



Statement: We Affirm that Black Lives Matter

(V 2.0)

Inspired by our commitment to "Standing on the Side of Love", we feel called to take a stand about the stain of racism in America.

A terrible series of violent deaths of young Black men at the hands of police officers has shocked us and highlighted inherent disparities in law enforcement's treatment of White people and Black people (1, 2). Somewhat less visibly, under our criminal justice system, Black Americans, both men and women, are arrested with greater frequency for even minor infractions, convicted more often and receive more extreme sentences for the same crimes compared to White Americans (3). The high rate of incarceration for young Black men has had devastating impacts on loss of income, unemployment rates, homelessness and the continuing destruction of the fabric of their families and communities (3, 4). We see systemic racism at work in both dramatic ways (as in the killings in Charleston and the bombing of Black churches) and more subtle ones (as in discrimination in housing and banking (5, 6, 7), leading to a profound loss of hope within the Black community.

THEREFORE, AS A CONGREGATION, WE ARE CALLED TO BEAR WITNESS AND STAND AS ALLIES WITH BLACK AMERICANS IN THEIR STRUGGLES FOR JUSTICE, EQUALITY AND SECURITY.

WE AFFIRM THAT BLACK LIVES MATTER.

To understand the current state of race relations, we must *educate* ourselves and reflect honestly on the legacy of slavery, Jim Crow policies and the "New Jim Crow." By adopting this statement, we commit to educating ourselves by reading books such as Ta-Nehisi Coates' [Between the World and Me](#), Bryan Stevenson's [Just Mercy](#) and [Waking Up White](#) by Debby Irving and by accessing online resources such as the Facebook Group "UUs Resisting the New Jim Crow and Mass Incarceration". Other options for self-education in 2016 include: joining Beloved Conversations on Race at UCS and/or participating in Conversations on Race, sponsored by the Summit Interfaith Council.

And, as the Congregation of the Unitarian Church in Summit, we will *take actions to bear witness and stand as allies* with Black Americans. This may include: publicizing and attending rallies and vigils; organizing events at the church to educate and raise awareness, and posting a "Black Lives Matter" banner. We also pledge to challenge acts of racial injustice wherever we encounter them.

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References:

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2. [AL BAKER, J. DAVID GOODMAN AND BENJAMIN MUELLER, Beyond the Chokehold: The Path to Eric Garner's Death](#), NYT, June 13, 2015
3. MICHELLE ALEXANDER, [The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in an Age of Colorblindness](#), The New Press, 2012.
4. JUSTIN WOLFERS, DAVID LEONHARDT AND KEVIN QUEALY, [1.5 Million Missing Black Men](#), NYT, April 20, 2015.
5. JESSICA SILVER-GREENBERG AND MICHAEL CORKERY, [Evans Bank Settles New York "Redlining" Lawsuit](#), NYT, September 10, 2015.
6. PAUL KIEL AND ANNIE WALDMAN, [The Color of Debt: How Collection Suits Squeeze Black Neighborhoods](#), ProPublica, October 8, 2015
7. TUCKER, J.B., [The Ultimate White Privilege Statistics and Data Post](#), www.jbtucker.com, February, 2015.

BLACK LIVES MATTER
V2.0
Frequently Asked Questions

Don't all lives matter?

Black people in American are being disproportionately arrested, imprisoned and killed at the hands of the state. They have been subject to discrimination in education, employment and housing.

From the www.blacklivesmatter.com website:

"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."

What is Black Lives Matter (BLM)?

Black Lives Matter is an international activist movement, founded by three African American women to campaign against violence toward Black people. Much of their work has focused on organizing protests around the deaths of Black people killed by law enforcement officers.

What is our country's "legacy of slavery?"

Slavery, the legal ownership of one person and his or her offspring by another person, existed in British North America from early colonial days and gradually became associated with African ancestry. Importing people for use as slaves was prohibited in 1808, but through the first half of the 19th century, African Americans continued to be bought and sold like merchandise, especially to provide labor for the cotton plantations in the deep South.

By the early 1800s, most northern states had abolished slavery. Sad to say, New Jersey was one of the last, in 1846. At the start of the Civil War, 18 New Jersey residents were still listed as "apprentices for life," slaves by another name.

Slavery was effectively ended by the Civil War and was outlawed throughout the U.S. with the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment in December 1865.

What is Jim Crow?

After Reconstruction (1865-1877), conservative forces in the former Confederate states enacted so-called **Jim Crow laws**. These laws differed state to state but restricted voting rights and reinstated racial segregation in all public facilities. Segregated public schools, public transportation, restaurants, water fountains and restrooms (among other examples) were claimed to be *separate but equal*, but conditions for African Americans were consistently inferior.

