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Black Lives Matter Vancouver Calls on the City to Dismantle Systems of Violence and Oppression

BLACK LIVES MATTER VANCOUVER

6 June 2020 – <https://blacklivesmattervancouver.com/vancouver-dismantle-systems-of-violence/>

George Floyd	Nina Pop	D'Andre Campbell
Breonna Taylor	Regis Korchinski-Paquet	Abdirahman Abdi
Ahmaud Arbery	Abdi Gani Mahamud Hirsi	Tony McDade
David McAtee	Andrew Loku	Samwel Uko

THese are just a few of the names of Black lives claimed by state violence and neglect in recent years. Their lives mattered. All Black Lives Matter!

Each of them should be here now, that is why we work to ensure that the systems that failed them do not claim another life. Each of these violent killings cuts deep, but we remain unbroken. Instead, they have (once again) brought us together in the streets, and online, to reaffirm what we've always known; there can be neither justice, nor peace, within a police state. Black Lives Matter centres the lived experiences of Black people who are queer, trans, non-binary, live with disability, and/or do sex work because these community members have too often been left to the margins of social movements or altogether erased from history. In prioritizing the voices of our most vulnerable, we address the needs most critical to community safety.

For many of you acknowledging – for the first time – that #blacklives-matter, this comes with a pang of guilt: a realisation of complacency and complicity in the face of ongoing state-sanctioned violence you thought was in the past. For others, this simple statement is an affirmation of

our existence, and our deserving to live and thrive. Black Lives Matter Vancouver exists to hold police accountable for violence against Black people. We do so while standing in solidarity with the Indigenous people on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territory of the x^wməθk^wəy'əm (Musqueam), Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish), and Səl'ílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) First Nations currently known as Vancouver.

Cultural amnesia allows us to think that Canada's, and British Columbia's history sits atop a moral high ground, and many people assume that Canada is "not as bad" as the United States. Let it be known that a nation built upon stolen lands and enslavement can only do so under implicit threat of violence. Land dispossession and brutal violence are the underpinnings of our shared history within this particular police state. The punitive justice model employed by the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) is harming our communities, and creates unsafe conditions because of increased police surveillance. We cannot move forward without a shift to community-based models of security and safety. A restorative justice model will allow good to come from harm, and stifle the cycle of pain, abuse, and racial violence at the root of policing.

We stand in solidarity with our people in the United States, but we will not allow Canadians to use the struggle of Black people to the south as a tool to distract from the ongoing police violence against, and state-sanctioned oppression of Black lives in Canada, British Columbia, and Vancouver. Simply put, the distinctions between the ways Black folks were used to generate wealth for the economies of colonial North America do not change the racist and white supremacist opinions and institutions that founded our two countries. The City of Vancouver has recently spoken up against anti-Black racism, but it was long overdue. It is imperative that the city acts in continuous collaboration with the Black community to address the long-standing institutional racism that exists within its policies and practices. We vehemently oppose the violence enacted on Black bodies by police, and the state, as well as the undergirding conditions which facilitate and justify this violence.

Our freedom is not and should have never been up for negotiation, and so Black Lives Matter Vancouver issues the following demands and calls to action:

- The City of Vancouver must redirect financial resources from the Vancouver Police Department towards initiatives that demonstrably support long-term community safety. This includes child care support, education, comprehensive mental health intervention and social support, local restorative justice services, employment programs, access to recreational facilities, community-directed public investment, peer-based programming, culturally-led policies and more.
- The City of Vancouver must commit to improving social conditions across the city with a commitment to the goal of eventually abolishing police and prisons, as they serve the primary purpose of oppressing marginalized communities and protecting the riches of the wealthy minority of denizens.
- The City of Vancouver must condemn the actions taken by colonial police forces with respect to silencing and violently suppressing Black voices and demands for systemic change.
- The City of Vancouver must address the past and current harms that the destruction of the Hogan's Alley neighbourhood has caused to Black and Indigenous people and other marginalised communities of Colour.
- The City of Vancouver must follow through with its policy to redress the past displacement of Vancouver's only Black neighbourhood by enabling the establishment of a Black-led non-profit community land trust on the former Hogan's Alley block within the Northeast False Creek area.
- The Vancouver Pride Society must cut ties with the Vancouver Police Department, and exclude all police officers (in and out of uniform) from participation in the Pride Parade itself in any official capacity.
- The Vancouver Police Department must demilitarise, and make a commitment to work towards officers not carrying firearms.
- The Vancouver Police Department must undergo an upheaval in the manner in which it collects and reports data from arrests/police interactions with civilians to be more thorough and transparent. We need accurate numbers for our missing and murdered trans sisters and brothers.
- The B.C. Association of Chiefs of Police and the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General's Police Services Division must strip the awards of valour given to Constables Ann Fontaine, Albert Lu and Greg Parkes for their involvement in the killing of Abdi Gani Mahamud Hirsi.

- The Vancouver School Board must acknowledge its dismissal of several incidents of blatant anti-Black racism, including hate speech and systemic practices, and commit to an anti-racism policy in collaboration with Black and Indigenous community organizations.

As we call on the above state bodies to act, here are some actions you and your families can and need to take. This handy resource can be used to guide you: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1dlq7dostNdAdrIcNcBFymT8k4uLhGHsesNshqjJGw/edit>.

Contact the city officials/councillors to demand that the City of Vancouver defund the VPD and redirect funds to helpful initiatives.

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City Manager – sadhu.johnston@vancouver.ca

Vancouver Police Board – office@vancouverpoliceboard.ca

Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General – PSSG.Minister@gov.bc.ca

BC Association of Police Chiefs – engagement@bcacp.ca

Chief Constable of the Vancouver Police Department and President of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police – Adam.Palmer@vpd.ca

Vancouver Pride Society Board of Directors

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