Policing Black Lives by Robyn Maynard
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Captions for this Youtube video were added manually in fall 2021 by Leah Horlick, who also created this transcript. She was trained by Kay Slater as part of a mentorship program through grunt gallery.

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Author Robyn Maynard speaks about her book, Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present, available in stores and online: https://fernwoodpublishing.ca/book/po...

[low, thrumming music]

ROBYN MAYNARD: In 2015 Andrew Loku, a Sudanese father of four, was killed by the police in Toronto in the midst of a mental health crisis. In 2016, Bony Jean-Pierre Jean, a Haitian man in his forties, was killed by the police in Montreal while he was unarmed.

In that same year, Abdirahman Abdi was beaten to death by the police in Ottawa. In 2017 Pierre Coriolan was killed by the Montreal police in the midst of a mental health crisis.

The death of Quilem Registre, the death of Jermaine Carby, the death of Anthony Griffin, Marcellus Francois. The list goes on.

We can also look at the death of Black trans woman Chevranna Abdi, who was a Somali woman who was actually dragged face-first down the stairs by the police and died in Ontario in 2003.

These deaths are part of a national crisis, and they tell a story of the surveillance, punishment, criminalization, and brutalization of Black peoples across Canada. "Policing Black Lives" tells these stories.

The story actually dates back centuries to the practice of slavery that lasted over two hundred years on the Indigenous lands that we now call Canada. The criminalization of Black peoples' lives has always been a major part of policing in Canada. Policing has always been extremely racialized. We can look, for example, to the RCMP, which was used to quell Indigenous rebellion and to help to clear the land for white settlers in Canada.

And only decades after the abolition of slavery we can look to the heightened surveillance and policing of Black communities; to the high Black incarceration rates; to the segregation practices that were part, a facet of Canadian life in many parts of the country; to the informal sundown laws that existed in many parts of the country as well.

Today, anti-Blackness, the surveillance and punishment of Black peoples of all ages and genders, is embedded within all major state institutions. Contemporary practices of racial violence like carding, the war on drugs, the war on gangs, the treatment of poor Black families by social service agencies, the pulling apart and destruction of Black families by child welfare agencies: all of these practices across institutions point to one similarity, and that is the reality of anti-Black racism and anti-Black punishment that can be traced back to slavery.

When we think about policing Black lives, we're often not talking about the realities of Black people with mental health issues and other disabilities across state institutions in Canada whose lives are often treated as less valuable and more disposable.

In a country that is so premised on the erasure of Blackness entirely, it should be no surprise that we've really also seen an erasure of Black resistance to state violence that spans back centuries as well. We can also look to the centuries of resistance of African Nova Scotian communities and we can look more recently, for example, in the 1970s to Black Jamaican domestic workers who were fighting racialized and gendered persecution by the state with attempted deportations.

"Policing Black Lives" comes out of a broader movement that is based not only in Canada but in the United States, in the UK, in Brazil, and around the world that refuses to normalize or accept Black suffering and death at the hands of the State, and instead insists that all Black lives matter.

[low, thrumming music]