

Montreal Council of Women

Thursday, February 4, 2016

Guest Speaker

Me Rachel Zellars, McGill University

On place names, symbols and anti-blackness in Quebec

On Thursday, February 4th, over 40 individuals and Federate members attended a meeting to celebrate "Black History Month". Our guest speaker for the occasion was Rachel Zellars, an attorney and PhD candidate in education at McGill University addressed us on the subject of Black Racism in Quebec.

Upon arriving in Montreal, Rachel was shocked to discover that eleven sites in Quebec bore the "N" word.

Finding this totally unacceptable, she took the "bull by the horns" and proceeded to start a petition calling for an immediate removal of the "N" word from all of the names and places governed by the Quebec Commission of Toponymy
<http://montreal.ctvnews.ca/the-n-word-on-maps-in-quebec-a-petition-for-change-1.2515273>

The petition went viral and last fall the Commission announced that the eleven locations whose names contain a racial slur are to be renamed. However, Rachel was not happy with the fact that the Commission, an all-white group with only one historian who has no experience or knowledge of Quebec black history were the ones to propose the new names. She feels that a group of black scholars and researchers should be the ones to propose the best way to preserve these black histories and also propose the first list of potential names.

Ms. Zellars also spoke of black slavery and black racism in Quebec and took the time to answer many questions from the audience.