

Unifor calls for significant, lasting reforms to end systemic racism in Canada



July 30, 2020 - 4:15 PM

Unifor's National Executive Board has issued a call for redefining public safety in Canada and for comprehensive reforms to Canadian institutions that allow, support, or excuse systemic racism.

"As trade unionists we cannot ignore the deadly threat that racism poses to Black, Indigenous, and racialized peoples," said Jerry Dias, Unifor National President. "Unifor will take action to organize, educate, and fight discrimination in all its forms."

With increasing incidents of violent and deadly racism across Canada, including the recent deaths of nine Black, Indigenous, and racialized people killed during police interactions, Unifor has made combatting systemic racism a top priority. Today, the [National Executive Board motion](#), passed unanimously, proposes a series of reforms to public institutions including redefining and demilitarizing policing and public safety, reallocating policing resources towards community-based models, destigmatizing mental health struggles, and ending systemic racism.

"Racially-motivated murders at the hands of law enforcement compels us to do more than just adopt an anti-racist posture," said Christine Maclin, Unifor's Director of Human Rights. "We have to take concrete action to eliminate systemic racism. Unifor members are doing just that by organizing educational events, actions, and promoting reforms that not only reshape how we conduct policing in our communities, but all institutions and structures in society."

The union has organized a National Day of Action for Racial Justice on July 31 that includes educational events, sharing educational materials and a moment of silence for Black, Indigenous, and racialized people killed in police interactions.

Unifor has also called on all Premiers to recognize Emancipation Day. Currently, Ontario is the sole province to designate August 1 as Emancipation Day, the date on which John Graves Simcoe, the Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada and slavery abolitionist, signed the first piece of anti-slavery legislation in 1793.

Emancipation Day is intended to confront and acknowledge Canada's role in upholding and maintaining slavery of Indigenous and Black people for more than 200 years. The history and legacy of slavery in Canada is often poorly understood and is regularly ignored, particularly when compared to the history of slavery in the United States.

"We have to use today as an opportunity of envisioning and building communities where everyone can thrive regardless of race, ethnicity or mental health status," added Dias. "If we are truly going to work towards the elimination of systemic racism then we cannot shy away from the difficult conversations and hard work needed to reconcile both historical and current injustices against Indigenous, Black, and racialized peoples."

Take action for racial justice on Emancipation Day



July 29, 2020 - 3:15 PM

To mark the August 1st Day of Emancipation, Unifor is holding a Day of Action for Racial Justice across Canada that includes workplace and online actions on July 31st. As part of the effort, Unifor has created and distributed t-shirts that read “2020 Civil Rights Movement. I am changing the things I cannot accept.”

In order to make the day as successful as possible, Unifor leadership is encouraging members to share photos and videos of their actions and individual members wearing our t-shirts and participating in local and online events to social media platforms using the hashtag #Unifor4RacialJustice. As well, Unifor members are encouraged to share photos and videos with Unifor’s Communications Department at communications@unifor.org.

On July 31 Unifor members and locals plan to hold the following events where possible and take the following actions:

- Create message boards supporting racial justice
- Create social media posts using #Unifor4RacialJustice
- Share [Unifor's policy on Racial Justice](#)
- Share the [6 steps to support racial justice shareable](#)

As trade unionists, we must continue to work towards combating discrimination in all its forms. We must continue to organize, educate and take action in our workplaces and our communities.

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6 Steps to Support Racial Justice

1. Choose to support racial justice every day.
2. Educate yourself on how to be an ally.
3. Challenge discrimination when you hear or see it, especially from friends and family.
4. Take political action and use your voice to assist in advocating for policy change.
5. Safely join a protest, days of action and cultural events.
6. Get connected and participate in your union and local anti-racist community organizations.

The Unifor logo, consisting of a stylized 'U' inside a square followed by the word 'UNIFOR' in a bold, sans-serif font.