



Resist.

#BlackLivesMatter

The Newsletter

Special 2015

Volume 24 #1

A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement

How a moment became a movement

By Alicia Garza

I created #BlackLivesMatter with Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi, two of my sisters, as a call to action for Black people after 17-year-old Trayvon Martin was post-humously placed on trial for his own murder and the killer, George Zimmerman, was not held accountable for the crime he committed. It was a response to the anti-Black racism that permeates our society and also, unfortunately, our movements.

Black Lives Matter is an ideological and political intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise. It is an affirmation of Black folks' contributions to this society, our humanity, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression.



Member of BreakOUT!, a Resist grantee in New Orleans, Louisiana with a sign reading "#BlackTransLivesMatter."

We were humbled when cultural workers, artists, designers and techies offered their labor and love to expand #BlackLivesMatter beyond a social media hashtag. Opal, Patrisse, and I created the infrastructure for this movement project—moving the hashtag from social media to the streets. Our team grew through a very successful Black Lives Matter ride, led and designed by Patrisse and Darnell L. Moore, organized to support the movement that is growing in St. Louis, MO, after 18-year old Mike Brown was killed at the hands of Ferguson Police Officer Darren Wilson. We've hosted national conference calls focused on issues of critical importance to Black people working hard for the liberation of our people. We've connected people across the country working to end the various forms of injustice impacting our people. We've created space for the celebration and humanization of Black lives.

The Theft of Black Queer Women's Work

As people took the #BlackLivesMatter demand into the streets, mainstream media and corporations also took up the call. #BlackLivesMatter appeared in an episode of "Law & Order: SVU" in a mash up containing the Paula Deen racism scandal and the tragedy of the murder of Trayvon Martin.

Suddenly, we began to come across varied adaptations of our work—all lives matter, brown lives matter, migrant lives matter, women's lives matter, and on and on. While imitation is said to

be the highest form of flattery, I was surprised when an organization called to ask if they could use "Black Lives Matter" in one of their campaigns. We agreed to it, with the caveat that a) as a team, we preferred that we not use the meme to celebrate the imprisonment of any individual, and b) that it was important to us they acknowledged the genesis of #BlackLivesMatter. I was surprised when they did exactly the opposite and then justified their actions by saying they hadn't used the "exact" slogan and, therefore, they deemed it okay to take our work, use it as their own, fail to credit where it

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came from, and then use it to applaud incarceration.

I was surprised when a community institution wrote asking us to provide materials and action steps for an art show they were curating, entitled “Our Lives Matter.” When questioned about who was involved and why they felt the need to change the very specific call and demand around Black lives to “our lives,” I was told the artists decided it needed to be more inclusive of all people of color. I was even more surprised when, in the promotion of their event, one of the artists conducted an interview that completely erased the origins of their work—rooted in the labor and love of queer Black women.

Pause.

When you design an event, campaign, et cetera based on the work of queer Black women, don't invite them to participate in shaping it, but ask them to provide materials and ideas for next steps for said event, that is racism in practice. It's also hetero-patriarchal. Straight men, unintentionally or intentionally, have taken the work of queer Black women and erased our contributions. Perhaps if we were the charismatic Black men many are rallying around these days, it would have been a different story, but being Black queer women in this society (and apparently within these movements) tends to equal invisibility and non-relevancy.

We completely expect those who benefit directly and improperly from White supremacy to try and erase our existence. We fight that every day. But when it happens amongst our allies, we are baffled, we are saddened, and we are enraged. And it's time to have the political conversation about why that's not okay.

We are grateful to our allies who have stepped up to the call that Black lives matter, and taken it as an opportunity to not just stand in solidarity

with us, but to investigate the ways in which anti-Black racism is perpetuated in their own communities. We are also grateful to those allies who were willing

Survival Tip #3587: When walking through your 'hood, hoodies not advised.

