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Queer Ontario's Position Statement on Black Lives Matter Toronto and Pride Toronto

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It has been suggested that the only way for long established white dominated institutions in our society to reach the goal to become truly welcoming of racial equity is for them to be shut down and rebuilt with that goal established as its foundation. At Queer Ontario, we wonder if the recent vote at Pride Toronto approving the Black Lives Matter demands and electing five new members of the Pride Toronto executive might give Pride Toronto the opportunity to test that premise.

Queer Ontario welcomes the Pride decision as a way of moving toward more active participatory inclusion of a wider diversity of LGBTQ folks and their concerns than has been seen up to now. Recent events have provided a challenge to white LGBTQ folks especially and the ability to re-imagine a deeper form of democratic inclusion and participation. Coming to this realization depends on understanding how the very important gains in community-building and resistance in our queer politics has also been a history of the leverage that whiteness (and middle-class) status affords those who engage in social justice politics as well.

Has Pride in Toronto become a corporatized tourist event with a party agenda and little to no tolerance of politics? Pride, which symbolizes the dawning of the modern-day gay liberation movement, was born out of resistance as demonstrated by the 1969 Stonewall riots in New York City and the 1981 bathhouse raids in Toronto. We have made enormous progress on queer issues in Toronto, Ontario and Canada but that progress has not been evenly meted out. Some members of our communities do not reap the benefits, namely those that are racialized, ethnicized, Indigenous, gendered, the disabled and the impoverished. The experiences of these communities at Pride in Toronto are not the same as revelers that reap the benefits.

Let us hope that the new Pride Toronto takes this opportunity and will reconstruct itself in such a way that it will become a truly inclusive and equitable organization.

Queer Ontario is a provincial network of gender and sexually diverse individuals — and their allies — who are committed to questioning, challenging, and reforming the laws, institutional practices, and social norms that regulate queer people.