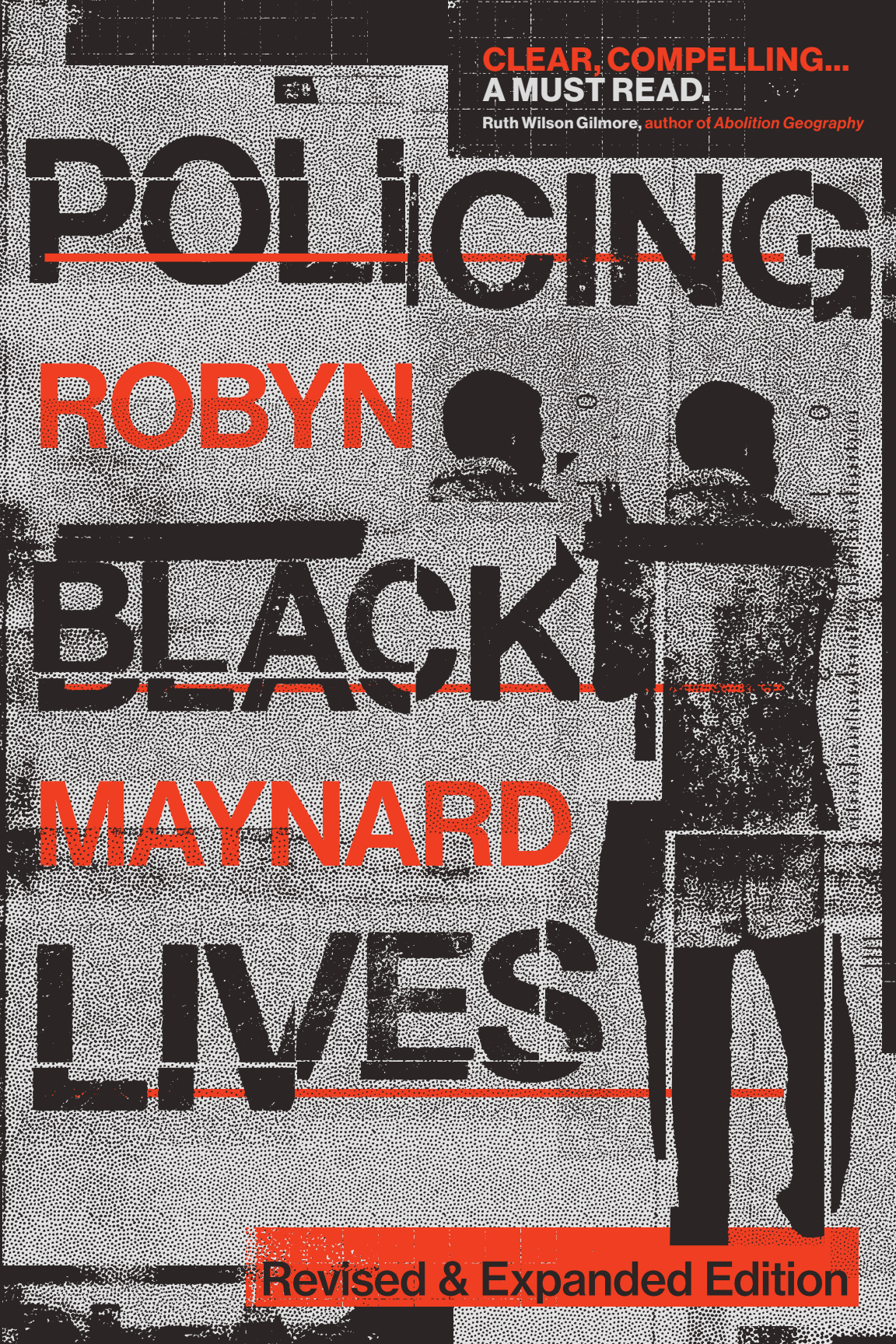
CLEAR, COMPELLING...
A MUST READ.
Ruth Wilson Gilmore, author of *Abolition Geography*

POLICING BLACK LIVES

ROBYN MAYNARD



Revised & Expanded Edition

"We are so fortunate to have this new edition! Robyn Maynard's clear, compelling book is a must read for organizations, households, and anyone who fights for social justice."

—RUTH WILSON GILMORE, author of *Abolition Geography*

"Impassioned, capacious, and insistently grounded in the legacies of Black activism, the revised and expanded edition of *Policing Black Lives* offers a sweeping analysis of state violence across historical periods, linking this phenomenon with impoverishment, surveillance, colonial dispossession, and the failures of educational institutions. Robyn Maynard remains an essential voice for our time, urging us 'to build futures that sustain rather than destroy life' and 'to build worlds in which all of us are free.'"

—DAVID CHARIANDY, author of *Brother*

"Robyn Maynard's meticulously-researched and compelling analysis of state violence challenges prevailing narratives of Canadian multiculturalism and inclusion by examining how structures of racism and ideologies of gender are complexly anchored in global histories of colonization and slavery. This book should be read not only by those who have a specific interest in Canadian histories and social justice movements but by anyone interested in the abolitionist and revolutionary potential of the Black Lives Matters movement more broadly."

—ANGELA Y. DAVIS, author of *Abolition: Politics, Practices, Promise*

"Timely, urgent, and cogent … brilliantly elucidates the grotesque anti-Black racist practices coming from the state, and other institutions imbued with power over Black people's lives."

—AFUA COOPER, Halifax's seventh Poet Laureate and the author of *Black Matters*

"Robyn Maynard offers powerful lessons for making anti-blackness in Canada legible to activists, scholars, policy makers, and community members committed to building a future nation — and world — free of racism, heteropatriarchy, xenophobia, and exploitation."

—ERIK S. MCDUFFIE, author of *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism*

"In this eye-opening and timely book, Robyn Maynard deftly and conclusively pulls back the veil on anti-Black racism in Canada, exploding the myth of multiculturalism through an emphatically and unapologetically intersectional lens. In compelling and accessible prose, Maynard provides a sweeping overview of Canadian state violence from colonial times to the present, seamlessly articulating the relationship — and distinctions — between settler colonialism and anti-Blackness, and centering Black women, trans and gender nonconforming people within the broader narrative. Through an analysis squarely situated in the global socio-economic context, *Policing Black Lives* explores parallels between state violence in Canada and its neighbor to the South, as well as the unique legal, social and historical forces informing criminalization through segregation, surveillance, "stop and frisk"/carding/street checks, the war on drugs, gang policing, the school to prison pipeline, welfare "fraud" and child welfare enforcement, and the conflation of immigration and criminality. The result is both eye-opening and chilling, firmly pointing to shared fronts of struggle across borders. *Policing Black Lives* is a critical read for all in Canada and the United States who #SayHerName and assert that #BlackLivesMatter, and essential to movements for Black liberation on Turtle Island."

—ANDREA J. RITCHIE, author of *Invisible No More: Police Violence Against Black Women and Women of Color*

"To understand this moment in Canada when Black communities are asserting that Black Lives really do matter, readers need this book."

—SYLVIA D. HAMILTON

"Grounded in an impressive and expansive treatment of Black Canadian history, Maynard has written a powerful account of state anti-Black violence in Canada. Empirically rich and theoretically nimble, this work is an outstanding contribution to Black Canadian Studies."

—BARRINGTON WALKER, Queen's University

POLICING BLACK LIVES

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State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present

Revised and Expanded Edition

ROBYN MAYNARD

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CONTENTS

PREFACE

Fall 2024

THE FIRST EDITION OF *POLICING BLACK LIVES* was published almost a decade ago. When the book came out, the world was still living in the wake of the global uprisings sparked by the murder of Trayvon Martin. A new generation had become aware that wherever we live, Black people are dying prematurely due to conditions of endemic anti-Black state abandonment and state violence. Refusing to allow the world to proceed as if Black life were disposable, Black people of all backgrounds took action to protect their communities. From Toronto to Baltimore, from Rio de Janeiro to Paris, ordinary Black folks transformed grief and outrage into creative, insurgent and disruptive action. With freedom-oriented practices spanning spontaneous uprisings, walkouts, occupations of police headquarters, highway blockades, die-ins and townhalls, Black people the world over were working to usher in more liberatory futures.

In the time of the book's publication, Black folks from all walks of life were coming together in old and new organizing constellations to make gains that had been thought unimaginable. The wins were significant. The Toronto Police Service was forced to end the brutal police harassment campaign that was facilitated by the Toronto Anti-Violence Intervention Strategy (TAVIS) squad, which was disbanded and defunded. The province of Ontario banned carding, the police practice of arbitrarily stopping, searching and recording information about individuals, which had been used to control Black people's mobility. Following generative disruptions by Black Lives Matter Toronto, Education Not Incarceration, Toronto Freedom School and others, Pride Toronto banned the presence of police floats at the annual LGBTQ pride parade, and Canada's largest school board — the Toronto District School Board — ended its police-in-school (School Resource Officer) program and committed to a process of eliminating the practice of streaming — long understood as a means of funnelling Black young people into "applied" programs. At various scales

and within various institutions, the terrain was shifting. Small parts of the mechanisms of anti-Black state violence were being decommissioned.

