

SAN FRANCISCO PRIDE®

SAN FRANCISCO PRIDE RESPONDS TO DEPARTMENT OF POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY FINDINGS

We are disappointed to learn the DPA has dismissed all charges of unnecessary force related to an incident of police violence at Pride 2019.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT

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SAN FRANCISCO — The Board of Directors of San Francisco Pride are sharing with our communities what we have learned from the Department of Police Accountability regarding an episode of police violence at the 2019 Pride Parade. We have been informed that the DPA has dismissed all five counts of unnecessary force on the basis of insufficient evidence.

The roots of the Pride movement are based in free and honest expression. Making space for that expression during the Parade is very important to us, and we have long implemented protocols for how to respond quickly and safely when incidents of protest arise. The incident in question involved a group of demonstrators who peacefully disrupted the Parade for several minutes. Before the Pride team could speak with the demonstrators, several officers of the San Francisco Police Department unexpectedly and rashly overreacted to the disruption, swarming the area and leading to a larger scuffle.

Cell-phone camera footage and numerous media reports documented this wholly unnecessary escalation into violence. (Two protesters were subsequently arrested.) Within days of the Parade, San Francisco Pride initiated a DPA investigation into the officers' conduct. Now, after a year-long process, it appears there will be no consequences for either the Department or the officers involved.

Needless to say, SF Pride is disappointed and frustrated.

While we appreciate the work of the Department of Police Accountability, we now see that it is limited in its capacity to effect change in a situation like this. Ever since that day, Pride has advocated that SFPD's charges against the protesters be dropped, sending

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letters to the court and stating our request at a press conference. It also bears noting that Pride staff met with District Attorney Chesa Boudin in February of this year to ask again that the charges against the protesters be dismissed. The DA listened, and the charges were dropped in March.

It is important to remember that this incident that took place more than a year ago, on June 30, 2019. From our initial statement to the present moment, we deliberately chose not to act in haste. Instead, we pledged to work within SFPD's own system for the redress of grievances — even to the point that members of our community equated our generous patience with inaction. We have cooperated with the department at every stage. We now see the department close ranks and, we assume, issue a proverbial slap on the wrist to officers whose use of force against peaceful protesters was clearly unwarranted and excessive.

We acknowledge and appreciate the steps that the police have taken to heal decades of mistrust between the department and the city's LGBTQ+ communities. But SFPD's longstanding patterns of violence outweigh any rainbow-colored police cruisers or Pride patches, and it overshadows even Chief Scott's apology for the historical mistreatment of LGBTQ+ San Franciscans at Compton's Cafeteria and in numerous raids. While welcome, such actions are merely symbolic unless accompanied by real change.

Consequently, the Board and staff have come to a decision about the involvement of uniformed law enforcement officers in the San Francisco Pride Parade. Although the ongoing COVID pandemic has put the future of large-scale public events in doubt, we have concluded that in 2021 we cannot welcome the participation of the San Francisco Police Department's Pride Alliance — which is to say, uniformed SFPD officers marching as a Parade contingent.

“LGBTQ people” and “police” are not mutually exclusive, it is true, but we have heard repeatedly from many members of our communities — in particular, Black transgender individuals and groups — that police presence does not allow for their true participation in our events. Pride organizations around the nation have sought to balance the physical safety of our events with the real fear that many in our communities express about law enforcement. Our position has never changed: The safety of our community is always our primary concern, and we will do what it takes to produce our event safely, obtaining the necessary permits and logistical support, while simultaneously standing in solidarity with our Black, Trans, and Lesbian/Gay/Queer+ siblings against police brutality. We strongly believe we can show our pride while shunning militaristic shows of force.

We understand that this is only the beginning of a critical dialogue between SFPD and

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the communities it serves. Moreover, we are greatly encouraged by Mayor London Breed's initiatives to reallocate funds from policing in order to seek community-based solutions for the Black community. Those efforts, pioneered and led by Black leadership, are to be supported. As SF Pride Board President Carolyn Wysinger has repeatedly cautioned against, we oppose the exploitation of Black trauma and Black pain as steppingstones for efforts that do not solely center Black people. Instead, we would like SF Pride to be an additional voice in the continuing call for meaningful and sustained police reform — which extends far beyond the particulars of the incident at San Francisco Pride 2019. We will not allow non-Black community members to co-opt this moment, in which we highlight the inequities that solely affect the Black Community.

As our Black Queer and Trans family members remind us, issues of the LGBT community and issues of the Black community are inherently intertwined. The events of this past summer have demonstrated enduring support for a fundamental restructuring of policing as an institution, both within LGBTQ+ communities as well as across the wider nation. As we have stated before, the Pride movement originated in the defense of Black queer bodies from state-sanctioned violence. Therefore, to truly represent San Francisco's LGBTQ+ communities, we have no choice but to take action today.

Queer solidarity forever,

Fred Lopez
Executive Director

Carolyn Wysinger
President, Board of Directors