

Intersecting identities

BLACK LIVES MATTER & BLOCKORAMA



LE CENTRE CANADIEN DE LA
DIVERSITÉ DES GENRES
+ DE LA **SEXUALITÉ**



THE CANADIAN CENTRE FOR
GENDER+SEXUAL
DIVERSITY



Canadian
Heritage

Patrimoine
canadien

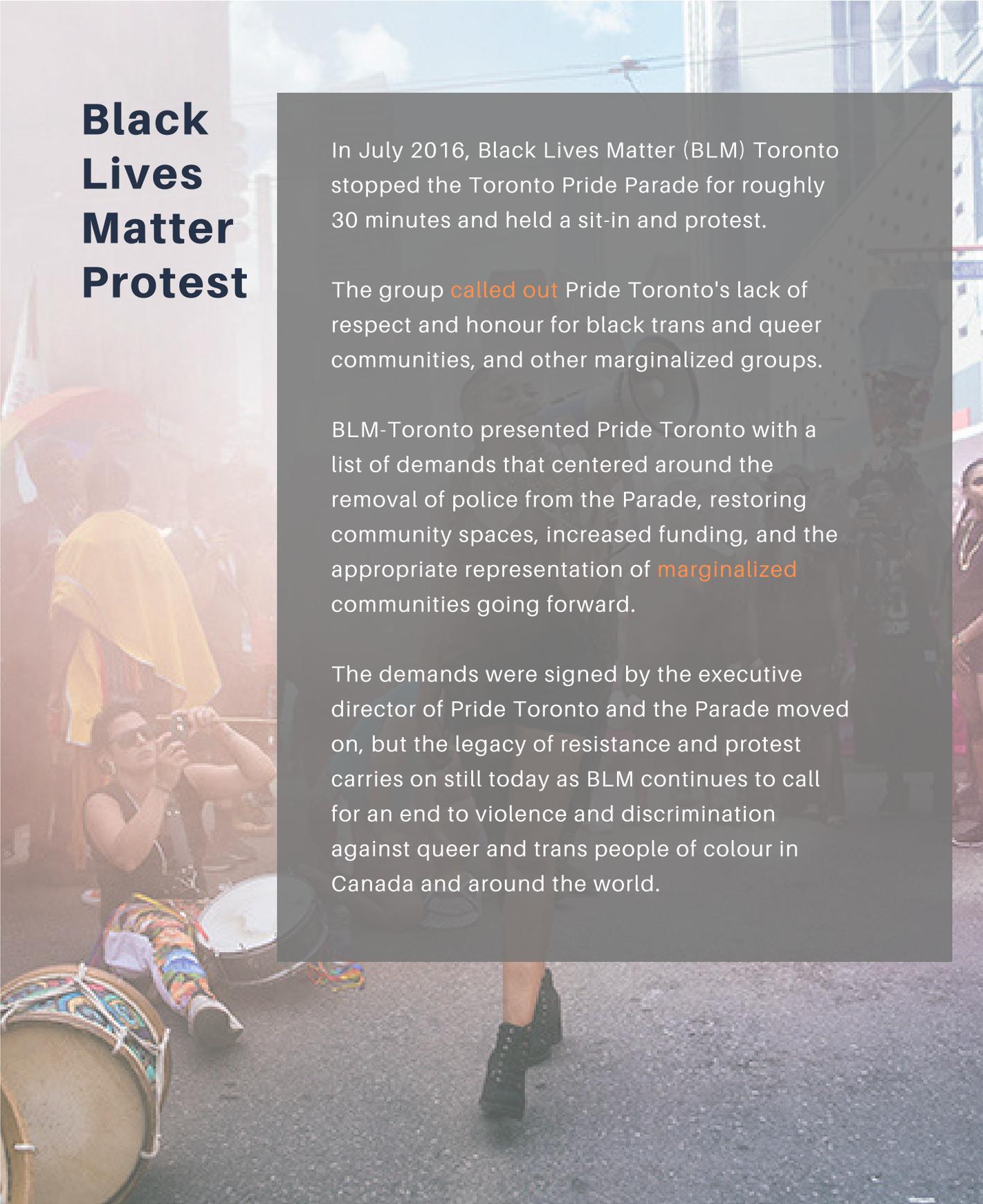


Please follow the steps to complete the zone:

- 1) Watch the video
- 2) Read through the booklet contents
- 3) Answer the discussion questions as a group

Content warning

Violence, anti-black violence, police violence, stigma, racism, discrimination, anti-2SLGBTQ+ violence, homophobia, transphobia



Black Lives Matter Protest

In July 2016, Black Lives Matter (BLM) Toronto stopped the Toronto Pride Parade for roughly 30 minutes and held a sit-in and protest.

The group **called out** Pride Toronto's lack of respect and honour for black trans and queer communities, and other marginalized groups.

BLM-Toronto presented Pride Toronto with a list of demands that centered around the removal of police from the Parade, restoring community spaces, increased funding, and the appropriate representation of **marginalized** communities going forward.

