



Correction: our earlier letter was dated June 22, 2017.

June 22, 2018

Hello members of the Seattle-King County chapter of Black Lives Matter,

We saw your recent Facebook post on June 17th at 8:54am about being asked by the Seattle Pride Board to participate as Grand Marshals at the 2018 Seattle Pride Parade. Your post says "Seattle Pride promised to change; we haven't heard from them since."

We are concerned that there seems to be a perception from your organizers, and now public communication with our Seattle community, that Seattle Pride has been silent with the Seattle-King County chapter of Black Lives Matter (BLM) on your request for dialogue and change.

To help us ensure that we are referencing factual communication, we have reviewed our email correspondence with your team and would like to provide the following documentation of our history of correspondence, since the invite to participate in the Seattle Pride 2018 Parade as Grand Marshals.

- On Jan 29, 2018, our all-volunteer board invited you to be one of our Grand Marshals for the 2018 Seattle Pride Parade.
- On Jan 31, 2018, a leader from BLM replied and said your organization "would be honored to be among this year's Grand Marshals."
- On Feb 12, 2018, BLM sent us an email sharing that your organization was withdrawing as a Grand Marshal from Seattle Pride. This email states "while Pride has turned away from some of its more problematic funders and partnerships, it has not joined the effort to hold accountable or dismantle the systems those funders and partners perpetuate and benefit from." BLM also shared in this email that Seattle Pride "benefited from the abuse, incarceration, or spilled blood of black and other people of color through its funding and partnerships both local and national." In this email, BLM shared that some allies are stepping up to do the hard work, yet there were few tangible requests made by BLM on what these anti-violence concepts and frameworks could look like in specific action for Seattle Pride, how we organize our leadership, leverage our resources and how we host our events and programming."
- On Feb 27, 2018, we responded with a letter acknowledging BLM's withdrawal honoring and respecting your decision. We addressed your concerns with the following paragraph in our letter: "Seattle Pride would like to address your concerns surrounding the ethics of our funding, to which we have an economic, social, and a principled response. Economically, an event like ours would not be possible without multiple sources of funding. Socially, we believe the partnership of some corporations and institutions helped us move the needle on LGBTQ+



worker rights, anti-LGBTQ+ bills, and Marriage Equality. We hope it will also move the needle against bathroom bills and other injustices faced by the LGBTQ+ community. And on principle, we are opposed to excluding a group of LGBTQ+ individuals from participating in the parade because of who they are employed by. Budgets and funding sources can be changed. The relationship with our sponsors can evolve. Not allowing an employee affinity group to march and show their Pride is something we feel goes against the mission and purpose of our event.” We ended our letter by sharing with you, “Our board humbly welcomes feedback and criticism in hopes that we can take steps to improve our organization. In recent years, we have taken action to address what the community has asked of us, and Seattle Pride is aware of the improvements it can make and the work it still has to accomplish. We will continue to invite you to engage in dialogue surrounding the issues your organization is focused on addressing. The struggle against oppression is most successful when it is fought on all fronts and by many allies. Seattle Pride wishes to be yours and hopes you will be ours.”

Unfortunately, since our last communication with you on Feb 27, 2018, we have not heard from the Seattle-King County chapter of Black Lives Matter at all and have no email or social media documentation sharing otherwise.

We want to be transparent and on record sharing that Seattle Pride believes in and supports the movement for Black Lives in this country. We are grateful for the work that you all do and were disappointed when we did not hear back from your leaders about ways we could meet, work together and support the dismantling of oppression of Black and Brown people in our city. We continue to stay committed to our own anti-oppression values and examine the ways we are committed to social justice and ensuring the safety of marginalized LGBTQ people in our communities.

This has included:

- Critical conversations around the individuals and identities that comprise the Seattle Pride board, who we recruit, the spaces and venues we prioritize in our community, and the types of access and resources we can leverage to provide affirming, equitable events for youth, people of color, transgender and gender diverse folks, undocumented folks, non-English speakers, survivors of violence and those with different physical and cognitive abilities.
- A continued commitment to examining racial bias and racial inequity through professional development and training in regards to transformative justice and trainings for us internally and externally to transformative justice, trauma-informed, and harm reduction events in our communities. These have included:
  - Ongoing consultation and guidance from racial justice and anti-violence consultants to host racial justice programming in our community.



- Multiple LGBTQ events and community town hall forums that engage in real, frank and necessary conversations on ways racism and violence impact Seattle's LGBTQ communities.
- Appointing the lead of our security team to a person of color and working as a team to examine our practices at Seattle Pride events to ensure non-violent protests and a safe parade route that prioritizes de-escalation techniques that do not use law enforcement or require their presence.
- A continued review of our funding, event and parade practices and procedures to center and prioritize the safety of youth, people of color, transgender and gender diverse folks, undocumented folks, non-English speakers, survivors of violence and those with different physical and cognitive abilities.

On a personal level, we also believe it's important to share that much of our board leadership currently identifies as LGBTQ people of color. We have collectively gathered together to create this letter to send to you and are deeply aware how anti-blackness, racism, xenophobia, misogyny and patriarchy affect and historically shaped our LGBTQ communities. We will continue to remain committed to asking those with privilege to be accountable. This may include asking those with power to leverage their resources to support programming, events, and movements that are addressing people and communities who are marginalized.

We also recognize how pervasive callout culture has become on social media and that people may be quick to believe something that is not true. Thankfully, we have email correspondence documented to show our efforts to support you and have your leadership at our communal table. This invite to have an in-person meeting or engage in meaningful dialogue remains open. In our commitment to transparent accountability, we also ask that you retract and remove the statement on your social media that we have not been in communication with you. This is not true and further creates an unnecessary and toxic divide in our communities, specifically among people of color. With respect, we request that you retract and remove the statement by 8:00 PM Saturday June 23, 2018.

We look forward to hearing from you and hopefully working together,

Seattle Pride Board of Directors