
Black lives Matter: A global Revolution

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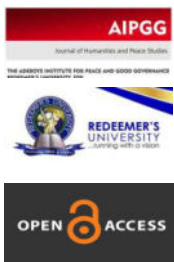
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Abstract

Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement was indeed a Social and political revolution. The events that followed the killing of George Floyd in the year 2020 became a catalyst for the acceleration of several socio-political processes relating the discourse on Civil Rights globally. The BLM movement that emerged became a conveyor belt for exhuming pertinent Civil rights issues that had been buried over time. The paper contends that its spread, reach and impact was revolutionary. The reaction to BLM was unique in many ways adding to the revolutionary nature of the fallout experienced all over the world. The paper presents a historical antecedents to the movement and traces the factors that can be held responsible for its outbreak.

Keywords: Education, Humane world, Trends, Industrial Revolutions, Nigeria

Introduction.

The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement is a social justice movement that emerged in the United States in 2013. It was founded by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi as a response to the acquittal of Trayvon Martin's killer, George Zimmerman. The movement gained widespread attention and support through the use of the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter on social media platforms. The BLM movement was initially focused on addressing the issues of

police violence and racial profiling faced by Black communities.¹ It aimed to draw attention to systemic racism and advocate for justice and accountability. The movement's founders sought to create a platform that centered the experiences and struggles of Black people, challenging the devaluation of Black lives in American society.² This Chapter attempts to trace the history of the movement and its key players against the backdrop of the civil rights movement in the United State of America. Most importantly the chapter interrogates the revolutionary nature of the movement in relation to its global reach and impact on institutional racism as a whole.

Civil Rights Background.

The perception of civil rights movements as a revolution was shared by one of the greatest icons of the 20th century Martin Luther king Jr. he maintained that...

The black revolution is much more than a struggle for the rights of Negroes. It is forcing America to face all its interrelated flaws—racism, poverty, militarism, and materialism. It is exposing evils that are rooted deeply in the whole structure of our society . . . and suggests that radical reconstruction of society is the real issue to be faced.³

Thus the civil rights struggle against racism as a revolutionary ideal was deeply rooted in African American history going way back to era of the slave trade in England and America, Making the abolitionist movement the earliest manifestation of the struggle for civil rights. The eighteenth century movement of the Quakers in the United Kingdom laid the foundation for a populist nineteenth-century abolitionist movement which would have ramifications beyond England, by touching the four corners of the world. Professor David Brion Davis, a pioneering historian of slavery and the slave trade, calls the abolitionist movement the world's "first successful movement for human rights."⁴ Professor Seymour Drescher, another leading historian of the slave trade, describes abolitionism as "the first and, in a narrow sense, the most successful human rights movement."⁵ The idea that nations should use international lawmaking to protect the rights of individuals who are not their own nationals was in connection with the slave trade. Also, the widespread adoption of treaties against the slave trade introduced into modern

¹ Rashawn Ray, Black lives matter at 10 years: 8 ways the movement has been highly effective. *Brookings*, (<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/black-lives-matter-at-10-years-what-impact-has-it-had-on-policing/>)

² Diancheng Li, The Black Lives Matter Movement Fights against Systemic Racism (May 26, 2022). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4262992> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4262992>

³ Hall, J. (2005) The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past. *The Journal of American History*. (March, 2005). P 1233

⁴ Martinez, J. (2012) Human Rights and History. *Harvard Law Review Forum*. Volume 126, No. 221. P 223.

⁵ *Ibid*. P. 223

international legal discourse the idea that violations of human rights were offenses of concern to humankind generally, and not just matters between a people and their state. Examples of such conventions include: the general acts of Berlin in 1885 and Brussels in 1890, the Convention of Saint Germain-en-Laye of 1919, the 1926 Slavery Convention, the United Nations International Law Commission, and the 1956 Supplementary Convention.⁶

Furthermore, it would not have been possible for human rights to emerge as a global discourse in the 1970s if the language, ideas, laws, and organizing tools that served as the building blocks of the movement had not already been in existence in some form. The antislavery movement's use of international law and legal institutions as part of a broader social, political, and military strategy has helped us better understand the potential role of international law today. It is however pertinent to understand what human rights movement was meant for. It was meant for freedom from desperate conditions, opposition to caste, emphasis on citizenship and non-judicial means for seeking change.⁷

