

SAN FRANCISCO PRIDE®

SAN FRANCISCO LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER
PRIDE PARADE AND CELEBRATION COMMITTEE, INC.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

July 23, 2019

CONTACT:

media@sfpride.org | (415) 508-5538

STATEMENT FROM SAN FRANCISCO PRIDE FOLLOWING UP ON 2019 PARADE DISRUPTION

San Francisco Pride is a non-profit organization committed to educating the world, commemorating our heritage as LGBT people, celebrating our culture, and liberating our people. One way in which we help to accomplish these goals is through hosting a parade and pride festival the last full weekend of every June. We'd like to acknowledge and thank all of San Francisco for a recent, momentous 49th annual event where we estimate about 50,000 people marched in our parade and about 100,000 watched from the sidewalks of Market Street.

During preparations for the march, we were reminded time and time again that this year, 2019, is the commemoration of the Stonewall riots. We turned to the actions of our elders such as those at Stonewall and those at Compton's Cafeteria here in San Francisco, to inspire and inform the activities of today. Then and now, those most marginalized in our communities deserve radical change.

We are here to address an occurrence that happened on the day of our parade and how our organization is responding. We've been approached by a number of individuals in our community who have expressed their desire that we voice our position regarding this incident more clearly. We have been collecting information leading up to this statement, and now that we have had time since the event to take some action, we would like to share with the community where in the process we are.

On Sunday, June 30, a group of people broke through the route's barricades to halt the parade. These activists identify as members of the LGBTQ+ community, but don't agree with how our parade and celebration are structured. Their presence at the parade was meant to raise awareness of their concerns about police presence and corporate sponsorship. SF Pride team members got to the scene as quickly as possible, within two to three minutes.

Before Pride could properly assess the situation and engage thoughtfully with the demonstrators, police responded, attempted to clear the parade route, and the situation escalated. Two individuals were arrested, one of whom was injured during their interaction with police. Members of the Pride team were immediately in contact with our representatives in the police department and asked the police to retreat their presence, a request for de-escalation that was eventually granted.

SF Pride Board members were able to facilitate time so that the demands of the activists could be heard on the parade route. Pride volunteers and team members worked to create a protective space around the activists so that they could openly verbalize their concerns. The parade was ultimately able to continue. As many are aware, this caused a delay of about an hour. We appreciate the patience of the many thousands of folks in our Parade who volunteered their time and energy to participate.

The following day SF Pride contacted the District Attorney's office to encourage them to drop all charges against the demonstrators who were arrested. A public statement from SF Pride outlining our position on dropping the charges was issued on our website two days later on July 3. (<http://www.sfpride.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/STATEMENT-SF-Pride-on-Demonstrators-at-2019-Parade-FINAL.pdf>)

SAN FRANCISCO PRIDE®

SAN FRANCISCO LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER
PRIDE PARADE AND CELEBRATION COMMITTEE, INC.

We have since learned that the charges that have been brought against the two community members arrested are misdemeanor charges of resisting arrest and disrupting a parade route. San Francisco Pride is not a decision maker in whether or not the DA decides to continue with the charges. We want to make it clear that we have encouraged the DA to drop all charges related to this incident. This has been our position since the day of the parade. We will be sending letters of support for the individuals who have been charged to the court, encouraging that the cases be released.

Additionally, we believe there are ways in which our relationship with the police can improve, and part of that is asking for accountability during times like these. On July 2, we reached out to the Department of Police Accountability and officially joined the open investigation of the incident on July 15. The DPA is made up of civilians, and their role is to receive complaints and allegations of misconduct by the police department and to make larger policy recommendations. Their investigation will include a number of professionals who are collecting statements from those who were eyewitnesses to the event, as well as video that has been submitted and discovered.

The findings of the Department of Police Accountability, including their recommendations for any potential discipline for officers involved, are then shared with the Chief of Police and the Police Commission. SF Pride has stated clearly in our communications with the DPA that we believe that officers involved in the incident used unnecessary force while attempting to clear demonstrators from the parade route. We will continue to provide information and testimony to support the DPA's investigation and eagerly await the final report and recommendations.

SFPD is a partner, like many other in the city, on whom we must rely to produce an event of the scale and magnitude of San Francisco Pride. We honor the need for safety at our event, the largest annual outdoor event in San Francisco. And, as we have said previously, we support change in any law enforcement system that unfairly targets trans individuals and people of color. We acknowledge systemic racism and understand the urgency for ideas and solutions which can create equitable progress.

We all have a stake in the ability to use our voices and in the development of peaceful protest. At a time when our country is increasingly divided, we support the need for respectful demonstration and valuable community dialogue. In the meantime, we remain hopeful that the charges against these community members will be dropped.

We are working to evaluate the learnings of this incident. The board and staff pledge to partnerships which are based in respect, thoughtful dialogue, and honest action. This kind of cooperation and coalition-building takes time and patience. As we work to close out our 2019 event, and begin planning for our fiftieth anniversary in 2020, we ask of our community to support us, engage with us, and work to find healing together.

ABOUT SF PRIDE

The San Francisco Pride Celebration Committee is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization founded to produce the SF Pride Celebration and Parade. The mission of the organization is to educate the world on LGBTQ issues, as well as commemorate the heritage, celebrate the culture, and liberate the people of all LGBTQ communities. A world leader in the Pride movement, SF Pride is also a grant-giving organization through its Community Partners Program. Since 1997, SF Pride has granted over \$3 million dollars in proceeds to local nonprofit LGBTQIA organizations and organizations working on issues related to HIV/AIDS, cancer, homelessness, housing rights, and animal welfare.

###