



MEDIA RELEASE

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Amnesty International supports the Black Class Action's pursuit of justice for Black employees

OTTAWA - Today, Amnesty International announced its support to the Black Class Action's landmark pursuit of justice for current and former Black members of the federal public service.

"For too long, Black employees have faced dehumanizing experiences of racist exclusion at the hands of the government. Amnesty International supports the work led by the Black Class Action to bring justice to Black federal employees in Canada and prevent further harm from taking place" said Ketty Nivyabandi, Secretary General of Amnesty International Canada's English-speaking branch.

Since the launch of the Black Class Action in December 2020, 1,300 Black employees have courageously shared deeply personal stories of their experiences working for the Public Service of Canada. They describe how they were denied promotions, mentorship, and other opportunities that were available to non-Black colleagues and were confined to low-level positions.

These dehumanizing experiences send the message that Black employees are not fit for public service in Canada and perpetuate stereotypes and biases about Black people's worth and capabilities. As a result, current and former employees continue to suffer deeply painful and significant harms. For Black employees who are members of other marginalized groups, such as Black women, Black people with disabilities, and Black LGBTQ2S+ individuals, the impacts of discrimination are even greater.

"We are grateful for the support of Amnesty International as together we call on the Government of Canada to take real action against anti-Black discrimination within its workforce", said Nicholas Marcus Thompson, spokesperson for the Black Class Action. "This government has repeatedly acknowledged the existence of anti-Black racism in its institutions but has failed to take real action in response. Black public service workers deserve better and expect no less."

Despite calls to address anti-Black racism from Black employees, the United Nations Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, and the Prime Minister, it persists in the Public Service. Black employees continue to face denials of their rights under Canadian and international human rights law, including the right to be free from discrimination and the right to have equal promotion opportunities based only on seniority and competence.

Amnesty International supports the efforts of the Black Class Action in pressing the Government of Canada to implement long term solutions that address systemic racism and discrimination in Canada's Public Service. This includes the establishment of a fund to compensate Black

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employees for the harms experienced because of workplace discrimination; the establishment of a Black Equity Commission to investigate and address systemic barriers and to create a framework for Black employees to be heard; and the establishment of a designated category for Black employees under the Employment Equity Act. It also includes the immediate establishment of culturally sensitive, trauma informed counselling and mental health supports for current, former, and future Black employees.

Together, the Black Class Action and Amnesty International urge the government to answer its own call to recognize the daily contributions that Black Canadians make to Canada, by comprehensively implementing the measures called for by the Black Class Action.

The Black Class Action lawsuit is a landmark case formally known as Nicholas Marcus Thompson et al v. Her Majesty The Queen, filed with the Federal Court of Canada on December 1, 2020. The claim filed by both current and former Black public servants seeks to represent thousands of workers who have faced systemic discrimination in the hiring and promotion process in the Federal Public Service of Canada. We invite the public to visit www.blackclassaction.ca to learn more.

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