

Expression of Condolence for Charles Officer by Toronto City Council

Moved by: Mayor Olivia Chow

Seconded by: Councillor Paula Fletcher

The Mayor and Members of Toronto City Council are deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Charles Officer, a Toronto-born filmmaker and award-winning screenwriter and director, who passed away on December 1, 2023, at the age of 48.

Born in 1975, Charles studied at the Ontario College of Art and Design (OCAD) as well as the Neighbourhood Playhouse School of Theatre in New York City. In his early career, Charles appeared as an actor both on stage and on screen though he is best known for his filmmaking, which foregrounds Black lives, voices, and experiences in a uniquely Canadian context.

Charles made waves in Canadian cinema with his feature directorial debut, *Nurse.Fighter.Boy* (2008), which was received with acclaim, and won awards and accolades from international film festivals. The film was also nominated for 10 Genie Awards – the precursor to the Canadian Screen Awards. In addition, Charles was well known for his documentary work including *Mighty Jerome* (2010), *The Skin We're In* (2017), and *Unarmed Verses* (2017). He also worked in television, directing several episodes for multiple series such as *Rookie Blue*, *Saving Hope*, *Private Eyes*, and *The Porter*, where he also served as an executive producer on the Black-led program. His last film before his passing, *Akilla's Escape* (2020), also won several awards.

Whether for film or television, Charles employed a unique ability to humanize his subject matter, which he applied to his filmmaking, striving towards poetic and honest storytelling. His narrative films constructed intimate portrayals of characters whose voices are underrepresented in our entertainment, media, and culture. Meanwhile, his non-fiction work poignantly captured Black life in Toronto at the intersection of multiple, overlapping issues, which by extension, spoke to larger social, cultural, economic, and political struggles felt by many in Black communities across Canada.

Charles was a visionary filmmaker who was a product of the Toronto neighbourhoods that raised him. The arts and culture sector as well as the film, television, and

entertainment industry in Toronto have lost a prolific and important voice. He will be greatly missed.

The City Clerk is requested to convey, on behalf of Members of Toronto City Council, our sincere sympathy to Charles's partner, Alice; their son, Selah; and the many people whose lives he touched through his work.

December 13, 2023