

# What Black Lives Matter Means to Me

## by Matthew Nieves

Black Lives Matter is an important international movement fighting towards racial justice. Black Lives Matter means to me that there are still people around the world, and in the States, that need to be educated on the value that minority lives have for the world. I first learned of the movement in a Contemporary Issues course while I was in High School. I remember walking in the classroom one day in April and the Time Magazine issue with Black Lives Matter on the cover was on my desk as a reading assignment. I felt inspired. I wanted nothing more than to be involved with the fight against systemic oppression. Fast forward seven years later and I am reciting poetry and chanting at protests all over Connecticut.

A few colleagues of mine and I were able to organize a protest in Torrington, CT and a series of protests in my hometown of Winsted, CT. Oftentimes we were able to open the minds of people that approached us inquiring more about the BLM mission. Unfortunately, we did have to deal with many angry Trump supporters and other ignorant members of the community. At some protests we received 'All Lives Matter' responses as contradictions to our statements that Black Lives Matter. Some opposers went so far to say "no they don't" and attack us not only with profanity but with garbage. One such incident, a counter protester attempted to hit BLM supporters with their truck and sped off. This goes to show that Black Lives Matter has a reason to be here, not that I ever doubted it. Black Lives Matter is important because there are still many people in this country that do not believe that the lives of minorities matter. I do feel that everybody's life is important, but the All Lives Matter counter movement was established to deter the Black Lives Matter mission. Black Lives Matter is seeking Immediate Harm Reduction, a transfer of funding from police departments to community development and inadequate education facilities. Black Lives Matter chapters are advocating for racial justice and are seeking things such as mandatory insurance liability for police officer's to cover for damages and medical expenses of those that fall victim to their violence to city review boards to determine whether excessive use of force or police brutality is targeting minorities (or anybody for that matter). Black Lives Matter means this country still has improvements to make before we can claim that we are the best country on Earth. I truly believe we can be, but not until all of the American people can agree that the American Criminal Injustice System must be reformed. Black Lives Matter means everywhere in the world life matters whether no matter the pigmentation of skin. As a minority myself, Black Lives Matter means my life matters.

Sometime in June of 2020 I wrote the following poem to recite at the Black Lives Matter protests in Winsted and Torrington. Black Lives Matter means education of those lacking a diverse experience of culture.

### **Stay Woke**

The System is Broke  
When the Police Shoot and Choke  
And Racial Equality is Treated as a Joke

We The People Demand Immediate Harm Reduction  
Mass Incarceration is a Minority Abduction

The Powers That Be  
Must Agree  
On a Solution For The Plight That We See

When Will They Address  
The Current Systemic Mess  
Rather than Chat and Digress

Will Those That Oppress  
Admit and Confess  
They Want Us to Feel That We Are Less?

We Will Not Bow Down  
Even if We Gotta Tear Up The Town  
We Honor The Victims: Tamir Rice, Breonna Taylor, and Michael Brown

We honor Philando Castile, Tayvon Martin, and Oscar Grant  
We Will Honor Their Names Until We Can't

From George Floyd and Anthony Hill  
To Rodney King and Emmitt Till  
We remember Zo Dowdell  
We won't stop until  
The Police Cease to Kill

Without Justice There is Not Peace  
So We Must Educate These Racist Police

To Demand Our Silence  
By Threat of Violence

But If We Give Into Fear  
The Masses Would Flee and Scatter  
They Don't Want to Hear

**BLACK LIVES MATTER!**