

THE WCR LEARNING COMMUNITY

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Viola Desmond in 1945
Photo: HO /AFP / Getty Images

Viola Desmond, a Canadian hero

(July 6, 1914 – February 7, 1965)

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Viola Desmond was born and raised in Halifax, Nova Scotia. In the 1940s, Viola was successful. She owned a beauty parlour and a beauty college. Many people liked and respected her.

Car breaks down

One November day in 1946, Viola's car broke down. She took it to a mechanic shop. While she waited, Viola decided to see a movie. She bought a 30-cent ticket and sat down.

Blacks only, whites only

Viola sat on the main floor. Soon, an usher came by. He told Viola she needed to move. The tickets on the main floor were more expensive. Viola offered to pay more. She did not want to move. The usher asked her to move again. He pointed to the balcony, but Viola refused. The man did not say it, but the main floor was for white people. The balcony was for black people. That day, police arrested Viola. She spent 30 days in jail and paid a \$20 fine. However, Viola went to court and won her case. Many people were angry. They believed that the law was unfair and that Viola was innocent.

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64 years later

Viola changed history.

She helped Nova Scotia change its laws.

It took 64 years for Nova Scotia
to apologize to Viola's family.

Illustrations:



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