

## Statement for Pride Month

The Black Female Lawyers Network, the Canadian Association of Black Lawyers and the Ontario Bar Association celebrate this June as Pride Month, in recognition of our colleagues who are members of the LGBTQ2+ community. We value your voice and the intersectional lens on equity, diversity and inclusion you collectively bring to the profession.

This open communication is about recognizing Pride Month while simultaneously acknowledging that the fight for equality continues. It is meant to illuminate the diversity within the LGBTQ2+ peer group and focus upon the unique life experiences of those who live and practice in that space where sexual and racial identity intersect.

Our organizations believe in the importance of strong allies and recognize those relationships are central to the profession's role in advancing equality for our clients and ourselves. We applaud those in the community who have bravely stepped forward to fight for safe and welcoming workplaces for LGBTQ2+ lawyers. History demonstrates however, that the cultural and political contributions of racialized members of the LGBTQ2+ community have often been overlooked.

The year 2019 marks the 50th anniversary of the 1969 Stonewall riots in New York City, where violent protests erupted after the police raided Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in Greenwich Village. Since then, there have been many legal and social milestones in Canada, including the decriminalization of homosexual acts between consenting adults (1969), and the Supreme Court of Canada ruling extending the protection of Section 15 equality rights under the Charter to include sexual orientation (1995). While there has been tremendous progress, gaps still exist, as systemic racism and homophobia persist as barriers in our profession.

We understand that the narrative of the marginalized lawyer as described by Hadiya Roderique in her 2017 essay, "Black on Bay Street" is the everyday experience of exclusion for Black LGBTQ2+ lawyers because of their stigmatized identities. It is unacceptable that Black lawyers often do not feel safe to bring their authentic selves into their work environment. We are distressed that this isolation is amplified for Black LGBTQ2+ lawyers who may feel compelled to adopt strategies to cope and compensate, which often deny or erode their different overlapping identities.

It is critically important to give mention to Black queer women lawyers who carve out their careers in law with the precision required to break down barriers of marginalization that target their womanhood, queerness and blackness. The Black Female Lawyers Network is especially proud to celebrate your success and your fortitude. We acknowledge the Black queer lawyers who navigate the complexities of that world every day – black in the queer struggle against stigmatization, and queer in the black struggle for equality.

This statement represents a point of entry for our organizations to expressly welcome to our membership Black LGTBQ2+ lawyers. We aim to build stronger relationships grounded in understanding, trust and solidarity. We hope this is the beginning of an informed and inclusive alliance. There is much for our organizations to learn on this journey, and so we approach it with open minds and whole hearts.

*'...it is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept and celebrate those differences.'*

*- Audre Lorde*

Happy Pride to All,

*Denise Dwyer*

President  
Black Female  
Lawyers Network



*Lori Anne Thomas*

President  
Canadian Association of  
Black Lawyers



*Ontario Bar Association*

