

## *Dr. Alexander T. Augusta's Streetcar Incident*



Alexander T. Augusta, M.D.  
Courtesy Oblate Sisters of Providence Archives

“My position as an officer of the United States, entitles me to wear the insignia of my office, and if I am either afraid or ashamed to wear them, anywhere, I am not fit to hold my commission.”

— Alexander T. Augusta, M.D

### *Forced off the Streetcar*

On a rainy day in Washington, D.C. in February 1864, Dr. Augusta, dressed in his army uniform hailed a streetcar. He wanted to stay dry, so he entered the covered area reserved for white passengers. The conductor informed Dr. Augusta that he would have to stand in the rain in the area assigned to blacks. When he refused, he was forced off the streetcar. He walked in the rain, arriving wet and late to his meeting. Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts was outraged when he learned that Dr. Augusta was forced off the streetcar. Senator Sumner requested that the United States Congress allow blacks the same railroad privileges as whites. In a year, blacks and whites were allowed the same seats on streetcars in the capital, Washington, D.C.



Typical Washington, D.C. streetcar, c. 1880  
Courtesy The Historical Society of Washington, D.C