



A Posthumous Honour for a Conspicuous Life

Dr. Gaspard in Quebec

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Dominique Gaspard, c1911, unknown photographer

(Photo credit: Centre d'histoire de Saint-Hyacinthe, CH001)

This story is an attempt to understand an unknown individual whose life was significant but has now been forgotten. He was American-born, yet his mother tongue was French. He served Canada in French units but embraced the English-speaking Black community once in Montreal. His life speaks of a complexity of language not often explored in narratives of Quebec's English-speaking community, particularly in those histories about Blacks in the province. I trust this will be the beginning.

Dominique François Gaspard and Barthelmi Gaspard, twins, were born on December 22, 1884.¹ Dominique grew up in New Orleans; his parents, John and Esther, were French Creole, and attended the Church of St. Katherine of Sienna in St. Katherine's parish.² Dominique's early years revolved around the vibrant Afro-French Creole Catholic community in New Orleans, "where many people of the free people of colour [Creole] had a long-standing position of privilege."³

As Dominique entered adolescence, St. Katherine's parish became dominated by the Catholic lay order, The Josephites.⁴ This lay order expanded across the United States to bring unbaptized Blacks into the Catholic church. In 1904, in the city of Baltimore, a small but thriving Black Catholic community became the headquarters of the Josephites. In the midst of this Catholic activity, Charles Randolph Uncles, a Josephite-Dominican, became the first ordained African American Catholic priest in the United States.⁵ Sixteen years earlier, in 1888, Uncles had graduated from Le Séminaire de Saint-Hyacinthe, in Saint-Hyacinthe, about 60 km from the provincial metropolis of Montreal.⁶ Established in 1811, Le Séminaire de Saint-Hyacinthe had begun receiving Black students from the United States as early as 1860.⁷

1 Library and Archives Canada; Ottawa, Ontario, Canada; *CEF Personnel Files*; Canadian Attestation Papers, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 3435 – 52.

2 The church was named after the wealthy benefactor Katherine Drexel who underwrote the costs of building the church, and the ongoing survival of other church institutions, hence the parish honour as well. Cyprian Davis, *The History of Black Catholics in the United States*, (NY: Crossroad, 1995), 209.

3 Davis, 208; Douglas J. Slawson, "Segregated Catholicism: The Origins of Saint Katharine's Parish, New Orleans," *Vincenian Heritage Journal* 1996;17(3):144, describes New Orleans Blacks as Afro Creoles who called themselves gens libres de couleur..

4 Josephites, [The St. Joseph Society of the Sacred Heart] were a religious order devoted exclusively to work among African Americans. See John Bernard Alberts, "Origins of Black Catholic Parishes in the Archdiocese of New Orleans, 1718-1920," (Ph.D. diss. Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College, 1998), 13.

5 "Uncles Was Made a Priest: Cardinal Gibbons Honors the First Colored Man," *New York Times*, December 20, 1891; Jean-Noël Dion, "Des élèves de couleur au Séminaire (1)," *Le Courrier de Saint-Hyacinthe*, May 1, 2006.

6 Initially called Collège de Saint-Hyacinthe, it became known as Collège Saint-Antoine and later, Le Séminaire de Saint-Hyacinthe. See <http://patrimoine.ville.st-hyacinthe.qc.ca/medias/POPUP/33-seminaire.pdf>.

7 For a complete listing of African American seminary students up to 1911, see <http://www.chsth.com/histoire/histoire-regionale/histoire-d-ici/article/des-eleves-de-couleur-au-seminaire>.