Origins of BLM

The BLM movement can be considered as one of the many multifaceted manifestations of African American civil rights movement. Hence the events that led to its prominence cannot be considered as the spark of a new movement but rather the continuation of an age old fight with new labels spaces. This new flow can be traced to the August 2014 shooting of Michael Brown, an unarmed Black teenager, by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri which sparked nationwide protests and unrest.⁸ The incident, along with the subsequent grand jury decision not to indict the officer involved, fueled further outrage and propelled the BLM movement to the forefront of national attention. The protests in Ferguson brought attention to the issue of police brutality and racial inequality, inspiring activists across the country to join the movement.⁹

The BLM movement continued to gain momentum in the following years, with activists organizing protests, marches, and acts of civil disobedience to demand justice for victims of police violence. The movement's activism also extended beyond police brutality, addressing issues such as mass incarceration, education disparities, economic inequality, and racial profiling in various contexts. The deaths of other Black individuals, such as Eric Garner in New York

⁶Allain, J. (2013) *Slavery in International Law of Human Exploitation and Trafficking*. Australia: Marinus Nijhof. P.17

⁷Sunstein, C. (1995) What the Civil Rights Movement Was and Wasn't. *Chicago Unbound. Volume 1995, No 1*, P 194

⁸The New York Times, What Happened in Ferguson? Available at <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/08/13/us/ferguson-missouri-town-under-siege-after-police-shooting.html>

⁹German Lopez, (2016) What were the 2014 Ferguson Protests About? Available at <https://www.vox.com/2015/5/31/17937764/ferguson-missouri-protests-2014-michael-brown-police-shooting>

City and Freddie Gray in Baltimore, further galvanized the movement.¹⁰ These incidents, along with the subsequent lack of accountability for the officers involved, fueled nationwide protests and calls for systemic change. In trying to understand the nature of the BLM movement a closer examination of some key incidences and figures that galvanized the movement is necessary. Some of these incidences

Trayvon Martin Killing

The death of Trayvon Martin in February 2012 had a profound impact on the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, as it was one of the key catalysts that led to the movement's formation. Trayvon Martin, an unarmed African American teenager, was fatally shot by George Zimmerman, a neighborhood watch volunteer, in Sanford, Florida.¹¹ The circumstances surrounding Martin's death, and the subsequent acquittal of Zimmerman on the grounds of self-defense, ignited widespread outrage and brought issues of racial profiling, systemic racism, and the criminalization of black individuals to the forefront of national conversation.¹²

Trayvon Martin's case became a rallying point for activists and community members who saw his death as a clear example of the injustices faced by black people in America. It sparked a broader discussion about racial bias, vigilante justice, and the need for reforms within the criminal justice system. The movement that later became known as Black Lives Matter emerged in response to Trayvon Martin's death and the subsequent acquittal of Zimmerman. Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi, the founders of BLM, initially organized protests and used social media platforms to draw attention to the case and advocate for justice.¹³

The impact of Trayvon Martin's death on the BLM movement was significant. It helped mobilize and galvanize activists, community organizers, and supporters who rallied under the BLM banner. The case provided a powerful symbol of racial injustice and police violence, highlighting the urgent need to address systemic racism and the unequal treatment of black individuals in society. Trayvon Martin's death and the subsequent activism it sparked also influenced the movement's core principles, including the demand for an end to racial

¹⁰ Nicole Dungca, et al, 2020, The cases that ignited 2020 black lives matter protests, available at https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/a-dozen-high-profile-fatal-encounters-that-have-galvanized-protests-nationwide/2020/06/08/4fdbfc9c-a72f-11ea-b473-04905b1af82b_story.html.

¹¹ CNN, (2023) Rayvon Martin Shooting Fast facts available at <https://edition.cnn.com/2013/06/05/us/trayvon-martin-shooting-fast-facts/index.html>

¹² Ibid

¹³ Ashley Cole, 2020, The Organisational complexities of the black lives matter movement, available at <https://archive.discoverysociety.org/2020/07/01/westandinsolidarity-the-organisational-complexities-of-the-black-lives-matter-movement/>

profiling, the call for accountability in cases of police brutality, and the push for systemic reforms within law enforcement agencies.

The BLM movement's focus on Trayvon Martin's case, along with other high-profile incidents involving police violence and racial profiling, contributed to a broader national dialogue on race and justice, prompting calls for policy changes, police accountability, and the recognition of the value and dignity of black lives.

