



NOTICE OF MOTION

Commemorating Dudley Laws contributions to Toronto

Moved by: Councillor Colle

Seconded by: Councillor Mihevc

SUMMARY:

Dudley Laws was a community activist and founder of the famed Black Action Defense Committee (BADC), best known for his involvement in changing the way Ontario investigates its police services.

Born in the Parish of St. Thomas in Eastern Jamaica, Laws immigrated to London, England in 1955 and moved to Canada in 1965, where he was actively involved in the community and rose to prominence for his outspoken critique of the Toronto Police. He challenged the police through protests and the media, speaking out against the use of aggressive policing tactics in the Black community.

While working his day jobs as a welder and a taxi driver, Dudley Laws was involved in civil rights organizations such as the Jamaican-Canadian Association and the Universal African Improvement Association (UAIA). Catalyzed by a series of shootings of Black men by Toronto-area police officers in the 1970s and 1980s, and the death of Lester Donaldson (who was fatally shot by a police officer in the chest at point-black range), Laws co-founded BADC with fellow activists Charles Roach, Sherona Hall and Lennox Farrell. Laws and the BADC led protest marches and demonstrations to bring racialized police violence to the forefront, and advocated for independent investigations of police misconduct. Laws and the BADC are credited with the formation of Ontario's Special Investigations Unit (SIU) in the 1990s and the creation of the Commission of Systemic Racism in the Ontario Criminal Justice System.

Laws was an outspoken critic of systemic racism in policing, immigration and the prison system, and advocated for the empowerment of the Black community. He co-founded groups like the Black Youth Community Action Project (BYCAP) and worked with Black Inmates and Friends Assembly (BIFA). With BIFA, Laws frequently visited and counselled Black prison inmates. In the 1980s and 1990s, Laws worked as an immigration consultant, advocating on behalf of immigrants and refugees, and supporting newcomers from the Caribbean.

Dudley Laws is an icon in the Toronto Black community; he is one of our City's greatest champions for social justice, having worked tirelessly to end youth violence, and support Toronto's cultural diversity. Dudley Laws' contributions to the City are worthy of official civic recognition and an initiative to recognize him in Toronto is long overdue.