

Name:

Period:

BLACK LIVES MATTER

Honors Research Packet



Research Question

- What is Black Lives Matter?
- What facts are important for understanding the BLM movement?
- What are the opinions of people who support BLM?
- What are the opinions of people who criticize BLM?
- What is your opinion on the issue?

ARTICLE 1

AN OPEN LETTER TO THOSE WHO STILL DON'T GET IT: BLACK LIVES MATTER

By Deandre Moore | 2017

Dear People (The ones who still don't get it),
Black Lives Matter, all of them. For some reason, some people still do not understand what we mean when we say "Black Lives Matter" or why Black Lives Matter is an imperative movement for African Americans. Which is part of the problem. With clear and concrete evidence of racial profiling, police brutality, systematic racism and racial injustice, there are some people who are still trying to tell us that there is no real issue. Some even argue that we, African Americans are the problem, not the system or the police. And then we have that group of individuals who continue to try to take what belongs to us, and make it fit them so that they aren't made to feel uncomfortable. Well guess what? If you feel uncomfortable when you hear or see "Black Lives Matter," it's probably because deep down, you know the reason we are saying this. Somewhere deep down, you know that in American, All Lives Don't Matter, because if they did, we wouldn't be in the middle of another civil rights movement. Yet, here we are.

Now, before I jump into the issues outside of the Black community, let me address what "Black Lives Matter" is for us, within the Black community. Black Lives Matter was created 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. Since then, the movement has and does get most of its attention when we see or witness the murders of Black and Brown men & women at the hands of police. For some who truly don't understand the purpose of Black Lives Matter, they would say that's all this movement is about, addressing the murders of innocent men and women who are killed by those who are supposed to protect us. However, it's so much more than that. Black Lives Matter is also about affirming those within our own community. It's about affirming the lives of Black queer and trans person, those who have lost their way, those who are disabled, women, men and all Black lives regardless of their gender identities. Black Lives Matter is about supporting one another and shedding light and love on some of the worlds most marginalized people. It's about affirming Black folks' contributions to this society, our humanity, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression.

As of lately, we have seen more and more Black and Brown men & women murdered at the hands of police, some of which, were unarmed. We have seen a man (Alton Sterling), shot and killed by police, in front of a corner store for simply making a living for his family by selling CD's. We've seen a Black man (Philando Castile), licensed to carry, get shot in front of his girlfriend and daughter, for doing exactly what an officer told him to do, which was to take out his identification and license to carry. We've seen a Black man (Eric Garner), choked to death by the police, for selling cigarettes, on a corner, which may have been his way of providing for his family. A Black woman (Korryn Gaines) was shot, while holding her baby, by the police, when they unlawfully kicked her door in. The list goes on and on and on, to the point of where it becomes traumatizing. It's hard waking up and looking at the news, or on social media, and seeing another man or woman, who looks like you, murdered by those who are simply supposed to protect and serve us. What's worse than that is seeing that justice is hardly ever served in these cases. It has become routine to see what is happening. Officer murders Black man or woman, they get paid leave during an investigation, the media tries to find all the negative stuff they can about the victim, if the officer gets charged with

anything, they may go to trial, and most of the time, at most, lose their job. That's not justice. That's taking the life of someone, and getting away with it. That's privilege.

It leaves many of us sad, angry, hurt, filled with rage, and some, even vengeful. There is only so much you can expect from people before they start to retaliate. What also makes us upset, is when people try to take a movement (Black Lives Matter) and try to change it (All Lives Matter/ #Blue Lives Matter) to make it fit them, even when it was never intended for them. First, there's no such thing as a Blue life. That would mean that you are giving life to an occupation. It's a choice to work as an officer, and it's a choice to wear that badge and that blue uniform. For me, being Black isn't an occupation or a choice. Being Black is not something I had control over. However, I'm unapologetically Black and walk in my body every single day. As far as that whole "All Lives Matter" thing is concerned, well, if you believe that, then you should understand why we are saying, "Black Lives Matter." All lives have not been faced with oppression. All lives were not forced here on ships, dehumanized for centuries and made to be slaves. All lives were not told that they were three-fifths of a person. All lives didn't have to march just to get the right to vote, and all lives don't wake up and see people of the same race as them being killed at a disproportionate rate by police all over the country. Now, no one ever said, that other lives don't matter, we know they do. But for centuries, we have been faced with oppression, poverty, a system that was never intended to work for us and inequality in this country. At this point, we are tired and will not tolerate it any more.

