

# What Black Lives Matter Means to Me

## by Madison Rogers

Black lives matter. These three words are not complicated, yet so many people fail to listen and understand them. It is simple, the lives of African Americans hold worth. Just as much worth as the lives of white people. The Black Lives Matter movement is a scream for people to shut up and finally listen to these words! Their goals are to draw attention to the ways that black people have been treated unjustly, to change the institutions, laws, and polices that aid this unfairness, to combat police brutality, and to end racial injustice. To understand this movement, it was critical for me to look at its history. In July 2013, an aggressor, George Zimmerman, was acquitted for the unjust murder of an innocent black teenager, Trayvon Martin. As a response to this injustice, three inspiring women, Patrisse Cullors, Alicia Garza, and Opal Tometi created a political movement to stir change, Black Lives Matter. In 2014, there were two more unjust deaths of innocent black men at the hands of police officers. These men were Eric Garner and Michael Brown. These were not the only instances. The unlawful deaths of Breonna Taylor, Tamir Rice, and Ezell Ford are only a few of the names of the African Americans who were wrongfully murdered because of their skin color. I am against anti-Black violence and I support Black Lives Matter in working to end the despicable violence in this country.

I am a white female who comes from a largely white-populated town in upstate New York. Growing up, I was not exposed to the racism and discrimination that exists in our country. In my small town, I was living in a bubble and was oblivious to the oppression that African Americans faced. It was not until I took a trip to Atlanta, Georgia where I came across vicious racism. I heard the appalling words that were spoken towards a black man who was minding his

own business. In that moment, I was startled that anyone would speak like that to another human. Despite experiencing this situation, when I got home, I am ashamed that I forgot about the incident and continued to live my life. Over the years, hearing about police brutality towards African Americans has invoked anger in me, but it was not until the killing of George Floyd in 2020 and the eruption of the Black Lives Matter social movement that I truly began to become aware of the issues in our society. Hearing about these injustices has made me question American society. I am no longer trapped in my bubble where everything is perfect. I have begun to question the laws, the motives of lawmakers, and the way that law enforcement operates. The Black Lives Matter movement has inspired me to not accept things the way they are. There must be a better way! Additionally, the movement has caused me to question the educational system. It has brought my attention to the educational inequality in schools in which race has a huge factor. In urban cities, there is huge population of minorities living at low poverty levels due to discrimination, poor education, and declining economic opportunities. This is forcing African Americans to be the underdogs because they are not being given equal economic and academic opportunities. The “urban crisis” of the 1960s has continued today, hurting the academic reputation of schools in cities, and African Americans are the ones who are suffering from this. Power can no longer go unchecked in the United States. Policymakers must make structural changes to end the oppression of black people and break the destructive cycle.

In addition to leading me to question the political and social structure in the United States, the Black Lives Matter movement has made me undergo a personal reflection. This movement has compelled me to ask myself what type of person I am. What are my values? What do my actions say about me? I have realized the unexamined stereotypes that I have within my subconscious and I need to work on correcting them. I can no longer ignore the cries of the Black

Lives Matter movement and fail to respond because African Americans deserve justice and equality in this country. As a white female, I understand that I will never have to face racism and stereotypes because of the color of my skin and cannot truly know how it feels. However, I sympathize with the Black Lives Matter movement because I believe that the lives of black people are just as valuable and I am committed to listening, understanding, and taking action to end the oppression of black people in this country. Black lives matter!