Then came the "Black Spring" rebellions of 2020 that set the world ablaze.[1] The police lynching of Breonna Taylor in Louisville and George Floyd in Minneapolis sparked historic urban rebellions across the United States and around the world. In Canada, Black-led but multiracial protests, the largest in the country's history, filled the streets. People were mobilized not just by their solidarity with the US protests but also by a series of police killings of Black and Indigenous people north of the border, including Regis Korchinski-Paquet in Toronto, Chantel Moore in Edmundston, Eishia Hudson in Winnipeg and Sheffield Matthews in Montreal. These protests illuminated the limitations of some previous movement "wins" and decades of tepid police reforms. The hiring of Black police chiefs in Toronto and Ottawa, the training of police forces in de-escalation and antiracism and the creation of boundless "community engagement" programs had done nothing to stem the tide of unrelenting violence against Black, Indigenous and other marginalized communities. The demands needed to go further, ask for more. And they did.

I knew we were on new ground, however temporary, when I found myself on primetime national television with a large graph of the municipal budget behind me, explaining to journalists how we could better reallocate the 70 percent of taxpayer money that was going toward the police budget in Toronto. This change reflected the public demonstrations. The signs in people's hands and the chants reverberating in the streets made clear that people's demands for justice had sharpened as they articulated a more transformative vision: Defund, dismantle and disarm the police. The times were marked by an increasingly widespread awareness that policing itself was the crisis. Police stations were aflame, and the Minneapolis police department seemed poised to be dissolved. Community meetings, public presentations, books and articles, reports and flyers explained how the police could be defunded and disbanded, while envisioning vibrant futures where Black, Indigenous and other communities could live in safety. The mass movement on the ground demanded futures beyond policing, a mass divestment of the billions of dollars spent each year on the institutions responsible for the mass surveillance and murder of Black folks and a parallel investment in long-needed community-based supports.

Abolition. Now.

This was the demand coming from the streets, supported by wide swaths of society and embraced by a generation of young people. Abolition — as critical analysis of carcerality, a theory of change, a praxis of world-making and a radical vision — had entered the popular imagination and lexicon and expanded global visions of what was possible. Tens of thousands came together to insist there is nothing natural or necessary about pouring billions of dollars of public funds into policing and prisons while homeless shelters overflow and communities are increasingly living in or near poverty without basic access to healthy food, transportation or a safe place to live. The once marginal demand to make police and prisons obsolete moved into the common sense; communities put together people's budgets and advanced wildly popular demands to divest half of the budget allocated to police and reinvest it into communities. In Halifax, activist pressure led the police board to create a committee to develop a road map for defunding the police, with El Jones, Tari Ajadi and other Black scholars playing leading roles. People demanded — and won — the creation of nonpolice responses to mental health crises (e.g., in Toronto) and the removal of police from schools (e.g., in Hamilton and Winnipeg). We lived, if momentarily, on an altered terrain.

Grassroots organization centring the lives of Black and Indigenous people advanced careful and thorough platforms that outlined what real safety could look like. Groups such as Toronto's Not Another Black Life, Police-Free Schools Winnipeg, Defund YYC, Yukon's Northern Voices Rising, Montreal's Coalition pour le définancement de la police, Vancouver's Cops Out of Schools, Toronto's No Pride in Policing Coalition, Hamilton's Defund HPS, Ottawa's Criminalization and Punishment Education Project, Ottawa Black Diaspora Coalition, Vancouver's Defund 604, prairie-based Free Lands Free Peoples, as well as Black Lives Matter chapters in Toronto, Kitchener-Waterloo, Guelph and Vancouver, all crafted new visions for a just society.

These visions resonated with Indigenous Peoples' enduring rejection of settler colonial sovereignty and its carceral institutions. In this new context, the term "abolition" increasingly became part of the language used to express longstanding demands. Indigenous organizers laid out what Emily Riddle called "The (First Nation) Case for Abolition," situating the contemporary crisis of policing within the longer history of policing of Indigenous Peoples, including clearing them from their

lands, criminalizing their ceremonies and stealing their children. As she put it, "Police will not help us address the crisis of murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls; they contribute to this violence. They invade our sovereign territories to ensure pipelines are built. To me, the case for abolition is clear."[2] As written by Indigenous penal abolition group Free Lands Free Peoples, "Anti-colonial penal abolition work in Canada recognizes the genocidal function of the Canadian 'justice' system .... Not only is this system a direct violation of Indigenous sovereignty and inherent right to self-determination, but it is also antithetical to non-carceral Indigenous justice."[3]

Communities have not only issued demands for the end of policing as we know it but also made links to broader movements to seek an end to prisons and all forms of carcerality. A group of federally incarcerated Black prisoners wrote in a statement in support of the protests:

> We join the calls to defund the police, and we also say it is time to defund the prison. Canadians should ask themselves why so many Black and Indigenous people are incarcerated. You should ask yourselves why your money is going to a system that doesn't work to solve crime. You should ask why a prison is being built in your community and whether it will actually make your life better .... We have heard people say until all Black lives matter, no one's life can matter. Until Black prisoner lives matter, can anyone be free?[4]

From the streets to the prison, new visions for safety were emerging.

The fresh abolitionist organizing over the past several years comes from a long history of movement work and continues to grow — around the world. Though it has received less public attention, abolitionist movement and analysis has been on display in the Global South, where movements, building from previous generations of Black Power and anticolonial struggle, took up new and renewed visions and campaigns to end state violence. In Nigeria, following the police killing of young men in the Niger Delta area in 2020, mass numbers of young people came together through the #EndSARS movement, created in 2017 to demand the abolition of the country's Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a particularly brutal and repressive regiment of the Nigerian police force. Though SARS developed in the 1990s, the police force itself had been established under British colonial rule. Though a number of protesters were

arrested and incarcerated, the SARS program was disbanded. In Kenya, due to police repression and the failures of police reform spanning the colonial and postcolonial periods, organizers and scholars have called for a divestment from police and an investment in community safety.[5] Black Brazilians, building on decades of organizing against racist police killings so numerous the phenomenon has been described as a form of racial genocide, have advanced abolitionist visions for an end to state and state-sanctioned violence and militarization through Afrofeminist *quilombismo*.[6] In South Africa, Black feminists have described prison as "a place and institution … built to reproduce violence and to further the entrenchment of the racial hierarchy established during colonialism and apartheid" and therefore antithetical to racial democracy.[7] Maori organizers and scholars, who, like most global Indigenous communities, come from societies that functioned without police and prisons prior to European colonization, have anchored popular movements for police and prison abolition in the Pacific Indigenous experience. In 2023, political party Te Pāti Māori included in its platform a plan for the abolition of all prisons by 2040.[8] The world over, ideas that had been considered fringe rapidly entered the vernacular of the mainstream.

From Invisibility to Visibility

Things change. Before the first edition of *Policing Black Lives* was published, systemic anti-Black racism in Canada was still subject to widespread public denial. Like many other Black scholars, I was writing up against a wall of silence and silencing, contesting what I described as a generalized erasure of the Black experience in Canada. We have shifted from a time of denial to a time of acknowledgement, accelerated significantly by the uprisings of 2020.

The realities of institutional anti-Blackness are no longer hiding in obscurity, subject to denial due to "lack of data." In 2018, the government of Canada formally endorsed the United Nations (UN) International Decade for People of African Descent, committing to improving race-based data collection, addressing systemic racism in the criminal justice system and implementing other forms of support. That same year, the province of Ontario passed a regulation mandating the collection of race-based data in the child welfare, education and justice sectors in order to remedy systemic racism. Shortly afterward, the province of British Columbia and police forces including the Royal Canadian

Mounted Police (RCMP) and the Calgary, Ottawa and Toronto police services committed to collecting and disseminating race-based data.

In Canada, never before has so much accumulated evidence existed to highlight what Black people have known for over a century: Black people have been living and dying in a state of siege. A study of Toronto revealed that Black people were twenty times more likely than white people to be shot by police.[9] Studies of policing in Toronto, Halifax, Montreal, Vancouver, Ottawa and Calgary have documented racist state violence in various forms. Black people are stopped, strip-searched, arrested, beaten, shot, tasered, pepper-sprayed, attacked by police dogs, placed in leg restraints and spit masks, charged, sentenced, and incarcerated at rates that dramatically outpace their representation in the general population.[10] Alongside the move from invisibility to visibility has been an institutional turn toward acknowledgement, and in some cases apology. In perhaps the largest admission of systemic racism in policing in the nation's history, the prime minister, provincial leaders and city mayors committed to making change. As Prime Minister Justin Trudeau put it, "Far too many Black Canadians and Indigenous People do not feel safe around the police. It's unacceptable. And it's governments — we have to change that."[11]

Some acknowledgement has occurred in the criminal justice system as well. In 2021, court of appeals in Nova Scotia and Ontario recognized the reality and impact of anti-Black racism and systemic discrimination in the criminal justice system. After decades of rote denial, mocking and derision, large police forces in Canada have changed their discourse dramatically. In 2016, Mike McCormack, president of the Toronto Police Association, told the press that police brutality against Black people was an American issue: "To say that we have the same issue in our Canadian policing model — I just totally reject that idea. The numbers don't back it up, the culture doesn't back it up."[12] Only a few years later, after the city's police were forced to reveal their own data — data that proved Black people were subject to massively disproportionate use of force and profiling — interim police chief James Ramer apologized to the Black community for the racial discrimination.[13] He was not the only one to do so. The Halifax police also formally apologized to the Nova Scotia Black community for street checks and racial profiling. In Montreal, police chief Fady Dagher has routinely acknowledged systemic racism and committed to changing the "culture" of policing.