Eric Garner 'I cant Breath'

The death of Eric Garner is closely connected to the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. On July 17, 2014, Eric Garner, an African American man, was confronted by New York City police officers for allegedly selling untaxed cigarettes. During the encounter, Officer Daniel Pantaleo placed Garner in a chokehold, despite the maneuver being prohibited by the NYPD. Garner, repeatedly saying, "I can't breathe," lost consciousness and later died.¹⁴ The incident was captured on video by a bystander, and the footage went viral, sparking outrage and protests across the country. Garner's death became a rallying cry for the BLM movement, as it epitomized the issue of police brutality and the mistreatment of black individuals by law enforcement.¹⁵

The phrase "I can't breathe" became a powerful slogan and symbol, reflecting the frustration and systemic injustice faced by African Americans at the hands of the police. Protesters and activists used Garner's case to highlight the urgent need for police accountability, reform, and an end to racial profiling. The BLM movement, already gaining traction after the shooting of Trayvon Martin and the killing of Michael Brown, incorporated Garner's death into their narrative and advocacy efforts. His case became another example of the disproportionate use of force against black individuals, and it amplified the movement's message regarding the need to address systemic racism within law enforcement agencies.¹⁶

Following Garner's death, there were numerous protests, demonstrations, and calls for justice. BLM activists and supporters organized rallies, marches, and die-ins where participants would lie down in public spaces, symbolizing the loss of life and demanding accountability for police violence. Eric Garner's death played a significant role in shaping the BLM movement and its focus on police reform and racial justice. It added momentum to the movement's fight against systemic racism, raised awareness about the dangers of police brutality, and

¹⁴ Al Baker et al, 2015, Beyond the Chokehold: The Path to Eric Garner's Death, *New York Times*, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/14/nyregion/eric-garner-police-chokehold-staten-island.html>

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Ibid

intensified the national conversation about the treatment of black individuals by law enforcement.¹⁷

The Michael Brown Shooting

The shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri in August 2014 had a significant impact on the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. The incident sparked widespread protests and galvanized the movement, which was already gaining momentum in response to systemic racism and police violence. Michael Brown, an unarmed African American teenager, was fatally shot by a white police officer named Darren Wilson. Eyewitness accounts of the incident differed, with some claiming that Brown had his hands up in surrender when he was shot, while others argued that he was reaching for the officer's gun. The shooting and the subsequent handling of the case by local authorities led to a strong backlash and fueled the anger and frustration of many within the black community.¹⁸

The incident in Ferguson became a focal point for activists and protesters who saw it as emblematic of the broader issues of racial profiling, police brutality, and the unequal treatment of African Americans within the criminal justice system. It sparked a national conversation about systemic racism and the need for police reform. The BLM movement, which had already been active since 2013 following the acquittal of Trayvon Martin's killer, gained increased visibility and support in the aftermath of Michael Brown's shooting. Activists, community organizers, and protesters across the country rallied under the banner of BLM to demand justice for Brown and to call for an end to police violence and racial injustice.¹⁹

The shooting of Michael Brown and the subsequent protests in Ferguson also highlighted the power of social media in spreading awareness and mobilizing supporters. The hashtag #BlackLivesMatter trended on platforms like Twitter and played a crucial role in amplifying the movement's message and organizing protests and demonstrations. The impact of the shooting on the BLM movement was profound. It brought issues of racial inequality and police violence to the forefront of public consciousness, leading to increased activism, policy discussions, and calls for change. It also contributed to a broader national dialogue on race, policing, and criminal justice reform, influencing subsequent movements and advocacy efforts seeking to address systemic racism in the United States.²⁰

¹⁷ Holly Yan, 2017, 'Black Lives Matter' cases: When controversial killings lead to change, *CNN* available at <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/05/04/us/black-lives-matter-updates-may-2017/index.html>

¹⁸ AP News (2019) Timeline of events in shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Available at <https://apnews.com/article/shootings-police-us-news-st-louis-michael-brown-9aa32033692547699a3b61da8fd1fc62>

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Ibid

The killing of Breonna Taylor

The killing of Breonna Taylor in March 2020 had a significant impact on the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. Breonna Taylor, a 26-year-old African American woman, was fatally shot by police officers during a raid on her apartment in Louisville, Kentucky. The circumstances surrounding Taylor's death, in which officers used a "no-knock" warrant and fired multiple shots, fueled widespread outrage and drew attention to issues of police violence, racial profiling, and the lack of accountability within law enforcement agencies. The BLM movement, which was already active and gaining momentum following the deaths of other unarmed black individuals such as George Floyd and Ahmaud Arbery, rallied around Taylor's case. Her death became another symbol of the systemic racism and excessive use of force faced by black individuals, particularly black women, at the hands of the police.²¹