Jim Crow did not end until the 1960s with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. But the lingering effects of Jim Crow can be seen today in both the South and North in patterns of housing segregation enforced by private covenants, some banking practices and job discrimination.

What is The New Jim Crow?

In 2012, civil rights attorney Michelle Alexander argued in her book, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, that America's war on drugs disproportionately affects African Americans and has produced new discrimination, by treating Black criminals more harshly than White criminals. According to Alexander, the U.S. criminal justice system functions as a contemporary system of racial control—relegating millions to a permanent second-class status—even as it formally adheres to the principle of colorblindness.

Michelle Alexander gave the UUA's Ware Lecture at General Assembly in 2012. Her book was the UUA's Common Read in 2012-1013.

How does the War on Drugs discriminate against Blacks?

- Whites and Blacks engage in drug offenses, possession and sales at roughly comparable rates (13 and 14%), yet African Americans make up 37% of those arrested for drug offenses and 56% of those in state prison for drug offenses, according to 2000 Congressional testimony by Marc Mauer of TheSentencingProject.org.
- Many states have laws preventing former felons from voting, disenfranchising about 5.8 million Americans for life. <http://www.sentencingproject.org/template/page.cfm?id=133>
- After serving a sentence, an ex-felon may become homeless. Public housing authorities may screen tenants for criminal records and may evict former drug offenders and other felons. Families may be evicted if their children are charged with a drug offense. *The New Jim Crow*, p. 146-147.

What do we know about police shootings of Black young men?

No nationwide database exists to which police departments are required to submit a report after investigations of police shootings of civilians. But some statistics are available:

- Black male teenagers, ages 15-19, are 21 times more likely to be shot and killed by the police than young White boys/men. <http://www.propublica.org/article/deadly-force-in-Black-and-White>
- Blacks are less than 13% of the U.S. population, and yet they are 31% of all fatal police shooting victims, and 39% of those killed by police even though they weren't attacking the police. FBI Supplemental Homicide Report.
- Blacks and Latinos were three times as likely as Whites to be stopped by police, according to a 2007 U.S. Department of Justice report on racial profiling. The same report said Blacks were twice as likely to be arrested and four times as likely "to experience the threat or use of force during interactions with the police."

Among the recent deaths of Blacks at the hands of police or in police custody are the following:

• **Trayvon Martin**, an unarmed Black teenager who was fatally shot on Feb. 26, 2012, by George Zimmerman, a White neighborhood watch volunteer in Sanford, Florida. Martin, 17, was returning from a convenience store with candy and a canned drink when he was accosted. A jury acquitted Zimmerman of second-degree murder and manslaughter.

• **Michael Brown**, an 18-year-old African American who was shot by White policeman Darren Wilson after a convenience store burglary on Aug. 9, 2014, in Ferguson, Missouri. Wilson confronted Brown and a friend outside the store, and an altercation

ensued over the control of Wilson's gun. Brown began to flee, then turned and moved toward Wilson, who fired several times, killing Brown. The teen turned out to be unarmed. Unrest followed. A grand jury decided not to indict.

•**Tamir Rice**, 12, was shot in the torso seconds after White police officer Timothy Loehmann arrived at a Cleveland park in response to a 911 call reporting a male ("probably a juvenile") pointing a pistol ("probably fake"). The dispatcher did not relay this information to the officers. Rice, an African American, died the day after the November 22, 2014, shooting. A grand jury declined to indict Loehmann, saying the death was a case of human error, not a criminal act.

In addition, **Sandra Bland**, 28, was found hanging in her jail cell on July 13, 2015, a day after Texas state trooper Brian Encinia stopped her for failing to signal a lane change near Prairie View A&M University, where she was about to start a new job. Bland's death was ruled a suicide. Family members say she should have been placed on a suicide watch. Results of a second independent autopsy have not been released. Encinia was taken off active duty and has been indicted on a perjury charge.

How can we be anti-racist allies?

We can stand as allies in confronting racism and racial inequality when we follow the lead of communities of color and listen to their voices. Most of our work is to address racism in the White community, educate ourselves to understand White privilege and unlearn White supremacy. We have to accept that we may make mistakes and feel awkward, both when working with Black activists and when talking about race and privilege with White co-workers and relatives.

What are the UU Educational and Networking Resources?

- Black Lives Matter & Ending the New Jim Crow: <http://www.uua.org/multiculturalism/new-jim-crow>
- History of UU Involvement in Anti-Racism Efforts: <http://www.uua.org/multiculturalism/history>
- UU Association Engagement for Racial Justice: <http://www.uua.org/multiculturalism/history/uua>
- UU Allies for Racial Equality: <http://alliesforracialequity.wildapricot.org/>
- Worship resources: <http://www.uua.org/worship/collections/black-lives-matter>
- Facebook group: UUs Resisting New Jim Crow and Mass Incarceration