Apology and acknowledgements are becoming the new normal, but there is a need to be clear-minded about what has and has not been achieved toward Black people's freedom in recent years. Collecting race-based data, acknowledging disproportionate violence and incarceration and apologizing for racism have been major capitulations from the state and institutions such as the police. This acknowledgement happened only because of the steadfast engagement of generations of community-based labour and the thankless work of scholars who sought, despite facing ridicule, scorn, and repression, to write their communities into the historical record. It is an achievement. But the achievement is not one that has made Black people safer.

Visibility is not freedom, and it does not stand in for meaningful change. Several years into its commitment to release race-based data and after it had banned carding, the Ottawa Police Service found in 2024 that while the number of traffic stops made by its officers had decreased overall, the disproportionality of traffic stops for Black people had actually risen to the highest rate in ten years.[14] Brutality remained endemic: Another study showed no improvement in police brutality from 2022 to 2023, as Black people still represented over a quarter of police use-of-force incidents, despite making up 8 percent of the city's population.[15] In 2023, a follow-up report to a landmark 2019 study on policing and racial profiling by the Montreal police found that three years into a new policy on police stops, rates of racial profiling were either the same or higher.[16] Data *measures* harm; it does not undo it. If visibility were causally related to safety, Black people in the United States would be the freest in the hemisphere. After all, the United States has no shortage of race-based data collection, yet Black folks there live in perpetually catastrophic conditions.

Even children can easily understand that "sorry" is meaningless if behaviour is unchanged. As longtime queer Black organizer, scholar and Caribbean feminist Beverly Bain told interim Chief Ramer, deftly and powerfully interrupting his apology:

> The Black community never asked for an apology …. We have been calling for defunding. We have been calling for having those funds divested to communities to create sustainable housing … to support communities. None of that has happened. What have we witnessed? An escalation in policing budgets! … What we have asked for you to do is to stop, stop

> brutalizing us, to stop killing us, to stop carding us, to stop continuously stopping us and harassing our Black children, our Black sons, our Black daughters. That is what we have asked for. We have asked for the preservation of our lives. And what we have gotten instead is much more police.[17]

In an era of institutional recognition, apology is worth nothing when violence is uninterrupted.

Black communities did not spend months — cumulatively, years — of their lives in the streets, face the elements camping outside of police stations and risk police tear gas, arrest and the threat of jail time so that anti-Black violence could be recorded more accurately in an annual report or so that police officers would apologize while escalating their violence against our communities. The demand was, and remains, the transformation of the conditions that imperil Black lives.

The New Carceral Consensus

We were promised a *new time*.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Toronto police chief Mark Saunders took a knee for eight minutes and forty-six seconds at a Black Lives Matter protest to remember George Floyd. But this response by those in power obscured a near-total rejection of the content of the protests that had drawn tens of thousands into the streets for weeks and months.

In fact, recent years have seen an expansion of police budgets and police powers, and the structural conditions underpinning Black lives remain the same — or worse. Across the country, the state of police killings has further deteriorated, and 2022 became the deadliest year on record.[18] We are witnessing nothing short of a violent, institutional backlash in the wake of historic protests in defence of Black life. If racial justice movements coalesced around the understanding that policing and prisons are forms of anti-Black violence, the entirety of the political class, after taking a knee, has committed itself to securing and expanding that violence. In response to a number of moral panics promulgated by conservatives and right-wing forces, police unions and wealthy industry leaders, the current moment is marked by a renewed institutional commitment to using carceral "crime control" approaches to manage social, economic and racial inequality.

Despite ongoing popular backing for reallocating police funds to health and community supports, police budgets across the country have increased each year.[19] In 2021, after voting down a measure that would have reallocated 10 percent of the police budget to community supports, Toronto mayor John Tory increased the budget. In 2023, he voted against a measure to spend $1.6 million to keep warming centres open 24/7 during the winter months, but opted to add eighty police officers to public transit at the cost of $1.7 million per month in overtime pay.[20] The Toronto municipal government, where 30 percent of the homeless population is Black, decided in 2021 to spend $2 million clearing homeless people from three large encampments in a series of violent police raids rather than invest in safe and secure housing.[21] These actions represent a clear political choice of violence and penality over support: Homeless shelters have been over capacity for years and regularly turn away dozens or hundreds of people each night, while social housing has years-long waitlists. Also in 2021, Ontario premier Doug Ford promised to invest $75 million to fight "gun and gang violence" and establish a new Office of Illicit Drug Intelligence,[22] ignoring decades of research demonstrating that "wars" on drugs and gangs are counterproductive and intensify the policing and incarceration of Black communities.

It is not only conservatives pushing for police and prisons. We are witnessing nothing short of a renewed carceral consensus that crosses ideological lines, from conservative to liberal, moderate and progressive. The consensus represents a full-scale assault on the same Black and Indigenous communities who were so recently promised change. In a callous usurpation of the concerns of their racially diverse and left-leaning bases, nominally progressive party leaders on both sides of the border are steadily rolling back long-fought-for and evidence-based reforms and shifting toward mass criminalization. While conservatives build power by ramping up racist tropes about Black-coded crime or "illegals" and promising more aggressive responses, liberals and social democrats advance markedly similar policies. In the wake of the George Floyd uprisings, US President Joe Biden campaigned on the need to, in his words, "fund the police." His approach was soon surpassed by the failed presidential campaign of Kamala Harris, whose platform was straight from the conservative playbook: law and order, tight borders, and unconditional support for Israeli war crimes. It is perhaps unsurprising that Canada's federal Conservative leader and prime minister hopeful

Pierre Poilievre has campaigned on "tough on crime" and antimigrant measures that would effectively bring back the war on drugs while sealing borders even more tightly. As for the federal Liberals, like the Democrats in the United States, they have conceded to the ideological framework of the right. After experimenting with a slate of minor but significant shifts toward racial and economic justice, they walked back a proposed mass regularization of immigration status, leaving over one million migrants in limbo, and they forwarded $390 million toward an expansion of the so-called Gun and Gang Violence Action Fund, the majority of which will go to police coffers. Those concerned with racial justice face a moment when few progressive alternatives to guns and cages are available.

Liberals and progressives have not only failed to fight back and protect decades of evidence-backed moves toward decriminalization and harm reduction but also bolstered criminalization efforts known to disproportionately impact Black and Indigenous communities. In 2024, the New Democratic Party (NDP) in British Columbia reversed its support for evidence-based drug decriminalization by empowering police to resume arrests for small-scale drug use and possession in public spaces. After taking office, Wab Kinew, Manitoba's first Indigenous premier and provincial NDP party leader, increased spending on policing by $29 million, the first significant boost since 2017. He further expanded police powers through *The Unexplained Wealth Act,* allowing police to seize property from individuals suspected of having possessions whose source cannot be explained. Legal and human rights organizations have criticized this form of legislation for serving to "erode privacy rights, undermine the presumption of innocence, and subvert the rights that shield people from unreasonable search and seizure."[23] Similar legislation to facilitate police abuse of Black communities has been widely documented in the United States, essentially legally sanctioning police officers to steal cars, jewellery and other goods at their discretion while having no impact on public safety or crime.[24] At the municipal level, the same betrayals are evident. In 2020, Valérie Plante, Montreal's nominally progressive mayor, expressed an openness to redistributing funds for police to community supports.[25] Instead, she oversaw among the largest increases to police budgets in any Canadian municipality three years in a row while providing only minimal amounts to address homelessness.[26] She did so as her office continued to invest in and defend police practices

and programs linked to the extensive racial profiling of Black communities.[27] Plante's government provided substantive funds to antigang policing programs including the Eclipse Squad, which had been subject to calls for its dismantlement in the 2010s because of its association with marked forms of racial profiling.[28] Plante's government also voiced support for the Montreal police's refusal to enact a moratorium on street checks, even after a court ruling and a number of studies highlighted that the practice facilitates racial profiling of Black communities, and in the face of legal and community advocacy for enacting a moratorium.[29]

The evidence is clear: The cross-party carceral consensus will have deadly outcomes for Black folks. Particularly after 2020, naivete can no longer serve as an excuse for the moral bankruptcy of the political class, who heard the calls from the streets and did the opposite, knowingly sacrificing Black and Indigenous lives at the mantle of "public safety."

