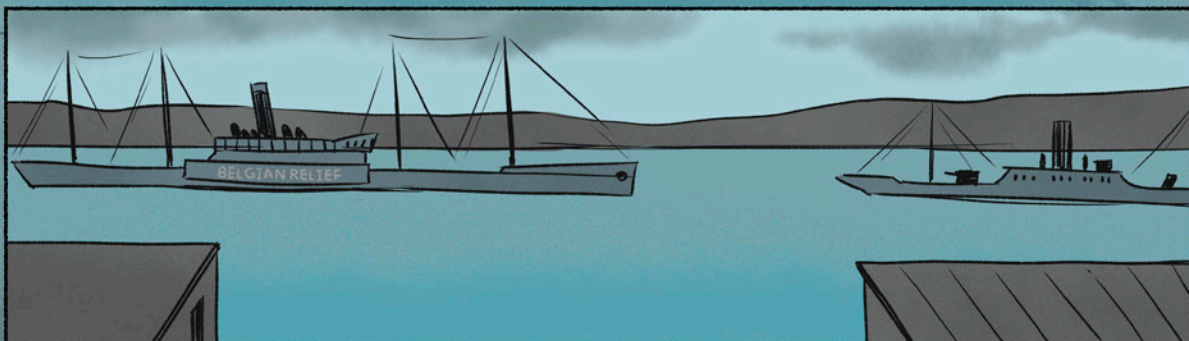
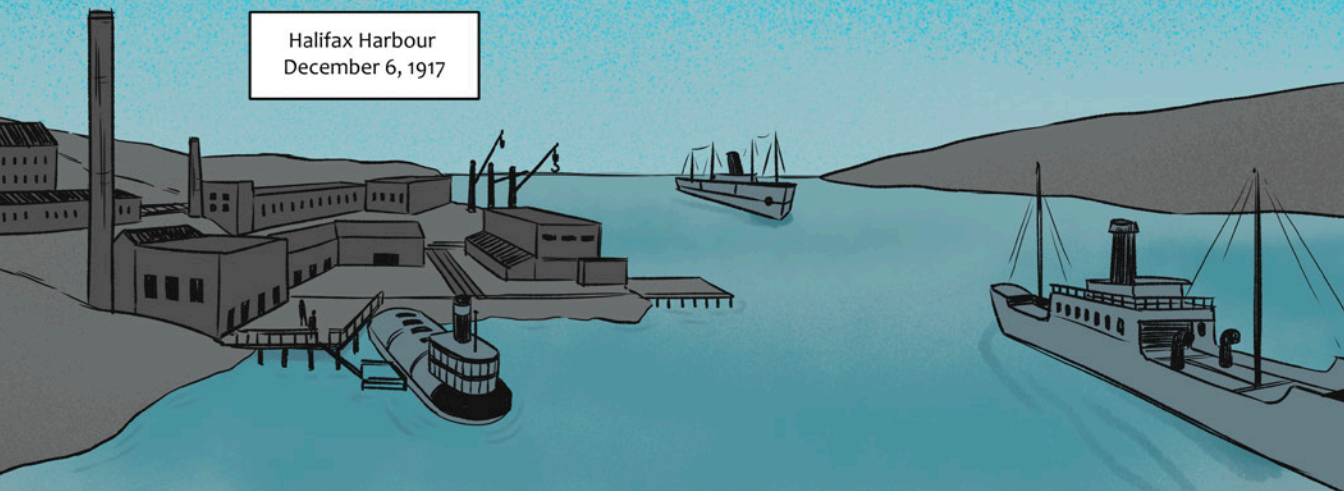


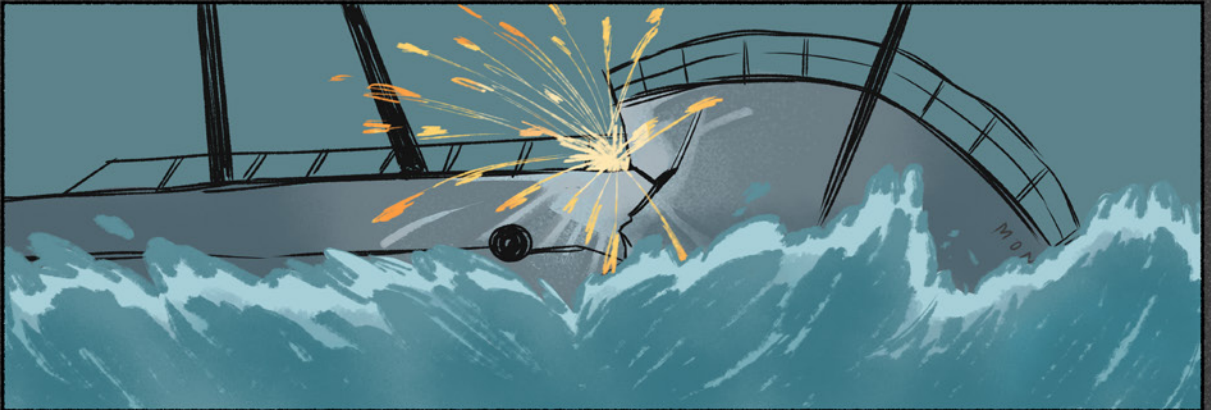
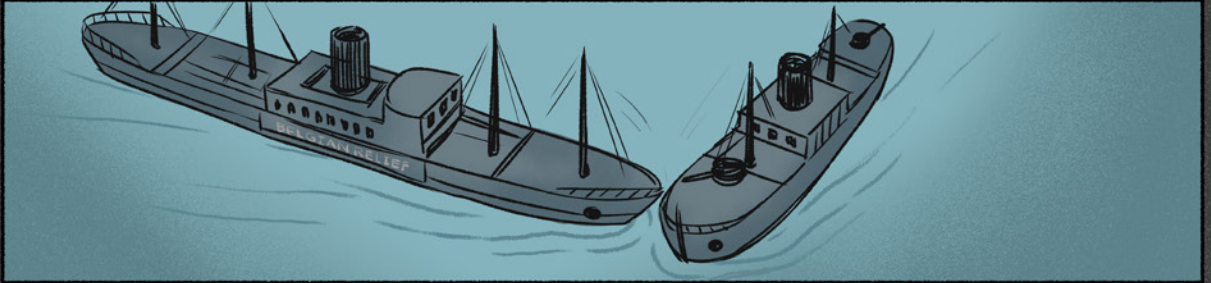
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Halifax Harbour
December 6, 1917







Over 2,000 people, including children, died in the massive explosion. Some 9,000 were maimed or blinded and 25,000 were left homeless.

Fishermen from as far as Boston heard the blast after the Mont Blanc blew up.



The shock waves broke windows in Truro, Nova Scotia, some 100 km away.



Black residents of Africville were forced to leave their homes due to the destruction of the community.



The Davis household wasn't spared. It sustained as much damage as many others.



The Davis Home

Oh my God...
Viola.

She's dead.
Lord help me.

Daddy. Those
mean boys threw
rocks at me.

She's safe. Oh,
thank the Lord.

My Viola
was spared.

The Lord has
great plans for
her one day.

Roseland Theatre
New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, 1946

THE DARK MIRROR
OLIVIA DE HAVILLAND

Olivia
de Havilland Le
Ayr

THE DARK MIRR

One
please.