C. R. Uncles took his role seriously and visited several Catholic communities throughout the United States. Yet, his connection to his alma mater appears to have been sustained and nurtured through the years, since he made candidate recommendations and novice referrals to Le Séminaire de Saint-Hyacinthe. One of his novice recommendations in 1904 appears to have been 20-year-old Dominique Gaspard, who registered as a student in 1905. In his recommendation letter of August 30, 1905, to Monseigneur Charles-Philippe Choquette at the seminary, Uncles wrote: “M. Gaspard a étudié le latin pendant deux ans ; il a traduit plusieurs chapitres De Bello Gallico. Quant au français, c’est sa langue-mère.”⁸

Once he was settled in the seminary, Dominique’s presence was noted. We have only one account by Father Athanase Saint-Pierre who wrote:

*Il était beaucoup plus nègre que Uncles. . . . Il fit des progrès sensibles. Il finit son cours à l’époque des grandes fêtes ... faisait partie de la fanfare et de l’orchestre, ne jouant pas seulement le tam-tam accoutumé aux gens de sa couleur. Puis parce que nègre, il n’en était pas moins affectionné de ses condisciples.*⁹

Unlike other students at the college, Gaspard never returned home to Louisiana during summer breaks. Rather, he worked in the town of Saint-Hyacinthe as a waiter. And from the accounts, over many years he got to know the local community in a personal way. This knowledge and familiarity may explain his repeated visits back to Saint-Hyacinthe throughout his life.

During his studies, Dominique Gaspard made his mark at the school, penning “Le Séminaire et ses élèves noirs” in the April 1910 edition of the school journal, *Le Collégien*. His account of previous Black Americans who had passed through the seminary stands as the only window into the educative Catholic formation, and the training role imparted to Black men in Quebec at that time.¹⁰

Moreover, the article gives a glimpse of Gaspard’s fascination with the appearance of egalitarian Catholic values during his six-year sojourn in the seminary. Having experienced America’s post-Reconstruction Jim Crow era, Gaspard painted for the reader the contrasting treatment and acceptance that he had experienced at Le Séminaire de Saint-Hyacinthe.¹¹ In the typical language of the early 20th century, it comes across as somewhat effusive, certainly flattering that as a Black man he had not had to live as a second-class student in the school. In his own words, this was a revelation:

8 Jean-Noël Dion, “Des élèves de couleur au Séminaire (2),” *Le Courrier de Saint-Hyacinthe*, March 8, 2006 <http://www.chsth.com/histoire/histoire-regionale/histoire-d-ici/article/des-eleves-de-couleur-au-seminaire-514>.

9 Ibid.

10 Besides the connection to Uncles, the first Black Catholic priest in the US, this aspect has yet to be explored by historians.

11 Slawson, *Segregated*, 178; Louisiana had set up its own Jim Crow in 1898, disenfranchising Blacks and then extending segregation to streetcars, railway waiting rooms, housing, hotels, theatres, circuses, tent shows, and even prostitution.

À notre arrivée au Séminaire... nous reconnûmes avec joie que la manière d'agir des écoliers d'autrefois n'avait pas changé. Depuis lors nous n'avons cessé de nous convaincre que les institutions catholiques au Canada français ne connaissent pas de race supérieure ou inférieure, que l'écolier noir y jouit des mêmes privilèges que ses condisciples blancs. Les élèves noirs ne sont pas forcés de s'y tenir à l'écart et de dédaigner la porte de devant pour entrer par une porte latérale, comme leurs nationaux sont condamnés à le faire dans certaines églises catholiques de la Louisiane et d'autres états du sud. En un mot, ils sentent qu'ils ne sont pas dans la maison des intrus simplement tolérés.¹²

Fifteen months after publication, Dominique's words were tested. Now a graduate, having spent six years flourishing in this Catholic institution, he believed that he was called to religious life, perhaps to be a missionary to Blacks in New Orleans. He took the first step by applying to enter the order of Saint Dominic, his patron saint. This move appears to have been earth-shattering: "Ce fut presque une révolution au couvent de Saint-Hyacinthe avant d'admettre **un noir** à revêtir la robe **blanche** des dominicains"¹³ (emphasis mine). A racial line had been crossed.

Dion revealed that the reaction at Le Séminaire de Saint-Hyacinthe was not just shock or disbelief—it was repugnance! Further, after saner heads prevailed, it seems that the mood changed from repugnance to acceptance—after all, these seminarians reasoned, "the person (Gaspard) was precious (worthy/valued) and should not be despised because of the colour of his skin"¹⁴ (translation mine). How the seminarians showed their repugnance to this "outrage" is not recorded, and Gaspard did not reveal his feelings about their reaction, except that he left "pour étudier une profession libérale à Montréal."¹⁵ By 1912, Dominique Gaspard had begun medical school at Université Laval de Montréal.¹⁶ For the next two years, Dominique Gaspard underwent pre-medicine and medical training.

