

Emancipation Day 2026

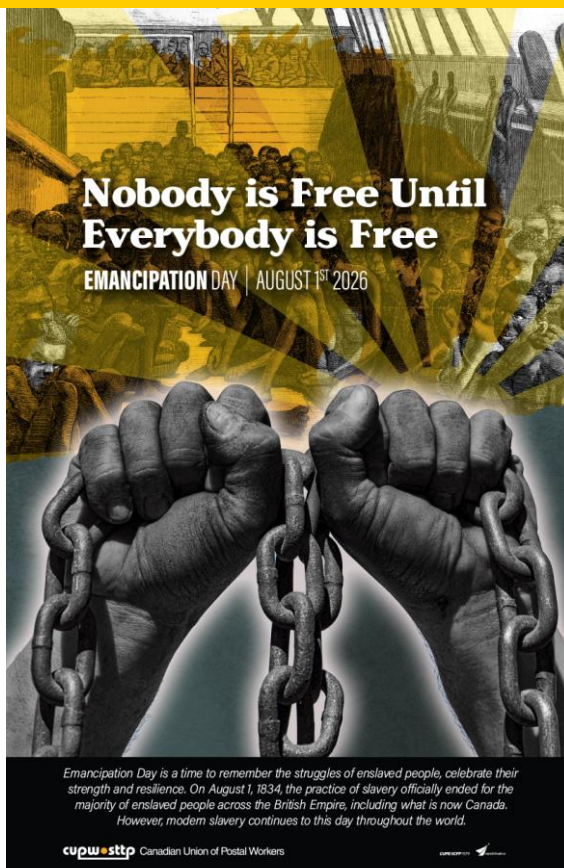
August 1st is officially recognized as Emancipation Day in Canada. It commemorates the Abolition of the British Slavery Act in 1834, which paved the way to freedom for the majority of enslaved people across the British Empire, including Canada.

Black Canadian communities across Canada have actively commemorated August 1st since the 1850s, but Emancipation Day was only officially recognized by Parliament in 2021.

This day serves as a reminder of our responsibility to stand against racism in our workplaces, our unions, and our communities. Solidarity means more than words, it means taking action to make sure every member is treated with dignity, respect, and fairness.

Although popular belief suggests otherwise, slavery was common in the lands that would become Canada after Confederation. Slavery was legal in French and British Canada for more than 200 years and wasn't abolished until 1834. Between 1629 and 1834, there were more than 4,000 enslaved people of African descent in the British and French colonies.

Between the 1830s and the 1860s, 30,000 to 50,000 Black freedom seekers in the United States fled to Canada via the Underground Railroad conducted by



Black abolitionists like Harriet Tubman, Josiah Henson, and Mary and Henry Bibb. Canadians should be proud of this part of their history.

The impacts of slavery continue to shape the life of Black People in Canada to this day. Anti-Black racism manifests into new policies and practices. Across Canada, Black people continue to face discrimination in almost all parts of their life, including education, employment, housing, healthcare, child welfare and their social, economic and political life. Black workers continue to face barriers in representation, advancement, and equal treatment. As trade unionists, we must challenge those barriers and push for real

change wherever discrimination exists.

Emancipation Day is an occasion to educate people about Canadian's history of slavery and its impact on racism towards Black communities. CUPW remains committed to equity through education, advocacy, and collective action. We will continue working to build a union where all members can participate fully and work free from harassment, prejudice, and discrimination. We encourage all members to learn more about the history of slavery in Canada, the ongoing impacts of systemic racism, and the leadership and achievements of Black communities.

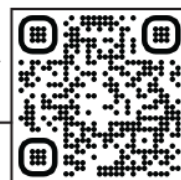
Understanding our history helps us build a stronger future!

In Solidarity,

Jan Simpson
National President

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