I've seen racism happen here on campus, in the Bearkat One Office, and watched as the university and our President, take it lightly, and place the situation "under investigation." However, it hasn't been something I have taken lightly. I have met with the Dean of Students on multiple occasions about the issues that have bothered a great number of Black student on this campus, and they could not even tell me what was being done to handle this employee of Sam Houston State University, who took to Twitter and lashed out at a student by using racial slurs and derogatory language toward her. I even requested a meeting with our President, Dana G. Hoyt, and was told that, "she's too busy" for even an hour out of her week, to meet with the victim of this incident, our NAACP president, and myself. Yet, I see her on campus, handing out food on the yard, and finding time to participate in homecoming activities. It has been an issue that SHSU has tried to keep quiet and under the radar, but if we allow it to happen once and give that person a slap on the wrist, and then it happens again and again, then it becomes a trend, kind of like the killing of unarmed Black men & women.

This is just the beginning of a very long overdue conversation, and I am just getting started. Some will get it after this, and some still won't, and some never will, because they don't know what it's like to be a Black man or woman in America, and that's ok. Just make sure that if you don't get it, you refrain from speaking on a subject as if you do. The Black students at this University won't sit and allow racism to go on, especially when we pay, just like everyone else, to be here. We know that when we come together, things change. When we come together we see the strength in numbers. We know that even if our President, the staff, or administrators won't stand for us, we have each other, and that we will stand together against any injustice, racism, or inequality. Not only at this campus but all over this country, because injustice anywhere, is a threat to us everywhere. We know our worth and we know that our lives matter. Here at Sam Houston State University, we know, that all, BLACK LIVES MATTER!

Sincerely,
A Black ma-..no,
An Unapologetically Black Gay Man

ARTICLE 2

CHICAGO POLICE SUPERINTENDENT BLAMES BLACK LIVES MATTER FOR HIGH MURDER RATE

By Gretel Kauffman | January 3, 2017

Amid speculation surrounding the 762 homicides that took place in Chicago in 2016 - the highest number in two decades - the city's former police superintendent is blaming the Black Lives Matter movement for the murder spike.

Garry McCarthy, who held the superintendent position for four years before getting fired in 2015 after his department withheld dash-cam footage of the police shooting of 17-year-old Laquan McDonald, said on the "Cats Roundtable" radio show on Sunday that anti-police brutality protesters have led to a "state of lawlessness" and a "political atmosphere of anti-police sentiment."

Chicago, where the homicide rate rose by 58 percent from 2015 to 2016, is "probably the worst example of something that has happened across the country," Mr. McCarthy told host John Catsimatidis. Though supporters of Black Lives Matter dispute accusations that the movement encourages violence or other criminal behavior, the tensions in Chicago are indeed representative of a greater widening rift between police and black communities as the Black Lives Matter and Blue Lives Matter movements struggle to find common ground.

"The simplest way to describe it is that we have created an environment where we have emboldened criminals and we are hamstringing the police," said McCarthy on Sunday, echoing a widespread notion that the Black Lives Matter movement has driven a deeper wedge between minority communities and law enforcement.

Meanwhile, the movement's organizers have maintained that their aim is not to promote violence against officers, but rather to peacefully address police bias and systemic racism within the criminal justice system.

"The movement began as a call to end violence and that call remains true today," DeRay Mckesson, a Black Lives Matter organizer from Baltimore, told the New York Daily News in response to McCarthy's remarks. "I am reminded that it was McCarthy's police department that killed Laquan McDonald and hid the video for a year. He bears great responsibility for the public attitude towards the police."

The ideological clash between police and activists has in recent months played out not only in the streets but also in commercial disputes. Last week, the largest police union in the United States asked online retailer Amazon to remove a T-shirt featuring the words "Bulletproof: Black Lives Matter" from its website, accusing the shirts of "commercializing our differences and perpetuating the myths which harm the relationships between the protectors and their communities." Days earlier, Wal-Mart removed the same T-shirt from its website after receiving a similar complaint from the police union. In October, a Blue Lives Matter blog post called for a boycott of Ben and Jerry's after the ice cream maker made a public statement of support for Black Lives Matter.

