

## STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO BLM-LDN

July 24, 2020 1:00 PM

The past few days have been filled with a lot of conversations, both with community elders and internally as well as with Black Lives Matter London representatives.

We are in the middle of creating historic change. Of calling for an end to the systems of oppression and violence against Black communities. Of calling for awareness and recognition of personal biases and ways in which we are complicit in these systems. It is hard work. It is unending work. And it is work in which we are called upon to admit that while we may think we are allies, there are ways in which we might be actively doing harm.

Black Lives Matter London reached out to us after our statement. we also know that they reached out to other LGBT2Q+ BIPOC leaders and voices in our community. They have admitted that they entered into a partnership with Pride without taking the time to understand the relationship of the LGBT2Q+ BIPOC individuals and groups within London to the Pride London Festival (PLF). That they approached it with an outsider view, admitting they believed that Pride was the only LGBT2Q+ voice in the city. We were happy to Black Lives Matter London taking the first step and announcing that they will be cancelling the event partnership with PLF. We remain cautious and remind everyone that platforms and privilege should be used to support, not to take over and dominate a conversation.

As Black Lives Matter has not explained in their statement why we were calling for an end to partnership. We will. We are not calling for an end to conversations about anti-racism within the queer community. We are not calling for an end to conversations about the intersections of privilege and power. We are speaking out that LGBT2Q+ Black community is ALSO part of the Black community and elevating an organization with a history of oppression against us in pursuit of change for the wider Black community, not only harms us, but once again sends the message that we do not belong. We are speaking out that the partnership has not only endorsed but has provided a platform to encourage the ongoing problematic behavior of performative allyship, racism, misogyny, bullying and manipulation which are all commonplace within the PLF organization. We are speaking out about the incredible harm of an organization with has a track record of exclusion and oppression particularly towards the BIPOC community once again using their power to dominate the conversation.

We cannot have a just and equitable conversation when one of the biggest known perpetrators is not only holding power in the conversation, but also positioning themselves as above reproach. We are speaking out about how the partnership will enable the PLF to continue to silence LGBT2Q+ BIPOC voices when they criticize the organization and behaviors. In fact, the voices that have been silenced by Pride London Festival throughout the years were not acknowledged or even invited to the table. We cannot "Continue the Conversation" when the conversation has for years been started but continuously

silenced by Pride London Festival. We are speaking out so that those who were in the position of BLM, looking at our community from the outside and not doing the work to see beyond those that hold all the power can know that we will not stand silently by anymore. We are speaking up and saying that you cannot speak for our community without involving our community.

We call for organizations, businesses, groups, individuals and allies to reconsider what allyship means. To look beyond an organization that by virtue of having a recognizable name, has positioned themselves to hold great power in our community. A power that has been used to silence others in our community. We call for allies to recognize that the LGBT2Q+ community does not begin and end with Pride London Festival. We call for work to be done to make visible the many diverse community groups that have been relegated to the shadow of Pride London Festival or that Pride London Festival has used their power to erase from the narrative. We call for allies to support the LGBT2Q+ community NOT just a festival once a year. That support for the LGBT2Q+ goes beyond a festival.

We call on our fellow LGBT2Q+ BIPOC community, to acknowledge the problems that are taking place within the Queer community once more. We know that it has been tiring. We know that many have chosen to simply leave the city. We know that many have chosen to disengage, believing that there would be no space for them. We know that many have chosen to sit quietly by as a way to survive and retain a sense of community. We recognize that there are members of the LGBT2Q+ BIPOC community who are part of Pride London who many not agree with us and we challenge those to recognize the intersections of privilege in their viewpoints and that profiting off of the power and privilege gained by remaining agreeable to PLF actions, is at the expense of an entire community.

We call on those in the LGBT2Q+ community, to support groups that are not Pride London Festival, to recognize that we are more than a once a year festival. To recognize there is incredible diversity within our community that needs to be respected, supported and included. To recognize that speaking out about the problems in our community means that we retain hope that there can be a BETTER version of our community. That we are calling on everyone to support and work for a shift in our thinking. To stop before you silence voices that are hurting and instead approach from a place of listening and being open to change.

We have given the PLF too much power for too long. It is time we stop holding PLF up as the sole voice and representative of our community. It is time we support the work of others who are inclusive, who are doing the real, hard work that is needed. It is time we come truly together as a community and work in solidarity.

**Black Queer Network - London Ontario**