THE BLACK BODY

SURVIVAL GUIDE

Help us #WriteABookIn1Day!
Tweet #BlackBodySurvival tips @intelmischief
All Day Sat. Feb. 22



Intelligent Mischief (IM), a Resist grantee, “provide(s) space for low-income communities to experiment with creative actions to improve their lively hoods...” and believe that “mischief-makers push the boundaries of authority and allow us to see what is possible.” Members of IM spent time in Ferguson, MO. They state, “As a response to the current state of race relations in the US, we have designed a multimedia project called ‘The Black Body Survival Guide.’ This will be a compilation of rules and regulations for surviving in the US as the owner of a black body. When the problems of race become absurd it's time to get (sur)real!”

to engage in critical dialogue with us about this unfortunate and problematic dynamic. And for those who we have not yet had the opportunity to engage with around the adaptations of the Black Lives Matter call, please consider the following points.

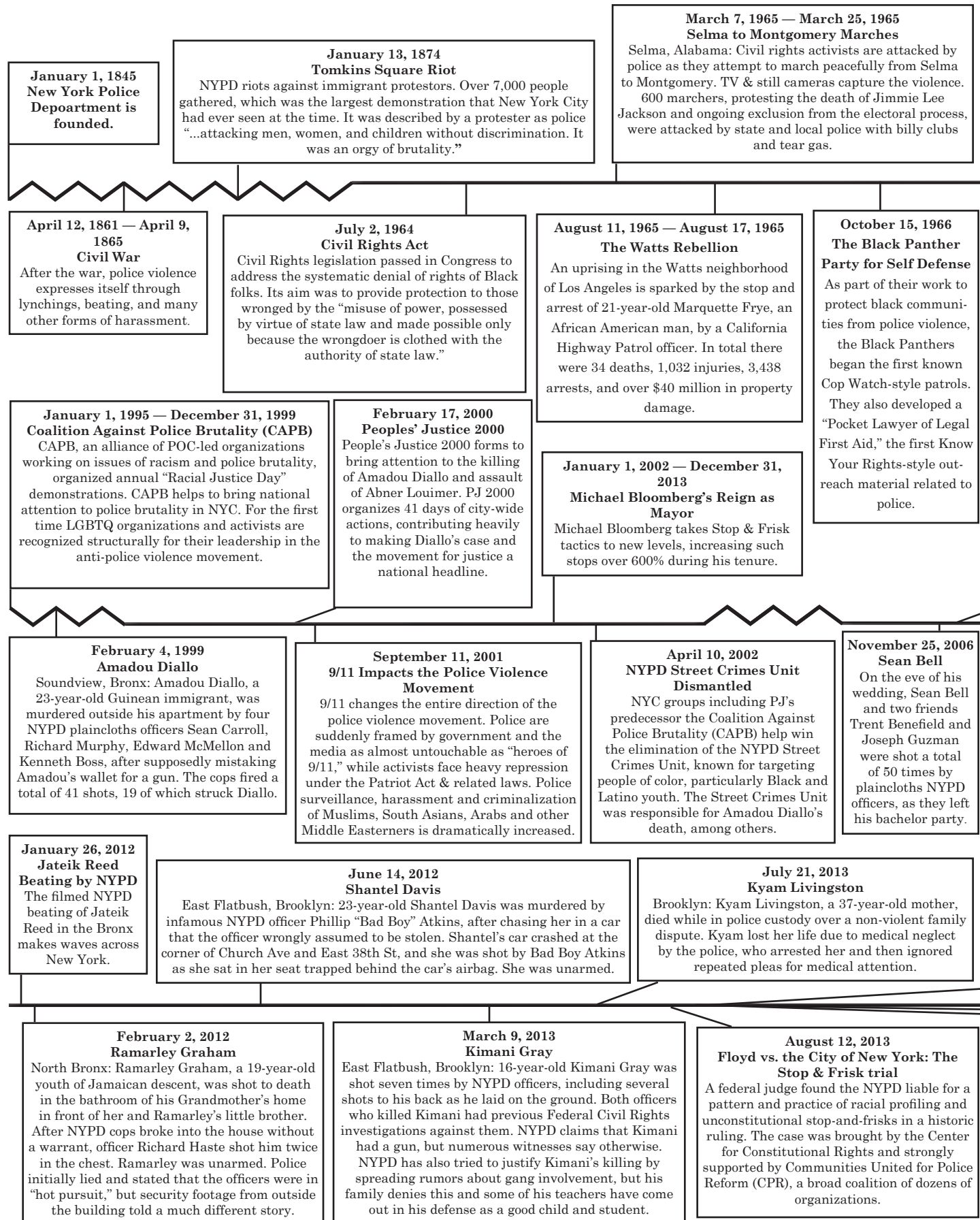
Broadening the Conversation to Include Black Life