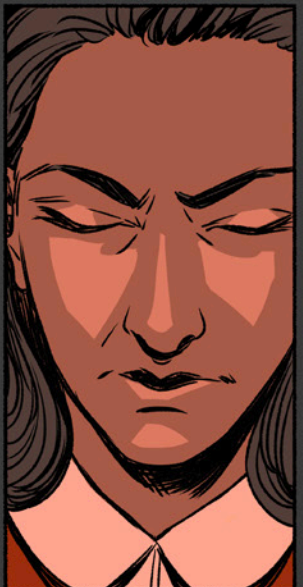
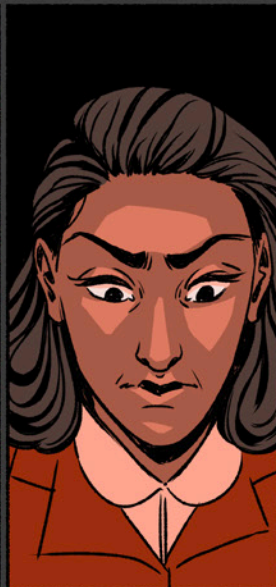
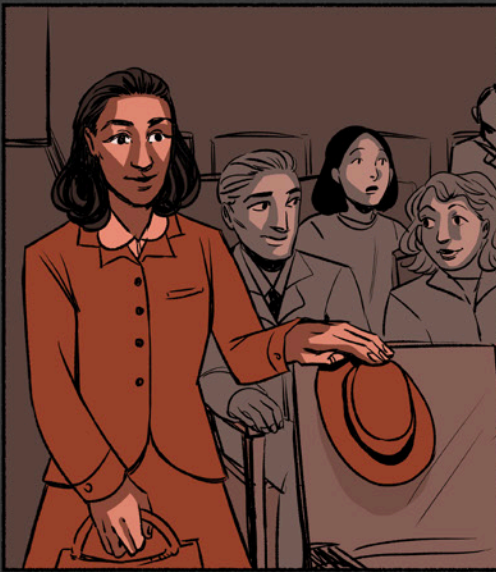
ADMIT
ONE
BALCONY SEATING

THEATRE

BALCONY

THEATRE

BALCONY



Miss.
Miss.

You are
sitting in the
wrong seat. You will
have to move.

But I paid
for my ticket.
I've got it
right here.

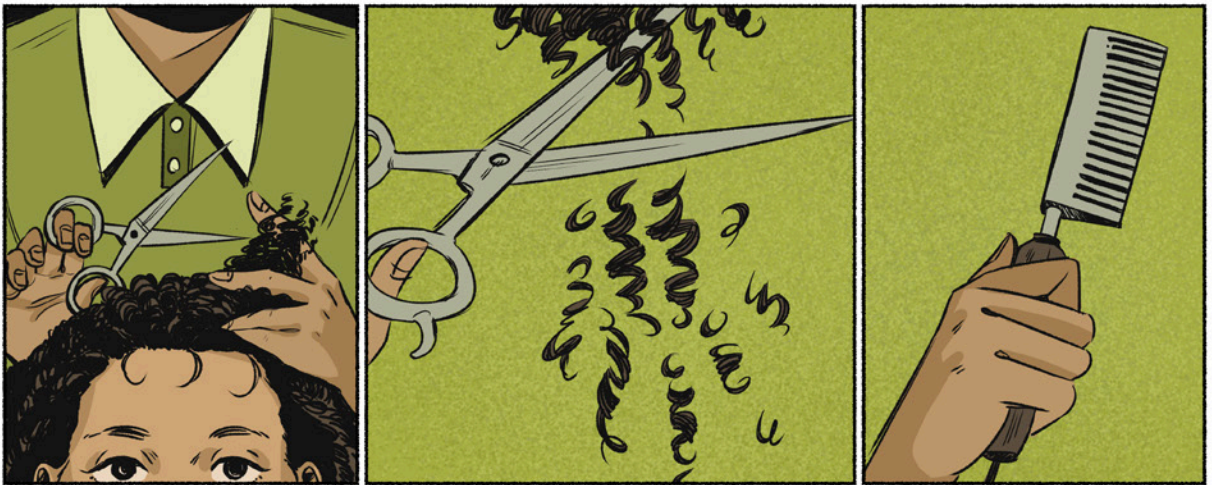
You don't
understand. You
can't sit here.

Why not? I can
pay the difference
in the ticket.

You people have
to sit in the balcony.
This is reserved.

Reserved
for what?

Take a look
around and
you'll see.





Hammonds Plains Public School
Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1932

Name the
provinces of Canada.
All together now.

British Columbia, Alberta,
Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario,
Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia,
and Prince Edward Island.

What's the
best country
in the world?

Canada.

Why?

Because here
we are healthy
and free.

Again.

Because here
we are healthy
and free!

Okay.

Everyone,
form a circle.



I ask you a question and the person I throw the ball to answers. Got it?



Name one of the original provinces. Michael?

Ummmm... New Brunswick.



Correct. Now you throw the ball to someone else.



Nova Scotia!



Good. Your turn to throw.



Ontario!

Very good. Mary, you throw the ball.







Miss Davis.
Be careful.



This lesson isn't about
slavery, Frederick.
Who founded Halifax?

Edward
Cornwallis!



Very good.



Nobody likes a
brown-noser, Mary.

Ball, Miss
Davis.



That's enough
teaching for today.
Class dismissed.



What?
We have twenty
minutes left.



Just what do
you think you
were doing?

Teaching. I'm
their teacher.

They weren't
learning. They
were playing.



And talking about
slavery. How will
that help them?

It's part of
history. Their
history.

You'll only
get them
upset.





Field Beauty Culture School
Montreal, Quebec, 1936

Let's have a sleepover
and give each other
facials to prepare for
the test on Monday.

I'll make up
flash cards about
hair colour, dyes,
and textures.

Ma mère
will make
tourtière.

I love it
here.

Nothing like
Halifax?

It's so
much bigger.

Maybe you
can stay after
graduation.

I'm going to
the States to learn
how to style coloured
people's hair.

You're so light
maybe you can
pass for white?

I wouldn't
even try.

...You go to
New York City
and learn from
the best.

I want to see
New Haven,
Connecticut,

my mom's
hometown.

No Paris
or Rome?

That means going
by ship and I'm afraid
of boats. Titanic?

Gives me
chills.

Speaking of
chills. That man is
watching us.





That is so sweet.

I guess I'm just an old cornball.

But you're my cornball.



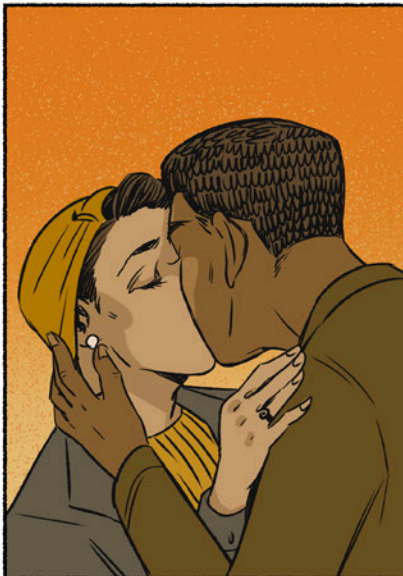
I didn't come here only because I missed you... I mean...



Viola Davis. Will you marry me?



Yes!



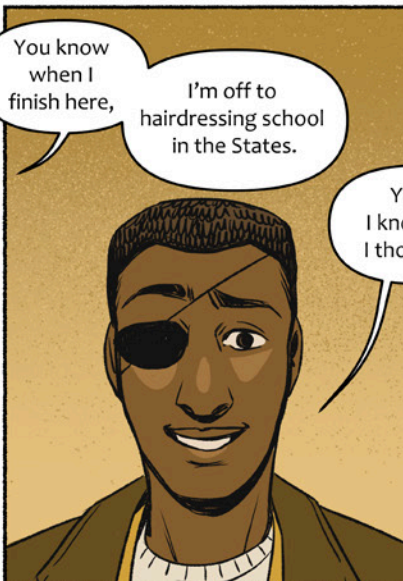
I can't wait to tell them at school.

