PRIDE TORONTO 2016 CELEBRATES BLACKNESS AND QUEERNESS

Pride Month set to explore the intersections of race and sexuality

TORONTO, ON, May 3 2016 | This year, Pride Toronto will draw special attention to blackness and queerness in an effort to amplify the voices of marginalized trans and queer people of colour, while highlighting homophobia and racism as continuing major civil rights concerns during Toronto’s first-ever Pride Month.

As the Black queer and trans community fight discrimination simultaneously on two fronts, Pride Toronto has developed rich programming to celebrate blackness and queerness and raise awareness about systemic discrimination and violence experienced by Black queer people.

“Fighting for the liberation and equality of blackness and queerness should not have to be an either/or equation,” said Pride Toronto Board of Directors Co-Chair Alica Hall. “This year, we are enabling a number of conversations about the intersections of liberation, race, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression. Our goal is inclusion of the full spectrum of queer and trans identities.”

“Pride Toronto strives to give a voice to marginalized people within our community and we have created a number of spaces to ensure especially that trans and queer people of colour are heard,” said Pride Toronto Executive Director Mathieu Chantelois.

Key discussions include a human rights panel about Blackness and queer politics as well as a trans youth panel discussion with a young man and young woman of colour, among other trans youth. Black queer performances range from the Prancing Elites to Black Boys stage actors and from a high energy Black Queer Youth showcase to the Queen of Soca, Alison Hinds.

Pride Month Honourary Group, Black Lives Matter – Toronto Coalition (BLMTO), will also highlight and challenge anti-blackness in our community while celebrating the beauty and ferociousness of Black queer, trans and gender diverse Torontonians. BLMTO has invited all Black queer and trans community members to join them leading the annual Pride Parade on July 3.
Highlights featuring Black queer and trans community members at Pride Toronto 2016, the city’s most vibrant and inclusive arts and cultural festival and North America’s largest Pride celebration include:

**MYA TAYLOR**, a trans Black actress and major film prizewinner, has an onstage conversation after a free screening of *Tangerine*. Presented in partnership with TIFF. (Friday, June 10, noon, TIFF Bell Lightbox)

**JAE DELACRUZ AND DANI ARAYA** discuss *Trans Rights in The New Generation* for trans people of colour. (Tuesday June 14, 7PM, The 519, 519 Church Street)

**BLACK BOYS PRESENTS A NIGHT OF SPIRITUAL PRIDE** with performances from *Black Boys*, a play unleashing the possibilities of the Black queer male. Starring **Virgilia Griffith**, **Stephen Jackman-Torkoff**, **Tawiah M’Carthy**, **Thomas Olajide** and **Jonathan Seinen**. In partnership with Buddies in Bad Times Theatre. (Saturday, June 18, show 8 PM, afterparty 11 PM, Buddies in Bad Times Theatre, 12 Alexander Street)

**THE WATERMELON WOMAN**, TIFF presents a new, digital restoration of the queer film classic *The Watermelon Woman*. The screening will be introduced by filmmaker and star **Cheryl Dunye**, the first Black lesbian to direct a feature film. (Thursday, June 23, 8:45 PM, TIFF Bell Lightbox)

**BLACKNESS AND QUEER POLITICS** is a human rights panel discussion with Black queer leaders **Beth Jordan**, **Kim Katrin Milan**, **Angela Robertson**, **Rinaldo Walcott**, **Syrus Marcus Ware**, BLMTO co-founder **Rodney Diverlus** and Youth Ambassador **Jordyn Samuels**. (Wednesday, June 29, 7 PM, The 519, 519 Church Street)

**JORDYN SAMUELS, YOUTH AMBASSADOR**
This 26-year-old woman of colour and passionate social activist takes part in the **Blackness and Queer Politics** human rights discussion and will be featured on the **Fruit Loopz Youth Stage**, a vibrant festival of arts, words and ideas for queer and trans youth, by queer and trans youth. (Human Rights Discussion: Wednesday, June 29, 7 PM, The 519, 519 Church Street, Fruit Loopz Youth Stage: Saturday, July 2, 1 PM - 4 PM, TD Village Stage)

**BQY (BLACK QUEER YOUTH) SHOWCASE** demonstrates the talent, culture, energy and art of Black, African/Caribbean and multiracial youth. (Friday July 1, 5 PM – 7 PM, TD Village Stage)

**ALISON HINDS**, the queen of Soca, headlines **Blockorama**, the longest-running stage celebration at Pride Toronto, a powerful space uniting and engaging communities through musical performances, words, images and dance presented by Blackness Yes!. (Sunday, July 3, 12PM – 11PM, Wellesley Stage)
THE PRANCING ELITES, are Black queer and gender non-confirming dancers from Alabama. The group, who inspires others to break boundaries and live their lives fully and openly, will help lead the Pride Parade. (Sunday, July 3, 2 PM, Parade starts at the corner of Bloor and Church streets)

ALEX NEWELL, Glee’s Unique Adams, performs at The Final Play, following the Pride Parade. (Sunday, July 3, 2 PM – 11PM, Molson-Canadian Stage, Yonge-Dundas Square)

BLACK LIVES MATTER – TORONTO COALITION, 2016’s Honoured Group, who is rebuilding the Black liberation movement and challenging the ways that anti-blackness is present in LGBT spaces, will help lead the Pride Parade. (Sunday, July 3, 2 PM, Parade starts at the corner of Bloor and Church streets)

ABOUT PRIDE TORONTO:
Pride Toronto is a not-for-profit organization with a mission to bring people together to celebrate the history, courage and diversity of our community. Uniting and empowering people with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions, the annual Pride Toronto festival has become a major Canadian arts and cultural event and the largest Pride celebration in North America. Pride showcases Toronto on the world stage with diversity, inclusion and vibrant creativity. June 2016 features Toronto’s first-ever Pride Month, culminating with the 36th annual Pride Parade on Sunday, July 3. For news and programming announcements, visit www.PrideToronto.com and follow @PrideToronto on Twitter, Pride Toronto on Facebook and @pridetoronto on Instagram. #PrideTO

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