Black Lives Matter is a unique contribution that goes beyond extrajudicial killings of Black people by police and vigilantes. It goes beyond the narrow nationalism that can be prevalent within some Black communities, which merely call on Black people to love Black, live Black and buy Black, keeping straight cis Black men in the front of the movement while our sisters, queer, trans, and disabled folk take up roles in the background or not at all. Black Lives Matter affirms the lives of Black queer and trans folks, disabled folks, Black-undocumented folks, folks with records, women and all Black lives along the gender spectrum. It centers those that have been marginalized within Black liberation movements. It is a tactic to (re)build the Black liberation movement.

When we say Black Lives Matter, we are talking about the ways in which Black people are deprived of our basic human rights and dignity. It is an acknowledgement that Black poverty and genocide is state violence. It is an acknowledgment of the fact that one million Black people are locked in cages in this country—one half of all people in prisons or jails—is an act of state violence. It is an acknowledgment that Black women continue to bear the burden of a relentless assault on our children and our families and that this assault is an act of state violence. Black queer and trans folks bearing a unique burden in a hetero-patriarchal society that disposes of us like garbage and simultaneously fetishizes us and profits off of us is state violence; the fact that 500,000

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Timeline of Police Violence



By Peoples' Justices for Community Control and Police Accountability

**September 23, 1968
Young Lords Party**
Young Lords Party advocates for and includes in their platform community control of all institutions including the police.

**March 1, 1982
Broken Windows Theory of Policing**
The broken windows theory of policing was introduced by James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling in their article titled "Broken Windows," which appeared in the March 1982 edition of *The Atlantic Monthly*. Broken Windows theory calls for harsh response to petty and minimal crimes as a means of preventing bigger crimes. This is the basis behind NYPD's Stop and Frisk policies.

**March 31, 1991
Rodney King Beaten by LAPD**
National uproar follows the beating of Rodney King by four Los Angeles Police officers, which was exposed by a witness who filmed it.

**April 29, 1992 — May 4, 1992
Los Angeles Uprising**
Mass uproar arises in Los Angeles after the LAPD officers that horrifically beat Rodney King were acquitted.

**June 28, 1969
Stonewall Riots**
Riots in what is now known as the West Village occur in response to a police raid and brutality at the Stonewall Inn, as well as government repression of LGBTQ folks in general. This event fueled the gay rights movement, and is the origin of what evolved into the current PRIDE marches.

People Killed by the NYPD in the 1990s
People Killed by the NYPD in the 1990s: Anthony Baez, 29, the Bronx. Anthony Rosario, 18, the Bronx. Hilton Vega, 21, the Bronx. Anibal Carasquillo, 21, Brooklyn. Nicolas Heyward, Jr., 13, Brooklyn. Answon "Keshawn" Watson, 23, Brooklyn. Yong Xian Huang, 16, Brooklyn. Amado Diallo, 22, the Bronx. Gidone "Gary" Busch, 31, Brooklyn. Richard Watson, 32, Harlem. Larry Cobb, 30, the Bronx. Angel Reyes, 47, East Harlem. Robert Striker, 54, Manhattan. Jatrek Hewitt, 17, Staten Island. Delano Maloney, 32, Brooklyn. Renato Mercado, 63, Manhattan. Rodney Mason, 38, Queens. Yvette Marin Kessler, 36, Manhattan. Freddie Rivera, 17, the Bronx. Alex Santos, 23, the Bronx. Jose Luis Zarete, 22, the Bronx. Cesare Mollo, the Bronx. Vladimir Santana, 19, Queens. Margaret McGivern, 94, Queens. Kevin Ceden, 16, Washington Heights. Dion Hawthorne, 17, Queens. Richard Singleton, 18, Bronx. Frankie Arzuaga, 15, Brooklyn. And many more.

**December 13, 2006
Timur Person**
Bronx: Timur, 19 years old, was shot four times in the chest and once in the neck by plainclothes detectives. Timur was killed at close range his hands were in the air and he was lying face-up on the floor.