The killing of Breonna Taylor sparked protests and demonstrations across the United States, with BLM activists, community organizers, and supporters demanding justice and accountability. The movement called for the officers involved in her death to be held accountable, and for an end to the use of "no-knock" warrants and other police practices that disproportionately harm black communities. The case of Breonna Taylor also shed light on the intersectionality of racial and gender injustices. The BLM movement, which aims to address the specific challenges faced by black individuals, rallied behind Taylor to emphasize the importance of centering black women's experiences and demanding justice for the harm inflicted upon them.²²

The impact of Breonna Taylor's killing on the BLM movement was profound. It further amplified the movement's message, bringing attention to the need for police reform, accountability, and an end to the excessive use of force. The case also fueled conversations about the specific challenges faced by black women within the criminal justice system and highlighted the urgency of addressing systemic racism and gender-based violence. Taylor's name became a rallying cry at protests, on social media platforms, and in public discourse, contributing to the broader national movement for racial justice and inspiring ongoing efforts to reform law enforcement practices and combat systemic racism.²³

George Floyd

The connection between George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement is significant and has had a profound impact on the movement's

²¹ Josiah Bates, 2022, Breonna Taylor's Killing Sparked Restrictions on No-Knock Warrants. But Experts Say Those Rules Don't Actually Change Much, *Time Magazine*, available at, <https://time.com/6156590/breonna-taylor-no-knock-warrants/>

²² By Richard A. Oppel Jr et al, 2023 What you need to know about Breonna Taylor's death, *New York Times*, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/article/breonna-taylor-police.html>

²³ Ibid

trajectory. The murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer on May 25, 2020, ignited a global wave of protests, shedding light on the pervasive issue of police brutality and racial injustice. Floyd's death became a rallying cry and a symbol of the urgent need for change within law enforcement and the broader systems that perpetuate systemic racism.²⁴

The video capturing George Floyd's final moments, in which he pleaded for his life while the officer knelt on his neck, went viral and sparked widespread outrage and empathy. This tragic event struck a chord not only in the United States but also around the world, as people of all races and backgrounds recognized the inherent injustice and the urgent need to address it. George Floyd's death acted as a catalyst for the BLM movement, providing a renewed sense of urgency and galvanizing protests across the United States and internationally. Demonstrations demanding justice for George Floyd and an end to police violence and systemic racism took place in cities around the world, with participants expressing solidarity with the BLM movement and advocating for racial equality.²⁵

The connection between George Floyd and the BLM movement extends beyond the immediate aftermath of his death. His case became emblematic of the broader systemic issues that the movement seeks to address. Floyd's death underscored the unequal treatment of Black individuals by law enforcement, the lack of police accountability, and the need for comprehensive police reforms. Moreover, George Floyd's name became a symbol of the broader fight against racial injustice. Protesters, activists, and supporters of the BLM movement often invoked his name as they called for justice and systemic change. Floyd's death and the subsequent movement that emerged propelled discussions and initiatives to re-imagine public safety, advocate for police reform, and address the structural racism deeply embedded within institutions.²⁶

The impact of George Floyd's death on the BLM movement cannot be overstated. His tragic killing brought renewed attention to the movement's core demands, such as defunding the police, addressing racial profiling, and pursuing criminal justice reform. It also sparked conversations about the need for broader societal change to combat systemic racism and promote racial equality. The connection between George Floyd and the BLM movement is profound. His death became a catalyst for global protests against racial injustice, highlighting the urgent need for reform within law enforcement and the broader systems that perpetuate systemic racism. George Floyd's name and his final moments

²⁴ *BBC News*, 20121, George Floyd: Timeline of black deaths and protests, Available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-52905408>

²⁵ Taoufik Djebali, 2020, *The Evolution of the Black Lives Matter Movement in the United States from its Creation to Nowadays*, Masters Thesis Année Universitaire.

²⁶ Jason Silverstein, 2021, *The global impact of George Floyd: How Black Lives Matter protests shaped movements around the world*, available at <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/george-floyd-black-lives-matter-impact/>

became symbolic of the broader struggle for racial equality and the ongoing fight against police violence, making him a central figure in the BLM movement's quest for justice and systemic change. At this point it is critical to examine the role played by some of the key leading figures in the BLM movement. Several black civil rights activists contributed to this revolutionary movement however Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi can be arguably considered as the founders of the movement.