You mean, you're still planning on going to classes?



Of course.

As my wife, you won't have to work.



You know when I finish here,

I'm off to hairdressing school in the States.

Yeah, I know but I thought...



I'd give up everything to be your wife?



Married ladies
don't work.

Jack, I want to
be a beautician
and a wife.

What about
having babies?



We'll have lots of
time for babies and
chicken pot pie.



I do like
chicken
pot pie.

When the
babies come,
I'll stay home.



I like it
when you
say babies.

We're going to
have fun together.
I can't wait to
be your wife.



You really did
say that? I'm
not dreaming?

I'm never
taking off
this ring.



Now that's
a promise I can
get behind.



Miss.
Miss.



You are sitting
in the wrong
seat. You will
have to move.

But I
paid for my
ticket.

I've got it
right here.



You don't
understand. You
can't sit here.

Why not?

I can pay the
difference in
the ticket.



You people have
to sit in the balcony.
This is reserved.

Reserved
for what?



Take a look
around and
you'll see.



I'm not
moving.

I have
the right to
sit here.

I'll have to get
the manager,
Mr. MacNeil.



Fine.
Get him.



Vi's Beauty Salon
Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1946

Vi, you make me look so good, I think I have a chance with Cary Grant.

Since when do you want to be kissing up to a white man?

Cary Grant is a star and white hot.

That makes him special.

Rose, you're too good for that man.

You saying you wouldn't put a little of that cream in your coffee?

I am a married woman, Mrs. Reid. I'm no actress.

You're our local star. You went to Broadway, but you came back. Why?

I was just going to school. I was always coming back.

This is my home.

You're pretty enough to be an actress.

How many coloured women you see starring with Humphrey Bogart?

There was Hattie McDaniel. She won the Oscar.

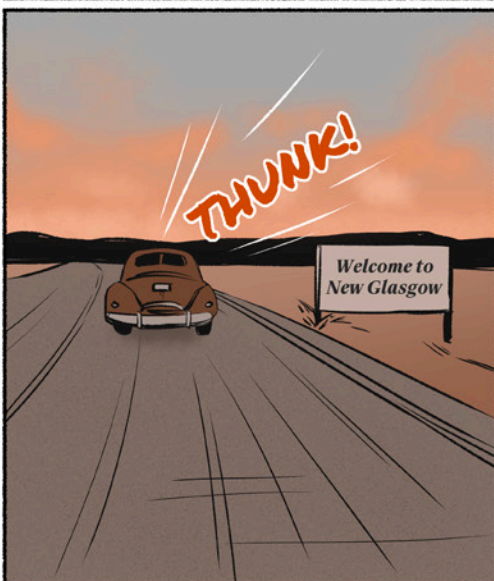
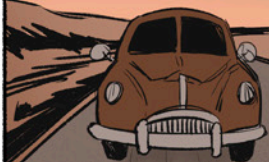
She won for playing a slave.

She played a maid.





New Glasgow, Nova Scotia
November 8, 1946



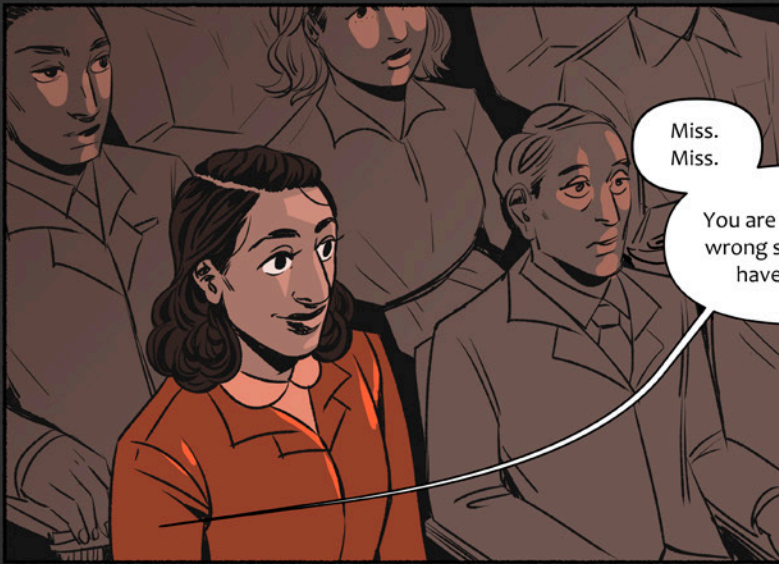


A woman with short, wavy brown hair, wearing a brown hat with a decorative flower and a brown coat, is shown from the back and side, looking towards a building. The building is a multi-story structure with arched windows. A sign above the entrance reads "THE DARK MIRROR OLIVIA DE HAVILLAND". A group of people in coats and hats are standing near the entrance. A large, stylized orange flower is mounted on the wall above the sign. Two framed abstract drawings are on the wall to the right of the entrance. The sky is a solid orange color.

Olivia de Havilland.
My favourite actress.

I'm going to
enjoy this.

THE DARK MIRROR
OLIVIA DE HAVILLAND



Miss.
Miss.

You are sitting in the
wrong seat. You will
have to move.



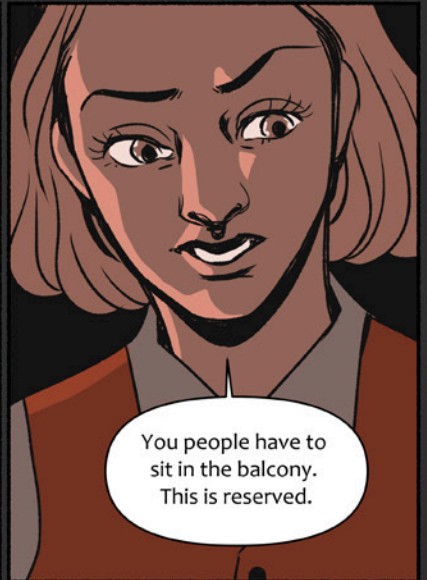
But I paid for
my ticket. I've got it
right here.



You don't
understand. You
can't sit here.



Why not? I can
pay the difference
in the ticket.



You people have to
sit in the balcony.
This is reserved.



Reserved
for what?

Take a look
around and
you'll see.



I'm not moving.
I have the right
to sit here.

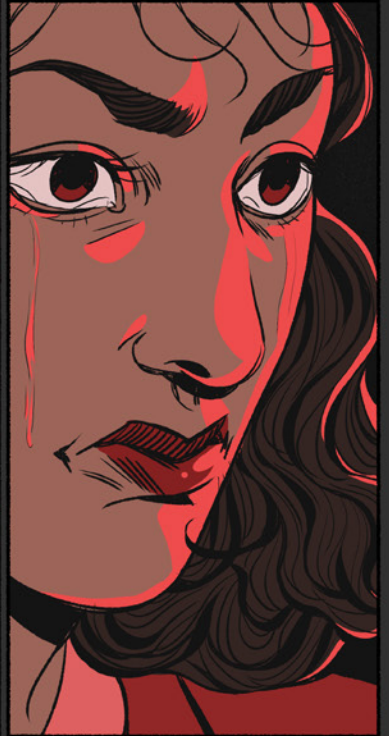
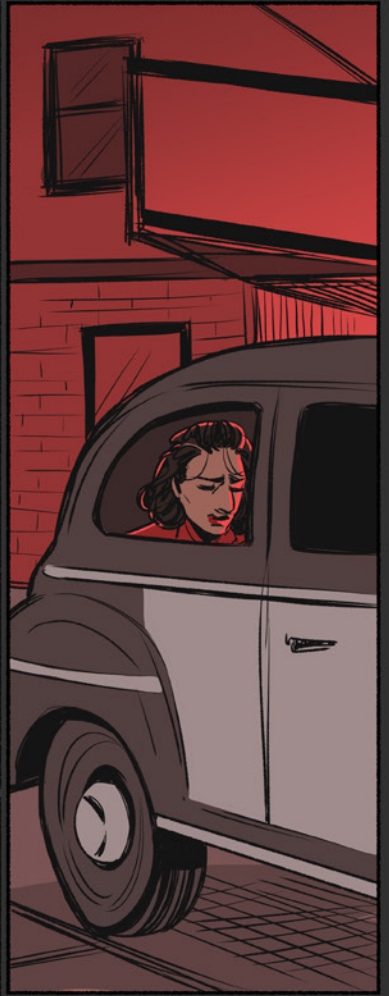


I'll have to get
the manager,
Mr. MacNeil.

