

## Black Creek Food Justice Network

June 15, 2020

The Black Creek Food Justice Network stands in solidarity with former and current staff at [The Stop Community Food Centre](#) regarding ongoing and structural anti-Black racism at The Stop. Systemic oppression is pervasive and violent in this world and no organization in Canada in the food justice movement is immune. We all have to make changes and fight racism in all its forms.

The violence of racism has always had a heavy impact on Black, Indigenous and racialized people. The COVID-19 pandemic has created a pressure cooker of oppression on the working class and poor people who uphold the very foundations of our food system, from migrant workers, food service workers, food processing workers, to workers trying to build food security through non-profit organizations. The essential workers doing this frontline food labour are disproportionately Black, Indigenous and racialized people facing systemic exploitation.

The Black Creek Food Justice Network is predominantly led by Black and racialized people. As a network we have used our platform to fight racism with an eye on anti-Black racism in food system spaces. We advocate for food justice through an anti-oppression framework in our community and the city at large. We don't do food justice perfectly and we are acutely aware of the systemic violence that impresses upon racialized people, groups, and movements. We know it is complicated; we know it is a struggle. Throughout our journeys we have learned a great deal, and still have so much more to learn.

We see that racism and exploitation pervades our entire food system. We see it in the low wages and exploitation of food system workers. We see it in the fact that emergency charity food aid, such as what is provided by food banks, has become permanent because our economic and social systems leave so many people unable to afford and access the food they need and our governments have not intervened in a way that changes this.

Additionally, we see it in the way that resources are distributed throughout our city, with wealth and privilege concentrated in wealthy white downtown neighborhoods and within the boundaries of the old city of Toronto, while precarious jobs, criminalization and policing, and negative health outcomes are concentrated in our neighbourhoods.

Systemic, interpersonal and institutional racism in the food movement and food organizations in Toronto continues to be a problem. White supremacy manifests in this work and it is pervasive. As we have seen through the pandemic, so much of Canada's food is grown by Black and racialized people. Yet when it comes to creating food policy, we are rarely at the decision-making table. This dynamic must not be replicated within the very organizations whose missions are to create a more just and secure food system for all.

Organizations in the food movement must stop performing allyship and portraying themselves as against anti-black racism while standing and building upon the backs of Black and racialized bodies. This violence has shown its head across the city with institutions, non-profits, and others who take up large spaces of real estate in our communities, leaving community-led organizations fighting for space. It shows when these

projects and labours of love are then taken away from us in ongoing cycles of betrayal, whether projects are cut in times of crisis, or our community members who are leading them are let go, or organizations fail to address their failings and change.

This is especially painful when it impacts our racialized youth, as it often does. It shows when organizations gain funding and attention for doing work in our communities but seem to benefit more than we do. It shows when our community members and their experience and knowledge are passed over and not valued in hiring or promotion. Or when Black, Indigenous and racialized people are hired only to face a toxic and racist work environment, have their labour taken but aren't valued as human beings, get burned out, are blamed for problems when they raise issues, don't get the support they deserve or have their positions cut.

There are so many things that need to change to meaningfully challenge white supremacy and racism within our organizations, within our movements, and within our city. Representation, decision making, and the elevation of racialized communities on all levels of these spaces is absolutely imperative to begin the intricate and heavy work of dismantling racism within these spaces. Change needs to happen interpersonally, institutionally and systemically and trust needs to be built with BIPOC communities. It is also a feature of anti-racism work and struggle in institutions whereby when concerns about race are raised, the work in addressing these issues in the workplace always seems to fall on Black and racialized workers, especially women. This must change. It absolutely is challenging, it can be "disruptive" to an organization, and is never completed, but there is no other way to do food security and food justice work.

Sincerely,  
Black Creek Food Justice Network

Endorsement:  
Jane Finch Action Against Poverty  
Black Creek Community Farm

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