On the Expanded Edition

My only hope in writing *Policing Black Lives* was that it would be useful. It was the first full-length book in Canada to address the past and present policing of Blackness in the country, identifying that policing has always been materially and ideologically rooted in anti-Blackness. The 2020 protests brought a renewed interest in the text. Three years after its initial publication, it went back onto every major bestseller list and stayed there for over a month.

In 2020, I lost count of the number of webinars, podcasts and teach-ins I had been asked to do situating the policing of Black life in Canada within a historical perspective. Like many other Black women at that time, I was working on the fly, providing research for movements across the country who were seeking the empirical and moral grounds from which to craft their demands for abolition. The book was helpful, but I felt it wasn't enough. The task of that moment was clear: We needed to understand the past, but we also needed to build new futures. This work required diving into municipal, provincial and federal budgets on policing and prisons and learning from the many evidence-based but underfunded alternative forms of safety. For this reason, when I was approached about a new edition of the book, I felt I couldn't say no to the opportunity to create an updated version that would engage some of the most important issues of the contemporary movement against policing.

It took an enormous amount of willpower not to rewrite the entire book from scratch. Some of the ways I would have drafted the text differently are merely a factor of the changing times. Today there is less need, perhaps, to so exhaustively "prove" the realities of anti-Black racism in Canada, so I would linger less on the details of brutality, lest these re-create dehumanization. But the work was, and is, a product of its time. Writing it anew would have felt inauthentic. Instead, I focused on updating facts and noting major new developments, including the dozens of important studies that have emerged in most areas of policing. I also added two new chapters and an updated conclusion. I hope the chapters will help materially ground our past and present conditions in order to fashion more emancipatory Black futures.

The first new chapter is called "Against the Romance of Police Reform." The central purpose of this chapter is to inoculate readers against the false promises of police reform — the central mechanism used by political leaders to subvert the more radical demands for transformation in times of unrest. Given that political leaders in 2020 betrayed movement demands in favour of "police reform," this undertaking seemed urgent. If we are attentive to the history of police reform in this country, it is clear that police reform is part of the problem, not the solution. There is nothing new about the police reforms ushered in during the #BlackLivesMatter era. Police reform has been central to the management of Black rebellion in Canada since at least the late 1960s. The leadership of law enforcement agencies has been remarkably adaptive, understanding that it is politically useful to embrace rather than reject calls for "modernization." It is not that nothing has changed; it is that police have routinely rejected and undermined any changes that would fundamentally alter the balance of power in favour of the communities they ostensibly serve. Instead, almost seventy years of police reform in Canada have relegitimized police access to already highly surveilled communities under the framework of "dialogue," contributed to the rise in police funding and power, and helped facilitate the attendant rise of criminalization and brutalization of Black folks en masse.

The second new chapter is called "Futures Beyond Policing." One of the most central questions I have been asked in the years since *Policing Black Lives* came out is "What next?" The first edition made the case that the abolition of prisons and borders is prerequisite to ending the terror constitutive to the policing of Black life. Yet this exploration felt

incomplete. Since the publication of the first edition, Black, Indigenous and other antiracist movements have changed, grown and dramatically expanded the horizon for what feels possible to imagine, demand and create. It felt only right for a book that argues policing is and has only ever been racial violence to also help establish the grounds from which to build something else. If police reform has failed to bring us anything that could approximate freedom, what would it take to finally end the centuries-long crisis facing Black lives? Do we dare to imagine cities where public funding goes not to law enforcement and its attendant violences but to community centres, safe housing and health supports? Can we imagine people experiencing a mental or physical health crisis such as overdose or a suicide attempt — the majority of police calls to service — having their needs met by community and health supports rather than men armed with guns and teargas? Building from the extensive research I have conducted over the past four years, this chapter provides a material and empirical basis for making policing obsolete, advancing means for addressing violence and harm in society that do not require Black folks to live under siege.

The Global Scope of Struggle

We are living, as Gramsci once wrote, in the time of monsters. The sense of possibility that permeated the summer of 2020 has been transformed into a "fascist nightmare."[30] At the time of writing, the ascent of the far right has put left movements of all stripes on the defensive, and the just societies that movements have been steadfastly working toward feel increasingly distant. The time of massive public struggle has waned, though it is too soon to say if the Black uprisings have abated or merely entered a dormant phase. Africa's Arab Spring (2010–13) has been largely annihilated by authoritarian regimes, and Sudan's December Revolution (2018–19), which ousted the rule of longtime autocratic president Omar al-Bashir, was replaced by what leftist Sudanese intellectuals have termed a "counterrevolutionary war."[31] Though the twentieth century saw historic breaks with formal colonialism, generations of Black and Red Power movements and a Third World struggle that spanned the globe, the twenty-first century has been marked by multiple genocides and imperial catastrophes in Palestine, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Lebanon and Haiti with the active support of Western governments. And it is policing that has served as a central anchor of repression against every movement toward change.

Today, the increasingly violent and repressive targeting of Palestine solidarity protests has impacted Palestinians as well as Arab and Muslim communities. Yet the repression also targets a significant number of young Jewish and white people who are outraged by apartheid and genocide. SWAT team raids — a form of police terror previously reserved by and large for working-class Black folks and Indigenous land defenders — have been deployed toward the repression of a global anti-war movement. Protesters, including Jewish university professors and middle-class white folks, have had their doors broken down in predawn raids by tactical squads for the alleged offence of using posters and red paint to protest the complicity of the owner of Canadian company Indigo in funding Israel Defense Forces soldiers through her charity.[32]

As June Jordan puts it,

> I can't think of a single supposedly Black issue that hasn't wasted the original Black target group and then spread like the measles to outlying white experiences.
>
> If slavery was all right, for example, if state violence and law could protect property rights against people, then the Bossman could call out the state against striking white workers. And he did. And nobody bothered to track this diseased idea of the state back to the first victims: Black people.[33]

The police war on Black folks inevitably boomerangs back onto the wider population.

At the same time, this new era of repression has made clear how domestic policing shores up imperial violence both at home and abroad. This role of the police ought to come as no surprise. The RCMP boasts on its website of its role in overthrowing the Métis and Cree rebellion that led to the execution, in an RCMP training camp, of Métis leader Louis Riel. It also hails its role in reinforcing British imperialism in South Africa during the Boer War, in which the British oversaw the deaths of approximately twenty thousand Black South Africans in internment camps.[34] Canadian police forces have been trained by the same US National Guard that unleashed the assault on Black folks in Ferguson, Missouri, and they have conducted trainings and delegations with Israeli police and security forces, including those accused of extra-judicial killings and other rights abuses.[35] As Just Peace Advocates wrote in its submission to Ontario's Independent Police Oversight Review,

"It is worrying when tactics and technology used by Israeli police and military forces becomes a part of Ontario and Canadian policing."[36] The same police forces who profile and brutalize Black and Indigenous people in Canada have been deployed, and sometimes accused of a litany of harms, in imperialist projects in Haiti and Mali.[37]

If the forces of state and imperial violence operate transnationally, so must our movements. While *Policing Black Lives* focuses largely on the underaddressed conditions governing state violence and Black life in Canada, the need to protect Black lives, and all lives, cannot stop at the border. Traditions of Black radicalism demand of us that we have the moral strength and clarity to condemn racial violence and brutality everywhere and anywhere they emerge. Abolition is necessarily expansive: The project of Black freedom is incomplete when our pensions and institutions are complicit in the destruction of Black and Indigenous and other oppressed peoples' lives and livelihoods the world over.

As I write this foreword, Canada is legally, financially and morally implicated in nearly every major crisis facing Black people globally. Canadian-owned firms have sold armoured vehicles to Sudan despite an export ban and made hundreds of millions of dollars from building gold mines in Sudan,[38] a country facing the world's largest displacement crisis and a possible genocide in North Darfur.[39] In the Democratic Republic of Congo, a mass displacement crisis is fuelled by extractivism and resource looting in the scramble for the country's resources.[40] Along with US-based companies that rely heavily on Congolese cobalt such as Apple, Volkswagen and Tesla, Canada-based mining companies including Banro and Ivanhoe Mines have a strong presence in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where they have been implicated in mass forced displacement.[41] These companies profit while contributing to the conditions under which an average of three million people were internally displaced each year from 2021 to 2023 — with over two million people internally displaced in just the first six months of 2024.[42] After working with the United States and France to demolish Haitian democracy by orchestrating the 2004 coup against the democratically elected president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Canada has spent over $100 million on policing, prison and border investments in Haiti to prop up a police force known to violently repress leftist dissidents.[43] With the United States and other Western countries, the Canadian government continues to dictate Haitian affairs through participation in the Core Group,[44] an imperial

force using mass violence facilitated by the postcoup chaos to justify a new generation of Western domination.

