



## **SABA North America’s Statement on the Remarks by Seattle Police Officer regarding the Tragic Death of Jaahnavi Kandula**

**September 14, 2023**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

“Delivering respectful police services means treating people the way you want to be treated.” —Seattle Police Department Policy Manual, Mission Statement and Priorities, p. 1 (rev. July 15, 2023)

SABA North America is appalled by the comments by Seattle police officer and Vice President of the Seattle Police Officers Guild, Daniel Auderer, regarding the tragic death of Jaahnavi Kandula. Jaahnavi, a 23-year-old student at Northeastern University, who died last January when she was hit by another Seattle police officer’s vehicle (traveling at least 63 mph in a 25 mph zone) while simply crossing the street.

Recently released body cam footage shows Officer Auderer, in conversation with Officer Mike Solan, the Guild’s President, mocking and laughing about Ms. Kandula’s tragic death, calling her an “ordinary person” and going as far as to say that her life had “limited value.”

SABA North America believes at its core that every single person’s life is meaningful and valuable. The Seattle Police Department (motto: “Service, Pride, Dedication) should believe the same. These disgraceful comments bring shame to every Seattle police officer, even though the vast majority would likely find them equally shocking and offensive. It is hard to imagine how a police force can hope to be effective at keeping its community safe when officers in positions of power clearly seem to hold people of color from that same community in such low regard. Additionally, SABA North America urges the Seattle Officers Guild not enable or condone Officer Auderer’s blatant disregard for human life- life that he has taken an oath to protect.

These remarks are part of a larger problem in our society—the nefarious view among some who should not be wearing the badge that people of color are of “limited value.” Three years ago, SABA North America stood with the families of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and Regis Korchinski-Paquet, along with all those who had been disproportionately affected by deep-rooted systems of institutionalized racism. Shortly thereafter, SABA North America launched the Racial Justice Task Force in September 2020, recognizing that we in the legal community have a special responsibility to enhance the quality of justice in our legal system. We stood with our brothers and sisters in the Black community, recognizing the decades long unjust persecution and brutality they faced at the hands of law enforcement. We urged the Department of Justice and Congress to investigate patterns and practice of violations by police departments across North America and increase accountability.

The remarks made by Officer Auderer reiterate that we still have a long way to go. It has long been time for our community to take action and demand that these patterns of racial intolerance come to an end.

Though Ms. Kandula's tragic death occurred in January 2023, it took almost 7 months for this video of Officer Auderer from another officer's bodycam to surface. And it has now been over a month since this video was brought to the attention of the Office of Police Accountability. While the OPA's investigation is still "pending" we are aware of no real punishment or action consequence that has been taken or imposed to date. In the meantime, every investigation involving Officer Auderer (at the very least) and a person of color should be called into question. This is unacceptable by the Police Department and the Police Union.

Just days ago, a federal district court lifted the consent decree that imposed policing reform requirements on the City of Seattle and Seattle Police Department. We respectfully ask the DOJ to consider whether this incident and its handling would alter its agreement that Seattle had fulfilled the terms of the consent decree.

We also demand that the OPA complete its investigation expeditiously, but just as importantly, transparently. We may never know what Officer Solan's half of the phone conversation with Officer Auderer contained, but to the extent records exist, they should be promptly disclosed. And the OPA's investigation should also consider whether SPD's explanation of the circumstances around Ms. Kandula's death were tainted by Officer Auderer's or other officers' bias.

Finally, at the very least, it is hard to understand how Seattle's police officers would continue to keep Officer Auderer in Guild leadership. Calls for de-unionizing the police will only grow louder if such explicit bias and callousness are allowed to fester in Guild leadership. We encourage Seattle's police officers to consider whether they would be more effectively led by officers who value, and are committed to protecting, the lives of every Seattleite.