

February 2012

**TO ALL CUPE CHARTERED ORGANIZATIONS**

**MARCH 21 – INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION**

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

Over half a century ago on March 21, 1960, in the township of Sharpeville, South Africa, white South African police fired more than 700 shots on peaceful black demonstrators, protesting the Country's pass laws. These discriminatory laws imposed restrictions on black South Africans to freely move around the country. They were controlled by passports, forbidden to organize unions, and black mine workers were forced to live in the countryside. Sixty-nine people were killed and 180 were wounded. Almost all of them were shot in the back.

In 1966, the United Nations General Assembly formally recognized the date of the massacre as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The assembly called on the international community not only to commemorate that tragedy, but also to work together to combat racism and racial discrimination wherever they exist.

For our members across the country, March 21 is a reminder of the struggles and challenges that racialized workers have endured. It is also a time to recognize and applaud the fact that members of these communities have made the anti-racism struggle a significant part of labour's agenda. Their active participation has strengthened our movement by bringing new ideas, perspective and energy to the struggles of working people.

Canadian demographics are rapidly changing, and with the low birthrate and an aging workforce, racialized groups are becoming major segments of our labour force.

CUPE has already started to prepare to meet these challenges by embracing diversity through employment equity measures that would assist in eradicating systemic racism and improve access for these group members.

We have developed new workshops and materials to promote and raise awareness on employment equity, and we encourage our locals and our leadership to engage in these workshops.

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CUPE has a proud and successful track record of using the collective agreement to promote human rights in the workplace before they were achieved through legislation. March 21 is the ideal time to renew our commitment to the goal of ending racism. By joining hand in hand with our racialized workers and our allies working within the union and our communities, we can make a difference in the fight to eliminate racial discrimination.

For further information, please contact the CUPE's Equality Branch at [equality@cupe.ca](mailto:equality@cupe.ca).

**Things you can do to fight racism:**

- Challenge yourself: consider how your own assumptions or beliefs might be discriminatory to others.
- Learn more about racially visible people and their communities.
- Stand with racially visible communities and speak out against hatred and racism.
- Challenge racist and discriminatory policies and laws.
- Organize a speaker on human rights at your next union meeting.
- Organize a panel discussion on racism.
- Set up an information booth or a lunchtime video that promotes better cross-cultural understanding.
- Speak out against racist acts like jokes, slurs, graffiti, name-calling, etc.
- Identify barriers to equality at work and find ways to remove them.
- Include equality issues on your bargaining agendas.
- Ask to have the *Creating Racial Justice Workshop* offered to your local or at the next division school.
- Include ethnic cultural success stories in your union newsletter. Send these stories to your local newspaper.
- Contact public institutions and officials to encourage their support for human rights and anti-racism issues when situations arise.
- Join or support organizations that are working to build inclusive communities.
- GET INVOLVED AND HAVE COURAGE! Stand up against racism and hate!

In solidarity,



PAUL MOIST  
National President



CHARLES FLEURY  
National Secretary-Treasurer