

What Is Black Lives Matter, and How Should Conservatives Respond to It?

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Tributes to Black Lives Matter are becoming as common as catfights on *Love and Hip Hop*. So lauded is this movement that one cannot be faulted for feeling as though the viewer can hardly sit through a Democrat politician's speech, or watch an award show outside the CMAs that will not include at least some tribute to this movement.

The 2016 *VH1 Hip Hop Honors* was no exception. On July 11, 2016, during that show's opening, Alicia Garza, one of founders of the Black Lives Matter movement, said:

We began the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag and network when Trayvon Martin's family was denied justice three years ago. When Mike Brown was killed the people of Ferguson rose up, and #BlackLivesMatter became a movement. This movement is grounded in Black people's dignity, justice, and freedom. It's about love, not violence.

As usual, the public rhetoric of Black Lives Matter (BLM) is spot on. There is a case for BLM that resonates loudly among African-Americans, even conservative ones. Few among us oppose dignity, justice, freedom, or love for anyone, much less for ourselves. And how many among us – especially African-Americans – are not saddened when unarmed men and women are killed by police officers, or someone from "the neighborhood watch," often for no other apparent reason than looking like our children?

Furthermore, although others dismiss BLM as a "movement based on a lie," as Harvard economist Roland G. Fryer, Jr. found in a [recent study](#), "[o]n non-lethal uses of force, blacks and Hispanics are more than fifty percent more likely to experience some form of force in interactions with police. Adding controls that account for important context and civilian behavior reduces, but cannot fully explain, these disparities." So BLM does raise legitimate questions about police and minority relations.

However, there is a gap between BLM's rhetoric and their reality that should give black conservatives reason for skepticism about the organization as a whole. Because as much as one may applaud lines like "love, not violence," what is one to believe when that rhetoric is matched by tweets celebrating the deaths of police officers or chanting in the streets, "Pigs in a blanket, fry 'em like bacon?" If BLM is not anti-police – as many

including President Obama claim – how does one explain BLM eloquently denouncing the Baton Rouge cop-killings, then seeing many associated with the BLM movement [cheering those killings on Twitter](#), as well as [chanting disruptively during the moment of silence](#) at the DNC Convention?

All groups have their extremists, of course, but it is hard to believe that the people sent to attend an event as prestigious and well covered as a national political convention were not representative of the group as a whole. In fact, BLM does not seek to conceal its roots in violence, as shown in [this video](#) featuring the other two co-founders of Black Lives Matter, Opal Tometi and Patrisse Cullers, who lead the crowd in a chant "from our beloved Assata Shakur." Ms. Shakur is not only a cop-killer, but a member of two organizations – the Black Panthers and the Black Liberation Army – that are said to have killed dozens of other police officers, as well as committing many violent crimes and acts of terrorism.

BLM often seems almost intentionally vague about its beliefs. The "What We Believe" section on the organization's website, blacklivesmatter.com, contains such poetically obtuse phrases as "As we forge our path, we intentionally build and nurture a beloved community that is bonded together through a beautiful struggle that is restorative, not depleting." But there is clarity to be found about their ideology in the list of extraordinary demands put forth by The Movement for Black Lives (MBL), a coalition of over 60 Black Lives Matter-affiliated organizations.

[One demand](#) from MBL that is particularly revealing is the one calling for "[r]eparations for the continued divestment from, discrimination toward and exploitation of our communities in the form of a guaranteed minimum livable income for all Black people" – including the "undocumented."

Putting aside the fiscally conservative objection as to how the U.S. can afford to pay approximately \$2 trillion a year to African-Americans, what is fascinating about this reparations demand is that it isn't justified in the way most reparationists would make their argument. Most reparationists couch their argument in America's history of slavery. The most prominent modern reparationist, for example, Ta-Nehisi Coates, who wrote "[The Case for Reparations](#)" for The Atlantic, argues, "To celebrate freedom and democracy while forgetting America's origins in a slavery economy is patriotism à la carte."

