



ACCT FOUNDATION &
ACT2ENDRACISM

SYSTEMIC RACISM IN POLICING

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Contrary to popular misconception that Asian-Canadians do not have negative experiences with law enforcement, studies have shown that dissatisfaction with police contacts and police forces, as well as experiences of police mistreatment, is prevalent in Asian-Canadian communities. Anti-Asian racism is also prevalent within the police. Civilian oversight boards, which are established to ensure police accountability, often fail to function effectively. To address anti-Asian racism and racism in general in policing, police boards need to be committed to diversity targets in the recruitment and promotion of police officers. Civilian Oversight Boards with guaranteed diversity and investigative powers need to be established.

There need to be mandatory anti-racism, anti-hate, and cultural awareness training, as well as laws, policies and mechanisms to support and protect officers of colour who report officer-to-officer racism or blow the whistle on racism within the police. Police services need to properly collect race-based data and host periodic community meetings. Finally, police organizations need to increase their transparency and accountability by using body cameras, drastically improving the complaints process and disclosing grievance cases against police with associated outcomes and costs.

ISSUES BACKGROUND



On January 20th, 2020, a nursing student named Mona Wang was assaulted by Officer Lacey Browning after the former's boyfriend called the RCMP to request a wellness check for her. Then, on the evening of June 29, 2020, Jia Li Riddell, a 15 year old girl of Chinese and Filipino descent, was racially profiled and violently arrested in Montreal. These incidents point to the seriousness of discriminatory policing and police brutality towards Asian-Canadians.

Discriminatory policing and police brutality towards Asian Canadians is a symptom of systemic racism, which refers to “social processes that produce racial inequality in decisions about people and in the treatment they receive”. It is revealed by specific consequences, incidents, and acts that indicate differential decisions or unequal treatment, but it is the underlying processes that make such events systemic.

Canada has a long history of systemic racism against Asian-Canadians, which started in 1800s when most of the early Asian-Canadians first came to Canada. In 1942, over 22,000 Japanese-Canadians from British Columbia were forcibly relocated and interned in the name of national security. Legislated discrimination and exclusion of the Chinese was present in Canada until after World War II; Chinese and Japanese Canadians were banned from voting until 1947 and 1949 respectively. The recent COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated anti-Asian racism across Canada.

Contrary to the popular misconception that Asian-Canadians do not have negative experiences with law enforcement, studies have shown that dissatisfaction with police contacts and police forces, as well as experience with police mistreatment, is prevalent in Asian-Canadian communities. We call on governments, police boards and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) to take actions to address discriminatory policing and anti-Asian racism in the current Canadian policing system.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1 There is a misconception that Asian-Canadians do not have negative experiences with law enforcement. However, studies have shown that dissatisfaction with police contacts and police forces, as well as experience with police mistreatment, is common in the Asian-Canadian community. In a 2008 study on Chinese immigrants' experiences with police in Toronto, 20% of respondents indicated that police prejudice against Asians was a serious or very serious problem. A 2018 study in Calgary showed that 41% of East and Southeast Asian participants have experienced racial profiling at least once or twice in the past 12 months.

2 Within the police, visible minority officers also experience racism. Such racism exists from junior probationary members up to senior levels of leadership. As a result, the attraction and retention of visible minority officers has been challenging. The lack of racial diversity in Canadian police services is concerning. In British Columbia, where 36% of the population are visible minorities or Indigenous peoples, only 23% of police officers identify as visible minorities or Indigenous. According to 2018 data from the Canadian Government, only 8% of police officers in Canada belonged to a visible minority group. A real or perceived lack of diversity at the leadership level leads to a reduced interest in joining the police force from visible minority communities.

3 To ensure police accountability, civilian oversight boards have been established across Canada. However, these civilian oversight agencies are not truly "civilian". A recent count revealed that two-thirds of staff at these civilian oversight bodies are ex-officers. Out of the 167 members in seven independent investigation units, only 20 are visible minority or persons of colour. Current targets for diversity in the hiring process are often set to appease the public, rather than to create truly respectful and transparent workplaces for diverse officers.



COMMUNITY & EXPERT CONSULTATION

Systemic racism in Canadian policing is a long standing issue including differential policing, over-policing and discriminatory policing. A new model of policing is needed to make policing one piece of a larger, multi-disciplinary approach to community safety; strong and independent civilian governance and a comprehensive system of accountability are needed to investigate and hold accountable police officers and police services for personal and systemic conduct, with real consequences.