Western countries, including Canada, continue to maintain an imperialist system that imposes violence and plunder not only on Black folks but on the people living on the other side of what W.E.B. Du Bois called the global "color-line."[45] The consequences of this system are most visible today in the West's support for Israel's genocide in Gaza and military campaigns in the West Bank, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, Yemen and Jordan. Canada backs Israel in material and symbolic ways while acknowledging the Palestine solidarity movement in ways that mirror its response to the Black struggle. Foreign affairs minister Mélanie Joly has expressed empathy, saying too many civilians have died in Gaza, while rejecting the widely supported demands of Palestinians, such as a two-way arms embargo. Canada has failed to use any mechanisms of soft power to end the genocide, even as the International Criminal Court has issued arrest warrants for Israeli leaders for war crimes and crimes against humanity, and the International Court of Justice has ruled Israel's actions amount to a plausible genocide. Black folks living in Canada experience state violence, but we are also implicated in the actions of our country abroad. In the latest counterinsurgency, Blackness is enlisted to do the bidding of Western imperialism. Given how Kamala Harris's identity as a Black woman was used to deflect the racist dehumanization of the Israeli–US genocide in Palestine, the Canadian federal government sent a Haitian-born Member of Parliament to the United States to tell Haitians not to migrate to Canada, and the United States and Canada have funded a Kenyan-led security force to put a Black face on the reoccupation of Haiti, it is politically urgent not to be distracted by a shallow politic of representation.[46] We are ethically required to refuse to support the use of Black faces to shore up imperial and racist violence.

The global stretch of imperialism and anti-Blackness, incredibly visible today, has long been recognized and challenged by Black liberation struggles. Black people organizing against police brutality in Canada have consistently understood their struggles as tied to an end of oppression and imperial domination throughout the Black world. The Black Youth Organization, which organized protests against police in Toronto in the late 1960s and early 1970s, raised funds in its newspapers for the national liberation movement in Angola and protested Canada's failure to take meaningful action against apartheid in South Africa:

"It is our duty as Black people in Canada to expose the racist attitudes of the Canadian government" in its actions in the Black world, the group wrote.[47] Rosie Douglas, writing from Leclerc prison in Quebec, where he was incarcerated for his role in the historic Black student protests of 1969 at Sir George Williams University, described how Black organizers involved with the African Liberation Support Committee organized thousands against the exploitative activity of Canadian-based multinational companies in South Africa and against Canada's complicity, through NATO, in the "fascist regimes in Southern Africa."[48] In the summer of 1988, Toronto's Black Women's Collective, key architects of the antipolice brutality movement, published statements linking Black women's struggles against systemic racism in Canada to women's liberation struggles in Palestine, Namibia, Western Sahara, South Africa and El Salvador.[49]

Black radicals have long understood that it is folly to advocate for the safety of Black lives only within the confines of a nation, that across borders our lives and fates are entangled. The struggle for Black liberation is part of a global movement to end to all forms of racist dehumanization and every form of race- and caste-based domination including anti-Palestinian racism, Islamophobia, antisemitism and anti-Black racism. This solidarity is born not from altruism but from a deeply felt knowledge that our survival is linked. The genocide and occupation of Gaza and the West Bank and the war, militarism and occupation in Haiti, Congo and Sudan are struggles to control land and the resources that lie beneath them. And so, in a time of climate crisis and mass human atrocity, we are engaged in what Audre Lorde described as "a war for survival in the twenty-first century, the survival of this planet and all this planet's people."[50] Defence of land and defence against state violence, war and militarism — these are part of the same project at the root: to build worlds in which all of us are free.

Traditions of Black radicalism show us that it is entirely possible, and indeed necessary, to demand the impossible. We cannot demand more visibility, more acknowledgement or more reforms that simply legitimize the weapons of state violence domestically and globally. Today, we hear Black folks in increasingly large numbers join a chorus of people whose struggles reverberate across multiple geographies: "Free the people; free the land in Congo, Palestine, Haiti and Sudan."

Generations of people now understand the interplay of state abandonment and state violence and believe in the possibility of a world

liberated from racial hierarchies. Their vision is divestment from policing and prisons, war, imperialism, militarism and extractivism — to build futures that sustain rather than destroy life. The possibility of this world beckons all of us.

INTRODUCTION

ON STATE VIOLENCE AND BLACK LIVES

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> African Canadians have always been in a relationship of social subordination in dealing with the state. It is irrelevant whether the relationship is with the government, the judicial system, the education or social-welfare systems, or any other state-controlled or state-influenced institution.
>
> —Linda Carty[1]

BEFORE THIS BOOK WAS A COHESIVE IDEA, it was germinating in my mind for years. I had spent much of my time doing paid and unpaid outreach, advocacy and organizing work with marginalized and criminalized people. Working with racialized youth in state care and in street-based economies, as well as with adult street-based sex workers, I have been constantly and painfully aware of the gross racial and economic injustices at the fault lines of Canadian society. Though I have not worked exclusively with Black communities, I've regularly witnessed enormous and disproportionate levels of what can only be called state-sanctioned violence and concerted neglect of Black people.

I remember speaking with a Black teenager who was being regularly followed and harassed by a police officer on his way home from school. The officer would call his name, sometimes search him for drugs (which were never found) and intimidate and humiliate him. He suffered this abuse largely in silence, as he did not want his parents to be disappointed in him. Another notable memory is the experience shared with me by a Black transgender woman in her fifties or sixties, who had fled violence

in her country of origin and did not have Canadian citizenship. To support several family members, she worked as a sex worker. She was frequently harassed and sometimes threatened by the police, who would call her the N-word and "tranny" while she was working. Because she was afraid of being arrested, deported and separated from her family, she soon began to try to avoid the police by working on streets and alleys in extremely isolated, unlit areas instead of in bars frequented by her clients, friends and community — in effect, sacrificing physical safety out of fear of arrest. In addition, I have witnessed the often hostile treatment and heightened surveillance that Black women receive at the hands of their social workers, the suffering felt by both youth and their families when Black children are seized by child welfare and the shame that many Black youth are made to feel by teachers in their schools just because they are Black.

While writing this book, I found myself organizing and attending far too many vigils and marches on the subject of Black death. In 2016, Bony Jean-Pierre, an unarmed Haitian man in his forties, was killed in Montreal North, after being shot in the head with a rubber bullet. His death occurred in the context of a drug raid that uncovered cannabis — a substance on the brink of legalization at the time and smoked openly by white citizens across the city — as well as two rocks of crack and assorted paraphernalia.[2] Later that same year, the police in Ottawa beat to death Abdirahman Abdi, an unarmed Black Somali man living with mental health issues. They had been called in because he was allegedly harassing customers at a coffee shop. However, witnesses saw the police subject him to repeated blows to the face and neck, kneel on his head and then leave him unconscious in a pool of his own blood, handcuffed, without medical attention.[3] He died a few days later in the hospital. Further, highly publicized police killings in the United States in recent years, including the police murders of Alton Sterling, Philando Castile, Korryn Gaines and hundreds of other Black men and women, have served as all-too-frequent reminders of both how little value is placed on Black life and the seemingly limitless level of hostility directed at Black individuals and communities.

In combing through the world of research for something that would describe the realities that I was seeing, I realized that there was still far too little literature addressing, in one place, the specificities of how criminal and immigration laws, inequitable access to work and housing

and other state policies and institutions interact to shape the conditions of Black life in this country. It has become increasingly clear that none of these incidents are isolated; they are part of a larger pattern of the devaluation of Black life across Canada.

I felt compelled to write this book because anti-Blackness, particularly anti-Blackness at the hands of the state, is widely ignored by most Canadians. This book is intended to be a humble addition to a wealth of brilliant, if underrecognized, Black Canadian scholarship from both inside and outside the academy that has meticulously intervened in Canada's national mythology of benevolence and tolerance: Agnes Calliste, Barrington Walker, Charmaine A. Nelson, Rachel Zellars, Afua Cooper, Dionne Brand, Esmerelda Thornhill, Rinaldo Walcott, Cecil Foster, El Jones, Desmond Cole, Katherine McKittrick, Awad Ibrahim, Grace-Edward Galabuzi, George J. Sefa Dei, Tamari Kitossa, Wanda Thomas Bernard, Malinda Smith, Njoke Wane, Akua Benjamin, Carl James, Délice Mugabo, Akwasi Owusu-Bempah, Makeda Silvera, Dorothy Williams, Harvey Amani Whitfield, Sylvia Hamilton, Linda Carty, Adrienne Shadd, Peggy Bristow, Anthony Morgan, the African Canadian Legal Clinic and others whom I am surely missing.

Despite the brilliant work of the Black scholars cited above, state violence against Black persons in Canada has, by and large, remained insulated by a wall of silence and gone largely unrecognized by much of the public, outside of brief media flashpoints. Anti-Blackness in Canada often goes unspoken. When acknowledged, it is assumed to exist, perhaps, but in another time (centuries ago), or in another place (the United States). Many Canadians are attuned to the growing discontent surrounding racial relations across the United States, but distance themselves from the realities surrounding racial disparities at home. Most know, for example, the names Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown as victims of anti-Black police violence, but could not name those Black Canadians cited above or recite the names of Andrew Loku, Jermaine Carby and Quilem Registre. A generalized erasure of the Black experience in Canada from the public realm, including primary, secondary and postsecondary education, combined with a Canadian proclivity for ignoring racial disparities, continues to affect mainstream perceptions of Black realities throughout the nation. In addition, unlike in the United States, systematic collection of publicly available race-based data is rare at the national, provincial or municipal level and at most universities.