Yet MBL argues that reparations are due to all black people – even those who are "undocumented" and have no personal or familial history with American slavery.

If a black African – whose ancestors were never enslaved by the U.S. and is in the U.S. illegally – is entitled to "a guaranteed minimum livable income," the call isn't for reparations, but rather for a drastic redistribution of wealth, signaling that BLM is yet

another movement like the Occupy movement from a few years ago, whose primary objective is socialism.

BLM underscores this by demanding "a progressive restructuring of tax code at the local, state, and federal levels to ensure a radical and sustainable redistribution of wealth."

Alicia Garza spoke of her objections to the American economic system when she told The Nation, "We are living in political moment where for the first time in a long time we are talking about alternatives to capitalism[.] ... It is a political moment that's opening up opportunities to envision a world where people can actually live in dignity."

It is also important for black conservatives to understand that although Black Lives Matter is supported [by several Jewish organizations](#), the movement itself suffers from an anti-Israeli zeal that borders on anti-Semitism, [accusing Israel](#) of committing "genocide" against Palestinians.

Clearly Black Lives Matter's reverence for domestic terrorism, its socialist agenda, and its anti-Israeli views make the movement a poor partner to any conservative.

What, then, should be the conservative response?

To dismiss BLM out of hand is to ignore some of the very real problems that exist in the black community. Often our white counterparts have a difficult time hearing that "Driving While Black" exists, or other issues we raise as "our" reality. To dismiss tensions between the black community and the police is naïve, just as it is to say, "Well, if 'they' didn't commit so much crime, there wouldn't be a problem."

This, while true on its face, dismisses historic issues of unequal access to quality in education, as evidenced by the still statistically significant black-white achievement gap. Are we saying because schools in low-income or minority urban centers are unequal, it should be a reason to commit crime? No. But we are saying there are hues that shade and deepen the complexion of the problem.

Conversely, whatever inherent truths may lie behind the matter, to embrace BLM is to embrace its messages of hate and progressivism as the answer to societal ills.

However, there is an opportunity here for conservatives to educate the black community on the multiple benefits conservatism holds for it.

Up until the early 1970s, blacks kept much of our income in our own communities. We had black-owned businesses, including banks, newspapers, and the like.

Additionally, as discussed, our children are mired in an educational system that benefits

teachers unions under the watch of the progressive left – leaving our children at a gross disadvantage. The [GOP enacted legislation](#) to create the very successful D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program – and [voted to reauthorize it](#). Despite clear empirical evidence that minority students were outperforming their traditionally schooled counterparts (of all colors), the successful program was pulled – [by the Democrats](#). The black community should be aware that this administration has hamstrung our children and that the conservative principle of school choice benefits us – as [research](#) has borne out [time](#) and [time](#) again.

Conservatives should take every opportunity to speak out about the black genocide perpetuated by Planned Parenthood. When more black children are [aborted than born alive](#) in New York City, it's clear that Margaret Sanger's fondest wish that the "undesirable" "human weeds" be "exterminated" has come true – and not only exterminated, but done so at a profit for them.

As we have discussed before, the GOP has a black eye in the black community. It will take patience, perseverance, and genuine communication not laced with traditional "talking points" that come across as condescension. Conservatives must be willing to hear the concerns of black America, and understand that it will take time to build trust. Conservatives must be willing to show up in places they haven't traditionally gone before: Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), community events, church gatherings, etc. And we cannot continue to force these "but black-on-black crime...", "if you don't do anything wrong, you have nothing to fear," "[all lives matter](#)" comments down the throats of those who have been hostile to our positions. True or untrue, these narratives don't "win friends and influence people" who may be hearing your message for the first time.

Black lives do matter. And conservative principles can enrich and benefit black lives. We must take the time and make the effort to take that message to the black community.

Together, Marie Stroughter and the pseudonymous DK co-founded the African-American Conservatives [website](#) and weekly [radio show](#). Follow them on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).