While such conflicts highlight tensions between law enforcement and anti-police brutality activists, other efforts have sought to bridge the divide between the two camps. In Wichita, Kan., for example, one Black Lives Matter protest in July made headlines when it turned into a community picnic with police. Weeks later, thousands turned out for the 33rd annual National Night Out, a yearly event that connects local police officers with the communities they serve.

Overlap between the two groups further suggests that reconciliation may be possible. Some members of law enforcement have publicly expressed support for Black Lives Matter, saying they don't see supporting the police and supporting the ideas behind the movement as mutually exclusive.

"They're not in conflict," Austin Police Chief Art Acevedo told a local Fox network in 2015. "Just because you believe black lives matter doesn't mean you don't support the police."

ARTICLE 3

WHAT VIDEOS CAN'T SHOW: BLACK LIVES & POLICE VIOLENCE

By Gary Gutting, *Commonweal* | 2016

Our intense and divisive debate over police violence has increasingly focused on striking videos ("raw" as they now say) that many think prove racial bias in police treatment of blacks. The videos are important, but reactions to them, pro and con, have very often expressed ideological commitments and emotions rather than objective

assessments of the facts. It's crucial that we use the videos as a start in our search for the truth, not as confirmations of what we think we already know.

The videos are used to support two quite different claims: that police officers use unnecessary violence, and that this unnecessary violence shows racial bias against minorities, especially blacks. Although it's possible to argue about many individual cases, the videos overall provide compelling evidence that police officers sometimes use lethal force when it isn't necessary. In some cases the unnecessary violence may be in accord with official guidelines, but that only shows that the guidelines need revision. Of course, a relatively small sample of clear cases does not tell us the extent of the abuses, but we shouldn't tolerate any instances of irresponsible killings by the very people we expect to protect us. We need a thorough scrutiny and reform of police practices to make sure that officers know how to defuse dangerous situations with minimal violence and shoot to kill only when there is no plausible alternative. Whatever other disagreements we may have, the video evidence should unite us on this point.

The second claim, that much of this unjustified violence is due to racial bias, is another matter. Supporters of Black Lives Matter typically insist that the videos also support this conclusion. In a New York Times op-ed, Chris Lebron, a black philosophy professor at Yale, pointed to the videos and said: "Just look at the rate at which blacks are killed by the police." The problem, however, is that we can't literally see the comparative rates at which the police kill blacks and whites. Establishing the claim of bias requires more than just a set of compelling examples of unjustified killings of blacks. We also require evidence that police unjustly kill a disproportionate number of blacks. Supporting the claim of bias requires not only evidence that blacks were killed unjustly but also evidence that blacks were killed at a rate higher than their percentage of the total population. We can't determine a higher rate of unjust killings by looking at a small sample of videos. We need statistical evidence about the ratio of unjust killings overall.

Such evidence is not easy to find, since official records on police killings are far from complete and often misleading. But recently journalists at the Washington Post have gathered some good basic statistics that seem at first glance to support the conclusion that there's a strong bias against blacks. In 2016, 26 percent of the unarmed men that police killed were black, even though blacks make up only 13 percent of the population. By contrast, whites, who are 62 percent of the population, were only 49 percent of those killed. In particular, an unarmed black man is about 2.5 times more likely to die from an encounter with a police officer than is an unarmed white man.

But this is not enough to establish racial bias in police killings; the argument requires at least one more step. The bias follows if we assume that whites and blacks are equally likely to have encounters with police officers. In fact, blacks run a much higher risk of being arrested (or otherwise stopped by police). They account for about 30 percent of arrests, which is not far from the black percentage of unarmed men killed by police (26 percent). This suggests that there is little or no bias against blacks. Of course, some argue that police officers have more encounters with blacks because their bias leads them to think that blacks are more prone to criminal activity. Others reply that the data

show that blacks are more likely to commit crimes. This debate has not been settled, and recent work by Roland G. Fryer, a black economist at Harvard, has further complicated the discussion, suggesting that police may be harder on blacks than whites in general, but that they are significantly more likely to kill whites.