- Alok Mukherjee, professor at Ryerson University and former chair of the Toronto Police Services Board

It is important to continue the collection and reporting of race-based disaggregating data as evidence to effectively hold the police services accountable across Canada.

- Anthony Morgan, lawyer

Three levels of barriers and three parallel levels of interventions are necessary in policing hate crimes which are individual, organizational and environmental. More training is needed for the police officers; systemic changes are required in the organizational level such as leadership and policy directives; and legislative ambiguity, prosecutorial challenges and community "trust deficit" are some key environmental factors to be improved.

- Dr. Barbara Perry, Professor in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities at Ontario Tech University

Throughout 2020, ACT2endracism conducted public consultations focused on five key areas: race-based data (July 28, 2020), racism in public education (Aug 5, 2020), systemic racism and policing (Aug 13, 2020), hate crimes and incidents (Aug 20, 2020), and human rights commissions and systemic change (Aug 27, 2020). Speakers with expertise in these topics gave presentations and public feedback was recorded into a series of consultation reports.

The systemic racism and policing consultation engaged 30 individuals, generating significant feedback, ideas and actions to inform the development of policies to improve law-enforcement practices in Canada. Stakeholders highlighted the existence of systemic anti-Asian racism in Canadian policing. They identified the lack of trust in public institutions and feelings of fear and intimidation as major barriers to accessing police services. Asian women, in particular, were identified as having the least trust in public institutions and often under-report their experiences with racist incidents. Concern for a lack of police oversight and accountability was also recorded. Suggestions were provided, such as the establishment of civilian oversight agencies, improved transparency in the oversight process, and improved diversity in hiring and promotion processes.



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

BASED ON OUR CONSULTATIONS, WE RECOMMEND:

- That the federal, provincial and municipal police services establish and announce diversity policies, with meaningful acknowledgement of the existence of racism, targets, steps, timeline, and an emphasis on recruitment and promotion of racialized police officers.
- That additional measures and mechanisms be in place to support and protect police officers of colour to report officer-to-officer racism.
- That mental health services be provided to ensure the wellbeing of racialized officers.
- That an equity, diversity and inclusion lens be applied in the hiring process so that candidates with racist predispositions are screened out.
- That anti-racism, anti-hate, and cultural awareness and sensitivity training be mandatory for officers of all ranks as well as civilian employees.



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

BASED ON OUR CONSULTATIONS, WE RECOMMEND:

- That whistleblower protection legislation, policies and programs be established to protect officers and civilians alike who report racist incidents and practices.
- That Civilian Oversight Boards be set up, with mandatory representation from racialized communities and legislated authority to investigate, compel witnesses and evidence, and make findings and recommendations, that such boards be mandated with goals include improving community-police relations, empowering citizens, and increasing police transparency, and that they are required to release annual reports of their work with meaningful details and statistics.
- That all police services host periodic public meetings in racialized communities where community members can express their concerns and proceedings are minuted for public access, and that chiefs of police hold such a public meeting annually to seek input from the communities.



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

BASED ON OUR CONSULTATIONS, WE RECOMMEND:

- That police services develop and implement a permanent system for recording, analyzing and publicly reporting race-based data on stops, searches, charges and arrests, with proper categorization of Asian ethnic identities (e.g. Central Asians, East Asians, Southeast Asians, South Asians, and West Asians).
- That all police service develop and implement policies against racial profiling and racial bullying.
- That police organizations increase their transparency and accountability by:
 - Requiring officers to wear body cameras;
 - Making the complaint process easy to follow, available in multiple languages, and with reasonable service standard for reply and disposal, and
 - Disclosing annually harassment and grievance cases against police, the outcomes, the associated costs, and the cases where non-disclosure agreements were signed.

ACCT FOUNDATION & ACT2ENDRACISM



The **Action, Chinese Canadians Together (ACCT) Foundation** builds the capacity of Chinese Canadian leaders committed to creating a more equitable society in Canada. We facilitate capacity building programs across the country, host leadership conferences, and provide a platform where work in academia can inform work in the community. We bring together established and emerging Chinese Canadian leaders to collaborate on identifying and breaking down systemic barriers to the full and equal participation of ethno-cultural leaders in Canadian society.

The **ACT2endracism** initiative is a coalition of concerned citizens and community groups of Asian descent. We aim to focus on Canadians affected by COVID-19 triggered related racism. We work on activities and campaigns targeted at anti-racism. ACT2endracism provides anti-racism resources and tools for the general public, community organizations and survivors of racism.

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