Marie Joseph Angélique
(Black History) (Canada 2025)

Marie Joseph Angélique. Her harrowing story reminds us of the history ofenslavement in what is now Canada – and sheds light on how those who wereenslaved resisted their bondage.

On April 10, 1734, a fire broke out in Montréal that engulfed much of the city'smerchant quarter. Dozens of buildings and homes burned down. Angélique, a 29-year-old enslaved Black woman, was arrested. It was alleged that she lit the fire toescape her enslaver after learning she had been sold and would potentially be sentto the West Indies.

Her trial lasted several weeks and included more than 20 witnesses, although notone is believed to have seen the crime committed. Most accused Angéliquebecause she had tried to escape before, and they said she had a history ofrebelling against and threatening her enslaver.

Angélique maintained her innocence throughout the trial. "Madam, although I maybe wicked, I am not miserable enough to do an act like that," she said during her interrogation. However, the courts found herguilty. They condemned her to death and had her tortured to force a confession. On June 21, 1734, she was publicly hanged.

Although historians disagree on whether Angélique was guilty, her story continues to encourage ongoing conversations aboutracial equality, justice and the importance of acknowledging the complexities of Canada's past.