

# BLACK LIVES MATTER: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

## Endorsements for Town Meeting Warrant Article

Q: Who has endorsed putting the banner back up?

So far, the Arlington Diversity Task Group, Arlington Black Student Union, Arlington Helps Mutual Aid, and Arlington Fight Racism have endorsed this warrant article. Several other Town commissions and local groups/orgs are currently considering endorsement.

Q: Who else supports putting the banner back up?

A grassroots petition to town leaders to put the banner back up received 350 electronic signatures in just a few days. The warrant article received 209 in-person signatures in just two days. A demonstration at Town Hall in late September to protest the banner being removed had more than 50 attendees in person and 20 people spoke at a late September Select Board meeting to urge them to keep the BLM banner on Town Hall. These examples represent just a small portion of those in the town who support Black Lives Matter.

## Basic information about Black Lives Matter

Q: What is Black Lives Matter?

A: Black Lives Matter is a US-based international movement co-founded by three black women: Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi. The #BlackLivesMatter movement began as a hashtag for Twitter, after George Zimmerman's acquittal for the murder of Trayvon Martin in 2013. It gained momentum after the 2014 shooting of Michael Brown, the death of Eric Garner, and subsequent events that continue to this day.

Q: What are the goals of Black Lives Matter?

A: Justice, an end to all forms of discrimination, and the full recognition of human rights for Black people. The movement calls upon the United States government to acknowledge structural violence and institutional discrimination and to recognize the full spectrum of human rights and obligations under international law. The focus is an end to police brutality and the murder of people of color and the oppressed, mass incarceration, and a call to demilitarize US police departments.

Other objectives from BlackLivesMatter.com include:

- Full, living wage employment;
- Decent and affordable housing fit for the shelter of human beings;
- An end to the school-to-prison pipeline by providing quality education for all;
- Aggressively work to dismantle laws and policies that disenfranchise any community from expressing themselves at the ballot.
- Ultimately, the goal is to address harm and conflict in our communities through community based, restorative solutions.

Source

- [www.BlackLivesMatter.com](http://www.BlackLivesMatter.com)

Q: But don't "All Lives Matter"?

A: Stating that "Black lives matter" does not insinuate that other lives don't matter. We say "Black Lives Matter" to recognize that Black lives are undervalued in our society and this must end. Black lives are threatened by systemic racism in criminal justice, education, healthcare, and many other aspects of American life. When the parts of society with the most pain and lack of protection are cared for, the whole system benefits. When Black lives matter, we will know that all lives truly matter.

Sources:

- [What Does "Black Lives Matter" Actually Mean? — Why Saying "All Lives Matter" Is Problematic](#)
- [Why saying 'All lives matter' misses the big picture](#)
- [Why you should stop saying "all lives matter," explained in 9 different ways](#)
- [Why saying "all lives matter" communicates to Black people that their lives don't](#)

Q. Why do we need to say that Black Lives Matter?

We need to affirm that Black lives matter because in so many ways, Black people are treated as if their lives don't matter in America. Here are some ways that institutional racism impacts peoples' lives today:

- At least 14 unarmed black people were killed by police officers last year. Only one of the officers was indicted.
- Eighty four percent of police officers interviewed from 100 departments across the country said they had seen colleagues use excessive force.
- In 2011-2012, the Montgomery County Police Department's arrest rate per 1000 residents was 65.2 for black residents and 16.8 for non-black residents.
- Nationwide, even though Black people and whites have similar levels of drug use, yet Black people are 10 times as likely to be incarcerated for drug crimes. In Maryland, African-Americans represent 90 percent of all those imprisoned for drug offenses.

- African-American youth are 9 times more likely than white youth to be sentenced as adults for the same crime. Prison sentences for Black men are about 20% longer than for white men for the same crime.
- There are more Black people under correctional control today — in prison or jail, on probation or parole — than were enslaved in 1850, a decade before the Civil War began.
- Only 2 states in the U.S. allow people serving time, on parole, or with criminal records to vote. All other states deny one or more of these groups the right to vote.
- As of 2004, more African American men were disenfranchised (due to felon disenfranchisement laws) than in 1870, the year the Fifteenth Amendment was ratified prohibiting laws that explicitly deny the right to vote on the basis of race.
- A national study of more than 90,000 schools found that although black children made up only 18 percent of preschoolers, 42 percent of preschoolers who were suspended were black.
- In a study of employment discrimination, resumes with the names Lakesha and Jamal were 50% less likely to get call backs than identical resumes with the names Emily and Brendan.
- The wealth of white households was 13 times the median wealth of black households in 2013, compared with eight times the wealth in 2010. The current gap between wealth for blacks and whites has reached its highest point since 1989.
- The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted Black people disproportionately. One in 1000 Black Americans have died of Covid-19, compared to 1 in 2100 white Americans.
- The Black unemployment rate reached a high of 16.6 percent in May 2020, and as of August 2020, it was still at 13.2 percent. Conversely, the white unemployment rate fell to 6.9 percent in August 2020 from a high of 12.8 percent in April, or nearly half of the Black unemployment rate. The ratio of Black-to-white unemployment went from 1.27 in April 2020 to 1.97 in August 2020—that is, the Black unemployment rate is currently double the white unemployment rate.