In August 1914, Canada was at war with Germany. The Surgical Officer of the Mount Royal Rifles, Dr. Mignault, was stationed as a captain at Military District No. 4 headquarters in Montreal. Taking his cue from McGill University's medical staff, Dr. Mignault successfully applied for permission to set up a French-Canadian field hospital in France. To man this hospital, Mignault culled the

12 Dion, March 8, 2006.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 The Hostesses of Union United Church, *The Hostess Memory Book* (Montreal: Union United Church, 1982), 248. The author suggests that, once in Montreal, Gaspard entered Notre Dame College on Queen Mary Road, but he would have been too old for admittance. Dion (2006) does not name the school Gaspard entered in the intervening period.

16 Université Laval de Montréal was renamed Université de Montréal in 1920. Gaspard graduated in 1918, two years before the Université Laval campus became Université de Montréal. "In 1878, Laval University opened a branch . . . in Montreal. This branch became independent in 1920 and took the name of Université de Montréal." Université Laval: Notre université Origine et histoire, <https://www.ulaval.ca/notre-universite/origine-et-histoire> (accessed March 21, 2020).

medical expertise, students and faculty at Université Laval.¹⁷ Now a second-year medical student and 30 years old, Dominique Gaspard suspended his training and volunteered to join the Canadian Medical Army on March 15, 1915.¹⁸ Unconnected in the Black community at this time, Dominique listed his brother Barthelmi, living at 1029 Rocheblave St., New Orleans, Louisiana, as his next of kin. After a clean medical exam taken on April 9, Private Gaspard sailed to England with his unit on May 6, 1915. Since No. 4 Stationary Hospital in France was being erected on a racetrack in the Parisian suburb of Saint-Cloud, Canadian personnel received training from July to November 19 at Shorncliffe, England, until their transfer to Paris.

No. 4 Hospital existed for the exclusive mission of caring for wounded French-speakers. Thus, day-to-day control of Canada's French-Canadian No. 4 Hospital was given over to the government of France.¹⁹

Very little is known of the day-to-day tasks and responsibilities of Dominique Gaspard while in Saint-Cloud. Dr. Archambault's journal records that, in 1916, the hospital at Saint Cloud was treating over a hundred wounded. In a photo in Saint-Cloud, Gaspard is seated in front of the "Toronto" ward, surrounded by two dozen patients and perhaps staff. Some of the wounded are in wheelchairs, others heavily bandaged. Another photograph captured Dominique Gaspard playing in the company's musical band. These two shots show him at work and at play. A clue to his abilities is his advancement or promotion records. Between June 1915 and May 28, 1916, Gaspard was promoted from Corporal to Sergeant, which meant that he was in charge of several men.²⁰ Nevertheless, his CEF records do not reveal anything exceptional in his administrative duties or in battle. Rather, Dominique Gaspard's service to France was acknowledged in a significant manner because of his diligent service to the safety and sanitation of the hospital. Consequently, in April 1917, Paul Painlevé, the French Minister of War, decorated Sergeant Gaspard with La Médaille des épidémies du ministère de la Guerre in France.²¹

Saint-Cloud remained Gaspard's base or Canadian Army Medical Corps (CAMC) until he was discharged. Unfortunately, not having his degree, there was only so much this bright man could do with patients. The need for certified doctors was so great that a decision was taken. Dominique would return to his studies and go back to the field once certified. Thus, the paperwork was submitted

17 At first, McGill University offered its doctors, associated medical staff and students to man a hospital in England for the duration of the war. To not be outdone, Dr. Arthur Mignault copied this model, which was federally approved on August 23, 1915.

18 Library, *Canadian Attestation Box 3435* – 52.

19 The No. 4 Hospital, though associated with Dominique, was not the first hospital out of Université Laval. By June 1915, Saint-Cloud had become the third medical installation in France. "Notes de Dr Archambault, re: Hôpital no. 6 en France. Hôpital conditions," Archives de Montréal, Bibliothèque de la Ville de Montréal, Collection Gagnon.