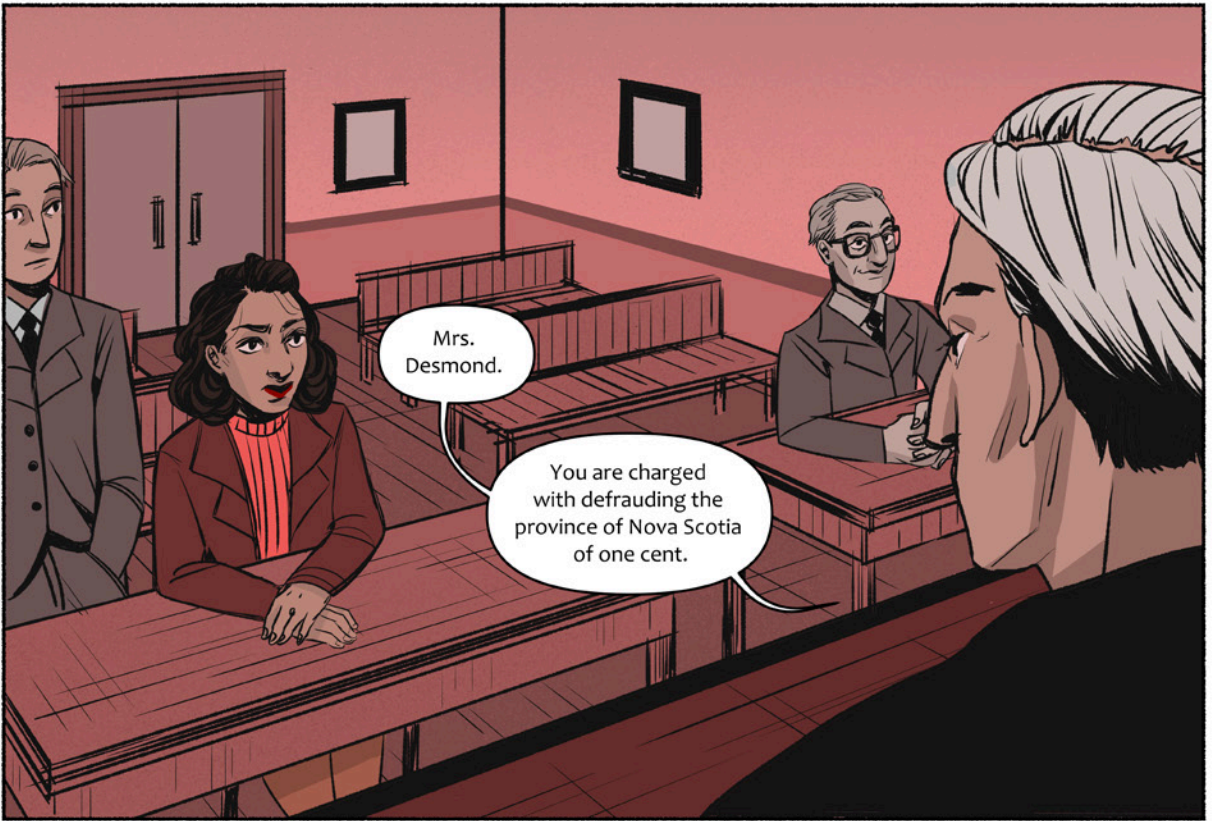
Fine.
Get him.



