



ACROSS BOUNDARIES

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Across Boundaries Concerned about Another Potential Incident of Anti-Black Racism and Sanism

(Toronto - July 28, 2016) Across Boundaries, a Toronto-based mental health centre providing services to racialized communities is outraged to learn of the fatal outcome of the Ottawa Police Services' interactions with Abdirahman Abdi, a 37 year old man who was Black, Somali, and Muslim. Mr. Abdi was also living with a mental health issue. Just over a year ago, 45-year old Andrew Loku, another Black male immigrant accessing mental health services, was fatally shot at his Toronto apartment by the Toronto Police Services.

This example is cited to highlight that this has not and never has been an isolated problem, but rather an ongoing pattern of behaviour and outcomes for those who live at the intersection of racialization, specifically Blackness, and mental health.

We condemn the statements made by Mr. Matt Skof, President of the Ottawa Police Association, who says "To suggest that race was an issue in this, it's inappropriate."¹ This statement was baseless and premature given the absence of evidence that race *was not* a factor in the police interaction with Mr. Abdi. It is these types of troubling statements that are seen in the day to day manifestation of anti- Black policing. This refusal to acknowledge and explore the reality of how race can consciously or subconsciously inform policing is troubling and remains a trend within policing that leads to anti-Black brutality and fatalities.

While the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) and the broader public query the intent and events that occurred on Hilda St. in Ottawa, Across Boundaries questions the continued reasons to rationalize, and absolve police services, across Ontario, of violent and fatal anti-Black responses to some of the most vulnerable populations in our communities.

With the recent iteration of the Ontario Anti-Racism Directorate and Premier Kathleen Wynne's alleged commitment to eradicating racism in Ontario, Across Boundaries strongly urges an immediate move from token political commitments to real actionable change for Black communities across Ontario. We call upon elected officials, the Office of the Independent Police Review Director, the SIU and the Ottawa police services to begin to take seriously Black lives not only in Ottawa, but across Ontario.

Our thoughts and prayers are with Abdirahman Abdi's family, the Somali community, and the communities comprising of all those in solidarity to address anti-Black racism, sanism and ableism in all its forms.

Board of Across Boundaries

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¹ "Ottawa police union president calls racism speculation in fatal arrest 'inappropriate' (<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/matt-skof-abdirahman-abdi-amran-ali-1.3695349>)