



Stay Safe East Statement on Black Lives Matter

Since 1969, just one police officer in the UK has been convicted for their role in the death of someone in their care (and in that case, the officer received a suspended sentence). That is not to say there have not been prosecutions – but the evidence has never been sufficient to persuade a jury that a police officer should be held responsible, based on the current evidential burden of proof process.

As an organisation committed to challenging hate and discrimination, Stay Safe East stands in solidarity with George Floyd (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-52861726>), his friends and family in Minneapolis but also the many other Black men and women who have died at the hands of police officers (<https://www.itv.com/news/2020-06-09/george-floyd-history-of-police-brutality-against-black-people-in-america/>).

Systemic and structural racism are manifestations of the assumption of white supremacy and permeate the lives of the Black community not only in the USA, but also here in the UK and all over the world. It is crucial that we here do not absolve ourselves of our responsibility by attributing the death of another unarmed Black man in police custody as only a 'US-specific' context of institutional racism and police brutality. Here in the UK, Black people are more likely than white people to be sent to prison if found guilty of a similar offence; disproportionately subject to restraint on mental health wards and significantly more likely to suffer an injury from police use of force and to die in police custody or contact than their white counterparts.

As across the globe, people here are living through the pandemic of COVID-19. Many are saying that they can't wait for things to 'get back to normal'. For the past three months, lifestyles for most have been radically different, but the death of George Floyd at the hands of the police brings the chilling reality sharply in to view: the pandemic of anti-blackness.

In addition, the impact of COVID-19 has fallen hardest on those from Black and minority ethnic, disabled and low-income communities. At the same time, immigration authorities have also destroyed the lives of Black people who were caught up in the Windrush scandal. Black disabled people are also disproportionately affected by hate crimes. Racism is part of the everyday reality of life for many Stay Safe East service users, trustees and staff and others in the communities where we are based.

It is time to act. The White community must question racist bias in themselves and one another, and move from expressions of solidarity to actions, since actions make a real difference.

It is time for all of us to *DO* better! We must 'call-out' racism when we see it, question racial bias in *ourselves and one another*, for real change to take place. Historical structures have been established to advantage White people, ensuring power and privilege, which means they must be the ones to hold to account not only themselves but also others like them. Unfortunately, the lived (and death)-experiences of hundreds and thousands of Black people demonstrates that much more must be done.

This means educating oneself, by actively learning from the work of Black authors, film-makers, journalists or bloggers. It means supporting members of our communities, colleagues, friends and family who experience racism. It also means taking action such as writing to MPs and holding them accountable, taking part in protests if able to, speaking out against racism on social media, in the

community and in our organisations, and finding other ways to challenge racism wherever it is found.

Stay Safe East will deepen its solidarity with the Black community in the UK and internationally, including our sister organisations led by and for Black and minority ethnic women, and those led by Black and minority ethnic disabled people. As an organisation, we will review our work to identify bias and what needs to change. Most of all, we will continue to challenge institutional racism and other forms of discrimination within the Police, the criminal justice system and public services. We are committed to listening to, learning from and amplifying the voices of the Black and disabled people we work with. We will call out racism as we continue to fight hate crime, domestic and sexual violence and other forms of abuse.

This fight is more than just about George Floyd. This fight is for all those who were murdered when no one was around to 'capture' the footage of a broken neck, or windpipe or whose Black body was left fighting for breath; and then discarded like it was worthless.

#BlackLivesMatter

The Board and Staff of Stay Safe East. June 22nd 2020

Below is a list of just a handful of the Black Men and Women, many of them disabled people, who have died at the hands of the police in the UK.

28 July 1993 Joy Gardner

Following police contact, she suffered respiratory failure and died on 1 August 1993 due to cerebral hypoxia and cardiac arrest, without regaining consciousness.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/when-deportation-means-death-joy-gardner-died-after-police-raided-her-home-john-torode-sifts-fact-1458919.html>

1 April 1998 Christopher Alder

A former British army paratrooper, was injured during a fight and ended up in hospital. He was then arrested for a breach of the peace and taken to Queens Gardens police station in Hull.

CCTV footage shows him lying face down on the floor of the station, motionless, with his trousers around his ankles. Officers stand around laughing while he lies there, dying, for 10 minutes.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-humber-43581781>

21 August 2008 Sean Rigg

An artist and musician who died at Brixton police station in 2008. An inquest found police had used “unsuitable force”. One officer was prosecuted, for giving false evidence; he was found not guilty. No other officer was prosecuted.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-33590412>

31 March 2011 Kingsley Burrell

Died while detained by police at a mental health unit in Birmingham. An inquest found that prolonged restraint had been a significant factor. Again, three officers prosecuted for lying under oath were found not guilty.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-birmingham-28169914>

4 August 2011 Mark Duggan

Shot by police, in north London, sparking riots in 2011.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-14842416>

3 May 2015 Sheku Bayoh

Died following a forceful arrest and sustaining several injuries.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-53076269>

21 June 2017 Edson Da Costa

Was a 25-year-old Black Portuguese man who died after being stopped by police on 15 June in Beckton, London.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/edson-da-costa-death-police-force-cs-spray-edir-london-black-man-father-dead-newham-beckton-a7805646.html>

10 July 2017 Darren Cumberbatch

Was punched repeatedly, beaten with a baton and Tasered by police. An inquest found police force was “excessive” and “probably avoidable”. His family are still waiting to hear if anybody will be prosecuted.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-coventry-warwickshire-40683047>

22 July 2017 Rashan Charles

Died in hospital after police chased him into a shop in Dalston, East London. A jury at St Pancras Coroner's Court found the officer used "justified" force against Mr. Charles but he failed to follow other police protocols.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-44551132>

20 May 2020 Simeon Francis

Simeon was found dead in a cell in Devon. Extraordinarily little is known about the circumstances.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-devon-53019214>

Data on Black people and policing

<https://www.inyourarea.co.uk/news/black-people-are-being-disproportionately-targeted-by-police/>