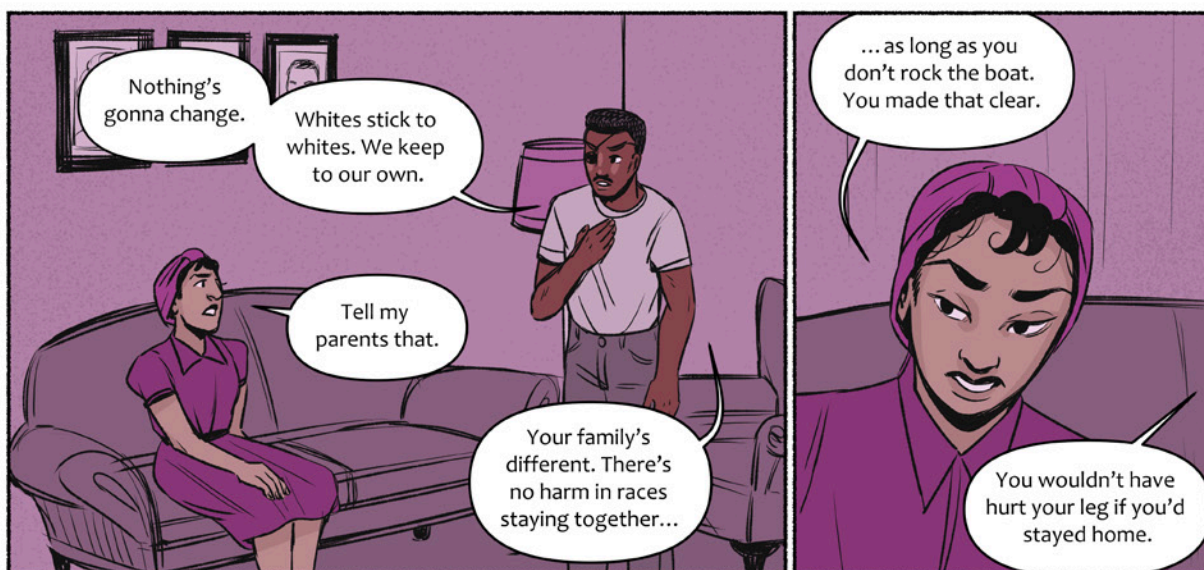










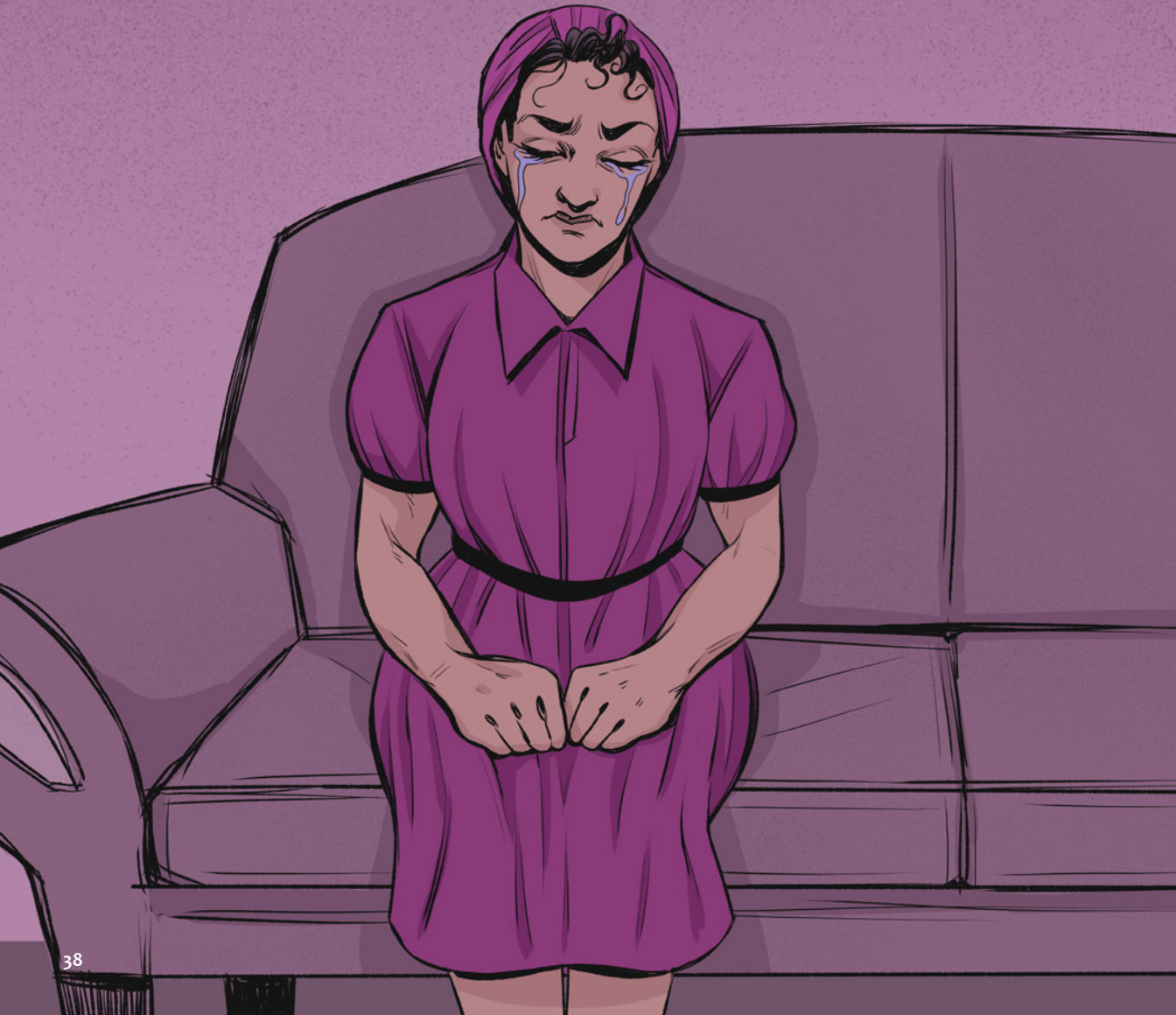


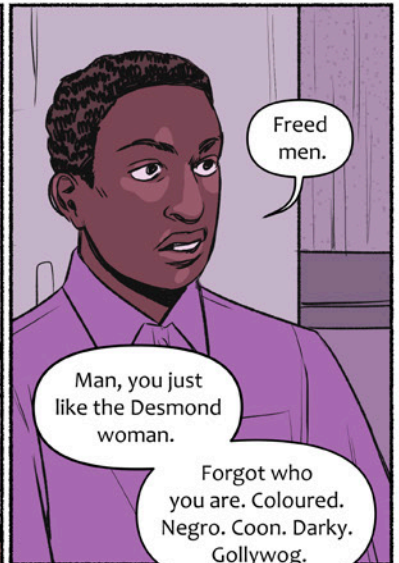
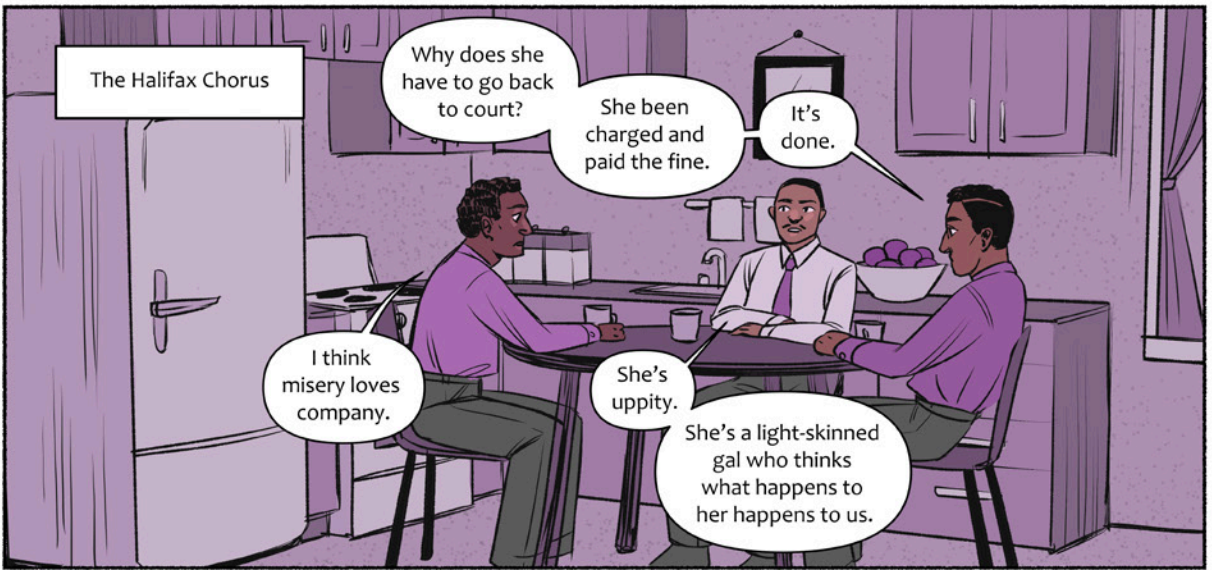
*He says take it to the Lord in prayer;
Lord have mercy, this has been hard to bear;*

*When you feel like you're never enough;
And they tell you you're too much;*

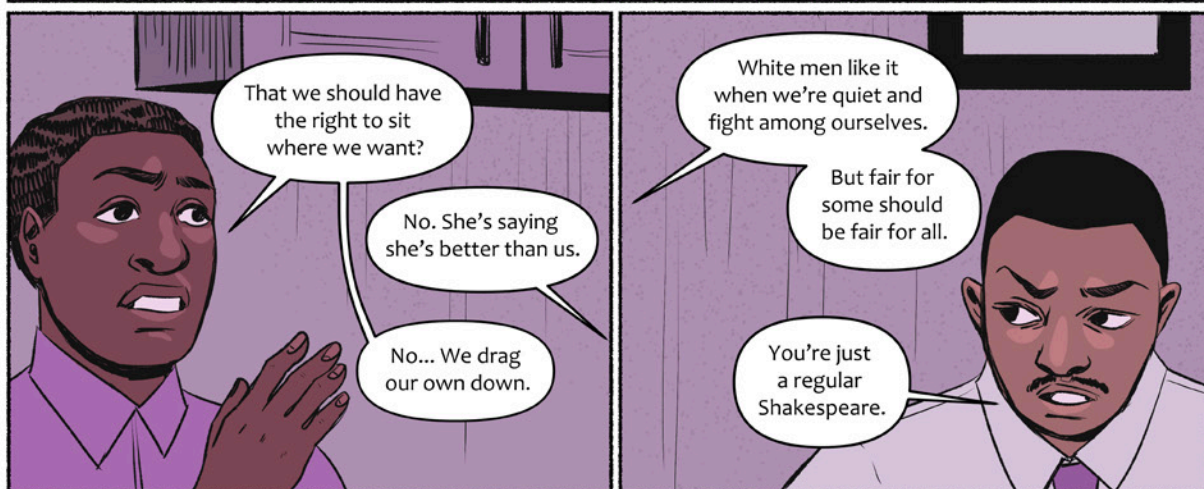
*What's a prayer gonna do for me now;
That I can't do for myself?*

