



**BLACK LAW STUDENTS  
ASSOCIATION OF CANADA**

**L'ASSOCIATION DES ETUDIANTS NOIRS  
EN DROIT DU CANADA**

Thursday April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2016

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**The Black Law Students' Association of Canada Statement of Support for Black Lives  
Matter—Toronto Coalition Demonstration**

The Black Law Students' Association of Canada (BLSA Canada) encourages the development of talented and socially conscious lawyers. Our organization's mission is devoted to the advancement of Black law students and the Black community in Canada. It is with a strong sense of purpose that we affirm our support for the Black Lives Matter-Toronto Coalition demonstration and are adding our voices to call for an end to state and structural violence against Black people and all of the ways in which Black people are disenfranchised through systemic discrimination and racism.

Developed in 2012, Black Lives Matter is a call to action. The movement denounces state and extra-judicial violence against Black bodies and culture, and demands a just response to the anti-Black racism that permeates social institutions and structures. This structural violence continuously tramples the rights of Black lives along the gender spectrum, Black lives with mental health challenges, Black lives facing precarious economic conditions, and ultimately, Black lives of the next generation.

On March 20, 2016 the Black Lives Matter Toronto Coalition organized a peaceful protest at Nathan Phillips Square to speak out against anti-Black racism in the city, against systemic violence, and especially against the Ontario Special Investigations Unit's (SIU) decision not to charge the officers accountable for the death of Andrew Loku. The 45-year-old Black man was originally from South Sudan and lived with a mental illness. He was fatally shot inside a Toronto apartment building last year. The building's units are leased by the Canadian Mental Health Association for the provision of affordable housing and services for people suffering from mental illness. Those close to Mr. Loku note that his struggles with mental illness stem from the trauma he experienced as a youth soldier while living in South Sudan. Witnesses on the scene note that police officers were on site not more than a few minutes before shots were fired.

The decision not to indict the officer who fatally shot Mr. Loku was announced just days after Toronto police fatally shot Alex Wettlaufer on March 14, 2016. The 21 year-old, while on the phone with his mother, was shot while on his way home from visiting his girlfriend. To this day, the Ontario's Special Investigations Unit cannot confirm that Wettlaufer was armed and posed a threat warranting such violence.

On the evening of March 21, 2016, after the SIU announced its ruling, members of the Toronto Police Service attacked peaceful protesters outside police headquarters, according to reports in Toronto media. Reports indicate that police officers pushed their way past demonstrators to dismantle tents that had been set up. Further, several peaceful protesters were reportedly injured and police actions showed no consideration for the children and disabled people present.

BLSA Canada believes that fatal police shootings arising from encounters between police and members of the Black community must come to an end. Black and racialized communities continue to be the disproportionate targets of state violence and for too long, there has been no accountability for the shootings and killings of Black and racialized individuals.

As future legal professionals and advocates in Canada, BLSA Canada is adding its voice to the community activists, civil society organizations, and those calling for reforms of police training and stronger oversight of police misconduct, as well as the collection and release of racial data on fatal shootings by police officers.

We echo the following demands from Black Lives Matter Toronto:

- 1) The adoption of the African Canadian Legal Clinic's demand for a coroner's inquest into the death of Andrew Loku;
- 2) The immediate public release of the name(s) of the officer(s) who killed Alex Wettlaufer, and charges to be laid accordingly;
- 3) An overhaul of the province's Special Investigation Unit, in consultation with families of victims of police violence, the Black community and the community at large;
- 4) A condemnation of the Toronto Police Service's excessive use of force and ongoing intimidation tactics against Black Lives Matter Toronto protesters; and
- 5) A commitment to the full elimination of carding, including:
  - a. The deletion of all previously recorded data;
  - b. Reframing of regulations to prohibitions;
  - c. Consistent implementation policy amongst different police boards; and
  - d. Concrete disciplinary measures for officers who continue to card.

Additionally, we reiterate the following recommendations made by the African Canadian Legal Clinic:

1. The Office of the Independent Police Review Director conduct a systemic inquiry into whether there has been adequate disciplinary action taken against officers who use force against Black people living with mental health issues;
2. That body-worn cameras be used by police forces across the province;
3. That the Special Investigations Unit, the civilian agency that investigates deaths involving police, release data on the number of their cases that involve racialized persons who live with mental health issues; and
4. That the Ontario Human Rights Commission conduct an inquiry into the disproportionate use of force used against Black people with mental health challenges.

These proposed reforms must be addressed by law enforcement, politicians, and policy makers. Too many lives have already been lost due to the systematic denial and inaction of our legal system and the prevailing lack of accountability measures to ensure that Black lives are treated fairly and equally under Canadian law.

BLSA Canada stands in solidarity with Black Lives Matter to demand swift institutional reforms that will result in justice and safety for Black lives—all Black lives.

Signed,

**Black Law Students' Association of Canada National Executive, 2015-2016**

Black Law Students' Association — Dalhousie Schulich School of Law  
Black Law Students' Association — McGill University  
Black Law Students' Association — Osgoode Hall Law School  
Black Law Students' Association — Queens University  
Black Law Students' Association — Thomson Rivers University  
Black Law Students' Association — Université de Montréal  
Black Law Students' Association — University of New Brunswick  
Black Law Students' Association — University of Ottawa  
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**Women of Color Collective — McGill University, Faculty of law**

**Radlaw McGill**