20 The promotion cycle is in keeping with standard army advancement. However, there is a bit of confusion as to the date and place of each. See Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa; *CEF Personnel Files*; Casualty Form-Active Service; Reference: *RG 150*; Volume: *Box 3435* – 52.

21 Other references to Gaspard's medal say it was for conspicuous service. See Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa; *CEF Personnel Files*; Proceedings on Discharge; Reference: *RG 150*; Volume: *Box 3435* – 52. Note: Paul Painlevé was War Minister between March 20 and November 16, 1917. He became Prime Minister of France in September 1917. The Editors of The Encyclopedia Britannica, "Paul Painlevé, French Politician & Mathematician," Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Paul-Painleve> (accessed February 27, 2020).

and approved. On September 9, 1917, Dominique Gaspard got an S.O.S. discharge, which set in motion his return to Montreal. He arrived in Halifax, Nova Scotia, from Liverpool on the S. S. Megantic on August 8, 1917, whose manifest lists passenger Dominic (sic) Gaspard of the 4th Montreal District as a medical student.²²

Once back in Montreal, Gaspard immediately took up his medical courses and graduated in the spring convocation of 1918. This achievement was noted, but only in the United States—that is, in Seattle, Washington. A notice at the back of a four-page Black newspaper, *Cayton's Weekly: A publication of general information, but in the main voicing the sentiments of Colored Citizens*, reads, “Dominique-Francois (sic) Gaspard, a native of New Orleans ... received his degree of Doctor of Medicine from Laval and is now practising in Montreal on St. Antoine Street.”²³

This newspaper account jibes with Gaspard's discharge and pay records. His mailing address, for official purposes, was 239A St. Antoine. This situates his office at the eastern edge of the Old Montreal Black community, which at one time had been the hub of the Black porters.²⁴ In 1918, the porters frequented company-owned buildings there during their lay-overs. However, this area would soon be vacated, since these housing and rental spaces were becoming less attractive to the men. Gaspard had moved into the Black community as the movement westward into the wards of St. Antoine and St. Joseph picked up momentum.²⁵ The inexorable migration westward was evident when the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), the only Black community organization at that time, moved its headquarters from the Old Montreal CPR-owned building to Guy Street.²⁶

Perhaps unaware because he was new to Montreal's Black community, Dominique Gaspard initially lived outside of St. Antoine, at 321 Ontario East. This put him close to the easternmost group of Black residents.²⁷ Yet, this lack of proximity to the St. Antoine community did not deter him from becoming involved in St. Antoine's Black life; rather, it may have been through his office address and connections to the men on St. Antoine that Gaspard became acquainted with Montreal's fledgling UNIA, established on June 9, 1919. Gaspard may have attended the many UNIA meetings held in the old Canadian Pacific Railway building or he may have found, as a highly educated Black man, that few other doors in the city were open for social and intellectual pursuits.

22 Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa; Canadian Passenger Lists, 1865-1935; Series: RG 76-C; Roll: T-4756.

23 *Cayton's Weekly, A publication of general information, but in the main voicing the sentiments of Colored Citizens*, August 24, 1918, 4.

24 Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa; *CEF Personnel Files*; Post Discharge Pay Office: Three Months Pay and Allowances After Discharge; Reference: RG 150; Volume: Box 3435 – 52.

25 For a detailed account of the westward movement of Blacks up to 1960, see: Dorothy W. Williams, *Blacks in Montréal, 1628–1986: An Urban Demography* (Cowansville: Les Éditions Yvon Blais, 1989).

26 Leo W. Bertley, “The Universal Negro Improvement Association of Montreal, 1917–1979” (Ph.D. diss., Concordia University, 1980), 46.

