



Statement of Solidarity with Black Communities and Call to Action

June 8, 2020

It was with great sadness and horror that we and the rest of the world witnessed the murder of George Floyd during an interaction with the police. George Floyd's murder highlighted the troublesome pattern of police brutality against Black people. This is seen not only in the United States but around the world, including in Canada. This incident was far from the first, but it has been one that has really brought people together to unite and take a stand worldwide.

Anti-Black racism is prevalent across our society. Police brutality, in Canada and the USA, against Black people is well documented. In Toronto, a Black person is almost 20 times more likely than a white person to be fatally shot by police. Members of the Black community are also grossly overrepresented in Toronto police use of force cases.

As an organization that supports primarily Black young women and children, we see the impacts of this anti-Black racism every day. It negatively shapes the lives, experiences, and opportunities of the clients we support. Anti-Black racism also negatively affects many of our staff members and volunteers. It is imperative that we create a just society for everyone, regardless of their race.

We all play a part in ending anti-Black racism, especially those who benefit from white privilege. While we are heartened by the attention this cause has received in recent weeks, a lot of work has to be done to create an equal and just society. This work needs to be ongoing, every day. We call on government, business and non-profit leaders, and all those who benefit from white privilege to have the courage to stand up and be part of the change to end institutionalized anti-Black racism.

A radical change is needed in the underlying systems and structures that govern our lives. Included in this change is the need to provide government policy and adequate core funding to support vulnerable Black teens who are pregnant and parenting who are disproportionately overrepresented in teen pregnancy statistics.

While teen pregnancies are on the decline in the general population, the teen pregnancy rate for Black teens remains high. Teen pregnancy has been shown to negatively affect multiple

generations of the same family and many of these families face incredible adversity such as poverty, trauma, homelessness, and mental health issues. There are no policies to address this pressing issue at any level of government. This means that the Young Parent and Infant Mental Health Agencies such as Massey Centre who receive some core funding from the provincial government still have to rely on private donations in order to provide essential services to these Black young moms and their babies.

In order to take a step towards a more-equal society for Black teen moms, **we demand** adequate core funding, from all levels of government, for the agencies providing important adolescent and infant mental health services in Toronto and across the province. We demand government action immediately around this critical issue.

“No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background or his religion. People learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.”

–Nelson Mandela