



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO EDUCATION WORKERS
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Executive Committee

23 April 2021

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Solidarity with Asian and Migrant Massage Parlor and Sex Workers

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C.U.P.E. 3902 stands in solidarity with the victims and communities targeted by the massage parlour and spa shootings in Atlanta, Georgia last month. Eight people died on March 16, 2021, including six women who were immigrants or migrants of Asian descent and were killed while at work. We mourn this senseless loss of life, as well as the losses incurred over more than a year of escalated violence against members of the Asian diaspora throughout the world. [A study conducted by the Chinese Canadian National Council in Toronto](#) reports that over 1,150 anti-Asian racist attacks took place in Canada between March 10th, 2020 and February 28, 2021, 40% of which occurred in Ontario.

The harm done in Atlanta was exacerbated by official police statements that attempted to mitigate the guilt of the perpetrator by reporting that the killings were caused by sex addiction. These remarks distort the systemic reality of racist violence, reproducing the killer’s fetishization of Asian spa workers as morally-anxious objects of white consumption. C.U.P.E. 3902 condemns these hate crimes against women, sex workers, and Asians, as well as the bigoted and harmful police response.

The historical record of white prejudice against Asians has become embedded in the contemporary myth of the model minority, of the ideal student or worker who despite contributing invaluable to their community lives in a state of perpetual foreignness and otherness relative to mainstream society. [Asian women face sexual harassment and violence in the University sector](#) as an inheritance from [white sexual imperialism](#), and face microaggressions in the workplace when they, as Asians, are obliged to present as stereotypically compliant and hard-working, while being barred from advancement. Just as Asian sex workers have suffered historically as a result of white hypocrisy, fulfilling vital services yet refused the domestic partnership and quality of citizenship afforded to whites, Asian workers in white-dominated workplaces too often suffer invisibly from perfectionism and overwork at the same time as their rights and professional development are curtailed by racial bias.

U of T prides itself as a multicultural institution, yet is complicit in the exploitation of Asian students and workers. The University’s position as a world leader in education and research is tied to a reputation as an institution populated by countless Asian students, interchangeable and vying for credentials. U of T’s ongoing objectification of Asian students and workers is especially pernicious because the precarious status of Asians as "honorary whites," which pandemic violence has revealed to be deceitful and easily revoked, comes from a [discourse that is inseparable from anti-Black racism](#), prejudicing Black and Asian workers against each other while obfuscating the real, systemic barriers to empowerment, which originate in white supremacy.

We cannot accept this, and we demand action from the University and the Canadian government to enact meaningful policy that protects the rights of workers, promotes an anti-racist culture, and prevents racist and sexist violence:

- We demand concrete and evidence-based action from U of T that reflects specifically on the educational experiences and working conditions of Asian community members.
- We demand that U of T strengthen supports and resources for survivors of campus sexual harassment and assault.
- We demand that the Canadian government specifically include anti-Asian racism in anti-racism policies and programs, including its upcoming [Anti-Racism Action Program](#), and that a Parliamentary Committee hearing be called on the subject of anti-Asian racism, its root causes, prevention strategies, and community support and resources.
- We demand that the Canadian government grant protection from violence to sex workers through decriminalization, and we demand an end to policies that conflate sex work with human trafficking. C.U.P.E. 3902 recognizes sex work as work and we demand that our government do the same. We stand behind all sex workers in their fight to have their labour and human rights respected.
- We demand immigration rights for all, and we demand an end to immigration-specific restrictions put on international students and other migrants when it comes to their rights to engage in sex work. Like criminalization, these policies precarize and endanger workers' safety.

Over the past year, our Union has endeavoured through collective bargaining to reach more equitable outcomes for gendered and racialized workers, recently [ratifying a new Unit 1 Collective Agreement](#) with the University requiring that departments make hiring criteria explicit for Unit 1 workers and that the University give the Union data on the representation of race and gender in hiring outcomes; strengthening our rights to grieve after sexual harassment; empowering teachers to enter the classroom equipped with anti-oppression and anti-racism training; as well as creating a new Equity Fund for BIPOC workers. But there's so much more to do.

As a workers' movement, we must acknowledge our own responsibility in mirroring and shaping the culture of this University, and our complicity with an Employer and a mainstream culture that are anti-sex work, misogynistic, and white supremacist. A healthy and diverse Union begins with taking intentional steps to listen and include, by holding space for diverse voices, and being thoughtful and deliberate about the specific processes whereby our Union works. We hope that all our members, colleagues, and allies will continue to hold us accountable to this difficult and important project.

We also offer our financial resources to community organisations that strive for justice for Asians, migrants, and sex workers:

1. The Executive Committee can quickly approve donations of up to \$200. Larger donations must be approved at a General Membership Meeting, and typically range between \$1000 and \$5000 for progressive organisations and initiatives.
2. Our budget sets aside funds to cover expenses related to rallies and other solidarity actions. Contact st@cupe3902.org for more details.

Finally, many projects and organizations in our networks are dedicated to uplifting the communities that were targeted by the attacks. We encourage our members to reach out and seek support during this difficult time.

In solidarity,

The Executive Committee
C.U.P.E. 3902

Resources for Reporting and Addressing Anti-Asian Racism:

- [Chinese Canadian National Council for Social Justice on Linktree](#)
- [Anti-Asian Racism and the Pandemic Reading List: Solidarity in a Time of Crisis \(Reading List\)](#)
- [Fight COVID Racism](#)
- [Project 1907](#), a racism incident reporting centre organized by diasporic Asian women
- [Asian Canadian Labour Alliance](#)
- [Migrant Rights Network](#)
- [“Addressing Anti-Asian Racism in the University”](#) by U of T Professors Hae Yeon Choo and Robert Diaz

Pro-Worker and Anti-Racist Statements of Unity and Calls to Action

- [Statement of Unity - Solidarity Rally Against Anti-Asian Racism on March 28, 2021](#) (CCNC-SJ Coalition with CCNC Toronto, Butterfly, ACLA, and For a Safer Space)
- [“It is Time for the Parliament to Take Concrete Action on Anti-Asian Racism”](#) (CCNC-SJ)
- [8 Calls for Justice](#) from Butterfly: Support Asian and Migrant Sex Workers
- [C.U.P.E. National Day of Mourning on April 28th, 2021 for Workers Killed or Injured on the Job](#)

Canadian and Transnational Sex Worker Support Networks

- [Butterfly: Asian and Migrant Sex Workers Support Network](#) (Toronto)
- [Sex Professionals of Canada](#) (Toronto)
- [Maggie's Toronto Sex Workers Action Project](#)
- [Canadian Alliance for Sex Work Law Reform](#)
- [Red Canary Song](#), a transnational Asian and migrant sex worker collective
- [Prostitutes of Ottawa-Gatineau Work, Educate and Resist \(POWER\)](#)
- [Stella Montreal: Sex Worker Advocacy and Support](#)
- [Swan Vancouver: Culturally-Specialized Supports & Advocacy for Im/Migrant Women Engaged in Indoor Sex Work](#)
- [Pace Society](#) (Vancouver)
- [Peers Victoria](#)
- [Stepping Stone](#) (Halifax)