

January 2011

TO ALL CUPE CHARTERED ORGANIZATIONS

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

FEBRUARY – BLACK HISTORY MONTH

February is Black History Month and it's time when members of Black Communities celebrate the contributions made by Canadians of African origin to our union, to our country and around the world. It is also a great time to learn, appreciate and promote information about the perspectives and experiences of Black people.

As a people, with roots dating back to 1603, African-Canadians have defended, cleared, built and farmed this country. Many Canadians, for example, are still unaware of Canada's central role in the Underground Railroad. Oppressed slaves wanted a way out, and with the help of Abolitionist and other Anti-Slavery proponents, many slaves escaped to freedom in Canada which was referred to as "Heaven".

A lot of them were helped along their way via the so-called Underground Railroad. The Underground Railroad was neither underground nor a railroad. It was a loosely constructed network of escape routes that originated in the Southern United States, through the less restricted North and eventually stretched to Canada. Slaves escaped not only to Canada, but also to Mexico and the Caribbean. This system of escape started as early as the 1500s and operated well into the 1800s.

CUPE celebrates Black History Month as part of our commitment to promoting an active and inclusive union that values every member. Black members in our union play a key role in fighting for equality in the workplace and actively challenge racism wherever it is found.

During the celebration of Black History Month this year, we again invite you to let us know what you, your local or Division do to celebrate this Month and what it means to you. Your stories and activities will be used on CUPE's website to raise awareness and promote better understanding about the significance of Black History Month.

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Please send us information about your actions, photographs and tell us what Black History Month means to you, your family and the community. Send them to equality@cupe.ca. For the stories and other links please visit www.cupe.ca.

Have a great Black History Month!

In solidarity,



PAUL MOIST
National President



CLAUDE GÉNÉREUX
National Secretary-Treasurer