

BLACK LIVES MATTER

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the origins of Black Lives Matter?

As stated from the organization itself, “#BlackLivesMatter was created in 2012 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. Rooted in the experiences of Black people in this country who actively resist our dehumanization, #BlackLivesMatter is a call to action and a response to the virulent anti-Black racism that permeates our society.”

<http://blacklivesmatter.com/about/>

What are the guiding principles of Black Lives Matter?

BLM has a wide range of guiding principles that can be looked at in greater detail at:

<http://blacklivesmatter.com/guiding-principles/>

Here they are in abbreviated form:

1. **Diversity:** Commitment to acknowledging and celebrating differences and commonalities.
2. **Restorative Justice:** The commitment “to collectively, lovingly and courageously [work] ... for freedom and justice for Black people and, by extension all people.”
3. **Unapologetically Black**
4. **Transgender Affirming**
5. **Globalism:** Black Americans are part of a global black family that experience privilege or disadvantage depending on their location.
6. **Collective Value:** “We are guided by the fact all Black lives, regardless of actual or perceived sexual identity, gender identity, gender expression, economic status, ability, disability, religious beliefs or disbeliefs, immigration status or location” matter.
7. **Black Women:** Commitment to creating a Black woman affirming space free from sexism and misogyny.
8. **Empathy:** The commitment to practicing empathy to engage with others.
9. **Black Families:** To make a movement that is family friendly so that parents and children can participate. BLM also promotes the end of patriarchal family structures where mothers have to work a second shift.
10. **LGBT Affirming:** BLM is dedicated to being mindful of heteronormative biases and standing in alliance with the LGBT community.
11. **Black Villages:** Promoting a wider family network beyond the nuclear family to collectively care for one another.
12. **Loving Engagement:** Practicing peace, liberation, and justice in their interactions.
13. **Intergenerational:** The belief that people of all ages can contribute to the Black Lives Matter movement.

When we hang a banner are we endorsing the Guiding Principles of Black Lives Matter?

As seen above, the guiding principles of Black Lives Matter are entirely consistent with our Unitarian Universalist principles. However, as with any type of political activism, our congregation does not have to support every action or policy stance the organization engages. By hanging the banner, we are aligning ourselves on the side of racial justice and the main goal of Black Lives Matter: that black people deserve to live their lives with dignity, respect and equality.

How does Black Lives Matter relate to The Movement for Black Lives?

The Movement for Black Lives represents an evolution of the Black Lives Matter movement. The Movement for Black Lives is an umbrella organization of Black Lives Matter that includes over 50 black-led organizations. It focuses wide range of stances that address black lives in the United States and across the globe. For more information please read:

<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/08/movement-black-lives-platform/494309/>

When we hang a banner are we endorsing the policy demands of the Movement for Black Lives?

The Movement for Black Lives takes on a wider range of policy and social justice issues than Black Lives Matter. In fact, the Movement for Black Lives has created a set of policy demands that rival the scope of a major political party platform. Many of us find ourselves supporting political candidates but do not agree with everything the candidate does. We apply the same logic to the Movement for Black Lives--we do not have to endorse everything in their platform. Again, by hanging a banner we are supporting racial justice and the general goal of Black Lives Matter: that black people deserve to live their lives with dignity, respect, and equality.

What does the UUA say about Black Lives Matter?

In 2015 at General Assembly the UUA urged Unitarian Universalists congregations to stand on the side of racial justice by discussing the Black Lives Matter movement. The UUA says, "Black Lives Matter is a movement and a stance in response to this reality: the United States was built on a legacy of slavery, racism, and oppression that continues to take new, ever-changing forms. To say that "black lives matter" doesn't mean that black lives are more important than other lives, or that all lives don't matter. The systemic devaluing of Black lives calls us to bear witness, even as we acknowledge that oppression takes many intersecting forms."

<http://www.uua.org/statements/support-black-lives-matter-movement>

Are other local UU church's supporting the BLM movement?

Concord, Stow-Acton, and Littleton are among our local area churches that have displayed a banner or sign in support of Black Lives Matter. In addition, UU Mass Action has a Black Lives Matter Working Group with representatives from many area churches who share experiences and provide support for our congregations' deeper engagement in supporting black lives.

Why not *All Lives Matter*?

The phrase *black lives matter* has an implicit 'too' at the end: It's saying that black lives should *also* matter. Saying *all lives matter* ignores the problem. It's a way of dismissing the statement by falsely suggesting that it means *only* black lives matter, which is not the case. Saying *all lives matter* as a direct response to black lives matter is essentially saying that we should just go back to ignoring the problem. *Black Lives Matter* is a precondition to all lives mattering. Until the first is true, the second cannot be.

How will we prepare the community for our banner?

Reverend Mark Worth turned his sermon "Racism and the Rigged System" into a *Consider This* piece for *The Harvard Press* that was published on February 2, 2017. In addition we have spoken to Police Chief Denmark, other churches and community leaders about this issue.

Why will the banner read, "All lives won't matter until...Black Lives Matter. Join the Conversation!"?

Just as the Concord UU church has raised a BLM banner that includes the words "Join the Conversation", we want to engage the larger community in what Black Lives Matter means. While we believe there is incredible value in taking a stand on BLM and bearing witness to the reality of white privilege and systemic racism in our culture, we also believe that there is value in raising awareness among the greater community. Plans are underway for a community forum, perhaps in conjunction with the League of Women Voters and the Harvard Public Schools

What if there is a backlash to hanging the banner?

Backlash to hanging a BLM banner has been experienced in many communities, and as a result the UUA's social justice campaign, Standing on the Side of Love, created a resource page for congregations whose banners have been vandalized. We hope it won't happen in Harvard, but in case it does, we will be prepared to take this as an opportunity to engage the community more directly and urgently.

We are a predominantly white congregation in a predominantly white suburb– aren't we being disingenuous to raise this banner?

Our predominantly white community has the privilege of being complacent about racial injustice, but the reality is that racism exists in Harvard, and its voice is getting louder. Recent events at the schools have made that clear. Our UU principles call us to act. White privilege makes it easy for us to assume that all people and races have similar experiences and opportunities. By raising the banner, we hope that we will also raise consciousness of these truths and invite the community into a much-needed dialogue about racism.

Do the police know that we want to raise the BLM banner?

We have been in touch with Police Chief Denmark and he is aware that we hope to raise the banner. We plan to again reach out to Chief Denmark to ensure that he is aware and aligned with the message and feels that the officers are not threatened by this or uneasy about the issue being raised in Harvard.

Isn't raising a Black Lives Matter banner on the church disrespectful to the police and the Blue Lives Matter movement?

Black Lives Matter and Blue Lives Matter are not mutually exclusive. Of course, police officers lives matter! We are all grateful for the protection that good community policing provides to people of all race and color. However, recent police shootings of black men raises questions about the underlying fears and inadequate training of some police officers. These shootings have also brought to question the types of laws that seem to encourage aggressive treatment toward African Americans and other people of color (i.e stop and frisk, mandatory minimums, broken windows policing, etc.).

It is also important to note that Black Lives Matter supports the police. Here is a statement from Black Lives Matter:

Police officers are people. Their lives have inherent value. This movement is not an anti-people movement; therefore it is not an anti-police-officer movement. Most police officers are just everyday people who want to do their jobs, make a living for their families, and come home safely at the end of their shift.”

Black Lives Matter is a nonviolent movement. It does not endorse the killing of police officers or terrorist actions. Black Lives Matter believes that all citizens of our country must be held accountable for their actions - including police officers. <http://blacklivesmatter.com/11-major-misconceptions-about-the-black-lives-matter-movement/>