



# Letter to Our Community

Boston Pride was established 50 years ago as a protest march against the systemic oppression of LGBTQIA+ people after the Stonewall Inn rebellion of 1969 thrust the issue of LGBTQIA+ rights into the mainstream spotlight. Since then, Boston Pride has changed and evolved as subsequent marches turned into celebratory parades, proclaiming our right to be seen and heard in Boston and throughout the region. Our history has not been without challenges and struggles within the community, especially for disproportionately affected people in marginalized groups who face additional oppression, are discriminated against, and continue to have their rights violated. The coronavirus pandemic, which has impacted many LGBTQIA+ people due to health, economic, and social inequalities, forced us to significantly change this past Pride season in June with cancellations, postponements, and many other changes.

Boston Pride is outraged at the long-standing culture of racialized violence and atrocious actions of police brutality and injustice, including the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and too many others. We find these acts intolerable as well as the homophobic/transphobic and gender misrepresentation and under-reporting of police brutality and violence against Transgender/ non-binary people and members of the Black community.

In May and June of 2020, Tony McDade, a Black transman, was murdered by police, as were Black transwomen Dominique Fells and Riah Milton. These deaths were not met with equal publicity or public outcry despite the ongoing Black Lives Matter movement and protests. Since 2013, when the federal government began tracking transphobic killings, there have been 202 murders of Transgender/ non-binary people.<sup>1</sup> We are incensed that in 2020, thus far, 38 Transgender/ non-binary people have been murdered in the U.S., 26 of whom were Black or Brown Transgender women.<sup>2</sup>

The unacceptable manner in which the Boston Pride board responded to these events, the community outcry, and the negative impact that resulted from our responses and interventions compelled us to examine our board and our entire organizational structure. We acknowledge and accept responsibility for our actions. In response, we needed to assess and evaluate our responsibility to the community and the challenges in the areas of diversity, access, inclusion, and equity. It has forced us to look inward, both personally and collectively as an organization, to learn, recognize, acknowledge, and accept where we failed to listen to the diverse voices of our community and be responsive to its needs. For instance, the Board did not listen to the members of the community who asked us to include an acknowledgement of systemic abuse by police and law enforcement and did not include #BlackLivesMatter in our letter about the protests that were taking place in May and June. Additionally, we could not fully implement all

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<sup>1</sup> Human Rights Campaign, as of November 20, 2020, [link here](#).

<sup>2</sup> Human Rights Campaign, as of November 20, 2020, [link here](#).

the demands made by the Boston chapter of Black Lives Matter after the 2015 interruption of the Pride Parade.

These incidents have resulted in the acknowledgement that we must become an organization that has evolved beyond celebrating "Pride" to include programs that promote social justice. We have lost sight of the fact that the creation of Boston Pride and our vision, mission, and values are deeply rooted in fundamental principles of civil rights, social justice, equality, and equity for all, thereby, failing to center and apply to the fullest extent our mission, values, and these fundamental principles. In so doing, Boston Pride has been complicit in perpetuating structural racism and white privilege.

We want to take this opportunity to make a full heartfelt apology for causing harm and express our gratitude to the volunteers, committee, staff and board members, who have given their time, talents, resources, and insights over the years. We understand and accept the feelings and actions of those of you and other community members, stakeholders, and allies who, as a result of pain, frustration, and disappointment, organized and confronted Boston Pride. We apologize and seek your forgiveness for the damaging and deleterious impacts our actions and inactions had on our community. The impact on those of us who are Queer, Transgender/ non-binary, Black, Latinx, Indigenous, people of color and other disproportionately affected communities, is inexcusable.

Taking responsibility for our contribution to the problem and recognizing the negative impact, Boston Pride suspended activities to allow us to put full focus and attention on transformational change from within our organization to dismantle systemic oppression and individual, interpersonal, institutional, and structural racism. We are working toward better representation of all individuals in the LGBTQIA+ community, especially those who have been underrepresented, unheard, and not prioritized in the past.

Transformation is a process, and we are on our way towards creating a Boston Pride that is in alignment with our vision, mission, values, and in the best interest of our community. The process will be evolving, as our community evolves; it will take some time and be ongoing, interactive, thoughtful, representative, transparent, impactful, and sustainable.

We recognize that we cannot do this without broader representation, and ask the community to join with us as we build a better Boston Pride from which the next generation of leaders will emerge. We will prioritize the representation of Queer, Transgender/ non-binary, Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and other people of color on our board, on our committees, and at our events.

You will see new opportunities for year-round community involvement in Boston Pride within the board, committees, volunteers, and advisors. We are immediately opening leadership opportunities including expanding our board roles to include a Director of Diversity, Access, Inclusion and Equity, Director of Human Resources, and Director of Technology. We are adding new Community Advisory Councils to guide and advise the organization, and are incorporating year-round diversity, access, inclusion, and equity training for Boston Pride and the community.

In addition, we are evaluating and revising, where applicable, our bylaws, policies, and procedures. During this transformation process, transparency will be provided about these initiatives to our community through our website.

We will use our platform and resources to reduce the negative impact of oppression and racism on LGBTQIA+ communities, with a deliberate focus on disproportionately affected people who face an intersectionality of racism, sexism, homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia that substantially increases the extent to which they are negatively impacted. We are making a long-term commitment to transformational change, and as such, anticipate this effort to be ongoing. To learn more about Boston Pride's transformation plans, Board positions, advisory councils and committees, please visit [www.bostonpride.org](http://www.bostonpride.org).

In closing, Boston Pride stands by our new commitment to ensure diversity, access, inclusion, and equity of the distinct identities that make up the LGBTQIA+ community which we serve.

We invite everyone and look forward to your participation in Boston Pride's transformation. Join us, and help us move forward together.