

Editorial ? Black lives do matter, but . . .

Black Lives Matter is a movement triggered by the acquittal of a white security guard who fatally shot a black teenager in Florida. The movement's website says it was created in 2012 ?after Trayvon Martin's murderer, George Zimmerman, was acquitted for his crime, and dead 17-year-old Trayvon was posthumously placed on trial for his own murder.?

The movement describes itself as ?a call to action and a response to the virulent anti-Black racism that permeates our society. Black Lives Matter is a unique contribution that goes beyond extrajudicial killings of Black people by police and vigilantes.

?It goes beyond the narrow nationalism that can be prevalent within Black communities, which merely call on Black people to love Black, live Black and buy Black, keeping straight Black men in the front of the movement while our sisters, queer and trans and disabled folk take up roles in the background or not at all.?

Anyone familiar with the Florida case and more recent shootings of black youths by white police officers in the U.S. cannot help but sympathize with the movement's stated objectives.

However, we don't see the rationale for importing everything mentioned above into Canada through the establishment of a chapter in Toronto which got some deservedly bad publicity over the weekend when its members brought the city's internationally famed Pride parade to a halt and presented a list of demands to be met before they would allow the parade to proceed.

In its short history, Black Lives Matter Toronto (BLMT) has directed most of its attention to the Toronto Police Service, which it portrays as just as racist as police forces in U.S. cities that have been the scene of race riots.

That to us is hard to stomach when one considers the fact Toronto has a black police chief and in the only recent incident in which a police officer killed a teenager standing alone in a streetcar, the victim was white.

One of the BLMT demands was that Toronto Police not be permitted to have a float supporting the gay and trans-gender community in next year's Pride parade.

We think Globe and Mail columnist Margaret Wente made a good point in Tuesday's Globe in a column which described the Pride incident as a form of bullying.

?Toronto's legendary Pride Parade is a festival of inclusiveness ? a good-natured rainbow coalition that embraces every letter of the LGBTQ alphabet. It's so inclusive that even straight people march in it. Its message is: Loud, proud and unbowed. Nobody can bully us any more.?

?Well, almost nobody. The new bully on the block is Black Lives Matter, a tiny group of noisy activists who borrow their branding and their belligerence from the United States. They've proved they can bully just about anyone, including City Hall, the mayor and the provincial Premier. The Pride Parade was a pushover,? she wrote, adding later in the column:

?By pretending that Toronto is just another racist hellhole where police routinely gun down black kids, the Black Lives Matter folks do not create a useful forum for discussion. Nor do they pay much attention to the black kids who are gunned down by other black kids. Don't those lives matter, too??

It will be interesting to see whether the Toronto chapter will ever turn its attention to the fact most of the victims of rampant gun violence in Toronto are black, as are the killers, and start working with police to reduce the senseless carnage.