

6 Dec. 1917, at 9 a.m. in the Morning

The Imo

Sounds like a name of a cartoon character

But it was a supply ship, loaded with life, foodstuff,

And headed to feed hungry soldiers in Europe

The *Mount Blanc*, White Mountain

Perhaps reminiscent of the Alps,

But this ship was loaded with death, munitions,

To take life on the battlefields of Europe

In the carnage they called World War One.

These ships collided in the Narrows, in Halifax Harbour,

The munitions heated and exploded

Shooting death into the four directions

Boom!!!

BOOM

BOOM

BOOM!!!

The sound of terror

The sound of death

Armageddon

The angel blowing the trumpet of destruction

And the sound was heard everywhere

As far away as Prince Edward Island

300 kilometres away

And the City of Halifax gave one long piercing scream

that sounded into the bowels of the Earth

And the Earth moved furiously.

She belched and vomited flames

Halifax destroyed

Halifax shattered

Richmond and Tufts Cove obliterated

2000 dead

9000 in various states of woundedness

25 thousand homeless

More will die

The North-End in flames

Viola Desmond, only three years-old

Is thrown from her high chair in her parents home, on
Gottingen St.

She will live to overcome another struggle.

And Clement Ligoure, a Black doctor from the island of
Trinidad, sits in his house at Robie and North

Having breakfast

And when his teacup flies from his hand and smashes
into the wall

And he calls out to his assistant, described as a coloured
woman, “are you alright?”

And she answers yes, and he says “get ready, we have a
long day ahead of us.”

Death and destruction roamed everywhere

Lives lost

Some persons never found

Like Edward, the husband of Black woman, Mrs. Rose
Hickey

Edward was from Newfoundland

And a worker down on the docks, ground zero for the
explosion

He went to work that morning and never returned.

“Presumed dead”, was what the authorities said.

Mrs. Hickey lost everything

Her house reduced to a rubble

The chickens and pigs she kept in the backyard
All killed
Thankfully, all her children survived
She asked for help from the Disaster Relief Commission
But Old Jim Crow raised his nasty head.
Mrs. Rachel Brown from Jamaica
Married to a man from Africville
They lived on Columbus Street
Their house collapsed in the blast
She was outside when it happened
Feeding the horses from the livery business they ran
The explosion threw the horses into the air
She never saw them again
How she survived was a miracle
Mrs. Brown fought a rear guard action
To recover some of what they lost
She also asked for compensation for the piano
You see she gave music lessons, and her piano
Was a source of income.

And Mary Lucas of Cornwallis St. lost an eye
Injured the other
And she descended into blindness.

That day, at the Amanda Private Hospital
Run by Dr. Clement Ligoure, our doctor from Trinidad
He came to run a private hospital, because as a Black
doctor, he was denied hospital privileges, in the City's
hospitals, but on that day, *This* day, 6 Dec. 1917,
Dr. Ligoure worked round the clock, he and his
assistant, treating the sick, the needy, and the dying, for
three days, hardly resting or eating or drinking
It is recorded that he treated close to 200 patients a day
And he did this for free
On day 4, he went to City Hall and demanded
assistance...

Does Halifax remember that Aldora Andrews Black
daughter of Laura and Charles Andrews from Africville,
was killed by the explosion on *this* day?

Does Halifax remember?

Afua Cooper