

# What The Black Lives Matter Movement Means to Me

## by Destiny Johnson

"I can't breathe. I can't breathe," were the dying words of Eric Garner as he was put in a chokehold after being suspected of selling illegal cigarettes on the streets of Staten Island, New York City. On the day of July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2014 Garner's last words repeated in my 14-year-old mind as I broke down in tears asking why. Why are innocent Black men constantly targeted by police officers and killed? Why are innocent Black women disrespected, killed and ignored by law enforcement, the same people who are supposed to "serve and protect" this country? Why do young Black boys and girls have to grow up fearing and hating Police officers because of what they do to our mothers, fathers, brothers, and sisters? As a curious 14-year-old Black girl I wanted to understand why my people were hated, being mistreated, and killed because of the color of our skin. The Black Lives Matter Movement then became present in my life as I learned that their mission is to eradicate White supremacy and eliminate the violence directed towards the Black community by police officers and vigilantes.

The Black Lives Matter movement was created in 2013 in response to Trayvon Martin's murderer being acquitted. This powerful movement has only gained more recognition and spotlight for the impactful work they have done and raising awareness to the innocent Black individuals who were murdered for simply walking around in their Black skin. This movement has positively affected me and my mental state because it gives me hope that change will come, as long as we fight for what is right. As an unappreciated and overlooked Black woman in America, the Black Lives Matter movement helps to amplify my voice, amplify all Black women's voices, and combat acts of violence towards my people. The continuous work that this movement does to raise awareness of the injustices that Black people face on a daily basis help to educate people from all different walks, ultimately gaining their support and allyship. As I have developed and become confident in the skin I'm in, I have had the opportunity to openly share my thoughts and opinions during my classes, important meetings, panels and much more due to the confidence the Black Lives Matter Movement has instilled in me.

The family members I hold close to me understand how strongly I feel about the Black Lives Matter movement and the mission they have to end police brutality and the mistreatment of any kind towards Black people. I am apart of a generation of go getters, people who set their mind on a goal and don't rest until that goal is achieved. I am an individual who will fight for what she believes in despite the obstacles that might stand in my way. The current American society needs to be woken up to the screams and cries of our innocent brothers and sisters who have been taken from us too soon. Our American society needs to stand up for the Black community and join the fight for equality. I expect racist individual's to be held accountable for their actions in the near future of America because of the pressure my generation and future generations will put on people in power to make change necessary. We are sick and tired of being ignored, slaughtered, and left out. Now is the time for change and the Black Lives Matter Movement has guided us in the right direction.