

Statement from CUPE Local 3906 regarding anti-Blackness and the racial profiling of BCSA member Shelby McPhee at the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences 2019

On June 2, 2019, a graduate student and member of the Black Canadian Studies Association (BCSA) who was attending the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of British Columbia was racially profiled by two white Congress attendees. Not only did these individuals accuse the BCSA member, Shelby McPhee, of stealing a laptop; they also stalked, harassed, and recorded him, demanding that he prove he was a registered attendee, and contacted both the RCMP and Congress volunteers who proceeded to get campus police involved as well. Mr. McPhee was then illegally detained by RCMP until a representative of the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences arrived to speak first with the two accusers. This representative did not speak with Mr. McPhee until the RCMP had confirmed his total exoneration of the bogus allegations. As has been noted by the BCSA, the behaviour of this Federation representative stands in stark contrast to that of another student attendee – an Indigenous woman from Asia – who courageously stood in solidarity with Mr. McPhee and bore witness to the racial violence that was playing out in front of her, all the while being subjected to police intimidation herself.

On June 4, the BCSA released an open letter recounting the events above and condemning the Federation's disregard for Mr. McPhee's wellbeing, as was apparent in the lack of responsive action that could have framed this incident for what it was: a gross example of racial profiling *advanced by the Federation itself*. This letter also contained four non-negotiable demands for action, which can be found [here](#).

The following day, on June 5, the Federation released a statement that was void of any apology to Mr. McPhee or any direct acknowledgment of the BCSA's letter, instead merely noting the Federation's commitment to its Code of Conduct without promising any commensurate action. **Here it is worth noting that although McPhee's accusers did clearly breach this Code of Conduct, neither were removed from Congress. In fact, Federation officials have yet to decide if they will face any sanctions at all.**

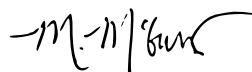
Since this initial response, Federation officials issued two more statements in communication with the BCSA. Crucially, the first contained an apology for the pain and suffering inflicted upon Mr. McPhee but no acknowledgment of the Federation's direct complicity in causing such pain and suffering, and the second noted that Federation officials would meet the BCSA's demand to waive the association fees of all BCSA members for Congress 2020. **This means that as of now, two of the BCSA's demands for action have yet to be met by Federation officials. Not only do they still have to ensure the delivery of the BCSA's letter to the two individuals who accused and harassed Mr. McPhee, they must also commit to the explicit addition of "Confronting anti-Blackness" to the official theme of Congress 2020, currently titled "Bridging Divides."** Echoing the BCSA, we believe this change would help to invigorate the Federation's stated commitment to confronting anti-Black racism at Congress and in the institutional structures that comprise the academy more broadly. The irony that Mr. McPhee was racially profiled in a setting that is widely assumed to be inherently progressive should not be lost on any of us.

We in CUPE 3906 stand in solidarity with Shelby McPhee and the BCSA in calling upon the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences to meet **all four** of the BCSA's demands. We would also implore other organizations and associations like ours to voice their support of Mr. McPhee, the BCSA, and all other members of the academy who not only experience anti-Blackness on a regular basis, but also continue to do the difficult work of dismantling the structures of anti-Blackness that evidently pervade academia to this day.

In solidarity,



CUPE 3906 Equity Officer



CUPE 3906 Political Action Committee Co-Chair



CUPE 3906 President