

2020 PROTESTS

The DC Mayor Had "Black Lives Matter" Painted Onto The Street. A Day Later, Protesters Added "Defund The Police."

The messages were painted right outside the White House.

By Kadia Goba



Reporting From
Washington, DC

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Kadia Goba / BuzzFeed News

Washington, DC's mayor on Friday had "Black Lives Matter" painted onto the street outside the White House right near where, five days before, police unloaded rounds of tear gas on peaceful protesters so President Donald Trump could get a photo op.

After another wave of demonstrations on Saturday evening, protesters broke out bright yellow paint and added their own demand right next to it:

The addition came as a rebuke to a rebuke, a focus on a message that protesters have been pushing since the video of police killing George Floyd was made public — that "reforming" the police, as countless politicians have pledged to do for years, is not enough, and that money needs to be reappropriated to education and more in Black communities.

"Black Lives Matter" was added to the roadway — along with a new street sign, Black Lives Matter Plaza NW — amid a feud between DC Mayor Muriel Bowser and Trump over federal law enforcement and military on the streets.

The message her staff painted runs along 16th Street NW, from K to H streets, which leads up to Lafayette Square Park and the White House grounds.

Bowser tweeted a video of the finished work.



Muriel Bowser

@MurielBowser

[#BlackLivesMatter](#)

412K 10:42 AM - Jun 5, 2020

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Black Lives Matter DC responded before the paint was even dry, calling it a "performative distraction."



BlackLivesMatter DC

@DMVBlackLives

This is a performative distraction from real policy changes. Bowser has consistently been on the wrong side of BLMDC history. This is to appease white liberals while ignoring our demands. Black Lives Matter means defund the police.

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Holy cow. The city of DC is out here on 16th street behind the White House painting BLACK LIVES MATTER onto the streets — that it owns — stretching all the way to K Street.



17.1K 9:53 AM - Jun 5, 2020

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As protesters from the Movement for Black Lives, a coalition of Black freedom groups, began to paint on Saturday, they chanted, "If Black

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lives matter, then we have to defund the police" and "I said I love being Black / I love the texture of my hair / I'mma rock it everywhere."

The organizers chanted, "Fund Black futures. Keep our people out of jail. The whole damn system is guilty as hell."



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It. Is. Happening. #georgeFloydProtests #DCProtests

01:01 AM - 07 Jun 2020

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Anthony Lorenzo Green, 34, a core organizer of Black Lives Matter DC, told BuzzFeed News, "We did this because Mayor Bowser painted our streets and said Black Lives Matter the for the first time in her administration.

"So what we wanted to do today was show the entire world that Black lives matter in DC, and there are Black men who have been killed by DC police and this administration has not been held accountable."

He also addressed the feud between Bowser and Trump.

"No matter what show is going on between Mayor Bowser and Donald Trump, we know about the real lives in Washington — Black men are being killed by the Metropolitan Police Department, and nobody in leadership in this city, wants to do a damn thing about it, but we got a dog and pony show going on."



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The scene here on 16th st down the block from the White House.

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Organizers said they did not have permission from the city to paint the street.

"We have to tear down this racist, white supremacist society, and make sure that we're funding Black lives in America," Green added, "especially right here in the nation's capital."

Dominique Hazzard, a member of BYP100, a Black youth group, told BuzzFeed News defunding is important "because as long as there are police, Black people will continue to die. The police is an inherently violent institution from the beginning of this country till now. And we envision a different future. We envision different ways that we can keep each other safe."

Protesters say they want reallocated funds to go toward healthcare, education, social services, and jobs.

"When you look at the communities in DC that one would say are safe —Georgetown, Tenleytown — why are those communities safe? Is it because their streets are full of police?" Hazzard asked. "No, it's because people there have resources that you need to live."



Kadia Goba is a political reporter for BuzzFeed News and is based in Washington, DC.

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