Together, these factors have led to a discernable lack of awareness surrounding the widespread anti-Blackness that continues to hide in plain sight, obscured behind a nominal commitment to liberalism, multiculturalism and equality. My goal in the writing of this book is to make anti-Blackness, as it has evolved in Canada, legible for activists, policymakers, students and concerned community members.

Anti-Blackness has not always been obscured. During the period of slavery, many slave owners demonstrated no shame in owning Black (and Indigenous) people as property. For instance, throughout the eighteenth century, it was common for slave owners to place their names on runaway slave notices in Canada. Since slavery's abolition in 1834, though, anti-Black racism in Canada has been continually reconfigured to adhere to national myths of racial tolerance. In 1865, textbooks bore little allusion to any Black presence in Canada, erased two centuries of slavery, included no mention of segregated schools (an ongoing practice at the time) and alluded to the issue of racial discord only in the United States.[4] During much of the first half of the twentieth century, despite segregated schooling in many provinces, discrimination in employment and housing and significant Ku Klux Klan membership, Canadian newspapers and politicians nonetheless continuously framed the so-called "Negro problem" as an American issue.[5] The existence of anti-Blackness remains widely unspeakable in many avenues to this day. For instance, in 2016, shortly following the above-mentioned police killing of Abdirahman Abdi, Matt Skof, the president of the Ottawa Police Association, told the press that it was "unfortunate" and that he was "worried" that Canadians would assume race could play a factor in Canadian policing, arguing that those issues were only pertinent in United States.[6] The long history of anti-Blackness in Canada has, for the most part, occurred alongside the disavowal of its existence. Black individuals and communities remain "an absented presence always under erasure."[7]

Canada, in the eyes of many of its citizens, as well as those living elsewhere, is imagined as a beacon of tolerance and diversity. Seen as an exemplar of human rights, Canada's national and international reputation rests, in part, on its historical role as the safe haven for the enslaved Black Americans who had fled the United States through the Underground Railroad. Today, it is well known, locally and internationally, as the land of multiculturalism and relative racial harmony.

Invisibility, however, has not protected Black communities in Canada. For centuries, Black lives in Canada have been exposed to a structural violence that has been tacitly or explicitly condoned by multiple state or state-funded institutions. Few who do not study Black Canadian history are aware that dominant narratives linking crime and Blackness date back at least to the era of the transatlantic slave trade, and that Black persons were disproportionately subject to arrest for violence, drugs and prostitution-related offences throughout Canada as early as the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The history of nearly a hundred years of separate and unequal schooling in many provinces (separating Black from white students), which lasted until 1983, is not taught to Canadian youth.[8] A history that goes unacknowledged is too often a history that is doomed to be repeated.

The structural conditions affecting Black communities in the present go similarly underrecognized. In 2016, to little media fanfare, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights confirmed that anti-Black racism in Canada is systemic. The committee highlighted enormous racial inequities with respect to income, housing, child welfare rates, access to quality education and healthcare and the application of drug laws.[9] Many Canadians do not know that, despite being around 3 percent of the Canadian population, Black persons in some parts of the country make up around one-third of those killed by police.[10] It is not yet common knowledge that African Canadians are incarcerated in federal prisons at a rate three times higher than the number of Blacks in the Canadian population, a rate comparable to the United States and the United Kingdom. Fewer still are aware that that in many provincial jails, the rate is even more disproportionate than it is at the federal level.[11]

In addition to being more heavily targeted for arrest, because so much of Canada's Black population was born elsewhere, significant numbers of those eventually released will be punished again by deportation to countries they sometimes barely know, often for offences that frequently go unpunished when committed by whites.[12] Black migrants, too, are disproportionately affected by punitive immigration policies like immigration detention and deportation, in part due to the heightened surveillance of Black migrant communities.[13] Black children and youth are vastly overrepresented in state and foster care,[14] and are far more likely to be expelled or pushed out of high schools across the country.[15] Black communities are, after Indigenous communities, among the

poorest racial groups in Canada.[16] These facts, along with their history and context, point to an untold story of Black subjection in Canada.

Though anti-Blackness permeates all aspects of Canadian society, *Policing Black Lives* focuses primarily on state or state-sanctioned violence (though, at times, this is complemented with an enlarged scope in instances when anti-Black state practices were buttressed by populist hostility, the media or civil society). The reason for this focus is simple: the state possesses an enormous, unparalleled level of power and authority over the lives of its subjects. State agencies are endowed with the power to privilege, punish, confine or expel at will. This book traces the role that the state has played in producing the demonization, dehumanization and subjection of Black life across a multiplicity of institutions. I use the word "state" throughout this text to include federal and provincial governments, government-funded programs such as schools and social and child services, and the enforcement wings of state institutions such as the municipal, provincial and national police.

The framework of state violence throughout this book is used to draw attention to the complex array of harms experienced by marginalized social groups that are caused by government (or government-funded) policies, actions and inaction. This use of the term "state violence" follows in the traditions of Black feminist activist-intellectuals such as Angela Y. Davis, Joy James, Beth Richie, Andrea J. Ritchie, Ruth Wilson Gilmore and others who have contributed enormously to studying anti-Black state violence while also actively organizing against it.[17]

The state is imagined by many to be the protector of its national subjects. But this belief is a fiction — one that can be maintained only if we ignore the enormous harms that have been directly or indirectly caused by state actions. "Valorizing the state as the natural prosecutor of and protector from violence," writes Joy James, "requires ignoring its instrumental role in fomenting racial and sexual violence."[18] It is more accurate to say that the state protects some at the expense of others. The purpose of state violence is to maintain the order that is "in part defined in terms of particular systems of stratification that determine the distribution of resources and power."[19] In a society like Canada that remains stratified by race, gender, class and citizenship, state violence acts to defend and maintain inequitable social, racial and economic divisions. As such, the victims of this violence have been the dispossessed: primarily but not exclusively people who are Indigenous, Black, of colour, particularly

those who are poor, women, lacking Canadian citizenship, living with mental illness or disabilities, sexual minorities and other marginalized populations. Often legally and culturally sanctioned as legitimate, the harms inflicted by state actors are rarely prosecuted as criminal, even when the actions involve extreme violence, theft and loss of life.[20] Grave injustices — including slavery, segregation and, more recently, decades of disproportionate police killings of unarmed Black civilians — have all been accomplished within, not outside of, the scope of Canadian law.[21] Not only is state violence rarely prosecuted as criminal, it is not commonly perceived as *violence*. Because the state is granted moral and legal authority over those who fall under its jurisdiction, it is granted a monopoly over the use of violence in society, so its use of violence is generally seen as legitimate.

When state violence is mentioned, images of police brutality are often the first that come to mind. However, state violence can be administered by institutions outside of the criminal justice system, including institutions regarded by most as administrative, such as immigration and child welfare departments, social services, schools and medical institutions. These institutions nonetheless expose marginalized persons to social control, surveillance and punishment, or what Canadian criminologist Gillian Balfour calls "non-legal forms of governmentality."[22] These bureaucratic agencies have repressive powers generally presumed to belong only to law enforcement. They can police — that is, surveil, confine, control and punish — the behaviour of state subjects. "Policing," indeed, describes not only cops on their beat, but also the past and present surveillance of Black women by social assistance agents, the racially targeted overdisciplining and expulsion of Black children and youth in schools and the acute surveillance and detention of Black migrants by border control agencies. Many poor Black mothers, for example, have experienced child welfare agents entering and searching their homes with neither warrant nor warning — in some instances seizing their children — as a result of an anonymous phone call. Further, state violence can occur without an individual directly harming or even interacting with another. It can be, in short, structured into societal institutions.[23]

This expansive understanding of state violence allows us, throughout the following chapters, to examine the seemingly disconnected state and state-funded institutions that continue to act, in concert, to cause

Black suffering and subjugation. State violence is not evenly distributed across populations but deeply infused along the lines of race, class and gender. These factors play a significant role in the likelihood of one's exposure to either direct or structural forms of state violence. State violence has historically impacted and targeted different groups of people throughout history to different degrees, according to shifting notions of race, ethnicity, class and ability — or willingness to subscribe to social norms. In the present, it continues to impact differently marginalized groups of individuals. But it is not arbitrary that Black communities are subject to state violence at such disproportionate rates. Black subjection in Canada cannot be fully understood, and therefore cannot be fully redressed or countered, without placing it in its historical context. The endemic anti-Blackness found within state agencies has global and historical roots and can be traced back to the transatlantic slave trade.

