

Ask PolitiFact: Does Black Lives Matter aim to destroy the nuclear family?

The Poynter Institute

- Critics of Black Lives Matter point to some of the statements on its website, including that it says "we disrupt the Western-prescribed nuclear family structure."
- Black Lives Matter's full statements about family show that it wants people to support one another broadly beyond the nuclear family.
- Black Lives Matter also calls for family-friendly spaces and equal rights for mothers.

At the Republican National Convention, former NFL player Jack Brewer [said](#) the organization "openly on their website calls for the destruction of the nuclear family. My fellow Americans, our families need each other. We need black fathers in the homes with their wives and children."

We found that while Black Lives Matter seeks change in how "family" is defined, especially with respect to public policy, it's a leap to conclude that it wants to eliminate traditional family structures.

What Black Lives Matter says

First, Brewer's statement doesn't fully represent what the Black Lives Matter [website](#) says about families. "We disrupt the Western-prescribed nuclear family structure requirement by supporting each other as extended families and 'villages' that collectively care for one another, especially our children, to the degree that mothers, parents, and children are comfortable," it says on the page titled "What we believe."

The movement, which [was formed](#) in response to the 2013 [acquittal](#) of George Zimmerman, a neighborhood-watch volunteer who fatally shot teenager Trayvon Martin in Florida, also says:

"We make our spaces family-friendly and enable parents to fully participate with their children. We dismantle the patriarchal practice that requires mothers to work 'double shifts' so that they can mother in private even as they participate in public justice work."

What the critics say

Some critics see the platform as evidence that Black Lives Matter wants to get rid of the mother-father-and-children model.

According to one criticism aired by a commentator in [The Federalist](#), a conservative online magazine, the logic of what Black Lives Matter has proffered suggests that children do better without parents and outside the home, and that the "'village' will raise them": "More than any other belief of BLM, this one against the nuclear family threatens the most harm to Americans of all races. Dismantling it leaves children extremely vulnerable to social ills."

What other observers say

Other observers don't see Black Lives Matter as seeking to go that far. "I don't think there's any reasonable basis to claim" that the group's website "is promoting an actual reduction in the proportion of people actually living in a Western nuclear family structure — but rather, to imagine 'successful' families as more inclusive than this particular vision of family," said Davin L. Phoenix, a University of California, Irvine, political scientist who studies Black politics.

Phoenix said that the statement calling for "disruption" is most accurately interpreted as disrupting agendas that give benefits to people with middle-class family structures over those without. For example, zoning laws that prioritize single-family housing or tax credits for married homeowners leave out people who are single or rent their home.

"It is a call to disrupt the notion that the nuclear family structure is the only way to ensure neighborhood stability and vitality, and to affirm that neighborhoods that contain a high volume of non-traditional family structures (e.g. households with a single parent or grandparents / other familial figures as primary caregivers for kids) are just as capable of — and just as deserving of — policies and practices that contribute to neighborhood stability and vitality," he said.

Black Lives Matter has essentially said the nuclear family is untenable and that extended families provide the necessary support to take care of one another, said Nadia Brown, a political science and African American studies professor at Purdue University and co-editor of the book "The Politics of Protest: Readings on the Black Lives Matter Movement."

"For example, if both parents work outside the home and a child gets sick, who will care for the child while also earning an income? Having a grandparent or another adult in the home who assists with care responsibilities lessens the burdens on the parents to both work and care for the children."

Black Lives Matter "is focused on improving life outcomes and opportunities for Black-identifying people in the United States, regardless of sexual orientation," said Georgetown University government professor Jamil Scott, whose specialties include race and ethnicity in politics. - Source: <https://bit.ly/3j9K4be>