

DENVER BLACK QUEER COLLECTIVE

Established in 2021

dbqcollective@gmail.com

MISSION & VISION:

The Mission of Denver Black Queer Collective is to provide a protective, supportive and uplifting space for Queer Black People in the Colorado Community. We believe in collective joy, healing and safety, queer resistance, and effective activism.

Our Vision: We may not have it all together, but together we have all we need and more.

OUR HISTORY:

Denver Black Queer Collective was established in February of 2021, with the hopes of bringing more Black Queer spaces/community and kinship to the Denver area with the goal of spreading collective joy with each other and sustaining ourselves through healing, safety, and community care.

The collective was built and has grown through the collective support of Black Queer people. As of June 2022, we have over 300 queers on meetup.com, with an average of 50ish folks who are ongoingly engaged. Our primary mechanism for folks joining is currently meetup.com, with social media support through Facebook. Queer members eventually joined GroupMe, after having one-on-ones and relationship building with others.



INDIGENOUS PEOPLE/LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT/LOCAL RECOGNITION:

We honor and acknowledge that we are on the traditional territories and ancestral homelands of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Nations. This area was also the site of trade, hunting, gathering, and healing for many other Native Nations: The Lakota, Ute, Kiowa, Comanche, Apache, Shoshone, Dine', and others.

We also honor Black Queer, Trans, and Non-Binary folx who have resided in Denver and continued to build spaces for themselves.

BRIEF TIMELINE:

- **February 2021** - First event hosted online on meetup.com;
- **March 2021** - First in-person game night event.
- **March-May 2021** - Ongoing in-person and virtual events; collective supporting each other through relationship-building
- **June 2021** - First Living in Color Event, a space for BIPOC Queers to gather and build relationships
- **July 2021** - First official organizing meeting; setting values, principles, and community norms
- **August 2021 - November 2021** - Collective gained over 250 users through meetup.com
- **December 2021** - Healing & Safety discussions started happening, a commitment to safety for each other
- **January 2022** - Call for co-organizers; collective co-leadership (non-hierarchical)

- **February 2022** - Mission & Vision passed
- **Present** - Collective has over 300 members on meetup.com; with at least 10-15 active organizers for meetings.

COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS:

Community Agreements are a way for us to move through conflict in building stronger relationships and the culture we want; resisting patriarchy and this violent cis non-queer society. **At any time, members can add additional community agreements collectively. We honor former BYP100 DC who created and cultivated many of these agreements for queer spaces.**

1. Be open to the struggle
2. Bring your whole self (confusion, happiness, disappointment, elation, depression, etc) with respect to others
3. Pause to make sure you are not taking up too much space (ie. allow others for input and sit in with the discomfort of silence)
4. Trust the collective (i.e. trust when decisions are made by the group even if you're not there)
5. "Critique to create" (keeping critiques and feedback generative and forward-moving)
6. Be honest, direct, and grounded while holding compassion.
7. Take responsibility for your feelings and actions.
8. Seek deeper understanding (ask, read - first). Consider that this may or may not be the container for what you need to bring.
9. Side conversations and one on ones should build us up.
10. We struggle for the sake of deeper understanding and greater unity.
11. Be aware of anti-indigenous languages, such as "Colorado Native.;" instead - note where you were born and where you currently reside.

Core Values:

Action: We are committed to engaging in meaningful action to fulfill our mission and realize our collective vision through a democratic, consensus-driven process. Our actions are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic (yet visionary), and time-specific.

Challenge and Growth: We challenge each other and promote each other's growth within the collective. We challenge injustice and work towards creating a world where all Black people are free.

We are experts of our own experience: We do not represent all young Black people, but we strive to be reflective of all Black people. We speak for ourselves, build spaces for young Black activists and engage in existing spaces where they speak for themselves.

Holistic Energy: We bring our entire selves to the work. Our efforts are driven with love, using a culture-centered approach (art, music, dance, call and response, songs and chants), while nurturing individual leadership, and building power through our collective. We apply energy to our work and in the solidarity work, we engage in with other marginalized groups.

Radical and Purposeful Inclusion of all Black People: We are committed to building and sustaining a collective that is reflective of all young Black people, including but not limited to a diversity of: sex, neuro divergency/expansive, gender, class, citizenship status, sexuality, physical ability, education experiences and faith.

