

5 June, 2020

WE ARE IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE MOVEMENT of BLACK LIVES MATTER

We want to recognize the outrage and grief of this moment. It is justified. We feel it, too.

The events taking place across North America and the world in response to the murder of George Floyd have given all of us a stark reminder of the ongoing wrong of racism in our communities. Centuries of anger at injustice and anti-Black racism are literally bursting into flames as people stand for political and cultural change to address these deep-seated systems that work to oppress so many members of our communities. Along with the death of Ahmaud Arbery, the threat against Christian Cooper who was participating in a park activity so many of us take for granted, and so many other wrongdoings, we are reminded of the horrendous consequences of anti-Black racism again and again, depriving people of their safety, their freedom and their lives.

In Canada, many people in the Black and Indigenous communities mistrust and live in fear of the police, such as in the death of Regis Korchinski-Paquet in Toronto. As Canadians, we have to do better and respond to such situations of a person with mental health challenges with trained health professionals, not with police.

We, as leaders in the worker co-operative movement in Canada, acknowledge the pain, frustrations and anger of our Black communities, and recognize that systemic anti-Black racism is prevalent in our context in Canada as well; in the streets of our communities, in the justice and policing systems, and in our co-operatives. It is important for members in our largely white co-ops to look at how we continue to perpetuate anti-Black racism, either inadvertently or intentionally.

George Floyd's words, "I can't breathe," continue to ring in our ears; they act as a voice of the pain and re-traumatization that is coming from peoples of African descent again and again. The voice is weary and tired. "We can't breathe" is the collective chant of peoples of African descent, notably those in North America, as they continue to struggle against centuries of racism and systemic discrimination.

We are hearing the same voice from leaders of African descent. This voice is tired of violence towards Black lives. This voice is tired of the exclusion of people of African descent in our structures of leadership. This voice is tired of the emptiness that comes from supposed allies who aren't willing to acknowledge their own privilege and responsibility. We want to affirm our commitment to ending our silence about and working towards the dismantling of anti-Black racism.

Solidarity Works / La Solidarité nous réussit

---

In addition, we declare our support of the International Decade for Peoples of African Descent, acknowledging the reality of racism in our institutions and committing ourselves to naming and working towards the eradication of anti-Black racism. We are inviting the members of our communities and worker co-operatives to join us in this commitment by visibly and concretely demonstrating the call for solidarity in the UN decade. Some suggestions are:

- Amplify Black voices by providing support, and encouragement.
- Use your white privilege, if you are white, to speak up for justice.
- Realize that what is happening is not a Black problem, but a collective problem.
- Conscientiously consider joining public expressions of solidarity towards seeking justice against anti-Black racism; stand together because it is only together that we will defeat this.
- Support and donate to Black Lives Matter and other solidarity groups, such as those listed [here](#) and [here](#);
- Educate yourself by reading books and other materials on Black history especially in the Canadian context, the impact of anti-Black racism, and the reality of white privilege including [here](#) and [here](#);
- Research critical elements of Black legacy;
- Engage with the artistic and cultural production of people of African descent, with a commitment to learn the history and context within these expressions.

Further, the CWCF joins movements demanding accountability, oversight, and democratic governance of law enforcement policies. We uplift the calls for the following:

1. Establish effective civilian oversight boards with investigative and subpoena powers.
2. Respond to mental health crises with healthcare, not policing responses.
3. Require independent investigations in all cases where police kill or seriously injure people.
4. Invest in healthy communities, not policing.
5. Increase transparency and accountability for officers with records of misconduct.
6. Make implicit bias and de-escalation training mandatory and periodic for everyone working in law enforcement.

As we pass through this moment of grief and rage, we must unify efforts across movements, because unleashing democracy – especially when powered by co-operative economics – leads us toward a future that is sustainable, inclusive, and based on principles of racial and economic justice. Together, we can and must build systems that are rooted in equity, reparations, democracy, and love. We call upon our members to join with us in this commitment.

In solidarity,

The Canadian Worker Co-operative Federation Board and Staff