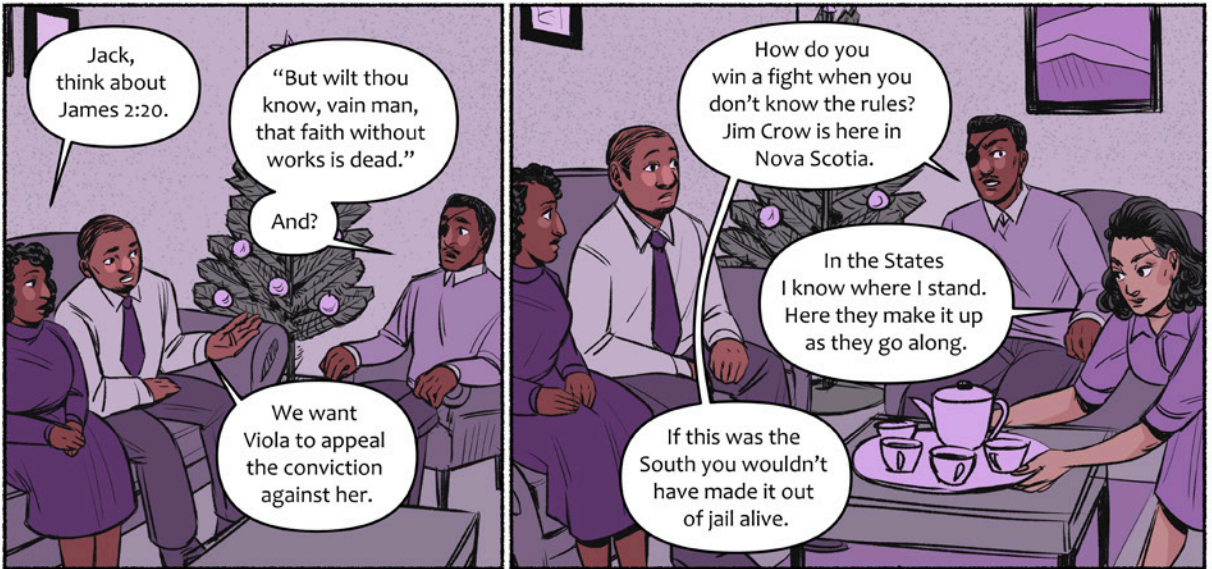
*I'm a troublemaker in their eyes;
But I have no reason to apologize.*



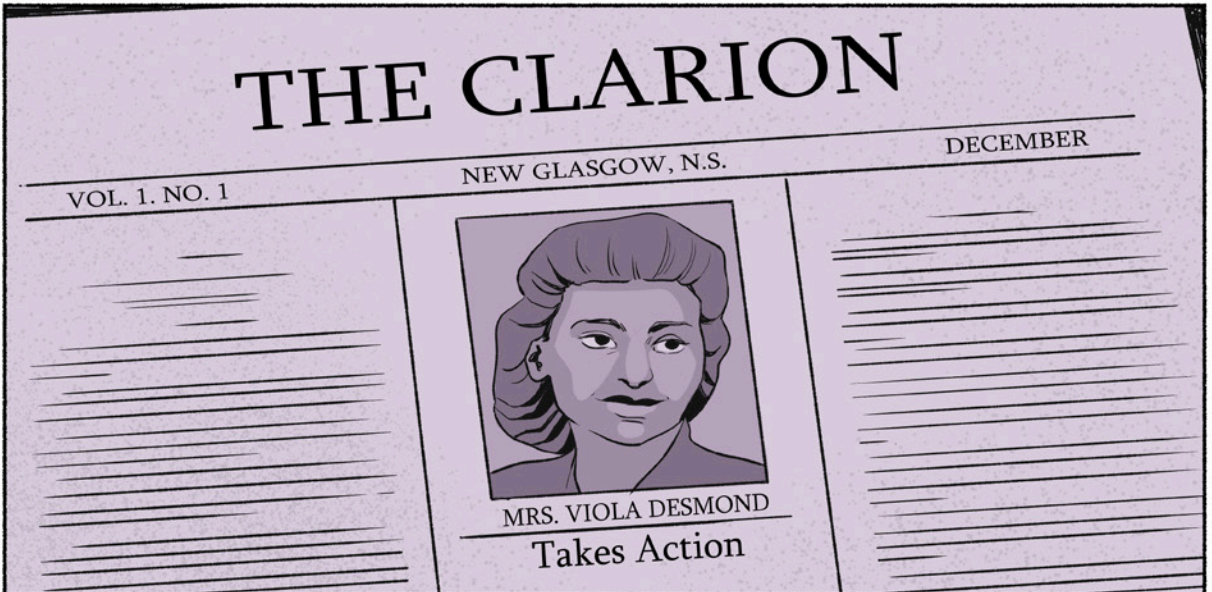
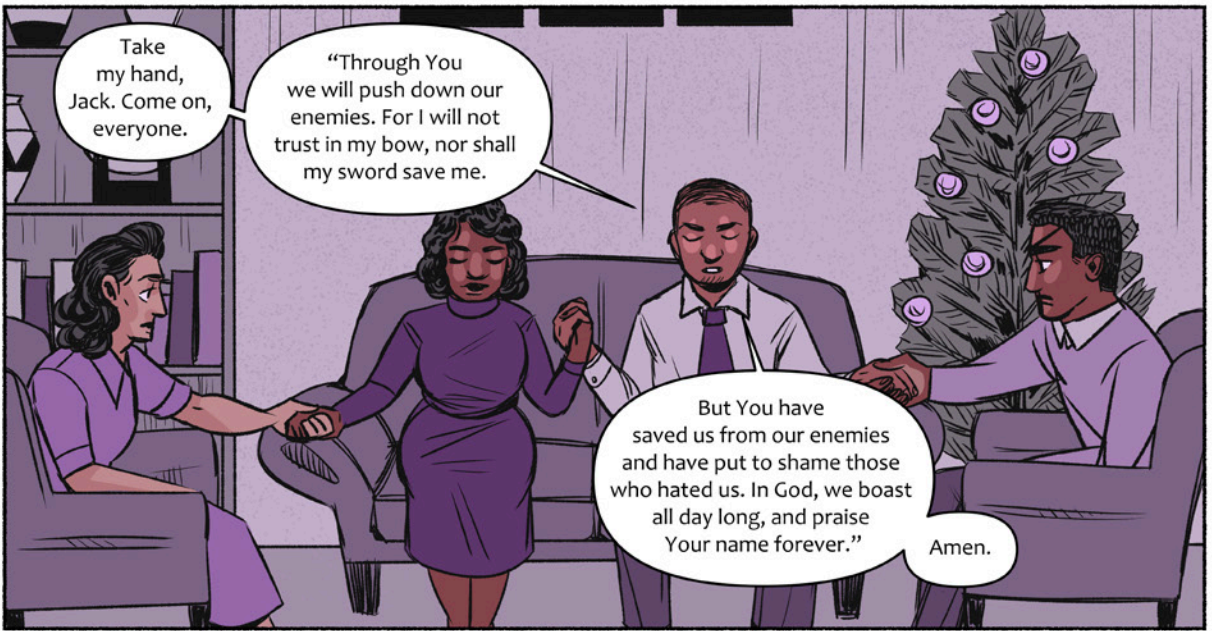












After the Appeal Failed
Late January 1947

Viola Desmond on the cover of
The Clarion too many
damn times.

Too many
damn times.

I didn't bring
anything into our
lives that wasn't
already there.

I can't go
anywhere without
people staring
at me. Me!

Being treated like
we don't matter
is tiring. I wanted
to feel human.

You let pride
run you. I don't know
why the Reverend
supported this
foolish decision.