The demands were signed by the executive director of Pride Toronto and the Parade moved on, but the legacy of resistance and protest carries on still today as BLM continues to call for an end to violence and discrimination against queer and trans people of colour in Canada and around the world.

The Demands

Black Lives Matter-Toronto along with various community groups, including BQY (Black Queer Youth), and Blackness Yes have the following demands:

1. *Commit to BQY (Black Queer Youth) continues space, funding, and **logistical** support.*
2. ***Self-determination** for all community spaces, allowing community full control over hiring, content, and structure of their stages.*
3. *Full and adequate funding for community stages, including logistical, technical, and personal support.*
4. *Increase funding for Blockorama (to \$10,000 + ASL interpretation & headliner funding).*
5. *Removal of police floats in the Pride marches/parades.*
6. *Reinstate and make a commitment to increase community stages/spaces (including the reinstatement of the South Asian state).*
7. *A commitment to increase representation amongst Pride Toronto staffing/hiring, prioritizing Black Trans women, Indigenous folk, and others from vulnerable communities.*
8. *A public townhall, organized in conjunction with groups from marginalized communities, including but not limited to, Black Lives Matter-Toronto, Blackness Yes, and BQY to be held 6 months from today. Pride Toronto will present an update and action plan on the aforementioned demands.*





History of police violence

Anti-black violence executed by police is a national problem in Canada. **Racialized** people are more likely to be stopped by police, black communities are more likely to experience over-policing and to be unequally impacted by police-related deaths.

While the rates of police violence in the USA are more common and visible, Canada has also experienced instances of fatal police brutality, and a lack of accountability in the aftermath.

In addition to racially motivated violence, queer and trans folks also experience discrimination and violence because of their sexual orientation. In Canada, there has been a history of **systemic** discrimination by police against the 2SLGBTQ+ community, including sting operations, establishment raids, physical violence, and verbal abuse.

To the queer and trans racialized community, police still present a clear danger. This is why one of the demands made by BLM-Toronto was the ban of uniformed, armed police officers marching in the Parade. The presence of hundreds of armed and uniformed police officers, even at a Pride event, creates an unsafe and unwelcoming environment for thousands of members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

Blackness Yes! & Blockorama

In 1998, Jamea Zuberi was reminded of the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival during one of Toronto's pride parades, which led her to question the lack of representation of African, Caribbean, and North American black communities in Pride. Along with fellow activists Angela Robertson, Camille Orridge, Junior David Harrison, and Douglas Stewart, Jamea formed *Blackness Yes!*, with the goal of creating an event that celebrated black members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community.



That event, Blockorama (or Blocko), became a reality in 1998 after receiving funding and a space for the venue. Dedicated to bringing thousands of people together to celebrate black queer and trans pride, Blocko has provided a safe space for marginalized and under-represented communities to feel welcome.

Blocko has continued to grow over the years and attract greater recognition, yet it also continues to face barriers, such as reduced funding, relocation to smaller venues, and unfounded complaints from the community.

Blackness Yes! is responsible, along with BLM-Toronto, for the list of demands presented during the 2016 protest. One of the demands included an increase to the space provided and the funding given to Blockorama.

Did you know?

BLM-Toronto runs a variety of different projects, including Freedom School, which teaches black children and youth about the history of black liberation and justice.

Glossary of terms



Call out refers to when someone publicly addresses another person for acting in an oppressive way, whether verbally or physically. Calling out both holds people accountable for their actions and aims to get them to stop the harmful behaviour. The opposite of "calling out" is "**calling in**," which also aims to change problematic behaviour, but does so by compassionately inviting the person to learn about why their actions or words are oppressive and how they can act more consciously (Everyday feminism).

Marginalized refers to a person, group, or concept within society treated as insignificant or powerless.

Logistical refers to the process of organization or planning.

Self-determination refers to the free choice someone has over them self without external influence.

Racialized refers to anyone whose real or perceived race, ethnicity, or culture falls outside of white Euro-centric norms, and experiences direct or indirect oppression as a result.

Systemic means affecting the whole of something. In this case, it refers to the ways in which society and its institutions systemically reinforce oppression.

Discussion Questions

- 1) Why would it be important for BLM-Toronto to present the list of demands in such a public space and public way?
- 2) Why do you think it is so important for black queer and trans people to have control over the organization of their own spaces within Pride?
- 3) Why are projects like Freedom School so important?



Sources used in this booklet:

Grier, C. (20 June 2018). "Trailblazing Pride party Blockorama turns 20." *Now Magazine*.

Hayes, M. (10 Dec. 2018). "Black people more likely to be injured or killed by Toronto police officers, report finds." *The Globe and Mail*.

Maynard, R. (24 April 2018). "Over-policing in black communities is a Canadian crisis, too." *Washington Post*.

Queerstory.com, "Blackness Yes/Blockorama."

Walcott, R. (28 June 2017). "Black Lives Matter, police and Pride: Toronto activists spark a movement." *The Conversation*.