

**Dear Mayor and Councillors,**

My name is Colin Gallant and I'm writing to tell you why I believe we need public artwork telling citizens that Black Lives Matter in Calgary.

Exhaustive evidence shows that we live in a world that privileges some and causes irreparable harm to others — especially Black people. Perhaps not obvious to those who don't experience the consequences of that on a daily basis, there's been damaging silence and inaction on racism for far too long. Though racism was designed into how our society functions centuries ago, there is still time to design it back out.

When Calgarians look at their city, they should see themselves reflected; they should see that they are celebrated and valued — even that they simply deserve to live. Right now, Black Calgarians are telling us by the thousands that they do *not* see these things.

Calgary is home to brilliant Black artists, organizers and leaders who deserve to share their stories in the public realm. This city belongs to everyone and everyone should have a stake in it. My inspired, hardworking and beautiful friend Allison Dunne who I work with at Pink Flamingo makes me proud to be Calgarian. I'm positive that her involvement here will make our city an even better place to live. It is a smart investment on your part in addition to being a useful decision for citizens.

I also believe that the larger network of Black Calgarians who will create the proposed public artwork will have the right kind of support in the form of artist Katie Green. Your record shows that you believe this, too. The Calgary Municipal Land Corporation chose Katie (amongst a wide pool of talent in a public bid) to produce the murals along the East Village RiverWalk. With this project, she connected the diverse voices of the East Village, from those who face housing insecurity or have lived there for decades to new residents like condo buyers and office workers, and then allowed them to tell their stories, their way. The result is impactful. I can't picture East Village without thinking of these murals and the story they tell about Calgary.

A mural (or murals) that shows who we are now and makes a pledge about who we will become serves as a physical reminder that we demand that not some but all Calgarians receive a fair standard of living. It would be part of Calgary's ongoing story and legacy should you choose to fund it.

The world and indeed our city are sending a clear message that they've had enough of the poisonous systemic racism that takes away dignity, opportunity and life. Now, your leadership will determine whether Calgary is a city everyone can love or become known as the place that looked injustice in the face, acknowledged it, then shrugged in response. The latter is not representative of what Calgary is.

Mayor Nenshi, you have already said that our city needs to do more to become actively anti-racist. Talented Calgarians are giving you and Council the chance to live up to these words by funding artwork that lays plain for all that our city will fight against racist injustice. Council often shows its commitment to the Calgary of tomorrow and what it is to be a world-class city. Beyond

the fact that it is the right decision to say Black Lives Matter, loudly and lastingly, if our city fails to do this we are not a world-class city and there is no just Calgary of tomorrow.

This is but one piece of an ongoing commitment that must be made to break down racism and build up a better city. If we are ready for this journey — and we must be — let's make it obvious and unignorable.

With faith and respect,

Colin Gallant  
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Assistant editor, **Avenue** magazine  
Programming committee, **Sled Island Music & Arts Festival**