27 At one time, seventy years earlier, this area constituted the largest Black residential cluster in Montreal. For an in-depth look at this Black cluster once living in the central eastern district north of Old Montreal, see Gary Collison, *Shadrach Minkins, From Fugitive Slave to Citizen* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

The UNIA was a paradox that even the founder, Marcus Garvey, tried to figure out. The organization was set up to educate the uneducated, those who had been deprived of education under slavery and who continued to be ostracized from intellectual pursuits. Each UNIA created a local space, called Liberty Hall, for Blacks to discuss matters of science, race, philosophy, history, finance, government, civics, etc. At Liberty Hall, without class distinction or racial segregation, Blacks could socialize as Whites did in their Young Men's Christian Associations or in private social clubs. However, the UNIA at first attracted intellectuals, those who had attained status but had little opportunity to confer with college or university cohorts within the dominant society.

Thus, after less than two years in the city, the Garveyism undergirding the UNIA must have appealed to Gaspard, because the UNIA's membership roll indicates that Dr. Gaspard was one of the first six doctors to join. He joined in January 1920 and soon developed a working relationship with the President of the Montreal UNIA Division, Dr. Lewis.²⁸ In the early years of Gaspard's life in Montreal, this friendship with Lewis was not his only enduring relationship.

On June 15, 1921, Dominique Gaspard married Ethel May Lyons at the Calvary Congregational Church on Greene Avenue, at the corner of Dorchester.²⁹ Ethel May had been born in Montreal, was a member of Union United Church and was considered an established and valued member of the community. Thus, Gaspard's marriage to Ethel marks a critical point in his social integration—her world was open to him. This integration would have been facilitated when the couple moved to 506 des Seigneurs Street, in the geographic heart of St. Antoine's Black district.³⁰ Moreover, it is at this juncture that Dr. Gaspard's office, while still on St. Antoine Street, was relocated near Mountain Street. The move farther west to this corner, was fortuitous, since Mountain and St. Antoine was about to become the fulcrum of Black jazz in Quebec and, indeed, within Canada.³¹ This new location would have brought significant traffic by his door and would have been increased by the daily comings and goings of Black porters on their way to their next shift at Bonaventure, Windsor and Central Stations.

In 1921, Dominique Gaspard seems to have been the first Black doctor serving the Ste. Cunégonde, St. Antoine, and St. Joseph Wards of the southwest. Wilfred Israel notes that there were:

28 Bertley, 124.

29 Beverley Levin, Calvary United Church (Formerly Calvary, Zion and Bethlehem Congregational Churches) Westmount, Quebec (Montreal: United Church Archives, n.d.).

30 Library and Archives Canada. *Sixth Census of Canada, 1921*. Ottawa: Library and Archives Canada, 2013. Series RG31. Statistics Canada Fonds.

31 The literature on Montreal as a jazz mecca is now voluminous and is replete with references to the development of the early Black district. For examples, see John Gilmore, *Swinging in Paradise: The Story of Jazz in Montreal*, 2nd ed. (Ellipse Editions, 2011); Nancy Marrelli, *Burgundy Jazz: Little Burgundy and the Story of Montreal Jazz* (Montreal: Véhicule Press, 2015); Andy Williams, Harlem of the North: Montréal: Little Burgundy Jazz and the Rise of Black Musicianship, October 25, 2016, <https://daily.redbullmusicacademy.com/2016/10/montreal-jazz-feature> (accessed February 26, 2020).

*three Negro members of the medical profession practising in this city during the year 1928. Each has practiced continuously since opening up his office in 1921, 1923 and 1928 respectively. While all have located their offices in the St. Antoine district, their patients are residents of all sections of the city. In each case more patients come from the white than the Negro group and include French, English and Scotch families in the residential suburbs.*³²

The city below the hill, with its underserved poor and working class, welcomed this gifted physician despite his race. No doubt, Gaspard's strong bilingualism would have added to his stature. As well, his neighbourhood reputation as a "highly respected diagnostician," perhaps honed during the war, meant he was always in demand.³³

While Dominique was in demand professionally, his social sphere, beyond the confraternity of the UNIA, continued to deepen. In 1935, Dr. F. D. Gaspard's name was joined with those of 14 other men in the initial application to establish the Coloured Veterans' Legion in the St. Antoine district.³⁴ The name marked this veterans' branch no. 50 as the only legion in Canada ever accredited for Blacks.³⁵ Officially, the Coloured War Veterans (Quebec no. 50) Branch received its charter from Dominion Command in Ottawa on March 20, 1935. The Legion opened its doors at 1450 St. Antoine near Lusignan Street. Since Black veterans were often unwelcome in other legion halls because of the colour of their skin, for many veterans, the Coloured War Veterans' Legion Hall represented their home away from home.

