



The No Pride in Policing Coalition (NPPC) was founded in 2018 to sustain the demands of Black Lives Matter Toronto (BLM-TO) at the 2016 Pride festivities, especially the demand that there be no institutional police presence in Pride Toronto parades and festivals. NPPC is a multi-racial, anti-racist, queer and trans group fighting for the defunding and abolition of police and prisons, and for the transfer of these resources to community-based groups to meet people's needs.

Last year we witnessed the global Black uprising that followed the police killing of George Floyd in the United States, and the police killings of Black, Indigenous, and racialized people here in Canada. NPPC put out a statement calling on the City of Toronto to defund, disarm, demilitarize, and abolish police. Our statement included all the demands of BLM-TO on these matters. NPPC and many other groups that represent Black, Indigenous, racialized queer, and trans people also organized around defunding and abolition of police, and reinvesting police funds into communities.

BLM-TO's years of activism have been instrumental to Black liberation work in Toronto. We are therefore stunned and disappointed by the news that BLM Canada is accepting a \$250,000 grant from the City of Toronto for its newly purchased Wildseed Centre for Art and Activism, and that the centre may receive ongoing funds from the local government. That government, led by mayor John Tory, continues to undermine and exploit Black people across the city—no one is more aware of this than BLM Canada, whose leaders have exposed anti-Blackness in Toronto politics for years.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic we have been witnessing an escalation of police harassment, carding, surveillance and violence against queer, trans, Black, Indigenous, racialized, and homeless people. We are outraged by the increased deployment of police and security personnel in parks and other public spaces, and government measures to further expand police authority.

We agree that Black people deserve our own spaces—we deserve that and so much more. But we disagree with BLM Canada's partnership with a city government that refuses to fund affordable housing or protect tenants from being evicted. We question partnership with a government that is spending millions to police unhoused people in parks, and deploying armies of police and city-funded security guards to remove people from public spaces. We have serious concerns that BLM Canada's acceptance of city money provides cover for mayor Tory's racist administration.

The leaders of BLM Canada, who have now created a financial relationship with the City of Toronto, spent years as BLM-TO activists exposing mayor Tory's anti-Black agenda, and the complicity of Toronto City Council. BLM-TO rejected private meetings with politicians, and taught of the importance of independent organizing. This independence was critical to the success of BLM's advocacy, as we saw during BLM-TO's disruption of Toronto's Pride Parade in 2016.



During that year City Councillors threatened, as they had done in previous years, to revoke Pride Toronto's funding unless it allowed uniformed police to march in the Sunday parade. Pride Toronto's reliance on city funding and good government relations meant the group was reluctant to cancel institutional police participation. Since BLM-TO, the honoured guest of the 2016 festivities, had no official relationship with or funding from the city, the group was more free to challenge Pride Toronto's historical anti-Blackness, and its modern co-optation by corporations and police forces.

Black liberation organizers, especially those fighting for an anti-capitalist and anti-colonial future, should be extremely wary of government funding and partnership. This long-established idea has been part of the Black radical tradition that birthed the BLM movement. We are disheartened that Black liberation advocates are aligning themselves with a government that continues to exploit Black people. The fact that BLM Canada leaders are pursuing a broader mission should not erase their responsibility to the principles they embraced and promoted for years.

We are also deeply concerned with BLM Canada's statement that the bulk of funds used to purchase the new Wildseed Centre have come from the Black Lives Matter Global Network (BLMGN) in the United States. For years, BLMGN has received criticism from the families of Black people affected by police violence. These families say BLMGN leaders have benefitted at their expense by overshadowing family and local voices, and by hoarding funds from families and local communities involved in struggles for Black freedom.

BLMGN reportedly raised \$90 million in the months after the lynching of George Floyd in Minneapolis. It has provided sparse accounting for these funds, and only after the relentless demands of family members and local chapters. We are heartsick at the failure of BLM Canada leaders to meaningfully engage these urgent concerns. Their decision to accept millions of dollars from BLMGN without publicly reckoning with the families' concerns is destructive to any notion of Black liberation.

Under the name "BLM10Plus", more than a dozen current and former chapters of BLMGN have supported the families' concerns. They have also criticized BLMGN for years of unaccountable leadership, lack of financial transparency, structural disorganization, and hoarding of resources. BLMGN has never formally responded to the demands from BLM10Plus.

The chapters say that "because successful movements are collective, not individual, they must be rooted in accountability that protects all of our people. Our love for the people means we have a duty to prioritize this principled accountability for each other, our communities, and the struggle for Black Liberation." We agree, and we express our love and solidarity with all those seeking answers and accountability from BLMGN.



We raise these concerns with love, respect, and a desire for liberation. We are informed by our values, and by the reflections of many people and groups we organize, strategize, and work with in Toronto. We call on BLM Canada to reject funding from the City of Toronto, and to publicly account for the concerns about funding received from the BLM Global Network. We also ask BLM Canada to lead open conversations on the issues brought forward by families affected by police violence, and by BLM10Plus. In the words of that coalition, “Black Liberation must be about more than protecting the few of us that are doing well. It must be about building a movement that will ensure all of us get free.”