Because it
was right.

Your white
lawyer messed
up. You lost.

We waited
too long to
appeal.

He should
have known that.
But you can't
leave it.

Miss "Take Action"
Desmond has to go
all the way to the
Supreme Court.

To have
the conviction
overturned. What's
wrong with that?

You lost again
and want to go
back for more?

How many
customers you seen?
Numbers have dropped.
Men don't come for a
shave and a haircut.

It's because
of you and your
selfishness.

Now, we
struggle.





Oh. Oh,
I see.

I told you
to take it to
the Lord. You
didn't listen.

I asked you
to support me
and you didn't
listen.

Just once
you could have
listened to me.

I couldn't
roll over, not
anymore.



I'm your
husband and
you're supposed
to love, honour,
and obey.



I'll pack a bag
and stay with
my parents.



What? You
don't have to
leave right now.

I do.
Yes, I do.





You don't.
You think you're one of
us but you think you're
better than us.

Who's
us?

Black
folks.



I'm not
Black?



No, you're
not black
or white.

You're
Mulatto,
mixed up.

You want what
white people have
and think we want
the same things.



We don't want the attention.

I am like them. We are happy as we are.

You're talking about yourself.

I'm not happy.

A whole world is out of reach because of our colour. Why can't we get the same things?



You haven't lived like a black woman.

The town is upset. Go. Leave us poor Negroes to our scraps.

Conquer the world. Good luck.



I don't need luck. I have skills, education.



Okay. You're special. We know. Because you're light. You have advantages.

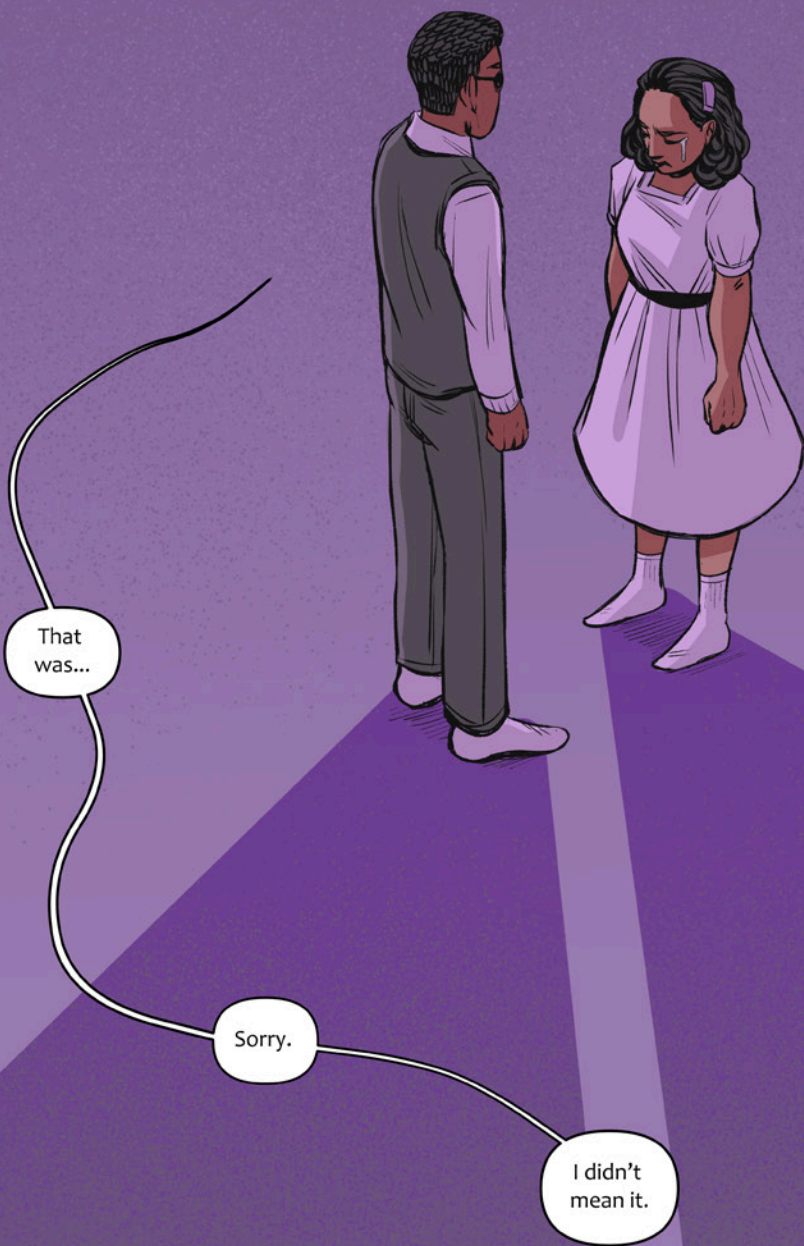


But to white people, you're still a troublesome nig...

Jack!



...Sorry, Vi.



Halifax Train Station
September 1957



Who lets their
dog poop on the
platform and
leaves it there?

What a
world we
live in now.



I guess I haven't
missed the train?

No.



Mind if I
sit down?

Go
ahead.

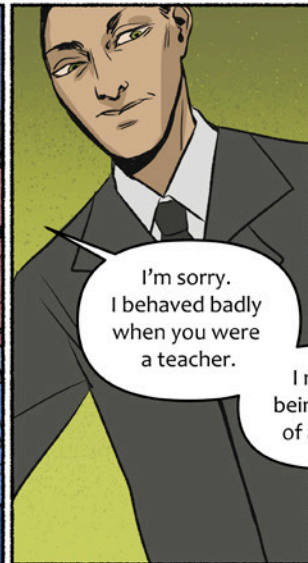


Where are
you off to this
fine day?

Montreal.









You're right.
I should have handled
it better... Reading
about war isn't the same
as the real thing.

Neither
is reading
about life.

I served my
country. Got this
wound for it.

Some things
are worth fighting
and dying for.

Like
freedom.

Exactly.
You get it.

Would you
say freedom is
the opposite
of slavery?

When you
experience injustice
do you appreciate
your freedom?

I don't
follow.

You were cruel
to me, Mr. Nixon,
and I still don't
know why.

...I heard you
sat up in that jail
cell all night.

Is that
true?

Why did
you think firing
me was a
good idea?



New York City
February 7, 1965

You look good, Rose.
And that hair.

It's a wig.

Don't scold me, now. Didn't have time to get it done before leaving.

Don't know why I care.

Since Marcel passed away, I've got nobody to look good for now.

Oh Rose...

You got someone to keep you warm in the big city?

No man's looking at a 50-year-old woman for romance.

There must be some handsome millionaire looking to scoop up a gal like you.

I'm too busy working to show my ankles, thank you.

Don't you get lonely? I miss Marcel every day. The kids are grown and don't visit often.

At least you have kids.



But how can I feel lonely here? It's the city that never sleeps.

You can be lonely in a community centre of people with a baby on your hip and a husband by your side.



I like living alone. I can be myself here.



You can't be yourself in Halifax?

It's different now. You're missed, Vi.

UGH!



By who? I feel like a pariah.

Here nobody sees me as that woman.

I'm just another Negro making ends meet.



People are grateful for what you did. They think of you as a hero.

Hero? Me?



Malcolm X. Martin Luther King. Boys being blown up in Vietnam right now. They're heroes.

I didn't do anything really. I stood up for myself, that's all.

But it wasn't just that. That's what I'm saying.



There's no future in the past.