#### Sources

- <https://www.uufhc.net/BlackLivesMatterFAQs.pdf>
- <https://www.vox.com/coronavirus-covid19/2020/10/2/21496884/us-covid-19-deaths-by-race-black-white-americans>
- <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/economy/news/2020/09/28/490702/persistent-black-white-unemployment-gap-built-labor-market/>

## Dispelling Myths about Black Lives Matter

Q. Is Black Lives Matter a violent organization?

No. About 93% of the 10,600-plus racial justice protests in the U.S. this summer [have been peaceful](#). Those that did become violent involved aggression by police or by counterprotesters from extremist groups, researchers noted. But one-off instances of violence, looting and

[aggressive demonstrators](#) have been conflated to suggest the Black Lives Matter movement employs and condones violence. The actions of these individuals are not aligned with the mission of the movement.

And often, the violence is provoked by outside provocateurs. For instance, the riots that took place in Minneapolis following the police killing of George Floyd were stoked by a [white supremacist](#). Additionally, two people were killed and a medic was wounded by a [white teenager with a semiautomatic rifle](#) at a Black Lives Matter protest in Kenosha, Wisconsin, last month.

Q. Is Black Lives Matter trying to “destroy the nuclear family”?

No. A page previously on the Black Lives Matter website about “disrupting the Western-prescribed nuclear family structure” has been taken out of context. Black Lives Matter’s full statements about family show that it wants people to support one another broadly *beyond* just the nuclear family (not destroy family units). They also wrote that they seek to make their spaces family-friendly and enable parents to fully participate with their children, which helps parents stay involved in the movement.

Source:

- <https://www.politifact.com/article/2020/aug/28/ask-politifact-does-black-lives-matter-aim-destroy/>

## Why the banner is necessary

Q: Why do we need to say “Black Lives Matter” in Arlington? This isn’t a racist town.

Unfortunately, Arlington is not immune to racism. Black people in Arlington have been harassed, racially profiled, and treated poorly in other ways by town residents and employees. Black people and other people of color in Arlington have spoken up about these concerns many times, one of the most recent being at the Community Conversation series this summer.

Students of color are also disproportionately disciplined in Arlington schools. A data analyst for the town found that in 2016-2017 Black, Hispanic, and disabled students made up 13 percent of Arlington High School’s enrollment, but received 80 percent of punishments like suspensions and detentions.

Overall, systemic racism is very much alive in the Greater Boston Area. According to a 2015 report by the Boston Federal Reserve, nonwhite households in Boston have only a fraction of the net worth attributed to white households. While a typical white household in Boston has total assets of \$256,500 and net worth of \$247,500, U.S.-born Black households have \$700 in total assets and median net worth of \$8. A study of housing discrimination in the Greater Boston area (including Arlington) conducted this summer found that “white market-rate testers were able to

arrange to view apartments 80% of the time. Similarly situated Black market-rate testers seeking to view the same apartments were only able to visit the property 48% of the time.”

The town leadership acknowledged the existence of systemic racism and pledged to fight systemic racism locally in their Black Lives Matter Proclamation on June 9.

#### Sources

- [The Color of Wealth in Boston](#)
- [Qualified Renters Need Not Apply: Race and Voucher Discrimination in the Metro Boston Rental Housing Market](#)
- <https://www.arlingtonma.gov/Home/Components/News/News/10288/3707?backlist=%2ftown-governance%2fall-boards-and-committees%2fboard-of-selectmen>
- [Arlington Select Board Adopts Black Lives Matter Proclamation | Diversity, Equity & Inclusion News](#)
- <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2020/07/11/metro/amid-national-reckoning-black-voices-challenge-white-suburban-school-district-do-better/>

Q. The banner was up for three months. Why should it continue to stay up?

The problem of systemic racism has not gone away over these past few months since the banner was placed on town hall. In fact, if anything, the coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated racial disparities in our nation, state and town. Additionally, there has been a noted backlash against racial justice movements locally nationally (as is a common reaction to civil rights movements) and locally, with a recent uptick in vandalization and theft of Black Lives Matter signs in Arlington and increased incidences of harassment of and threats toward peaceful BLM vigil attendees in town.

Black Lives Matter every day, and it is important we continue to affirm that Black Lives Matter until real progress is made toward racial equity in Arlington and the US more broadly. Keeping up the banner is a gesture that indicates to all marginalized people in Arlington that their lives are valued, and affirms the town’s commitment to advancing racial equity.

In Somerville, a Black Lives Matter banner has been on their town hall since 2015. When the mayor Joe Curtatone was asked whether he thought it was appropriate to place the Black Lives Matter banner on a government building, he replied: "No one can sit out this conversation. Where this is happening is in cities. This is the grassroots level."

#### Sources:

- <https://patch.com/massachusetts/arlington/arlington-black-lives-matter-signs-vandalized-kkk-imagery>
- <https://www.wbur.org/news/2016/07/29/police-rally-somerville>

Q. Does keeping up the banner mean our town does not support the police force?

No. The Black Lives Matter movement is not about retaliation or eliminating police. Rather, it's about examining the structure of law enforcement and how it can better serve communities, especially Black and brown ones.

Putting up a banner that says, "Black Lives Matter" means that the town values the lives of Black people and other marginalized people and is committed to policies that will allow them to live and thrive in Arlington. Eliminating systemic racism in Arlington will require examining its presence in all town departments, including the APD, in order to better understand how to reform or restructure these departments to further equity and justice.