**June 11, 2007
Puerto Rican Day Parade**
208 people, mostly youth, were arrested for wearing black and gold which supposedly signified membership in the Latin King and Queen Nation. Some people arrested were wearing beads as part of their religious practice. Most of the charges were eventually dropped and several lawsuits against the NYPD have been paid out.

**September 24, 2008
Iman Morales**
Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn: Iman was tasered by NYPD officers while standing on the ledge of a store front awning 10 feet high. Despite his mother's cries for an inflatable bag and clear indications that Iman was experiencing a mental health crisis, the officers still tased Iman and made no attempts to catch him as he fell to his death.

**December 31, 2011
Annual Stop & Frisks top 600K**
Stop and Frisks by NYPD top 600,000 - more than a 600% increase since 2002. About 90% of those stopped were Black and Latin@, and about 90% of them were completely innocent of any wrong doing at all.

**January 1, 2007
Peoples' Justice Forms**
Peoples' Justice for Community Control & Police Accountability is formed as a coalition of grassroots POC & LGBTQ orgs in NYC, in the aftermath of both PJ 2000 & CAPB. The coalition started by organizing around the murder of Sean Bell and shootings of Trent Benefield and Joseph Guzman, and today coordinates a city-wide Cop Watch Alliance as well as other organizing around police violence.

**November 4, 2007
Khiel Coppin**
Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn: On November 14, 2007, NYPD officers shot 20 bullets at Khiel Coppin, an 18-year-old young man with a mental health condition, striking him eight times. Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly claims the officers were provoked by Khiel when he pointed an object at them that looked like a gun. After the police ceased fire, they found the object he was holding was a hairbrush. An eyewitness said officers told Coppin to put his hands up. When Khiel did, he dropped the brush and the officers began to shoot.

**January 1, 2009
Oscar Grant**
Oakland, CA: Oscar Grant, a 22 year old father, was shot un the back as he laid on his stomach by BART police officer Johannes Mehserle on New Year's Day 2009. Several of Oscar's friends were also beaten and were detained by police for many hours after watching their friend be murdered in front of them. Luckily the case was captured on film by dozens of cameras as a packed train full of people watched in horror. Mehserle eventually was convicted but only for manslaughter, and served less than 2 years in prison.

**August 22, 2013
Community Safety Act Passes!**
The New York City Council overrode the Mayor's veto to approve two Community Safety Act bills. The bills were Intro. 1080: End Discriminatory Profiling Act — protecting New Yorkers against discriminatory profiling by the NYPD, and Intro. 1079: NYPD Oversight Act — establishing independent oversight of the NYPD. As in the "Floyd" stop-and-frisk lawsuit, the movement to pass the bills was spearheaded by Communities United for Police Reform (CPR), of which all Peoples' Justice member orgs are members.

**July 17, 2014
Eric Garner**
Eric Garner was a 43-year-old husband, a father of six, grandfather of two and a widely-loved member of a community. On July 17, 2014, in Staten Island's Tompkinsville neighborhood, his life was ended by an NYPD officer's chokehold, which has been explicitly banned as a restraint tactic for decades. He was unarmed and non-threatening prior to being choked and tackled.

**August 9, 2014
Michael Brown**
Michael Brown was an 18-year-old young black man who fatally shot by Officer Darren Wilson in Ferguson, Missouri. A Grand Jury decided not to indict Darren Wilson. This sparked massive protests in Ferguson and around the country and also sparked the "Hands Up, Don't Shoot" movement.

Peoples' Justices for Community Control and Police Accountability is a New York City coalition of grassroots organizations working in Black, Latino/a and Asian communities. The coalition was formed in the wake of the 2006 NYPD killing of Sean Bell and shooting of Trent Benefield and Joseph Guzman in order to respond to the incident and highlight the systemic nature of police violence.

Dear Governor Cuomo,

A letter from the families of those killed by the NYPD

February 24, 2015

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State

Dear Governor Cuomo,

We are family members of New Yorkers who were killed by New York police officers during the last two decades. There are too many New Yorkers suffering because of the epidemic of police brutality.

We are glad that you have pledged to make criminal justice reform a priority this year and that you are sensitive to the historic failure of District Attorneys and the grand jury system to hold police officers who unjustly kill New Yorkers accountable. However, we are disappointed that your seven-point agenda did not include more definitive steps towards ensuring police accountability in cases of excessive, deadly force.

