

## Asian and South Asian Heritage Month

**May 1, 2020**

May marks Asian and South Asian Heritage Month in Canada, an important time to celebrate the contributions and achievements Asian and South Asian Canadians have made to our society—enriching our culture, politics, diversity, and everyday life. During this time, we also reflect on the perseverance and activism of Asian Canadians who've shaped Canada into what it is today.

This month is of high importance during the COVID-19 pandemic, where incidents of anti-Asian racism has surged. Those who are or are perceived to be Chinese or Asian, are experiencing stigma, racism, and prejudice because of the continued spread of misinformation related to coronavirus. As cases of COVID-19 are increasingly reported, so are cases of racist behavior where people are placing blame on communities and individuals who have nothing to do with the outbreak. As the union for everyone, Unifor is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion and to breaking down barriers and stereotypes.

The struggles of people of Asian descent parallels stories of resilience and prosperity—from Canada's immigration surge during B.C.'s gold rush, to the Chinese Exclusion Head Tax, to the internment of Japanese people during World War II, to today, where Asian Canadians continue to thrive despite anti-Asian racism.

Many South Asian community organizations have shown true solidarity during rough times by continually giving back. Despite the racist history many South Asian people face, and continue to face, in Canada, communities have continued to persevere through racist policies that excluded South Asian people from voting, participating in political office, jury duty, professions in public service jobs and labour in public works. One such story is that of the Komagata Maru, a vessel transporting 376 passengers that was denied admission into Canada as a way to restrict immigration.

Asian and South Asian Canadians have overcome great adversity to live here and generations of hard work has transformed communities and helped make Canada prosperous. During May, we celebrate these achievements and recommit to our pledge to combat racism.

Canada's legacy of anti-Asian racism is still rampant. As advocates for human rights, we still have sobering lessons to learn about racism, and ways we can elevate the fight for an anti-racist Canada. Collectively, we will learn how to do better and inspire others to do the same.

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