Alicia Garza

Alicia Garza is an influential figure and one of the co-founders of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. Her role has been instrumental in shaping the movement's direction, goals, and impact. As an activist, organizer, and writer, Garza has played a vital role in advocating for racial justice, amplifying the voices of marginalized communities, and mobilizing people to take action against systemic racism and violence. Garza's journey as an activist began long before the inception of the BLM movement. She has been involved in grassroots organizing and social justice work for over a decade. As a queer Black woman, she has consistently highlighted the intersecting oppressions faced by marginalized communities and emphasized the need for collective action to address them.²⁷

Garza's contribution to the BLM movement goes beyond her co-creation of the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter. She has been deeply involved in organizing efforts, strategic planning, and community engagement. Garza has worked tirelessly to build and sustain the movement, providing essential leadership and guidance. One of Garza's significant contributions is her emphasis on intersectionality within the BLM movement. Intersectionality recognizes that individuals experience overlapping forms of oppression based on their race, gender, sexuality, class, and other social identities. Garza has consistently emphasized the importance of centering the experiences of Black women, queer individuals, and other marginalized groups who face compounded forms of discrimination. Her advocacy has helped ensure that the BLM movement remains inclusive and committed to addressing the intersecting challenges faced by various communities.²⁸

Furthermore, Garza has been a strong advocate for transformative justice and community empowerment. She has emphasized the importance of community organizing, grassroots mobilization, and sustainable change. Garza has encouraged the development of local BLM chapters, providing guidance and support to activists on the ground. This approach has allowed the movement to address local issues and build solidarity networks across different communities.

²⁷ Arwa Mahdawi, 2020, Black Lives Matter's Alicia Garza: 'Leadership today doesn't look like Martin Luther King', *The Guardian*, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/17/black-lives-matter-alicia-garza-leadership-today-doesnt-look-like-martin-luther-king>

²⁸ Ibid.

Garza's influence extends beyond her role within the BLM movement. She is also a respected writer and public speaker, using her platform to articulate the vision and goals of the movement. Through her writing and speeches, she has challenged dominant narratives, offered critical analysis of systemic racism, and inspired individuals to take action. Garza's work has helped educate and engage a broader audience, expanding the movement's reach and impact.²⁹

It is worth noting that while Garza is one of the co-founders of the BLM movement, the movement itself is decentralized and comprises a diverse range of activists and organizers. Garza's contributions should be understood within this context of collective action and collaboration. Alicia Garza has played a crucial role in shaping the Black Lives Matter movement. Her leadership, commitment to intersectionality, emphasis on community empowerment, and ability to articulate the movement's vision have been instrumental in mobilizing people, challenging systemic racism, and advocating for racial justice. Garza's contributions have not only impacted the BLM movement but have also inspired individuals and communities worldwide to join the fight against racial inequality and violence.³⁰

Patrisse Cullors

Patrisse Cullors is a prominent activist, artist, and co-founder of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. Her role in the movement has been significant, with her leadership and advocacy driving important changes in the fight against systemic racism, police violence, and social injustice. Cullors has been involved in activism from a young age, having experienced firsthand the impacts of racial inequality and the criminal justice system on her own family. Her experiences shaped her commitment to social justice and motivated her to work towards dismantling oppressive systems.³¹

As a co-founder of the BLM movement, Cullors played a crucial role in its formation and development. Alongside Alicia Garza and Opal Tometi, she helped create the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter, which became a rallying cry for activists worldwide. Cullors' expertise in grassroots organizing and her ability to mobilize communities have been instrumental in the movement's growth and impact. Cullors has been a vocal advocate for racial equality, drawing attention to the experiences of Black people and marginalized communities. She has used her platform to shed light on issues such as police brutality, mass incarceration, and the disproportionate impacts of systemic racism on people of color.

