



August 25, 2017

Dear Friends,

## Re Challenge Racism

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Like people around North America and the world, we at the Union of Northern Workers were shocked and dismayed at the displays of racial hatred and bigotry that took place in Charlottesville, Virginia on August 12, 2017. The sight of neo-Nazis and white supremacists openly expressing hate and violence led to the death of Heather Heyer and the injury of many more innocent people.

It is our role as a labour organization to denounce these actions whenever and wherever they take place in the strongest terms possible. As a union, one of our most important missions is to fight for human rights and social equality and to promote harmony among our diverse membership and community.

But more importantly, as thoughtful members of the human race, we reject the words and actions of hateful racists who seek to divide us.

In Canada, we are not immune to racial hatred. We have seen a mass shooting in a Quebec mosque, we have seen incidents of police abuse against people of colour and people of indigenous descent. We have seen demonstrations by extremist groups emerge in Quebec City and Vancouver who attempted to build off the chaos in Charlottesville.

Even in the North, we are seeing Nazi symbol graffiti, and angry racist comments on social media.

We are a proud nation of different ages, races, colours, sexes, gender identities, marital statuses, family statuses, religions, national and ethnic origins, disabilities, sexual orientations, languages, and political beliefs. We must respect, and indeed *celebrate* our differences!

**Now is the time for good people to stand up to hatred and violence.**

We must not tolerate any form of discrimination. We must speak out against it.

On a personal level, I am a white male, born and raised in Canada. I fully admit that I can't completely understand how it feels to be discriminated against. But I want to help make everyone feel safer – whether it is in the workplace, or just walking down the street.

**I humbly ask each and every one of you to look inside yourselves, to recognize your own biases, think about where they come from, and challenge yourself to look at things from a different angle. I will do the same.**

We must all educate ourselves in things we don't understand. We must all speak up if we see or hear someone else being mistreated. We can all listen to, validate, and take seriously people who report discrimination.

If we want safer and more just communities, workplaces, and lives, we must continuously fight for them and protect them.

In Solidarity,

Todd Parsons