



Humanist Canada and Centre for Inquiry Canada issue the following joint statement on the killing of George Floyd and systemic racism.

Humanist Canada and the Centre for Inquiry Canada join the rest of the world in outrage over the senseless death of George Floyd. This is yet another example of systemic injustice against men of colour who are disproportionately profiled, arrested, incarcerated, and killed by authorities

In 2019, 1,004 people were killed by USA police, including 230 Black men (see: <https://killedbypolice.net/kbp2019/>). This percentage is disproportionate to the black share of the population (14.6%); and it has been alleged that this is the result of racist police who routinely target black men. The killers of George Floyd may well fall into this category and the prevalence of such racist attitudes within all police forces requires investigation. However, even if such excessive killing results not from police racism but from socio-economic conditions leading to a higher crime rate, then those socio-economic conditions require remediation. All of this must be understood from the backdrop of long-standing historical grievances incurred by people of colour.

As Prime Minister Trudeau has noted, we watch with “horror and consternation” the events south of the border. However, we also know that we are not immune to racism in Canada and we must acknowledge the disproportionate violence against Black, Indigenous, and other people of colour and marginalized groups. For example, according to a 2017 Ontario Human Rights Commission’s investigation of the Toronto police department, in the city of Toronto, where Blacks make up 8% of the population, “a black person is 20 times more likely than a white person to be shot and killed by police” (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-46513250>).

Since 1933, Humanists have endeavoured to eliminate “all discrimination based upon race, religion, sex, age, or national origin” (Humanist Manifesto II) and affirm “the worth, dignity and autonomy of the individual and the right of every human being to the greatest possible freedom compatible with the rights of others” (Amsterdam Declaration).

Centre for Inquiry Canada and Humanist Canada believe in fostering democratic ideals and justice for all. We condemn the brutal killing of George Floyd and express our deepest condolences to his family, friends, and loved ones. It is a hopeful sign that the police officers involved have now been charged with murder. We look for a fair trial to shed light on the extent of the officer’s racial bias and authoritarian approach.

Furthermore, in line with the Humanist tradition, we jointly call on our members, community leaders, elected representatives, and all Canadians to redouble efforts to eliminate racism in Canada. Now is the time to strengthen our commitment to justice and foster the acceptance and inclusion of Canada’s diverse cultures through a collective sense of humanity. We, as Humanists, must be the change we want to see.

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