There is one crucial reform that we urge you to support: establishment of a permanent independent prosecutor for all cases of police brutality, not just killings. Towards this end, we urge you to immediately enact an executive order to assign a special prosecutor to all cases of police killings moving forward.

New Yorkers have looked to District Attorneys to investigate and charge the officers who took the lives of their loved ones for decades. The hope is that investigations will lead to indictments and families will have their day in court to uncover the truth and begin to heal. In all of our cases, the District Attorneys failed to deliver any justice or accountability. The failure has occurred even in cases for which there is video evidence – look no further than Eric Garner and Ramarley Graham.

There is an inherent conflict of interest whenever District Attorneys must investigate the NYPD they rely upon and work with every day. The system is broken.

You can begin to fix this problem by immediately enacting an executive order to assign a special prosecutor to all

cases of police killings moving forward.

After several months of heated debate over police reform in New York City and nationally, this is a major reform you can and should pursue immediately. The time to do it is now.

We need you to take action immediately to ensure the independent, fair and adequate investigation and prosecution of all police brutality cases moving forward.

Losing a child, sibling or spouse to police violence is horrific. The loss is compounded when the criminal justice system fails to provide any justice or accountability for those responsible for the deaths of New Yorkers.

A special prosecutor – independent of local police departments and local politics – would have helped our families, and can help countless families in the future. We urge you to act today by issuing an executive order to establish a special prosecutor for all cases of police killings in New York State.

Finally, we request a meeting with you by March 24, 2015 to discuss our call for a special prosecutor. Loyda Colon of the Justice Committee can be contacted to schedule this meeting.

Sincerely,

- Constance Malcolm and Francot Graham, parents of Ramarley Graham, killed February 2, 2012, in the Bronx
- Valerie and William Bell, parents of Sean Bell, killed November 25, 2006, in Queens
- Kadiatou Diallo, mother of Amadou Diallo, killed February 4, 1999, in the Bronx
- Kenneth Chamberlain Jr., son of Kenneth Chamberlain Sr., killed November 19, 2011, in White Plains
- Gwen Carr, mother of Eric Garner, killed on July 17, 2014, in Staten Island
- Iris Baez, mother of Anthony Baez, killed December 22, 1994,

in the Bronx

- Margarita Rosario, mother of Anthony Rosario, killed January 12, 1995, in the Bronx
- Hawa Bah, mother of Mohamed Bah, killed September 26, 2012, in Manhattan
- Natasha Duncan, sister of Shantel Davis, killed June 14, 2012, in Brooklyn
- Cecilia Reyes, mother of Noel Polanco, killed October 4, 2012, in Queens
- Nancy Pacheco, sister-in-law of Jayson Tirado, killed October 21, 2007, in Manhattan
- Amarilis Collado, wife of John Collado, killed September 6, 2011, in Manhattan
- Nicholas Heyward Sr., father of Nicholas Heyward Jr., killed August 23, 1994, in Brooklyn
- Olga Negron, mother of Iman Morales, killed September 24, 2008, in Brooklyn
- Carol Gray, mother of Kimani Gray, killed March 9, 2013, in Brooklyn
- Carmen Morales, mother of Hilton Vega, killed January 12, 1995, in the Bronx
- Jennifer Gonzalez, mother of the child of Kenny Lazo, killed in April 8, 2008, in Bay Shore
- Cynthia Howell, niece of Alberta Spruill, killed in May 16, 2003, in Manhattan

Thank you to the Justice Committee (JC), a Resist Grantee, for sending this letter to The Newsletter and giving permission to publish it. JC is a Latina/Latino-led organization dedicated to building a movement against police violence and systemic racism in New York City. Their organizing strategies include leadership development, political education, base-building and direct action, as well as resource development and service provision to meet the immediate needs of victims and their families.



Constance Malcolm, mother of Ramarley Graham, conducts a die-in in front of the DOJ building.

A Herstory of #BlackLivesMatter *continued from page three*

Black people in the US are undocumented immigrants and relegated to the shadows is state violence; the fact that Black girls are used as negotiating chips during times of conflict and war is state violence; Black folks living with disabilities and different abilities bear the burden of state-sponsored Darwinian experiments that attempt to squeeze us into boxes of normality defined by White supremacy is state violence. And the fact is that the lives of Black people—not *all* people—exist within these conditions is consequence of state violence.