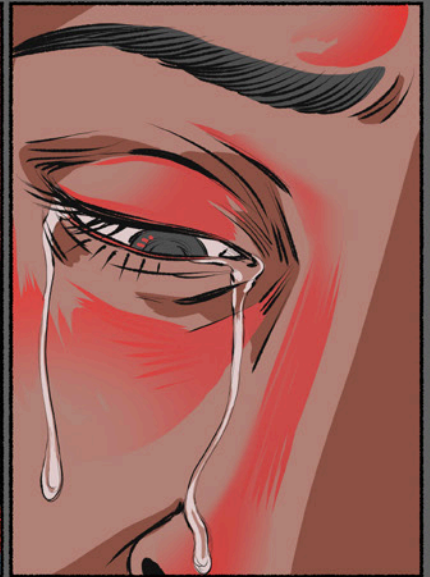


No point looking back at things we can't change.

You made a difference. Accept it.

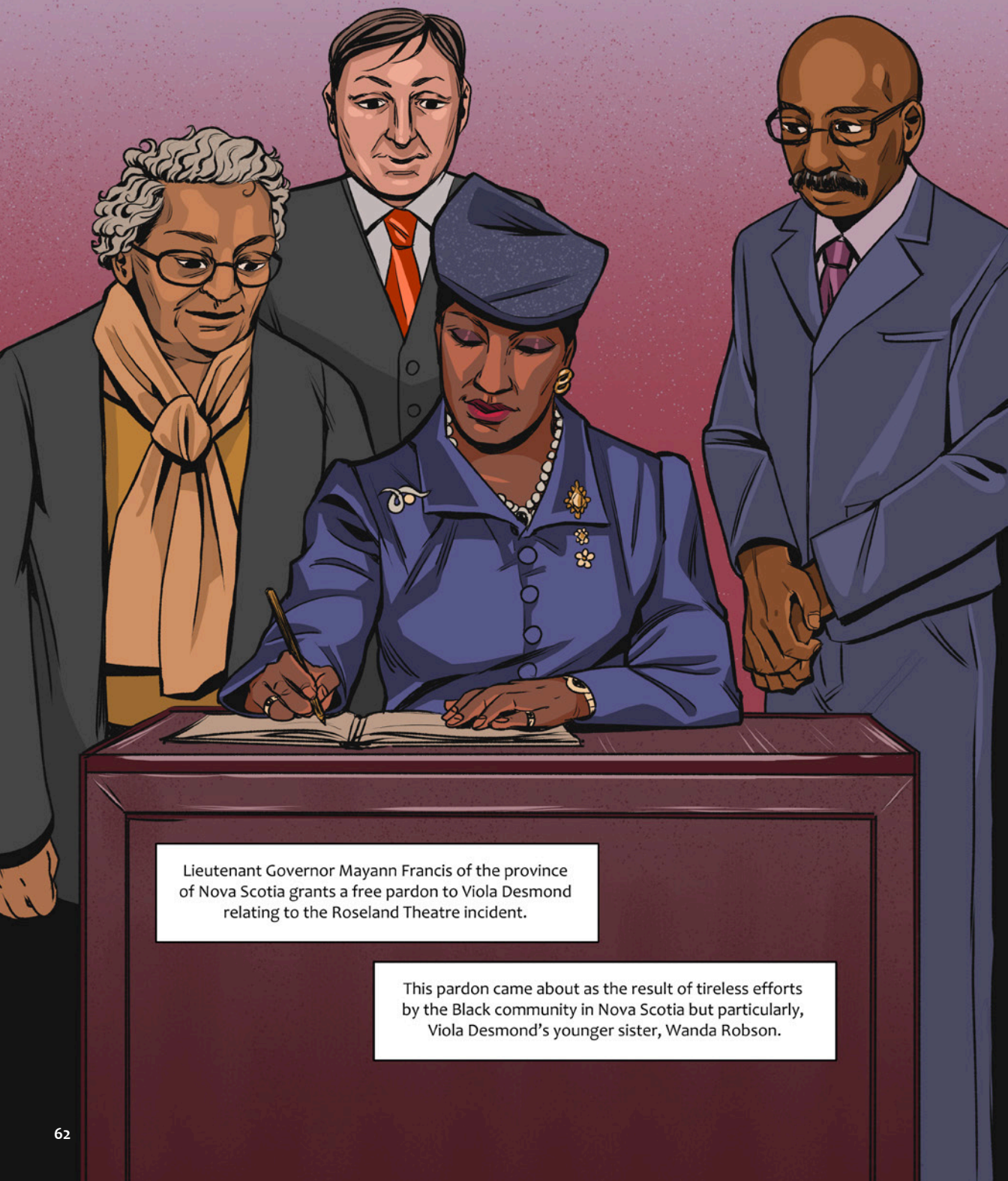






Viola Desmond died in her New York City apartment on February 7, 1965.

Province of Nova Scotia
April 14, 2010



Lieutenant Governor Mayann Francis of the province of Nova Scotia grants a free pardon to Viola Desmond relating to the Roseland Theatre incident.

This pardon came about as the result of tireless efforts by the Black community in Nova Scotia but particularly, Viola Desmond's younger sister, Wanda Robson.

Parliament of Canada
November 9, 2018

Viola Desmond is commemorated
in her appearance on the
Canadian ten-dollar bill.





Who is Viola Desmond, and can anyone tell my why she's so important?



Today we'll be reading a story about Viola Desmond...



This here is the Roseland Theatre where Viola Desmond was arrested in 1946.

I'm a
troublemaker
in their eyes...

but I have
no reason to
apologize.



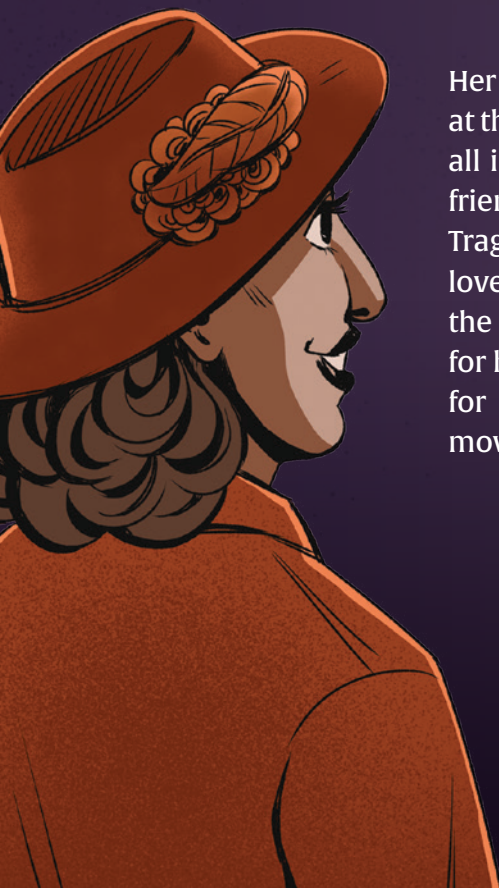


NO REASON TO APOLOGIZE

The Resilient Legacy of Viola Desmond



In 2018, Viola Desmond's likeness appeared on the Canadian ten-dollar bill, leading many people to wonder about her story. Who was she and why is she considered an important figure? Viola was a stubborn, entrepreneurial woman who stood up against racial discrimination. Denied a floor seat in the whites-only section at a cinema in 1946, she was forcefully removed, arrested, and convicted of tax evasion. She owed a single penny. Viola fought for her rights in court, even appealing her case to the Supreme Court of Canada, but was unfortunately denied.



Her actions sparked controversy among the Black community at the time, and her career, reputation, and relationships were all impacted. In the end Viola chose to leave her family and friends in Nova Scotia and move to New York City to start over. Tragically, it was there that she died, alone and far from her loved ones, at the relatively young age of fifty. It wasn't until the year 2010 that Viola Desmond received a full pardon for her supposed "crimes" and conviction. Today, her struggle for justice and her contribution to the modern civil rights movement is widely recognized.

