

What Black Lives Matter Means to Me

by Emily Hunnewell

Issues and experiences related to the Black Lives Matter movement means to me that I can make a change. My ancestors built this country and I owe it to them and every other black person whose voice has been silenced to use my voice and make myself be heard. Issues include colonization, culture appropriation, environmental racism, medical racism, institutional racism, systematic racism, colorism, generational poverty, police brutality, school to prison pipeline, mass incarceration, and gentrification just to name a few.

I grew up in a white family, and lived in a white community. Because of this, I was never exposed or taught about black history or black culture. I grew up being ashamed to be black, and hated my skin color and my hair. I envied the white people I was surrounded by. It wasn't until junior year of high school that I read the book "When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir" by Patrisse Khan-Cullors, Asha Bandele, and Angela Davis. I had never read anything like it. This book opened my eyes and taught me so many things about being black and how we are taught to hate the brown skin that we are in. It was the first time in my life that I had ever heard the phrase "Black Lives Matter." I remember how emotional I was, and the relief I felt that someone thought that my life mattered and shared similar experiences. This movement means everything to me, and it has shaped me to become the person that I am today. I got "BLM" tattooed on my wrist as a reminder that my life matters and is valuable and just as important as anyone else's. The Black Lives Matter movement has affected me because it has validated my experience as a black person. I feel like the Black Lives Matter movement has given black people a chance to come together and unite and to finally say that our lives matter, which we have never been able to do in a country that has never valued us or believed it to be true.

My expectations for the future include all of those issues listed above to be changed drastically. In order to change the system, you must be a part of it. I want to go to law school to help make a difference and interrupt racist agendas that have been implemented in the system to continue to oppress and discriminate against black people. Black generations before me weren't allowed to be in powerful positions, which was very purposeful because they wanted to suppress black people. However, I now have the power to become a part of the system and I plan on dismantling it and rebuilding it with the hope and goals that it will be equal and not work to only benefit white people. In the future I expect to see more black people in politics, running companies and corporations, and starting black owned businesses.

I believe that this generation of black people is the future of this country and I envision that we will be the new revolutionary, following in the footsteps of other revolutionaries like Malcolm X, Assata Shakur, Angela Davis, James Baldwin, Huey P. Newton, Bobby Seale, and Fred Hampton. The Black Lives Matter movement has given us the momentum and empowerment so that we can continue to move forward and demand equality and use our voices as black people to share and tell our experiences. This movement has given me the inspiration and passion to fight for my people and refuse to be silenced or stopped.

