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Queer Ontario Calls for Anti-Racist Actions

In light of numerous racist incidents being reported of late in Canada, the US, and other countries, Queer Ontario (QO) calls for a concerted effort for all to engage in anti-racist actions, inclusive of individuals regarding personal behaviours and institutions regarding structural and systemic powers.

Like many we are deeply disturbed by the recent murders and assaults against racialized and Indigenous individuals. The murder of George Floyd, a US Black man, under the knee of a white US cop; the suspicious death of Regis Korchinski-Paquet, a Canadian Black woman during an interaction with Toronto Police, the killing of Chantal Moore, an Indigenous woman in Edmundston, New Brunswick are only recent examples of blatant forms of deadly racist behaviours (see Maynard 2017). Other subtle and not so subtle forms include carding of people of colour and racial profiling by police, following racialized and Indigenous people in retail services or denying housing to these individuals, etc. Asians in particular have been targeted during the current COVID-19 pandemic. Anti-Black, anti-Indigenous, and anti-Asian racism have a long history and rests with leaders at all levels and us to redress.

The Ontario Human Rights Commission has reported on the over-representation of Black people in cases resulting in serious injury or death due to use of force by the police (see OHRC 2018). QO has long supported the demands of Black Lives Matter and continue to advocate against police violence and brutality as well as all racist and colonizing actions that further inequality (see Diverlus et al. 2020). All levels of the state and each of us as individuals have a responsibility to engage in anti-racist and decolonizing measures to address this scourge.

QO is calling for not only no increases in funding at the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) and all police services across the province but even further a reduction in police budgets be implemented. QO believes that these funds would be better redirected to fund anti-racist, decolonization and equity initiatives at major societal sectors such as law enforcement, corrections, health care, social services, education, etc. QO urges that part of these funds also be funnelled into racialized, Indigenous and other marginalized communities to assist in strengthening those communities and society in general. Members of these communities need better financial and social supports, and have suffered from an over-involvement in police surveillance, profiling, and interrogation which at times leads to assault and death at the hands

of police. Furthermore, QO is also open to emerging discussions about the defunding of police, with an aim toward developing radical community-based solutions to social and economic investment, community-safety, and the regulation of undesirable behaviour. That racist behaviours can continue to take place blatantly and subtly is proof that both individuals and systems need to acknowledge such racism, and importantly, address it by putting into place social changes that provide dignity and respect for every individual regardless of their race.

Queer Ontario is a provincial network of gender and sexually diverse individuals — and their allies — who are committed to questioning, challenging, and reforming the laws, institutional practices, and social norms that regulate queer people. Operating under liberationist and sex-positive principles, we fight for accessibility, recognition, and pluralism, using social media and other tactics to engage in political action, public education, and coalition-building.

References

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