

March 2016

TO ALL CUPE CHARTERED ORGANIZATIONS

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

MARCH 21 – INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

On March 21, 1960, police opened fire and killed 69 people and wounded 180 others who were peacefully demonstrating against apartheid "pass laws" in the township of Sharpeville, South Africa. The General Assembly of the United Nations subsequently declared March 21 the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, calling on the international community to commemorate that tragedy and work together to confront racism and discrimination wherever they exist.

This is a day to remember the struggles and challenges that workers of colour and Aboriginal peoples have endured. It is also a time to recognize and applaud the fact that members of these communities have made anti-racism work a significant part of their unions' agenda. Their active participation has strengthened our movement by bringing new ideas, perspective, and energy into the struggles of working people.

We are currently experiencing the rise of precarious work across the country. As precarious work becomes the norm, workers of colour are a disproportionately forced to take on low paid jobs, contributing to their higher rates of poverty.

In addition to more precarious work, gun violence and discriminatory practices like racial profiling and carding targets youth of colour, new immigrants, and refugees. These practices have a devastating impact on these groups, and tear communities apart.

Human rights, economic justice and racial justice go hand in hand. In light of that reality, we need to redouble our efforts to pressure our government to implement a \$15 minimum wage and reverse the trends in precarious employment. CUPE members advocate to governments and the police to stop gun violence, racial profiling and carding practices. We have also demanded that the federal government implement the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation commission.

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March 21 is a special day of commemoration, but at CUPE, we believe the ideal time to renew our commitment to eliminating racism and discrimination is every day.

Creating a workplace where everyone is treated equally isn't easy. But there are many things you can do to promote equality:

- Challenge yourself: consider how your own assumptions might be discriminatory.
- Become an ally – someone who actively supports racialized groups facing challenges. It helps strengthen relationships in the workplace.
- Speak out against racist acts like jokes, slurs, graffiti, or name-calling.
- Challenge racist and discriminatory policies and practices in your workplace.
- Participate in a union workshop on anti-racism practices, harassment, discrimination, or bullying. Invite someone to speak about anti-racism at your next union meeting.

Please join us in calling attention to tools like our anti-racism brochure, *Diversity, Our Strength* (http://cupe.ca/sites/cupe/files/antiracismsinglepages_eng.pdf) and other online resources at <http://cupe.ca/racial-equality>.

In solidarity,



MARK HANCOCK
National President



CHARLES FLEURY
National Secretary-Treasurer