The debate spills over into other thorny issues: whether racial biases are built into our drug laws and their enforcement, whether psychological experiments show police officers to have an implicit bias against or in favor of blacks, whether poverty rather than racism is the root of blacks' problems with police. I suspect that firm conclusions about the relation of unjustified police shootings to racial bias would require better data than we have and more refined analysis than anyone has been able to provide. In any case, the powerful video images on which we fixate cannot answer the complex statistical questions needed to resolve the issue of police bias against blacks.

Does this mean that blacks have no good reason to protest against police violence? By no means. Blacks, as perennial victims in our history, have a particularly sharp historical awareness of violence in America and a special interest in keeping it to a minimum. It's crucial to keep emphasizing that black lives matter, not because other lives don't matter but because black lives have so often been treated as though they did not matter.

But the claim that the galvanizing examples of unjustified police violence caught on camera are evidence of racial bias is incorrect. This issue is still unresolved, and our efforts to settle it through fruitless frame-by-frame analyses of videos does nothing but exacerbate our disagreements, which quickly degenerate into exchanges of epithets. I'm not convinced, as many are, that this has led to a crisis that threatens to undermine our democracy. But if we realized the irrelevance of riveting videos to the incendiary issue of racial bias, we could turn our national attention to the project of eliminating the unjustified police violence that the videos do establish. Here we have a number of excellent models of how to proceed--including, ironically, the Dallas police department. Since racial bias remains a possible source of police violence, we should, of course, continue and expand current efforts to ensure bias-free policing. But giving up the vain and counterproductive effort to prove bias from video evidence would go a long way to reducing the debilitating rancor of our public life.

ARTICLE 4

GRIM STATISTICS ON RACE AND POLICE KILLINGS

By Eric Bradner, CNN | 2016

WASHINGTON (CNN) -- Syndicated columnist Nicholas Kristof wrote this week that young black men are 21 times more likely to be shot and killed by police than young white men. Fox News Channel host Bill O'Reilly had a much different take on his show Monday night, offering that more whites are killed by police than blacks.

"In 2012, 123 African-Americans were shot dead by police. There are currently more than 43 million blacks living in the U.S.A.," O'Reilly said on his program. "Same year, 326 whites were killed by police bullets. Those are the latest stats available."

Two dramatically different statistics -- and they could both be right.

That reality, in part a result of weak local reporting and national data gathering efforts on police homicides, has long frustrated researchers and analysts who say they need to know more about those shootings.

Here's how the two pundits came to such dramatically different conclusions:

Kristof was citing an analysis by ProPublica, which combed through the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Supplementary Homicide Report.

The site reported: "The 1,217 deadly police shootings from 2010 to 2012 captured in the federal data show that blacks, age 15 to 19, were killed at a rate of 31.17 per million, while just 1.47 per million white males in that age range died at the hands of police."

What's key is that ProPublica narrowed the scope of its analysis to the 15-to-19 age range, and adjusted for population differences to account for the fact that more whites live in the United States than blacks -- both key differences from O'Reilly's approach.

The Fox News host's numbers, meanwhile, came from a fatal injury database maintained by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

A search in 2012 for deaths caused by "legal intervention" as a result of the use of a firearm -- that is, a police shooting -- yields just the numbers O'Reilly cited Monday night. In the 15-19 age range, the database shows 20 white people killed in 2012 and 14 blacks.

The problem, experts say, is that the United States doesn't collect accurate statistics and verify nearly enough information to show definitive trends in police shootings.

"There isn't a mandatory reporting. It is a self-reporting. Almost on the honor system," Sunny Hostin, a CNN legal analyst, said on CNN's "The Situation Room" on Tuesday.

"Although the FBI does have some statistics, most people know that those statistics can't even be counted upon, because they are self-reported," Hostin said. "So my suggestion has been all along that we need mandatory reporting from our law enforcement agencies around the country and I think that the number of officer shootings involving young black males is actually much higher than is even self-reported. That's something that needs to be part of the conversation."

Geoff Alpert, a University of South Carolina criminologist, recently told USA Today the FBI's database can confirm police have shot and killed people -- but provides few other details.

The numbers are self-reported by individual law enforcement agencies and not all local and state agencies participate. Most shootings are marked as justified homicides, with little follow-up.

"There is no national database for this type of information, and that is so crazy," Alpert said. "We've been trying for years, but nobody wanted to fund it and the (police) departments didn't want it. They were concerned with their image and liability. They don't want to bother with it."

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