Race and Racial Subjugation

Blackness, like all racial categories, is not a biological fact but has been historically and socially constructed.[24] Across time, the meanings assigned to race have shifted. Cedric J. Robinson shows that the use of constructed categories of race — and varying levels of worth assigned to these races — existed in ancient Europe within its own boundaries long before the creation of Blackness. Blackness, he argues, was invented by Europeans at the advent of the transatlantic slave trade. To create "the Negro," meaning, in effect, the African slave, Europeans had to erase and repress the hundreds of years of contact between the ancient West and North Africa, undertaking "immense expenditures of psychic and intellectual energies."[25] The construction of the African as a subhuman and bestial life-form justified the commodification of Black life and labour that would enrich the nations of Europe for centuries to come.[26] Subsequently, Black life was reduced to "dumb, animal labor, the benighted recipient of the benefits of slavery."[27] During the transatlantic slave trade, Black men, women and children were thought not to be full human beings but interchangeable commodities.[28] Enslaved Black people were seen as lacking sentience, possessing a limited ability to feel pain, and were represented as animalistic, hypersexual and dangerous.[29] In recent decades, writers including Saidiya Hartman, Rinaldo Walcott, Lewis R. Gordon and Sylvia Wynter, have documented how, despite the abolition of the slave trade worldwide, the transition from slavery

to freedom did not substantially change the meanings that had become inextricably associated with Blackness.[30] Those marked as Black — a category demarcated by anatomical and physiological attributes, as well as skin colour and hair — were not seen as individual human beings. In *Black Skin, White Masks,* Frantz Fanon states that people with African features had their very existence reduced to pathology, assigned the same meaning across the colonial and slave-holding world. He writes, "I am given no chance. I am overdetermined from without. I am the slave not of the 'idea' that others have of me but of my own appearance."[31]

Long after the formal emancipation of enslaved Black populations and the formal decolonization of the Global South, anti-Blackness remains a global condition and continues to have enormous impacts on Black individuals and communities. It is "our existence as human beings," writes Rinaldo Walcott, that "remains constantly in question and mostly outside the category of *a life*."[32] Despite the end of slavery as a legal form of controlling Black movement and curtailing Black freedom, the enduring association of Blackness with danger and criminality was further consolidated, and new forms of policing Black people's lives emerged. Under slavery, the policing of everyday Black life was the standard. "A violent regulation of black mobilities" was required for slave owners to maintain the institution.[33] Emancipation required new, or at least modified, expressions of racial logics; people designated Black have been homogenously rendered as menacing across much of the world, and surveilled and policed accordingly.

Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, criminality, danger and deviance became more fully assigned to Blackness. In the United States, following emancipation, newly freed Black men and women were targeted with arrest, imprisoned and forced to perform free labour under the jurisdiction of the Thirteenth Amendment.[34] In the mid-twentieth century, Frantz Fanon demonstrated how shared beliefs about the criminal proclivities of Black people existed throughout the French Empire, the Southern United States, South Africa and West Africa.[35] In 1970s Britain, Black cultural theorist Stuart Hall critiqued the linking of Blackness and violence in the panic surrounding "young Black muggers" that resulted in a significant increase in law enforcement agencies' policing of Black communities in Britain.[36] Today, Black men and women in the United States remain unduly targeted by criminal justice, in a system of mass incarceration unknown throughout much of the

world.[37] In other parts of the world where chattel slavery flourished, such as Brazil, racial profiling and Black incarceration are also endemic.[38]

Given the "global anti-Black condition,"[39] it should come as no surprise that the associations between Blackness, crime and danger continue to have enormous power in Canada nearly two centuries after the British abolished slavery in all their colonies. Black and white Canadians appear to commit relatively equal levels of most crimes, yet the Black population, viewed as dangerous, continues to bear the burden of criminal stigma. Canadian politicians, police and newspapers have, for centuries, linked Blackness or Black cultures to criminality and danger. Black people have been treated as menaces to be kept out, locked up or removed. From ordinances attempting to ban Blacks from Canadian cities in 1911 to the Montreal police's use of pictures of young Black men as targets for shooting practice throughout the 1980s to the targeted deportation of nearly a thousand Jamaicans in the mid– to late 1990s,[40] the encoding of Black persons as criminal, dangerous and unwanted holds enormous power across Canadian institutions.

Black subjection has changed forms in important ways in a society that purports to be colour-blind. Today, the denigration of Blackness is sometimes difficult to pinpoint. Explicit hatred of Black persons — for example, the use of a racial epithet or perpetration of a violent hate crime — is no longer culturally acceptable. Most Canadians of any political persuasion would largely reject any politic based on open hatred and would be unlikely to support an open call to bring back "whites only" immigration policies or to resegregate education and ban Black youth from schools. This form of racism — though being reinvigorated in some segments of society amid an upswing of white supremacist movements — has largely fallen out of mainstream political favour in an era where formal equality prevails in Canadian law.[41]

Liberal democracies like Canada continue to practise significant racial discrimination, yet they now do so while proclaiming a formal commitment to equality. It is, after all, "the wedding of equality and exclusion in the liberal state" that distinguishes modern state racism from the previous forms of racism found under slavery.[42] Racism has merely become more difficult to both detect and contest. While many Black people in twenty-first-century Canada officially have rights equal to those of other national subjects, "official" equality means little when it is the state that is both perpetrating and neglecting to act in the face of racial subjugation, neglect

and other forms of violence. Because many forms of overt racism are not tolerated, state-sanctioned violence relies on the blameworthiness of those whom it harms. Anti-Blackness, which attaches Blackness to criminality and danger, rationalizes state violence against Black communities because Black people are presumed to be "guilty in advance" — as always and already blameworthy.[43] Indeed, state-mandated violence and subjugation are conceived of, often, as rational responses to a threat — the threat of Blackness. Hate speech masquerades as protectionism, and the violence perpetrated on Canada's Black population, when visible, becomes "justice served." Joy James, Black American racial theorist and activist, reminds us that racism helps invert our perceptions of who is causing harm and who is on its receiving end. She observes, "Anti-black racism has played a critical, historical role in rationalizing (and inverting) hierarchies of oppressor and oppressed."[44] Though anti-Black racism has justified centuries of racial violence, with lasting impacts on the dignity, health and well-being of Black people, Black communities themselves are blamed for the state violence that they have been continually subjected to.

The state violence that targets Black populations makes visible that Canada's Black population has been excluded from those seen as "national subjects"[45] and denied many of the accompanying protections and rights. Further, Black persons are represented not only as other-than-national subjects, but are constituted historically and presently as a threat to "real" Canadians. Accordingly, state violence against Black communities often takes place in the name of protecting "us" from "them," rendering anti-Blackness and, indeed, Black suffering invisible.

In Canada, then, as elsewhere, the legacy of Black enslavement lives on, and the associations of Blackness with pathology, though modified in some ways, continue to have significant impacts on Black life. To use the words of Black slavery scholar Saidiya Hartman, "Black lives are still imperilled and devalued by a racial calculus and a political arithmetic that were entrenched centuries ago." To be Black in Canada is to live in slavery's "afterlife" and to have one's existence demarcated by "skewed life chances, limited access to health and education, premature death, incarceration, and impoverishment."[46] *Policing Black Lives* traces the role of the state in slavery and its afterlives, following the intensive policing of Black life in Canada that originated on slave ships and persists into the present, spanning the criminal justice, immigration, education, social service and child welfare systems.

Though *Policing Black Lives* tells the story of anti-Blackness in Canada, any study of institutional anti-Blackness must necessarily be informed by the reality that Canada is a settler colony founded on colonization and genocide. In settler colonies like Canada and the United States, Black and Indigenous oppression are historically and currently connected. Indeed, recent writings by Black and Indigenous studies scholar Tiffany King argues that we cannot truly understand the conditions of Black life in settler societies without examining the relationship of anti-Blackness and slavery to settler colonialism and genocide.[47] These were not, she argues, isolated historical processes. Instead, there was a relationship between the genocidal settlement project that tried to annihilate Indigenous Peoples and take their land and the brutal logics of enslavement that attempted to reduce Black men, women and children into nonhuman things.[48]

Though there is a relationship, the racial logic of slavery and settler colonialism take different forms and are not reducible to one another; anti-Blackness and settler colonialism rest on somewhat different foundations. Indigenous Peoples are seen as "in the way," and laws and policies are used toward destroying Indigenous communities to secure unfettered access to Indigenous land.[49] The overarching goal of white settler colonialism is to eradicate Indigenous Peoples, either through assimilation or genocide — to turn them into "ghosts."[50] The reserve system, the imposition of residential schools intended to "kill the Indian in the child," forced sterilization of Indigenous women, ongoing resource extraction and pipelines extending across Indigenous territory are only a few examples that demonstrate a unique logic of genocide and theft targeting Indigenous Peoples.[51] Contrastingly, while theft of both land and labour was integral to the colonization of Africa,[52] in the logic of Black enslavement, it is Black *personhood* that is under attack: "The slave" is a useful commodity, but "the person underneath is imprisonable, punishable, and murderable."[53] Despite differing racial logics, the living legacy of slavery and the ongoing practice of settler colonialism at times result in similar forms of repression. Black and Indigenous people experience grossly disproportionate incarceration, susceptibility to police violence, poverty and targeted child welfare removal.

