

June 3, 2020

An injury to one is an injury to all.

The Executive Committee of CUPE 3906, representing academic workers at McMaster University, joins unionists around the world in declaring that enough is enough. No more liberal hand-wringing. No more promises for inquiries and sensitivity training. No more racist cops. Period. Capitalism was built on a foundation of colonialism, anti-Black racism, and white supremacy. Working people simply cannot afford to go on thinking we can liberate ourselves from capitalism without also dismantling those foundations. Modern policing has its roots in the slave patrols, and its principle functions even today are to protect private property and preserve the status quo.

We want justice for George Floyd. We want justice for Breonna Taylor. We want justice for Tony McDade. We want justice for Regis Korchinski-Paquet. We want justice for Eishia Hudson, Jason Collins, and Stewart Kevin Andrews, three Indigenous people murdered by Winnipeg police over the course of just ten days back in April. And we believe that justice for them is not simply a matter of individual cops being held to account, but the kind of deep systemic transformation required to prevent these atrocities, which now seem like an almost daily occurrence.

Real justice also requires us to acknowledge that policing cannot be reformed. For every racist cop willing to abuse their authority there are hundreds more willing to cover it up or look the other way for fear of violating the so-called “blue wall of silence.” Policing must be abolished, and in its place, new systems of accountability built on strong foundations of community and mutual aid must be established. In the meantime, we must do everything in our power to ensure that racist police are held to account.

We also need to reflect on the role of police unions in protecting bad cops. Every time a cop, or a prison guard, or a spy joins our ranks, they gain access to a grievance procedure to shield themselves from accountability, and they use their negotiations with municipalities and the state to shield themselves from reforms. In return, our unions develop a financial incentive to lobby governments for increased budgets for policing, surveillance, and incarceration. As working-class people, cops do not and cannot share our interests. They are the bodyguards and foot soldiers of the bosses. There is a reason you don't see police unions participating in Labour Day. For the safety of our members and for the integrity of our struggle for a more just society, they must be removed from our unions and federations, including CUPE.

A better world is possible, but only if we stand as one global labour movement in unequivocal solidarity against every system of oppression in society, in the workplace, and in our unions.

In solidarity,

The Executive Committee of CUPE Local 3906