

June 8, 2020

Open Letter Condemning Racial Injustice for Black and Indigenous Communities

The death of George Floyd is not an anomaly. It follows the death of many Black and Indigenous people at the hands of those who have pledged to protect and serve our communities.

The protests that have erupted in response to Floyd's death around the world, including in Edmonton, are in recognition of the systemic discrimination and racism that runs through our societies that criminalizes Blackness and Indigeneity, and in many cases, kills Black and Indigenous people, and how more deaths will follow if we do not heed the urgency of this moment and address the structures and prejudices that allow for this evil to manifest.

The South Asian Bar Association of Edmonton ("**SABA Edmonton**") recognizes the systemic racism that exists in our city, particularly the pervasive manner that it is experienced by Black and Indigenous people. We must also acknowledge that this racism exists within communities of colour, and work towards eradicating racial prejudice and oppression wherever it manifests, including within our own institutions and families.

As lawyers, students-at-law, and law students, we have a special responsibility in the pursuit of racial justice and equity. We have the ability to speak and act for others in the legal system, and shape understandings of justice and the institutions through which it can be accessed. We must use our positions and privilege to advance the cause of justice, to dismantle systems of discrimination and oppression within in our profession and in the broader community.

We encourage our members to employ their abilities to enhance access to justice for racialized communities; hire Black and Indigenous people for positions in their firms and businesses, especially as lawyers; and understand the biases and injustices that exist in the legal profession and how they inform our work.

We understand that these conversations and actions may be difficult. That they may disrupt the status quo, settled routines, and how we see ourselves and interact with others.

But, this discomfort is necessary, as in the words of Martin Luther King Jr.: "True peace is not merely the absence of tension: it is the presence of justice."

SOUTH ASIAN BAR ASSOCIATION OF EDMONTON