



June 26, 2020

To Our Grand Rapids Community —

The Grand Rapids Pride Center Board of Directors and Staff believe:

Black Lives Matter.

AND

Black Trans Lives Matter.

In fact, Black Lives more than “Matter”; Black people deserve to thrive, to be cherished, to be respected, to be safe, celebrated and uplifted.

The Grand Rapids Pride Center is taking seriously this national moment of reckoning. We are examining the ways in which we’ve failed to call out racism, work to dismantle systems that perpetuate it, and confront anti-Blackness within our organization and our community. We apologize to the Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities, especially the Black community, for actions we engaged in that caused you to feel harmed, unsafe, devalued, sadness, anger, disgust, or exhaustion for the amount of effort it took to be seen and heard.

This June, rather than focusing on Pride, we have begun the necessary and long-overdue work of looking inward. We are constructing the steps and actions we can take as individuals and as an organization to be anti-racist and to become true allies for people of color within our LGBTQ+ community and the BIPOC community in our city, county and state.

The GRPC Board of Directors & Staff, while more diverse than in the past, still lacks the diversity that truly reflects our community. We know this needs to change and we are committed to this change. This statement outlines only the first steps in the actions the GRPC is taking to repair our relationships with the BIPOC community.

Listening and responding to the recent demands of BIPOC community members, we have voted on the following action steps:

1. The Grand Rapids Pride Center (GRPC) will end all existing relationships with the Grand Rapids Police Department (GRPD) and other local law enforcement agencies. Additionally, GRPC will not utilize the GRPD or any other local law enforcement



agencies at any GRPC events or initiatives, including Grand Rapids Pride Festival. This will be communicated to GRPD through a letter to GRPD Chief of Police.

2. GRPC staff, Board of Directors and interns will undergo racial justice & sensitivity training at least once per year. To be contracted externally with local community knowledge experts (CKE) .
3. GRPC Board of Directors will schedule & hold quarterly listening sessions to engage and receive feedback from specific populations of marginalized community members. The purpose of the listening sessions will be to hear from community members on how GRPC can better serve unrepresented LGBTQ+ populations. **2020 tentative listening session dates: August 24, 2020 & November 9, 2020.**
4. GRPC will create a process for identifying Community Knowledge Experts to contract with for organizational development and community engagement. GRPC will also develop a compensation structure for contracted CKEs.
5. GRPC will update its organizational handbook to include policies & procedures regarding contracting with outside vendors. This will include language and guidance surrounding GRPC requiring vendors to already have undergone cultural sensitivity training and/or have experience in working with the LGBTQ+ and intersecting communities. GRPC will continue to prioritize vendor relationships with LGBTQ+ and/or BIPOC businesses.
6. GRPC will update its Board of Directors on-boarding paperwork to include a signed commitment to self learning and development, current Board members included. This document will require the GRPC Board of Directors to engage in actions and direct practices that facilitate self learning and development so GRPC may better serve its LGBTQ+ communities as well as all intersecting communities.
7. GRPC will develop a Community Accountability Advisory Committee to ensure that, as an organization, GRPC is responding to community incidents, events and concerns in a timely and culturally-sensitive manner. Requirements of the Community Accountability Advisory Committee will include a diverse make-up of representation, including gender identity, sexual orientation, race, disability-status, and socioeconomic status.
8. No Police at Pride. GRPC is committing to not utilizing the Grand Rapids Police Department or any other local law enforcement agency at any future Grand Rapids Pride



Festival or festival-related event. This will be communicated to Grand Rapid Chief of Police via formal letter.

GRPC will contract with outside vendors to provide safety and security services. Any contracted outside vendor will be held to requirements determined by Action Item #5.

9. GRPC will include in all statements related to its commitment to racial equality and the dismantling of systematic racism in our community that Black Lives Matter and Black Trans Lives Matter.
10. GRPC will continue to actively recruit diverse members for its Board of Directors. GRPC is committed to avoiding tokenization and emotional labor abuse of the BIPOC community. In an attempt to break the homogeneous cycle of typical Board recruitment and avoid tokenization, Board of Director applications will be open to the public where we will be seeking diverse community members who are active and ready to be engaged in helping to move our organization forward with change.

GRPC will integrate its Board of Directors application into its website to ensure it is easily accessible to any member of the community who wishes to apply.

11. GRPC will make a financial contribution of \$100 per month to the [Trans Sistas of Color Project- Detroit](#) through the end of 2020 beginning in June 2020. Additionally, GRPC will request that all committed Grand Rapids Pride Festival 2020 sponsors make a financial contribution of at least \$100 to the [Trans Sistas of Color Project- Detroit](#) or [The Okra Project](#).
12. GRPC will request that the Grand Rapids Police Department's budget be reduced from 39% to 32%, allowing approximately \$9 million dollars to be reallocated to public services for communities of color. GRPC will request that the Grand Rapids City Commission begin the process of eliminating any requirement that a percentage of the City of Grand Rapids budget is spent on policing.

Requests will be sent to each Grand Rapids City Commissioner individually as well as the Grand Rapids Mayor and Grand Rapids City Manager.



Thank you to all our community members who stepped forward to hold us accountable. The Grand Rapids Pride Center stands in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement and Black LGBTQ+ members of our community. Moving forward, the Grand Rapids Pride Center is committed to putting in the work to be an agency that works for **ALL** LGBTQ+ people, especially our BIPOC community.

The Staff & Board of Directors of the Grand Rapids Pride Center

Thomas Pierce, Executive Director

Larry DeShane Jr, Center Administrator

Tommy Allen, Interim Board President

Jennie Mills, Board Secretary

Lucy Dyer-Joswick, Board Treasurer

Jazz McKinney, Board Member

Charissa Huang, Board Member

Anne Hertl, Board Member

Regina Salmi, Board Member

Devin Rittenhouse, Board Member