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Asia A. Carter-Lamb
Roger Williams University

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Black Life Mater: Debunked!

We all want to believe that times have changed. We often think that tragic stories of African Americans like that of Emmett Till, who at 14 was targeted and killed for flirting with a white woman, are things of the past. Yet, year after year new victims are claimed because of the color of their skin. Michael Brown. Freddie Gray. Alton Sterling. These are just a few of the hundreds of people of color who have died because of racial targeting. These tragedies make headlines, yet social justice legislation remains stagnant.

The Black Lives Matter movement emerged in 2012 to combat racial targeting after the death of Trayvon Martin. The purpose of the movement, according to the Black Lives Matter Guiding Principles, is to serve as “an ideological and political intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise” and “an affirmation of Black folks’ contributions to this society, our humanity, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression.” From meetings with Democratic National Convention leaders, to attending a meeting at the White House at the invitation of the President, the Black Lives Matter movement is making strides in eliminating racial profiling in our society.

Many people disapprove of Black Lives Matter. Their disapproval leads to many misconceptions about the purpose of the movement. These misconceptions must be debunked as they cause people to discredit the entire purpose of the movement.

The most dangerous misconception is that by declaring that black lives matter, we are actually claiming that other lives do not matter, thereby elevating black lives to a superior status. This fallacy is even believed by former NYC mayor Rudy Giuliani, who claimed that the movement was “inherently racist.” However, this belief directly contrasts one of the BLM guiding principles, which states that the movement is “committed to acknowledging, respecting and celebrating differences and commonalities.” This is why many protests by BLM have drawn notably diverse participants.

The next misconception is that BLM encourages needless violence against police officers. In the article “More Hypocrisy from Black Lives Matter,” Ian Tuttle details the story of Micah Johnson who opened fire during a march in Dallas, which resulted in the death of five police officers. Although Johnson attended the protest, it was later discovered that his alignment with violent black nationalists is what spurred his violence. Though his extreme actions do not represent the values of the movement, they are now intertwined with its reputation. Violent acts committed in the name of the movement have led the movement to creating Campaign Zero in association with social activist DeRay Mckesson, explicitly outlining the changes they wish to see in modern policing. Their initiative shows the true intentions of BLM, which is not to attack police officers, but to collaborate with them in order to make all citizens feel safe.

Out of these gross misconceptions, the Blue Lives Matter counter-movement has sprung. Though their mission statement does not contradict the BLM movement, it directly attacks the movement, even claiming that the purpose of Black Lives Matter is the “vilification of the law”. It baselessly compares police uniforms to the skin color of an entire race. When an organization that claims to support police devalues an organization like Black Lives Matter, a movement that signifies the fundamental values of many African Americans, it only serves to reaffirm what society has been telling us: that the police are out to get us, that society wants to see us in the penitentiary, that our existence does not matter despite everything that African Americans have had to overcome. By contradicting us, bigots only create more division, more intolerance, and more hatred between us. This leaves society stagnant.

From my perspective as a black woman, I directly witness the rampant ignorance of my fellow Roger Williams University students on a daily basis. Issues of racial targeting directly affect very few people at Roger Williams. Even so, it is up to us, as prospering academics in a globalized world, to educate ourselves on issues of social justice lest these issues continue to fester.

Movements like the Black Lives Matter Movement need to be accurately understood and portrayed if social changes are to come about. Until its legitimacy is accepted and addressed, ignorance will continue to separate us. Until we are accepted, we will remind the world of who we are. But in the end, it will not be a matter of how far we march, how loud we shout, or how many black lives at lost at the hand of societally ingrained prejudice.

Black lives will only matter when society begins to treat them like they do.

Sincerely,

Asia A. Carter-Lamb