

Tax documents reveal Black Lives Matter improperly spent tens of millions in donations

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The Associated Press reported on May 17 that tax filings for fiscal 2020 by the Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation (BLMGNF) list millions of dollars paid to entities controlled by relatives and close associates of then-Executive Director and co-founder Patrisse Cullors.

The filings with the Internal Revenue Service are the first and to date only public disclosures of the Black Lives Matter foundation's finances. They show that the "non-profit" took in \$76,872,002 in fiscal 2020, mainly in donations from corporate backers and individuals, and paid out \$25,997,945 in grants to other non-profits and contractors.

Cullors, the only BLMGNF board member listed on the 63-page filing, resigned as executive director in June of 2021. She did so just weeks after two mothers of victims of police violence—Lisa Simpson, the mother of 18-year-old Richard Risher, killed by Los Angeles police in 2016, and Samara Rice, the mother of 12-year-old Tamir Rice, killed by Cleveland police in 2014—released a statement demanding that BLMGNF stop exploiting the deaths of their children to make money.

They wrote: "We don't want or need y'all parading in the streets accumulating donations, platforms, movie deals, etc. off the death of our loved ones, while the families and communities are left clueless and broken. Don't say our loved ones' names, period!"

The same month as the mothers' statement was published, the *New York Post* revealed that Cullors and her wife had purchased four properties worth approximately \$3 million between 2016 and 2021.

Last month, *New York Magazine* reported that in October 2020 the organization spent \$6 million of donated money to purchase a mansion in Southern California. The 6,500 square foot property, with seven

bedrooms and bathrooms, a sound stage, music studio and pool, was supposedly bought to serve as a "safe house" and headquarters for BLM leaders to create social media content.

Last June, Cullors and two other BLM leaders, Alicia Garza and Melina Abdullah, recorded a video outside the mansion to mark the first anniversary of the police murder of George Floyd.

According to the fiscal 2020 tax filings, BLMGNF's biggest payout—\$2,167,894—went to the Bowers Consulting Firm, which is owned by current BLMGNF board member Shalomyah Bowers. Defending his lucrative take, Bowers called Black Lives Matter "the largest black abolitionist nonprofit organization that has ever existed in the nation's history."

Los Angeles-based Trap Heals LLC, owned by Damon Turner, received \$969,459 for "live production, design and media." Turner, a rapper and artist, is the father of Cullors' son.

The BLM foundation also paid \$840,993 to Cullors Protection LLC, a company owned by Patrisse Cullors' brother Paul and established in July 2020.

Kailee Scales, a consultant whose name appears on the original Delaware registration of BLMGNF, was paid \$139,625.

According to the tax filings, the Black Lives Matter foundation still has more than \$50 million in donations. It invested \$32 million of that in the stock market.

Cullors gave an exclusive interview to MSNBC in an attempt to clear her name. She said that BLM was unprepared for the rush of donations and complained that her "mistakes" were being weaponized against her.

Her mistake was failing to conceal the blatant self-dealing, nepotism and corruption of BLMGNF. She and her cronies have enriched themselves by fraudulently

portraying their operation as a movement in defense of oppressed African Americans and in opposition to police brutality.

This is not simply a matter of individual moral depravity, although there is plenty of that. It has rather a broader social and political significance. Exposed here is the reactionary character of racial politics and the right-wing social interests it serves.

The grasping proponents of black capitalism are massively promoted and subsidized by sections of the corporate elite, the so-called “liberal” media and the Democratic Party. They are well paid for services rendered in promoting racial divisions and obscuring the common class interests of all workers.

They have nothing in common with—and are hostile to—the masses of workers and youth of all races who are coming into struggle against capitalism.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* recently wrote:

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.



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