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BOSTON PRIDE'S VOLUNTEER WORKFORCE, COMMUNITY LEADERS, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS CALL FOR THE CURRENT MEMBERS OF THE BOSTON PRIDE BOARD TO STEP DOWN

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(Boston, MA) June 30, 2020 - On June 2, the Boston Pride Communications Team sent a statement condemning unjust police violence against black people to the board for approval. The Board removed “#blacklivesmatter”, rewrote portions of the statement, and posted it without consulting the Communications Team. The revised statement was immediately met by a firestorm of backlash, calling out Boston Pride for its persistent failure to proactively address issues of racism and white privilege, and failure to center on the lives and voices of Black People, Trans People, Indigenous People, and People of Color.

This was not an isolated incident or accident. The Boston Pride Board's poor relationship with LGBTQ+ communities of color has worsened in the past decade. Black and Latinx Pride have been underfunded and neglected. In 2015, Black Lives Matter held a protest at the beginning of the Boston Pride Parade to voice their demands. Those demands have remained largely ignored. In 2016, Boston Pride named Woburn police officer Anthony Imperioso as Parade Marshal. This was met with protest as Imperioso reportedly had made negative comments about Black Lives Matter on social media. In 2017 and 2018, the Stonewall Warriors protested at the Pride Parade, voicing concerns about values of some of Pride's corporate sponsors, and Pride's continued failure to address issues that affect Trans People and People of Color.

On June 16, outraged by the incessant systemic racism in Boston Pride, members of the Pride Committee (the body of volunteers that produce all the events and programming that comprise Boston Pride), the Communications Team, community organizers of color, and affiliated community members of color presented the Pride Board with a statement demanding that members of the current Pride Board step down. The statement included a proposed transition plan that would help ensure continuity and stability during the transition to a more diverse board who will turn their focus on the lives of Queer and Trans, Black People, Indigenous People, and People of Color.

The Board's decision to remove "#blacklivesmatter" in the wake of the unjust and brutal murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Tony McDade at the hands of police, and their rewriting of systemic police brutality into a "bad apple" narrative, served as a wake up for the majority of the volunteer workforce of Boston Pride. They joined the voices of community leaders and members of color who are not interested in Boston Pride's regularly occurring empty promise "to do better."

On June 18, the Boston Pride Board posted a statement promising to transform. Instead of engaging in dialogue with its volunteer workforce and the LGBTQ+ community about microaggressions experienced by volunteers, the unmet ten demands made by BLM in 2015, and structural racism, the board hired a consultant to help improve its image. The statement was immediately met with another firestorm of backlash.

The growing number of individuals and organizations, as well as the many members of the Pride volunteer workforce, calling for members of the current board to step down indicates that the current Pride Board no longer holds the trust of LGBTQ+ community that Boston Pride is supposed to serve.

For more information, including the statement presented to the Board on June 16 and documented cases of racial tension between the Boston Pride Board and the LGBTQ+ community, please visit: <https://www.bp4thepeople.org/>