

May 15, 2020

## SOLIDARITY WITH THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY: BREAKING THE SILENCE

On May 17<sup>th</sup>, we join over 130 other countries worldwide in celebrating the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia.

We must remember and acknowledge the continued systemic injustice faced by the LGBTQ community. The theme for this year is Breaking the Silence.<sup>1</sup> It was chosen as a reminder that for most of their lives, LGBTQ people have been made to feel ashamed, stigmatized and have had to hide their sexualities, gender identities or sex characteristics.

We must break down barriers to accessing health care and higher rates of social and economic isolation. Let us all band together and show solidarity for our LGBTQ sisters, brothers, and friends. This is the year to speak up, make noise, to let people tell their stories and occupy the space that is rightfully theirs.

CUPW recognizes that during this time of a global pandemic, many members of the LGBTQ community may be experiencing additional stress and anxiety in relation to the health crisis. It was only in 1990 that the World Health Organization declassified homosexuality as a mental disorder, and only since 2004 that the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia has been celebrated around the world. Sadly, there are still places in the world where people are harmed or even killed for their sexual and gender identity. With still many challenges ahead, we must all stand in solidarity with the LGBTQ community's fight for human rights.

Together, let us be better allies. We must always seek to be better informed and more vocal advocates. There is certainly a lot of work to be done, but we must learn from and be inspired by the pride and the resilience of the LGBTQ community as we continue to move forward with this fight. For this reason, CUPW has negotiated provisions in our collective agreements that prohibit discrimination by reason of sexual orientation, gender expression and gender identity. We encourage our members to stand up for each other, and to always seek support when in need. An injury to one is an injury to all.

While we continue to practice physical distancing, we must also continue to stay connected. Many celebratory events will be held online and in different settings this year, but that does not make the movement any less vibrant, loud, or proud.

Even though many of us are still isolated due to the pandemic, there are many different virtual events happening on May 17<sup>th</sup>:

- **Canada and Quebec:**  
<https://may17.org/2020-country-page-canada/>
- **World Events:**  
<https://may17.org/events-announced-on-all-continents-for-may-17-idahotb-idahobit-2020/>
- **Ideas for Action Under the Lockdown:**  
<https://may17.org/dont-give-up-the-fight-ideas-for-action-under-lockdown/>

In solidarity,



Jan Simpson  
National President

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<sup>1</sup> <https://may17.org/2020-theme-elected-breaking-the-silence/>