

## Statement of Black Protest Legal Support

The experience and knowledge within our organisation, Black Protest Legal Support, has allowed us to delve into the struggle which people of African descent face when interacting with the Criminal Justice System in the UK. Through our research, discussion with our community and personal experience, we have learnt that the key human rights issues facing people of African descent in this area centre around the breach of their protection from discrimination (article 14 of the ECHR), and then relate to their breached rights to life (article 2), liberty and security (article 5), a fair trial (article 6), privacy and family life (article 8), expression (article 10), and assembly and association (article 11).

These human rights breaches are illustrated in the results of multiple studies. People of African descent in the UK die in custody at disproportionately high rates, are three times more likely to be arrested than white people, are four times more likely to have force used against them by the police, are 9.8 times more likely to be stopped and searched by police (up to 40 times more likely when using search powers which require no “reasonable suspicion”), are more likely to be remanded in custody, and receive more aggressive reactions from the police when they protest.

The UK Criminal Justice System has never escaped its racist foundations. During most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century this racism was explicit, with policemen openly using racist rhetoric and acting on prejudices without discipline. This was evidenced in Sir MacPherson’s report, Mark Daly’s infamous BBC exposé, and even Lord Scarman’s report. As we enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century large portions of this racism has been forced underground. However, it still exists under the cover of dog-whistle politics, in the disguise of nationalism, and embedded in the systemic racism of the Criminal Justice System. The positive steps which *have* been made, have mostly resulted from greater transparency through deep study and data collection (such as David Lammy’s 2017 report), the championing and publicization of the experiences of people of African descent through popular culture (such as Akala, Stormzy and Marcus Rashford), and the voices of young people - of African descent and otherwise - fighting against racism through community organisation and industry representation. However, these efforts have been met with lip service at best, deaf ears as the norm, and pig-headed resistance at worst. Few of Mr Lammy’s recommendations have been take forward, Marcus Rashford’s appeal was ignored until the last moment, and the peaceful BLM protests have been met with swinging batons and cavalry charges. This pattern continues when considering people of African descent’s experiences with health care, education, housing and employment, though we will leave organisations with more expertise than us to advance those arguments.

Over the next five years, this institutional racism needs to be stamped out. The priority actions for this should be the advancement of young antiracist people of African descent into higher, decision-maker roles in their industries (particularly in law and politics), the redistribution of resources away from aggressive police tactics and into community programmes which are proven to reduce crime rather than oppressing communities of African descent, and the strengthening of a judicial enforcement body which can hold racist institutions to account.