



Black Legal Action Centre

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Dr. Robert Gordon
President and Vice-Chancellor
University of Windsor
401 Sunset Avenue
Windsor, Ontario N9B 3P4
Sent via e-mail: president@uwindsor.ca

April 6, 2020

Dear Dr. Gordon:

Re: Letter in Support of Mr. Jordan Afolabi

The Black Legal Action Centre (BLAC) is a not-for-profit corporation incorporated under the laws of Ontario to combat individual and systemic anti-Black racism by providing legal services to members of Ontario's diverse Black communities.

BLAC is deeply concerned about the ongoing anti-Black racism¹ and racial profiling occurring on the University of Windsor campus and in the wider community. Since BLAC opened its doors to the public in March of 2019, we have become acutely aware, through work with our community, and affirmed through recent media reports², that many school boards and University school administrators, are failing to ensure that all students are treated with dignity and respect in schools and on campuses across Ontario. Further, that this is a result of the failure to deal adequately with issues of anti-Black racism when they arise.

We are writing this Open Letter to you to voice our concern about the handling of Mr. Jordan Afolabi's case at the University of Windsor, the internal investigation, and the subsequent restrictions placed on him as a University of Windsor student. The continued

¹ "Policies and practices embedded within Canadian institutions that reflect and reinforce beliefs, attitudes, prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination that is directed at people of Black-African descent and is rooted in the unique history and experience of enslavement and colonization in Canada." This definition was adopted from the Anti-Racism Directorate, Ontario; Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit, City of Toronto. The term 'Anti-Black Racism' was first expressed by Dr. Akua Benjamin.

² <https://www.thestar.com/opinion/star-columnists/2020/01/27/two-university-of-windsor-students-are-admonished-after-a-fight-why-was-the-black-student-the-only-one-disciplined.html>



labelling and treatment of Mr. Afolabi as an active threat, despite the findings that he did not violate the University's *Student Code of Conduct*, that he was a victim of an attack, and that he used "a reasonable level of force" to defend himself, are examples of anti-Black racism.

BLAC approaches its work with an understanding that the experiences of Black Canadians today – the disproportionate and troubling ways in which Black people are mistreated, scrutinized and brutalized by legal institutions and systems of power – are rooted in our country's history of colonialism, slavery and segregation.

Educational institutions specifically, continue to be spaces for the perpetuation of anti-Black racism. Through over-surveillance, disproportionate disciplinary actions, and exclusionary tactics, Black students are overwhelmingly impacted by the lasting effects of explicit and implicit racism. Scholars such as Dr. Carl James and Robyn Maynard have pointed out that, "the feelings of exclusion and pain cause emotional harm and limit Black students' ability to thrive in the public education setting."³

BLAC stands behind the demands made by Mr. Afolabi, who continues to face anti-Black racism at the hands of University of Windsor administrators. Specifically, BLAC supports calls for a revocation of the sanctions against Mr. Afolabi; the collection and reporting of student discipline rates disaggregated by race⁴; and an independent investigation of the University of Windsor's Student Experience Office.⁵

All Black students, staff and faculty should feel that the University of Windsor is their campus and their university. We call on the University leadership to take Mr. Afolabi's case seriously – in words and actions.

Sincerely,

The Black Legal Action Centre

³ Maynard, R. (2017). *Policing Black Lives: State violence in Canada from slavery to present*. Halifax, NS: Fernwood Publishing, p. 217.

⁴ For example data on: when non-academic misconduct is found; when are sanctions imposed; use of trespass orders; when the University of Windsor Campus Police or Windsor Police Service are called, etc.

⁵ An investigation into the conduct of the Academic Integrity & Student Conduct Officer in Mr. Afolabi's case and the subsequent restrictions that were placed on him. Further, an investigation into the application of the University of Windsor's "Procedures for Addressing Student Non-Academic Misconduct" and the "Student Code of Conduct".



Cc: Mr. Jordan Afolabi
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Cc: Ms. Kaye Johnson
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Via email: kjohnson@uwindsor.ca

Cc: Mr. Ryan Flannagan
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