



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on December 10, 2020

BLM Divided Between National and Local Over Cullors' Power Grab, Money Use

BLM is going corporate. And many of the grassroots aren't happy about it.

Tensions are [growing](#) between local chapters and national leaders in the Black Lives Matter movement over questions of goals, direction, and money.

Although BLM has generally bragged about being a grassroots movement (despite the fact that it has been [financed by billionaire George Soros](#) from the beginning) without a central hierarchy, its most prominent figures at the national level want to restructure it into a more traditional political organization, forming a political action committee, corporate partnerships, and adding a third organizing arm.



Photo: FatCamera / E+ / Getty Images Plus

In addition, the movement wants to have an audience in what they hope will be a Biden White House. But these moves to turn BLM into a sleek political machine are rubbing local members the wrong way, resulting in mutiny. Ten local chapters are cutting ties with the Black Lives Matter Global Network, the name of the national leadership.

In particular, the rebellious chapters are incensed that Patrisse Cullors, the only one of BLM's co-founders to still be officially involved with the organization, named herself executive director of the national leadership without input from the local chapters. They say it's a betrayal of the movement's "leaderful structure, which was ostensibly intended to give every member an equal say and prevent any single leader from gaining too much decision-making power."

It was Cullors who [admitted](#) that BLM's co-founders are "trained Marxists."

Politico notes:

Local Black Lives Matter activists say national leaders cut them off from funding and decision-making, leaving them broke and taking the movement in a direction with which they fundamentally disagree. And as the Black Lives Matter movement grows in influence, with millions in donations and celebrity endorsements, local organizers argue they're the ones in the streets pushing for change — and they're not getting their due.

"There's been intentional erasure," of local activists, said Sheri Dickerson, lead organizer with Black Lives Matter Oklahoma City. "People assume that that money is distributed to local chapters. That is not the case. People also assume that when actions are made, that national [leadership] has the support and agreement from this collective that what they're saying is representative of us. And that's certainly not the case."



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“We became chapters of Black Lives Matter as radical Black organizers embracing a collective vision for Black people engaging in the protracted struggle for our lives against police terrorism,” the 10 disaffected chapters [wrote in an open letter](#) last week. “With a willingness to do hard work that would put us at risk, we expected that the central organizational entity ... would support us chapters in our efforts to build communally.”

Referring to themselves as the #BLM10, the chapters put forth a list of a half-dozen contention points and grievances — among them Cullors’ alleged power grab.

They also accuse the national leadership of lacking transparency over money raised and how chapters can get a piece of it, with complaints that local chapters have received little funding since the organization began in 2013.

A private discussion with Cullors didn’t satisfy their concerns.

“We didn’t have an opportunity to agree to discuss. Nothing,” said Yahné Ndgo, a lead organizer with Black Lives Matter Philadelphia. “So then we ask questions, and we are told no answers.”

The Black Lives Matter Global Network has fired back that the #BLM10 are not formally affiliated with the national organization and that they are using the Black Lives Matter brand to get themselves credibility and money.

“Chapters that are a part of BLM Grassroots joined a unity pledge that laid out a set of organizing principles,” read a statement from the global alliance, adding that most of the #BLM10 declined to sign on. “Regardless of their affiliation, we know these groups will continue to do good and necessary work in their communities.”

Another struggle between the national and local leadership is what the area of focus over the next four years will be, assuming (as they do) that Joe Biden becomes president. While the global alliance wants to work with the executive branch closely and have a seat at the table, many chapters are wary about “begging” the White House.

“What [supporters] see is national folks talking about trying to get a meeting with Biden, while kids are literally outside of my door asking for food,” said April Goggans, lead organizer with Black Lives Matter D.C.

“I’m not begging Biden, or Harris, for any type of sit-down or meeting,” said Chanelle Helm, an organizer with Black Lives Matter Louisville. “I’m trying to get my mayor out of his seat, because he keeps doing the same s*** he’s doing.”



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