We create an incomplete history of anti-Blackness without addressing settler colonialism; acknowledging the relationship between Black and Indigenous oppression is of fundamental importance in any inte-

llectual or political movement geared toward racial justice. Due to scope limitations, *Policing Black Lives* does not undertake a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between settler colonialism and slavery/anti-Blackness. Where relevant, though, I attempt to draw parallels or distinctions between the ways that state violence has targeted both Indigenous and Black people. The examples I provide are not exhaustive and should not stand in for the important work of Indigenous scholars and activists such as Sarah Hunt, Cindy Blackstock, Colleen Cardinal, Bridget Tolley, Lee Maracle, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, Pamela Palmater, Eve Tuck, Naomi Sayers, Emma LaRocque, Chelsea Vowel, Bonita Lawrence, Arthur Manuel, Audra Simpson, Howard Adams and Lina Sunseri, to name only a few.

In Defence of All Black Lives

All Black people are not demonized equally or identically. Gender, sexual orientation, (dis)ability, mental health and place of birth also mediate the way that anti-Blackness is experienced. Black feminist scholarship and activism has forced a necessary reexamination of what and whom we imagine when we speak of violence against the Black body. It is common in discussions surrounding anti-Black racism to focus on the Black male body as the state's primary target. Most literature and research focuses on the means by which young Black heterosexual males have been demonized by popular culture and the criminal justice system. This focus has frequently allowed state violence against Black individuals who are not young Black men to go unseen and unchallenged. Kimberlé Crenshaw and Andrea J. Ritchie, legal scholars and the lead authors of *Say Her Name: Resisting Police Brutality Against Black Women*, insist that we expand our gaze to see how the demonization of Blackness extends to Black women and sexual minorities across the gender spectrum.[54] Though it is obviously important that these pages address how law enforcement interacts with young Black males, it is equally important to make visible, for example, how Black sexual minorities and Black students with disabilities may face particular scrutiny and hostility in schools, or the unique realities faced by Black trans women on city streets. To use the words of Crenshaw and Ritchie: "No analysis of state violence against Black bodies can be complete without including *all Black bodies* within its frame."[55] To correct past oversights, whenever data is available, particular attention is paid in each of these chapters to

Black women, sexual minorities across the gender spectrum and people with disabilities and/or mental illnesses.

Continuing in this direction, a considerable number of Black persons are harassed, arrested, suspended, expelled or placed in state care, despite having committed no crime, solely because of their Blackness. Law enforcement violence against an innocent Black woman is an obvious manifestation of racial injustice. Yet it is my intention that this work also challenges widely held dichotomies of who is innocent/guilty and how this affects our perception of who is undeserving/deserving of state violence or protection. It should not be seen as *less violent* when the police harm a Black youth who is, in technical terms, a criminal, or as *more violent* when the police harm an innocent Black youth with no previous infractions.

Black communities experience significant societal pressure to appeal to white middle-class norms and to defend our communities on the pretext that we, too, are upstanding, law-abiding and virtuous citizens — to prove ourselves worthy of the human dignity that we are denied. This is called the politics of respectability. But as Black communities continue to learn, appeals to respectability are insufficient as a long-term strategy because "our very blackness places us all beyond the bounds of respectability."[56] Additionally, to focus solely on the protection of those Black folks perceived as good or innocent is to abandon those who have been designated as "bad" by the law or by Euro-Christian morality. This leaves "bad" Black people undefended: those community members stigmatized by real or imagined involvement in illicit economies, those youth or adults who have used or sold illegal drugs, those whose gender presentations or sexualities have been deemed deviant, sex workers, undocumented migrants and incarcerated persons. Stigmatized and rendered disposable, these Black persons are most vulnerable to state abuse, exploitation, confinement and even death with little or no outcry. The horrible conditions experienced by many Black youth in state care and those who reside in Canada's provincial jails or immigration centres are testaments to this fact. To counter this abandonment, I centre these historically expendable lives in this book whenever possible.

I wish to contribute to a framework for racial justice in which we perceive the injustices levelled at all Black lives. I would like, of course, to value the life of Viola Desmond, a Black woman of upstanding status who famously refused to sit in the "Blacks only" section of a theatre in

Nova Scotia in 1946 and challenged segregation.[57] In addition, I wish to honour the full value of the life of Chevranna Abdi, a Black transgender woman and drug user living with HIV who died in 2003 after being dragged down several flights of stairs, face down, by police officers in Hamilton, Ontario. Even in death, Abdi was ridiculed by the media and ignored by the larger LGBTQI*[58] and Black communities. In short, it is urgent that all Black lives are seen as valuable and all Black suffering is acknowledged.

It is dangerous to fail to recognize the ways that anti-Blackness has shaped, and continues to shape, the contours and possibilities of Black freedom. Yet we risk presenting narratives of Black dehumanization as totalizing: "At stake is not recognizing antiblackness as total climate," but also at stake is "not recognizing an insistent Black visualsonic resistance to that imposition of non/being," explains Christina Sharpe.[59] By insisting that we recognize the persistent devaluation of Black life, it is not my intention to eclipse the very real realities of Black refusal, subversion, resistance and creativity that have flourished, despite centuries of systematic hostility and oppression. Though it is not the primary focus of this book, there exist extraordinary histories of rebellion, refusal and protest — many documented and more still unwritten — that are a testament to a politics of sustained Black cultural, intellectual and spiritual creative practices, despite policies intended to extinguish these acts. These histories span centuries. In 1734, an enslaved Black woman named Marie-Joseph Angélique attempted to flee her white mistress. She faced enormous consequences for her insistence on independence and agency. Accused of burning down Montreal, she was arrested, tortured and publicly hanged.[60] In the nineteenth century, hundreds of free Black men and women in Southwestern Ontario risked state and populist repression by forming vigilance committees that resisted white American slave catchers' attempts to re-enslave Blacks who had escaped their bondage and had fled to Canada.[61] Black communities in the Prairies fought against the impunity granted to the Ku Klux Klan in the early twentieth century.[62] The resilience needed to survive everyday life amid structural and populist violence is not always credited, and there is a tendency to overlook "the subversive tactics of ordinary people" and focus only on the "spectacular feats such as those carried out by freedom fighters, demonstrators, or rioters."[63] Less glorified, but just as significant, are the everyday acts of resilience and survival undertaken

by Black individuals faced with institutional racism and deprivation, documented, for example, by Makeda Silvera, Dionne Brand and Sylvia Hamilton.[64]

Worldwide, we are currently in the midst of a revitalization of Black resistance, and by no means has Canada been exempt. Growing out of and building upon the community organizing traditions in the late 1980s of groups like the Black Action Defence Committee, protests by Black communities have erupted across Canadian cities in recent years.[65] In addition to the everyday bravery of Black survival and care, there has been new life breathed into the Black radical imagination, spurring new forms of activism, art, intellectual work and resistance. This resurgence is taking place not only in the United States, but also in regions less well known for their Black populations, and includes solidarity actions in Palestine and Black organizing in numerous nations across Latin America.[66] Conversations across Black communities around the world are rendering it clear that anti-Blackness knows no borders: Few, if any, places in the world have been untouched by the legacies of European colonization and slavery, or the racist worldviews left in their wake. Contemporary movements for the dignity of Black life are underway throughout the African diaspora, and many, but certainly not all, fall under the banner of #BlackLivesMatter. At the same time, the unique realities of anti-Black racism as it has evolved locally across different regions are also being widely shared and disseminated.

Due to limitations of space and scope, the following pages are not a thorough history of Black activism, and this work does not describe all of the brilliant feats accomplished by Black communities against racial discrimination in Canada. But as a Black activist and writer, I situate myself and my writing within the growing movement that fights for Black lives and against state violence. This book describes, in sometimes painstaking detail, the structural conditions that mandate ongoing Black suffering in Canada, as it is my hope that in recognizing our conditions, we will be better placed to challenge them. For that reason, though this book is for everyone with an interest in Black lives in Canada, it is written most particularly for those who are committed to working toward the creation of more liberatory Black futures.

ENDNOTES

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54 Kimberlé Crenshaw and Andrea J. Ritchie, with Rachel Anspach, Rachel Gilmer and Luke Harris, *Say Her Name: Resisting Police Brutality Against Black Women* (African American Policy Forum, 2015). Throughout *Policing Black Lives*, I use the terms "sexual minority" or "LGBTQI*" interchangeably to inclusively encompass a diverse array of sexual and gender identities, including those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, Two-Spirit, trans, intersex and gender nonconforming. At times, I more specifically address transgender or trans women with the aim of addressing the unique forms of oppression that trans women experience in society. Otherwise, the word "women" should be considered inclusive of both cis and transgender women. On some occasions, I use the term "gender-oppressed," following Julia Chinyere Oparah (formerly Sudbury), in an attempt to encompass the ways that patriarchy impacts women as well as those outside of traditional gender binaries — meaning, in effect, all of those who are not cisgender men. Sudbury, "Maroon Abolitionists: Black Gender-Oppressed Activists in the Anti-Prison Movement in the U.S. And Canada," *Meridians* 9, 1 (2009).

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Chapter One

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