**Adapted from BYP100 DC*

THE COLLECTIVE - OUR COLLECTIVE ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES:

Building upon the radical Black Queer leaders of Ella Baker, Fannie Lou Hamer, and others; we explicitly are a non-hierarchal organization that believes in the self-determination of all BLACK people. We do not believe in leadership structures that reinforce any racist, classist, patriarchal, assimilationist, or otherwise oppressive frameworks for determining who is fit to be a leader.

We explicitly list oppressive frameworks that we are aware of that keep us confined. Others may be added as new members and/or the collective grows:

- White Supremacy - Respectability Politics
- Fatphobia
- Ableism
- Queerphobia
- Racism
- Sexism
- Classism
- Transphobia
- Colorism
- Xenophobia
- Anti-Indigeneity
- Anti- Blackness
- [Add others if needed at anytime]

With that, our collective is made of up Queer Black People who also take on various leadership roles. **All members collectively take the responsibilities of:**

- Creating a space where ALL Black Queer people can show up and be their full selves.
- Learning, growing, and critiquing what a safe space truly means for individual and collective people. This includes completing and updating individual [healing and safety form](#) when needed.
- Attending monthly organizing meetings (*when you have the capacity*) to provide input on the growth of the collective, upcoming events, structures, etc.
- Have at least 1-2 one on one meetings with a new member of the collective to build true authentic relationships (*when you have the capacity*).
- Supporting co-organizers with social events, collective structures and processes, and community events (*when you have the capacity*).

When thinking about whether or not we have the capacity to do something, we need to access our physical, mental, and spiritual state. Not everyone has the same capacity and capacity can change at any time, but we need to be honest with ourselves as to what we can and cannot take on. If you take on a role that you later realize is too much, it is okay to let others in the group know so that someone else can take on a role. The most important thing is that we are taking care of ourselves and that this collective is fun, uplifting, and supportive. If things ever become too much, it is okay and encouraged to take a step back and do whatever kind of self-care is accessible.

We believe that in order to build together effectively we must know one another, we must have a love for one another, and we must support one another. In order for our collective to be reflective of the world we want to see, we must be working to care for the people around us.

Relationship Building (and maintaining)

- Are we building relationships and community with one another that are rooted in who we are as people beyond an organizing context?
- Are we coordinating one-on-ones, particularly with new members?
- Are we checking in with members who were once engaged and checked out?
- Do we know each other well enough to work together effectively?
- Do our members know each other well enough to feel engaged and invested in the work?
- Are we having social events?

Supporting one another

- Are we supporting one another's needs in a way that allows us to engage as fully in the work?
- Is there an unfair distribution of labor?
- Are we having potlucks at meetings?
- Are our meetings in accessible spaces that people have a way of getting to?
- Are we making sure the parents in the collective have childcare options?
- Are we creating spaces that are safe enough for people to engage?
- Are we holding ourselves and others accountable to harm that is done in our spaces or that impacts our members?

Meaningful Relationships



Trust in Community



Collective Power

CO-ORGANIZERS ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES:

Denver Black Queer Collective is striving for a leader[full] group of Black Queer Members. The co-organizers structure was created in January of 2022 with the understanding that anyone - regardless of your background, skills or experience can support moving the collective forward.

Co-organizers typically support moving an event forward, supporting the creation of a collective structure/process, and are instrumental in keeping the “glue” of the collective strength.

Co-Organizers commit to:

- Creating a non-hierarchy leaderful collective through *group-centered leadership* - leaders form in groups and are committed to building shared power and struggling for collective goals. This is different than leader-centered groups, in which the group is dedicated to the goals and power of that leader.
- Ella Baker Organizing principles. You can learn about key organizing principles [here](#).
- Attending 1-hour monthly co-organizer meeting for updates on finance, healing and safety, and pertinent information.
- Attending monthly organizing meetings with the rest of the collective. (3rd Sunday of the month, alternating to Saturdays every two months)

Our current co-organizers are: Candice, Mysha, Nneka, Stevie, Janee', Matthew, and Leo

If you are interested in taking on a leadership role with the collective, please contact Jas or any of the other co-organizers for more information.