When Black people get free, everybody gets free

#BlackLivesMatter doesn't mean your life isn't important—it means that Black lives, which are seen as without value within White supremacy, are important to your liberation. Given the disproportionate impact state violence has on Black lives, we understand that

when Black people in this country get free, the benefits will be wide reaching and transformative for society as a whole. When we are able to end hyper-criminalization and sexualization of Black people and end the poverty, control, and surveillance of Black people, every single person in this world has a better shot at getting and staying free. When Black people get free, everybody gets free. This is why we call on Black people and our allies to take up the call that Black lives matter. We're not saying Black lives are more important than other lives, or that other lives are not criminalized and oppressed in various ways. We remain in active solidarity with all oppressed people who are fighting for their liberation and we know that our destinies are intertwined.

And, to keep it real—it is appropriate and necessary to have strategy and action centered around Blackness without other non-Black communities of color, or White folks for that matter, needing to find a place and a way to center themselves within it. It is appropriate and necessary for us to

acknowledge the critical role that Black lives and struggles for Black liberation have played in inspiring and anchoring, through practice, and theory, social movements for the liberation of all people. The women's movement, the Chicano liberation movement, queer movements, and many more have adopted the strategies, tactics, and theory of the Black liberation movement. And if we are committed to a world where all lives matter, we are called to support the very movement that inspired and activated so many more. That means supporting and acknowledging Black lives.

Progressive movements in the United States have made some unfortunate errors when they push for unity at the expense of really understanding the concrete differences in context, experience and oppression. In other words, some want unity without struggle. As people who have our minds stayed on freedom, we can learn to fight anti-Black racism by examining the ways

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A Herstory of #BlackLivesMatter

continued from page seven

in which we participate in it, even unintentionally, instead of the worn out and sloppy practice of drawing lazy parallels of unity between peoples with vastly different experiences and histories.

When we deploy “All Lives Matter” as to correct an intervention specifically created to address anti-blackness, we lose the ways in which the state apparatus has built a program of genocide and repression mostly on the backs of Black people—beginning with the theft of millions of people for free labor—and then adapted it to control, murder, and profit off of other communities of color and immigrant communities. We perpetuate a level of White supremacist domination by reproducing a tired trope that we are all the same, rather than acknowledging that non-Black oppressed people in this country are both impacted by racism and domination, and simultaneously, *benefit* from anti-black racism.

When you drop “Black” from the equation of whose lives matter, and then fail to acknowledge it came from somewhere, you further a legacy of erasing Black lives and Black contributions from our movement legacy. And consider whether or not when dropping the Black you are, intentionally or unintentionally, erasing Black folks from the conversation or homogenizing very different experiences. The legacy and prevalence of anti-Black racism and hetero-patriarchy is a lynch pin holding together this unsustainable economy. And that’s not an accidental analogy.

In 2014, hetero-patriarchy and anti-Black racism within our movement is real and felt. It’s killing us and it’s killing our potential to build power for transformative social change. When you adopt the work of queer women of color, don’t name or recognize it, and promote it as if it has no history of its own such actions are problematic. When I use Assata’s powerful demand in my organizing work, I always begin by sharing where it comes from, sharing about Assata’s significance to the Black

Liberation Movement, what its political purpose and message is, and why it’s important in our context.

When you adopt Black Lives Matter and transform it into something else (if you feel you really need to do that—see above for the arguments not to), it’s appropriate politically to credit the lineage from which your adapted work derived. It’s important that we work together to build and acknowledge the legacy of Black contributions to the struggle for human rights. If you adapt Black Lives Matter, use the opportunity to talk about its inception and political framing. Lift up Black lives as an opportunity to connect struggles across race, class, gender, nationality, sexuality, and disability.