From the Legion's inception, Dr. Gaspard held a special place in the organization. This is noted on the branch letterhead on which "Dr. F. D. Gaspard" (without qualification) is set apart from the executive members listed and from the Honorary Chaplain, the much-respected Reverend Este of Union United Church. Gaspard was one of 15 charter members, yet the reason for his name to be a point of distinction in 1935 is not made clear in any branch correspondence.³⁶

Another indication of Gaspard's deepening affinity to Montreal's Black community was his joint application on August 16, 1937, to establish the Canadian Brothers' Social Club Inc. This was to be a high-class athletic social club for Blacks in Montreal providing a space for "billiard and pool rooms, dining rooms, tennis courts, skating rinks, swimming pools, newsstands,

32 Wilfred Israel, "The Montreal Negro Community" (master's thesis, McGill University, 1928), 166.

33 The Hostesses, 248; Referring to St. Antoine and other impoverished wards south of Montreal's downtown as the "city below the hill" comes from Herbert Ames, *The City Below the Hill: A Sociological Study of a Portion of the City of Montreal, Canada* (Montreal: The Bishop Engraving and Printing Company, 1897).

34 D. G. Corrigall to B. Thomas, March 8, 1935, Correspondence of the Canadian Legion of the British Empire Service, (Archives, Gaspard Research, 1953), Ottawa.

35 Interview with K. Therien, Royal Canadian Legion, Dominion Command, Ottawa, January 14, 2020.

36 Canadian Legion of the B.E.S.L., Coloured War Veterans no. 50 (Correspondence), *Charter Members*, March 8, 1935; Canadian Legion of the British Empire Service League, Dominion Headquarters, Ottawa, *Form no. 1442*, March 20, 1935; Frederick Phillips to J. R. Bowler, January 5, 1938 (Correspondence) Coloured War Veterans' no. 50 (Archives, Gaspard Research, 1953), Ottawa.

and to carry on therein the sale of cigars, cigarettes, tobacco and candy.”³⁷ The request was granted by provincial charter on September 18, 1937. Even by today’s standards, this was a very ambitious endeavour, but perhaps, in view of the social ostracization that Montreal’s Blacks endured at that time, for these men, a club like this was considered necessary “for the use and enjoyment, comfort and accommodation of the members ... and their friends.”³⁸

Despite the best of intentions, with the death of 53-year-old Dominique François Gaspard on February 6, 1938, the Social Club never came to fruition. His obituaries note that he died after a four-week bout of illness.³⁹ The cause of death is not stated. He died in Verdun General Hospital, having moved his office to the City of Verdun in 1937, just months before his demise. Dominique F. Gaspard was buried on February 9 in Montreal’s Notre-Dame Cemetery.⁴⁰

Outside the province, his death was noted in the *New York Herald* and, in Quebec, the City of Saint-Hyacinthe took notice, as did his alma mater, Université de Montréal. Though the immediate reaction to Gaspard’s death has as yet not been uncovered, decades later, the women of the community posthumously lamented that “the Black Community ... lost a beloved humanitarian when he passed away,” attributing his death to his selfless, unceasing medical help given without remuneration that “as a result he denied himself [and] literally sacrificed his life for the Black community.”⁴¹

The men too, decades later, had also taken note of his contribution to the community and the country. On February 22, 1953, at their Legion board meeting, a unanimous resolution was passed requesting a change of name from the Coloured War Veterans’ (Quebec no. 50) Branch to Dr. Gaspard Royal Canadian Legion Branch no. 50. The reasons given for the change were twofold as outlined in the resolution: “1) the present name is inappropriate and outmoded and, 2) the late Dr. Gaspard served with distinction in the First World War, was a chartered member of this Branch and rendered invaluable medical service to our community.”⁴² The change went into effect on April 13, 1953.⁴³

37 Gazette officielle du Québec/Quebec Official Gazette, Province of Quebec, Saturday September 18, 1937, vol. 69, no. 38, *Canadian Brothers’ Social Club Incorporated*, 3555-3557.

