Black Lives Matter purchases $6 million property with donation money

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Allegations of financial mismanagement among supposed leaders of the Black Lives Matter movement (BLM)—as well as questions surrounding the true character of the organization—continue to unfold following a recent *New York Magazine* report revealing the group purchased a $6 million luxury home in southern California with money that had been donated to the BLMGNF (Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation, the official title of the only actual national organization).

According to the report, BLMGNF bought the 6,500 square-foot property, complete with seven bedrooms and bathrooms, a sound stage and music studio, a pool, and parking for almost 20 cars, in October 2020, to serve as a "safehouse" and headquarters for BLM leadership to create social media content. Last June, three BLM leaders—Patrisse Cullors, Alicia Garza and Melina Abdullah—recorded a video outside the property while marking the first anniversary of George Floyd's murder.

The report has further fueled questions about BLM's finances barely a year after it released the first look into its finances. The foundation said it collected over $90 million in 2020 alone and committed $21.7 million in funding to various BLM chapters and grassroots organizations. With its operating budget set at $8.4 million, more than $60 million was unaccounted for.

BLM released an official statement defending the purchase of the mansion while simultaneously performing damage control, promising to "provide clarity" and to increase "transparency and accountability."

"Despite past efforts, BLMGNF recognizes that there is more work to do to increase transparency and ensure transitions in leadership are clear," said a tweet from the official BLM account. "We are redoubling our efforts to provide clarity about BLMGNF's work. In the coming weeks, we will unveil new initiatives to increase transparency and accountability, and to continue reshaping what radical philanthropy looks like for Black people."

BLM sought to justify the purchase of the California mansion, which they call the "Creator House," by arguing that it was made to encourage "Black creativity" which is "necessary and vital to Black survival."

"That's why Creator's House was purchased—to provide a space for Black folks to share their gifts with the world and hone their craft as they see fit, under the conditions that work best for them and outside systems of oppression in creative industries."

Patrisse Cullors, co-founder and former executive director of BLMGNF, and Melina Abdullah, co-director of BLM Grassroots, spoke to reporters Monday in a closed roundtable discussion, according to NBC News, where the pair dismissed recent allegations as media attacks and "misinformation." Cullors and Abdullah claimed that the purchase of the multimillion dollar property was out of concern for the leaders' safety.

"Almost immediately upon closing, the attacks on me, and BLM, which also means Melina and others, escalated," Cullors said. She also claimed that she stayed at the home for four nights while the FBI investigated a death threat against her. "So we did use the campus as a haven, as a safe place. That derailed an announcement strategy. Conditions changed, and that's it."

Chelsea Fuller, who moderated the discussion, said BLM's current leadership declined to be part of the discussion and a spokesperson for the organization said that "the Foundation intends to do its own media in the

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near future." Cullors officially stepped down as executive director a year ago and it is currently unclear who is in control of the organization and its tens of millions of dollars in donations.

The *New York* magazine exposé included telling details about the group's efforts to cover up the actual property transaction. The $6 million house was bought in October 2020 by Dyane Pascall, the financial manager for an LLC operated by Cullors and her spouse, as well as for Trap Heals, a nonprofit run by Damon Turner, the father of Cullors' only child.

The cash for the purchase came from $66.5 million that had just come in to BLMGNF from donor contributions. Pascall then quickly resold to a Delaware-based LLC, a maneuver that concealed the actual final owner of the property, who remains unidentified.

Last week's revelations are just the most recent in a long line of allegations that expose the fraudulent nature of BLMGNF. Rather than being a genuine hub of expression for the mass opposition to police brutality, the group speaks for privileged sections of the middle class seeking to cash in on the promotion of racial politics to advance their own positions within the state and corporate America.

The Democratic Party and corporate media have incessantly promoted illusions in racial identity politics as part of an effort to promote racial divisions and obscure common class interests of all workers, including in the fight against police violence.

After the eruption of mass multi-racial protests against police violence triggered by George Floyd's murder in May 2020, the Democratic Party and its pseudo-left allies worked to redirect popular opposition to police violence into racialist identity politics while promoting illusions that the police can be reformed.

In an article covering the numerous financial scandals of Black Lives Matter, the *World Socialist Web Site* explained the true character of the organization:

> The facts that have emerged demonstrate that Black Lives Matter is largely a creation of the corporate media and the Democratic Party, not a genuine expression of insurgent popular opposition to the pervasive brutality and social inequality of American society. The revelations illustrate the venal and privileged social layers whose interests are expressed by the elevation of race, rather than class, as the essential dividing line in society.

The deadly force police regularly employ against the population is an inevitable result of a society riven with inequality and social contradictions. The victims of the police are of every race, ethnicity and gender—predominantly poor and working class. The fight against police brutality and racism can be won only through the abolition of the capitalist system and the struggle for socialism.

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