



Law Union of British Columbia

bclawunion.org

July 18, 2020

Statement of Complicity, Solidarity, and Commitment to Change re: Policing & Systemic Racism

Recent events across “Canada” and the “U.S.” have shed further light on the lived realities of Black and Indigenous people in our communities. Anti-Black racism in “Canada” is older than “Canada” itself; it began with the slave trade and continues today.ⁱ In 2020, Black people in Canada still face disproportionately high rates of imprisonment,ⁱⁱ denial of parole review,ⁱⁱⁱ street checks,^{iv} murder by police,^v use of force by police,^{vi} and sexual assault by police.^{vii} Similarly, Indigenous communities also face disproportionately high rates of imprisonment,^{viii} denial of parole review,^{ix} longer sentences,^x suicide attempts while imprisoned,^{xi} return to prison two years after re-entering society,^{xii} street checks,^{xiii} murder by police,^{xiv} use of force by police,^{xv} and homelessness.^{xvi}

The Law Union of British Columbia (the “Law Union”) wishes to not only acknowledge these realities in this moment of heightened clarity and grief, but to also recognize our role as a participant in the systemic racism that oppresses Black and Indigenous peoples. The Law Union is aware of the disproportionate harms experienced by Black and Indigenous communities both in “B.C.” and across “Canada” at the hands of police and the prison system, and will strive to use its position and resources to combat this systemic racism.

We commit to continuous engagement with these issues beyond performing allyship in the form of solidarity statements issued in times of duress. This commitment includes a full endorsement of [Black Lives Matter Vancouver’s demands](#), issued on June 6, 2020,^{xvii} and is certainly not limited to this singular, symbolic action. We commit to taking meaningful action to address anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism, including:

1. thoughtfully developing policy positions and tangible actions to support prison and police abolition;
2. advocating for the legal profession to acknowledge its historic and ongoing role in perpetuating systemic racism and to take tangible measures to address it;
3. as members of the legal community, uplift the calls of movements to identify and dismantle racism embedded in the legal system itself;
4. meaningfully acknowledging the labour and knowledge of local Black and Indigenous liberation advocates which inform our work through compensation and other self-determined reparations;
5. dismantling barriers which discourage Black and Indigenous folks from accessing leadership positions in our organization;
6. building capacity within our organization to address microaggressions and systemic discrimination; and,
7. proactively protecting Black and Indigenous community members who are targeted in the course of this work.

We recognize that no amount of training or workshops will rid our organization, nor those we work with, of anti-Black and anti-Indigenous bias and other systemic racism due to, for example: (1) their close ties with colonial legal institutions, (2) their placement within a settler, white supremacist society, and (3) their lack of meaningful connection to Black and Indigenous communities affected by violent policing.

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We are calling on our peer organizations, allies, policymakers, and communities to commit to consistent engagement with issues of anti-Black and anti-Indigenous bias and systemic racism beyond learning how to discuss and analyze these issues through a nuanced and intersectional lens. This includes actions like [speaking at City Council](#) regarding policing issues, including Motions [B2](#) and [B4](#) on July 21, 2020; the Law Union will be speaking in favour of both motions when the time comes.

The Law Union is in the process of developing a meaningful and substantive response to the generations-old issue of anti-Black and anti-Indigenous police violence and will be looking to our community partners and allies, led by Black and Indigenous communities, to amplify calls for systemic change.

Please consider providing material support to affected communities in so-called Vancouver by donating to and sharing the following fundraising links:

[Black in BC Community Support Fund for COVID-19 organized by Jahmira Kedesha](#)

- The Black in BC Community Support Fund is a fundraiser for a low-barrier, emergency, micro-grant program for Black people in British Columbia, Canada, who are experiencing financial hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Hogan's Alley Society](#)

- Hogan's Alley Society seeks to preserve and promote the historical, cultural, societal and economic contributions made by Black Settlers and their descendants to Vancouver, Greater Vancouver, the Province of British Columbia, the Pacific Northwest and Canada. Pivot Legal Society's [Know Your Rights Handbook](#) was in part informed by workshops facilitated by Hogan's Alley Society members at Nora Hendrix Place.

We would like to thank [Rania El Mugammar](#) for their public education resources regarding Black liberation and anti-oppression, which informed much of this statement, in addition to [Pivot Legal Society](#) for direction regarding how to financially support Black-led organizations in Vancouver.

In solidarity,

Law Union of British Columbia Steering Committee

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ⁱ Ajamu Nangwaya, *Fact Sheet on Police Violence against the African Community in Canada* (July 2013), online: Toronto Media Co-op: <<http://toronto.mediacoop.ca/blog/ajamu-nangwaya/18378>>

ⁱⁱ Ontario, Office of the Correctional Investigator Annual Report 2018-2019 (June 2019), online: Office of the Correctional Investigator [OCI]: <<https://www.oci-bec.gc.ca/cnt/rpt/annrpt/annrpt20182019-eng.aspx#s5>>

ⁱⁱⁱ OCI, *supra*.

^{iv} Ontario, Report of the Independent Police Oversight Review (2017) at 40 [Tulloch Report].

^v Ontario Human Rights Commission, *A Collective Impact: Interim report on the inquiry into racial profiling and racial discrimination of Black persons by the Toronto Police Service* (November 2018), online: Ontario Human Rights Commission [OHRC]: <<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/public-interest-inquiry-racial-profiling-and-discrimination-toronto-police-service/collective-impact-interim-report-inquiry-racial-profiling-and-racial-discrimination-black>>

^{vi} *Ibid.*

^{vii} *Ibid.*

^{viii} OHRC, *supra*.

^{ix} OCI, *supra*.

^x *Ibid.*

^{xi} *Ibid.*

^{xii} *Ibid.*

^{xiii} Scot Wortley, “Police use of Force in Ontario: An Examination of Data from the Special Investigations Unit, Final Report” (2006), online: Research project conducted on behalf of the African Canadian Legal Clinic for submission to the Ipperwash Inquiry [Wortley]:

<www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/inquiries/ipperwash/policy_part/projects/pdf/AfricanCanadianClinicIpperwashProject_SIUStudybyScotWortley.pdf>.

^{xiv} Colin Freeze, *More than one-third of people shot to death over a decade by RCMP officers were Indigenous* (November 2019), online: Globe and Mail: <<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-more-than-one-third-of-people-shot-to-death-over-a-decade-by-rcmp/>>

^{xv} Wortley, *supra* at p. 40.

^{xvi} Homeless Hub, *Indigenous Peoples*, online: Homeless Hub: <<https://homelesshub.ca/about-homelessness/population-specific/indigenous-peoples>>

^{xvii} Black Lives Matter Vancouver, *Black Lives Matter Vancouver Calls on the City to Dismantle Systems of Violence and Oppression* (2020), online: <<https://blacklivesmattervancouver.com/vancouver-dismantle-systems-of-violence>>.

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