38 Taking note of the three applicants’ status, the need was felt along all classes of Blacks in the city. Dr. Dominique Gaspard, a professional, applied along with Arthur Moore, an employee of the Canadian National Railway, and entrepreneur and restaurateur Benjamin Wilson. For the socio-economic ramifications of de facto segregation/exclusion in the interwar years in Montreal, see Williams 1989 and Dorothy W. Williams, *The Road to Now: A History of Blacks in Montreal* (Montreal: Véhicule Press, 1997).

39 “Dr. Dominic (sic) F. Gaspard,” *New York Herald Tribune*, February 8, 1938, 12; “Le Dr D. Gaspard est decede a l’age de 54 le defunt bien connu à St-Hyacinthe avait fait ses études au séminaire de notre ville. Originaire de la Louisiane. Figure pittoresque qui disparaît,” *Le Courrier de Saint-Hyacinthe*, February 18, 1938, 1; “Ceux qui vont,” *L’Action Universitaire : Revue des Diplômes de l’Université de Montréal*, February 1938, 119.

40 It is unclear if this was his home or office address. See Collection d’annuaires Lovell de Montréal et sa région—Montréal et sa banlieue—Série principale (1842-1977)—937-1938—Annuaire montréalais des rues—OR-Z, 215; *Gabriel Drouin, Drouin Collection*; Institut Généalogique Drouin; Burial record: Dominic Francis (sic) Gaspard, Montreal.

41 Hostesses, 248.

42 Archie Greaves to Quebec Command, March 17, 1953 (Correspondence) Coloured War Veterans’ no. 50 (Archives, Gaspard Research, 1953), Ottawa.

43 Mr. Mulhall, Dominion Command, Ottawa, April 13, 1953, Coloured War Veterans’ no. 50 (Archives, Gaspard Research, 1953), Ottawa.

As we mark the end of Dominique Gaspard's story here, it is important to take stock of the history uncovered in this narrative.⁴⁴ Dominique Gaspard's life in Quebec was a unique story in key areas, not the least of which was the fact that he was African American—indeed, our Black neighbours have been part of the province for hundreds of years, especially in Montreal. Another point of significance was that Gaspard, and apparently others, centred their experience outside Montreal, in a French Catholic school in the village of Saint-Hyacinthe, Quebec. Black histories in Quebec have been written without this knowledge. Gaspard's military life is also an exceptional aspect of his sojourn here. He did not have to protest to be accepted in Canada's military. He was not offered a segregated enlistment (as others were). Gaspard's path mirrored that of other men from Quebec: when he was given the opportunity to serve, he excelled and served with merit. Moreover it appears that, once he integrated into the local community, he embraced his role and shouldered the responsibility to serve his community. This life sketch answered the question this researcher posed: Why was the Veterans' Legion serving Little Burgundy named after a singular individual? Who was he and what did he contribute? Tracing the life of this French-speaking American Catholic in the province reveals a bit about the historical challenges he faced, but we also see a glimpse of a role model in the making, since he worked to make a difference for the entire community around him. For us to truly understand the extent of Black contributions and legacy in the province, there are many other stories that need to be revealed and shared. Yet today, as in the past, Canadian schools are bereft of Black history studies like this one. Thus, as Quebec's English-speaking community continues to uncover local histories, it remains important to delve even more into local histories in order to broaden our understanding of the historical complexity and heterogeneity of English-speakers.

44 Though the stories of Blacks' integration and contributions remain unknown, this narrative has not been contextualized within the 400-year history of Blacks living in Quebec. Nevertheless, the Black presence has been documented through periods of exploration, slavery, settlement, wars, invasions and rebellions, nation-building, the underground railroad, etc. For more understanding, consult the sweeping narratives found in Daniel G. Hill, *The Freedom Seekers: Blacks in Early Canada* (Agincourt: Book Society of Canada, 1981); and in Robin W. Winks *The Blacks in Canada: A History* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997).

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