

BLACK LIVES MATTER

BLACK LIVES MATTER: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q: What is Black Lives Matter?

A: Black Lives Matter is a US-based international movement co-founded by three black women: Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi. The #BlackLivesMatter movement began as a hashtag for Twitter, after George Zimmerman's acquittal for the murder of Trayvon Martin in 2013. It gained momentum after the 2014 shooting of Michael Brown, the death of Eric Garner, and subsequent events that continue to this day.

Q: What are the goals of “Black Lives Matter”?

A: Justice, an end to all forms of discrimination and the full recognition of human rights for Black people are what the movement includes in its vision for a “New America.” The movement calls upon the United States government to acknowledge structural violence and institutional discrimination and to recognize the full spectrum of human rights and obligations under international law.

The focus is an end to police brutality and the murder of people of color and the oppressed, mass incarceration, and a call to demilitarize US police departments. Other objectives from BlackLivesMatter.com include:

- Full, living wage employment;
- Decent and affordable housing fit for the shelter of human beings;
- An end to the school-to-prison pipeline by providing quality education for all;
- An aggressive attack against all laws, policies, and entities that disenfranchise any community from expressing themselves at the ballot

Ultimately, the goal is to address harm and conflict in our communities through community based, restorative solutions.

(Source: www.BlackLivesMatter.com)

Q: But don't “All Lives Matter”?

A: Yes, our UU principles call us to recognize “the inherent worth & dignity of every person” (Principle 1), to promote “justice, equity and compassion in human relations” (Principle 2), and to work for “the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all” (Principle 6). *But at this time in history*, a spotlight is being projected onto serious issues of systemic injustice towards black people specifically. Our principles call us to support this cause, without negating the value of other causes. We need to break from the “either/or” mentality and embrace “both/and” understandings.

Q: Where do UUs (specifically the Unitarian Universalist Association) stand on this movement?

The 2015 UU General Assembly (GA) called upon member congregations to support the Black Lives Matters Movement as an Action of Immediate Witness and urged us to:

- Engage in intentional learning spaces to organize for racial justice
- Work toward police reform and prison abolition

- Recognize that the fight for civil rights and equality is still very real today and take initiative in collaboration with local and national organizations fighting for racial justice

The UU GA further stated “No matter who you are, black lives matter, and a system of fair, transformative, and restorative justice that is accountable to communities is something to which each of us has a right. Unitarian Universalists and our greater society have the power to make this happen. Let’s do it!”

(Source: <http://www.uua.org/statements/support-black-lives-matter-movement>)

Q. What are we doing at our own Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Harford County to support Black Lives Matter?

- A. We are spearheading county-wide forums on race and law enforcement with civic leaders from many walks of life and law enforcement.
- B. We are engaging in the UUA common read, *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*, planning various discussion and multi-media events in the winter months. This is also a county-wide invitation.
- C. Our wayside pulpit has the single phrase “Black Lives Matter” on our roadside sign.

Institutional Racism in America – Consider This:

- *At least 14 unarmed black people were killed by police officers last year. Only one of the officers was indicted.*
- *84% of police officers interviewed from 100 departments across the country said they had seen colleagues use excessive force.*
- *In 2011-2012, the Montgomery County Police Department’s arrest rate per 1000 residents was 65.2 for black residents and 16.8 for non-black residents.*
- *Nationwide, even though blacks and whites have similar levels of drug use, yet blacks are ten times as likely to be incarcerated for drug crimes. In Maryland, African-Americans represent 90 percent of all those imprisoned for drug offenses.*
- *African-American youth are 9 times more likely than white youth to be sentenced as adults for the same crime. Prison sentences for black men are about 20% longer than for white men for the same crime.*
- *There are more blacks under correctional control today — in prison or jail, on probation or parole — than were enslaved in 1850, a decade before the Civil War began.*
- *Only 2 states in the U.S. allow people serving time, on parole, or with criminal records to vote. All other states deny one or more of these groups the right to vote.*
- *As of 2004, more African American men were disenfranchised (due to felon disenfranchisement laws) than in 1870, the year the Fifteenth Amendment was ratified prohibiting laws that explicitly deny the right to vote on the basis of race.*
- *A national study of more than 90,000 schools found that although black children made up only 18 percent of preschoolers, 42 percent of preschoolers who were suspended were black.*
- *In a study of employment discrimination, resumes with the names Lakesha and Jamal were 50% less likely to get call backs than identical resumes with the names Emily and Brendan.*
- *The wealth of white households was 13 times the median wealth of black households in 2013, compared with eight times the wealth in 2010. The current gap between wealth for blacks and whites has reached its highest point since 1989.*

(Adapted with permission from the Cedar Lane UU website, www.cedarlane.org and the UU Church of Annapolis <http://www.uuannapolis.org>)