And, perhaps more importantly, when Black people cry out in defense of our lives, which are uniquely, systematically, and savagely targeted by the

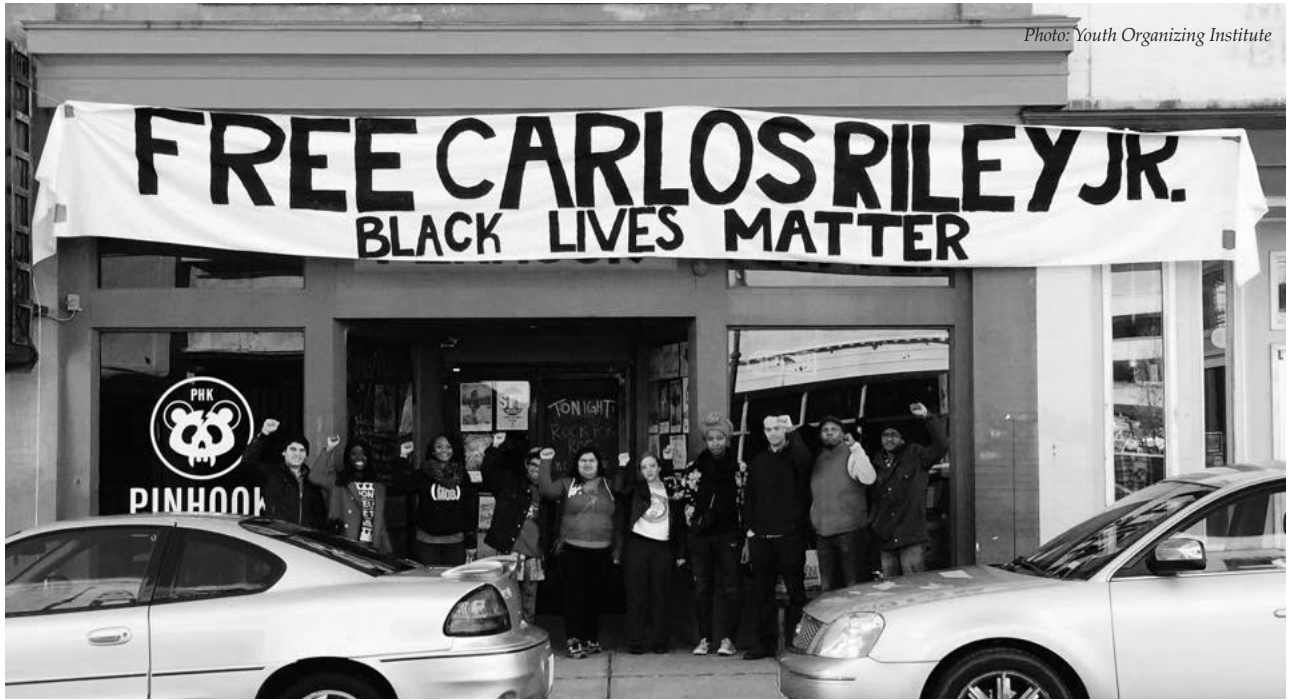
state, we are asking you, our family, to stand with us in affirming Black lives. Not just all lives. Black lives. Please do not change the conversation by talking about how your life matters, too. It does, but we need less watered down unity and more active solidarities with us, Black people, unwaveringly, in defense of our humanity. Our collective futures depend on it.

Alicia Garza is the Special Projects Director for the National Domestic Workers Alliance. In 2013, Alicia co-founded #BlackLivesMatter, an online platform developed after the murder of Trayvon Martin, designed to connect people interested in learning more about and fighting back against anti-Black racism. This piece was originally published in The Feminist Wire (www.thefeministwire.com).

Photo: Alliance of South Asians Taking Action



Members of Alliance of South Asians Taking Action, a Resist grantee, “have been participating in protests in Oakland, Berkeley, and San Francisco in solidarity with the #BlackLivesMatter movement. South Asian and API folks in our larger networks are also engaging in internal conversations about white supremacy and how anti-black racism plays out in our communities.”



Youth Organizing Institute in North Carolina, a Resist grantee, has been organizing a “#BlackLivesMatter Youth Assembly.” In addition, they have been fighting to drop the charges against Carlos Riley Jr., stating: “Drop the charges, Free Carlos Riley Jr., sentenced to 10 years for defending his life against a killer cop. #BlackLivesMatter even when they survive.”

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#BlackLivesMatter Special



Photo: Justice Committee

#ThisStopsToday

“On December 4, 2014, Justice Committee [a Resist grantee] and allies blocked the entrance to the Manhattan Bridge in response to the officers that killed Eric Garner not being indicted.”