²⁹ Arwa Mahdawi, 2020, Black Lives Matter's Alicia Garza: 'Leadership today doesn't look like Martin Luther King' *The Guardian*, Available <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/17/black-lives-matter-alicia-garza-leadership-today-doesnt-look-like-martin-luther-king>

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Aric Jenkins, 2018, Black Lives Matter Co-Founder Patrisse Cullors on Her Memoir, Her Life and What's Next for the Movement, *Time Magazine*, available at <https://time.com/5171270/black-lives-matter-patrisse-cullors/>

Through her advocacy work, Cullors has challenged societal norms, sparked dialogue, and pushed for policy changes.³²

Furthermore, Cullors has been a leading voice in addressing the intersectionality of oppression within the BLM movement. She recognizes that issues of race cannot be separated from other forms of discrimination such as gender, sexuality, and class. Cullors has worked to ensure that the movement includes and uplifts the voices and experiences of Black women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and other marginalized groups who face multiple layers of oppression. Beyond her role in the BLM movement, Cullors is an accomplished artist, using her creativity as a means of activism. Her artwork often explores themes of identity, race, and social justice, providing a platform for marginalized voices and fostering conversations about the ongoing struggle for equality.³³

Cullors' impact extends beyond her activism and artistry. She has been instrumental in supporting and mentoring other activists, particularly through the creation of BLM's Global Network, which provides resources, guidance, and solidarity to local chapters worldwide. Her commitment to building community and fostering collective action has strengthened the movement's grassroots efforts.

It is important to recognize that Cullors' contributions to the BLM movement are part of a collective effort. The movement comprises a diverse range of activists, organizers, and community members working together towards a common goal. Cullors' leadership and dedication have played a significant role in mobilizing communities, amplifying marginalized voices, and advocating for systemic change. Patrisse Cullors has played a vital role in the Black Lives Matter movement. Her leadership, advocacy, and artistic expression have been instrumental in raising awareness about systemic racism, police violence, and social injustice. Through her work, Cullors has helped shape the movement's vision, fostered inclusivity, and inspired others to join the fight for racial equality. Her contributions continue to drive progress towards a more just and equitable society.³⁴

Opal Tometi

Opal Tometi is a prominent activist, writer, and co-founder of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. Her role in the movement has been instrumental in shaping its vision, advocacy, and impact. Tometi's leadership, organizational skills, and commitment to social justice have played a crucial role in the fight

³² Patrisse Cullors, 2020 How Black Lives Matter went global, *FT women Serries 2020*, available at <https://www.ft.com/content/c6eac3c7-3f38-49be-9caa-f3aa1248184a>

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Alejandra Molina, 2020, Black Lives Matter is 'A spiritual movement,' says co-founder Patrisse Cullors, available at <https://religionnews.com/2020/06/15/why-black-lives-matter-is-a-spiritual-movement-says-blm-co-founder-patrisse-cullors/>

against systemic racism and inequality. As one of the co-founders of the BLM movement, Tometi contributed to its formation and early development alongside Alicia Garza and Patrisse Cullors. Together, they created the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter, which served as a catalyst for a national and international movement demanding justice for Black lives. Tometi's dedication to the cause of racial justice and her experience as an activist played a significant role in shaping the movement's mission and strategies.³⁵

Tometi has been a vocal advocate for racial equality and human rights. She has used her platform to draw attention to the experiences and struggles of Black people, emphasizing the need for systemic change. Tometi has spoken out against police violence, mass incarceration, and the marginalization of Black communities. Through her activism, she has fostered dialogue, inspired action, and worked towards dismantling oppressive systems. One of Tometi's notable contributions to the BLM movement is her focus on international solidarity. She has actively engaged with activists and organizers across the globe, recognizing the global nature of racial injustice. Tometi has worked to build connections with marginalized communities worldwide, sharing resources, knowledge, and support. Her efforts have led to the expansion of the movement beyond the United States, allowing for a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to tackling systemic racism.³⁶

Furthermore, Tometi's background as a writer and storyteller has played a significant role in amplifying marginalized voices. She has utilized various mediums to shed light on the experiences of Black people and to challenge dominant narratives. Tometi's storytelling has been instrumental in raising awareness about systemic racism, inspiring empathy, and fostering understanding. In addition to her work within the BLM movement, Tometi has been actively involved in other social justice initiatives. She has advocated for immigration reform, recognizing the intersections between racial justice and immigrant rights. Tometi co-founded the Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI), an organization that focuses on addressing racial and social disparities faced by Black immigrants.³⁷

Tometi's leadership extends beyond her involvement in activism. She has been a mentor and role model for young activists, particularly those from marginalized communities. Her commitment to empowering the next generation has helped foster a sustainable and inclusive movement for social change. It is important to acknowledge that Tometi's contributions to the BLM movement are part of a collective effort. The movement encompasses a diverse

³⁵ Ellen E Jones, 2020, Opal Tometi, Co-founder of Black Lives Matter: 'I do this because we deserve to live', *The Guardian*, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/sep/24/opal-tometi-co-founder-of-black-lives-matter-i-do-this-because-we-deserve-to-live>

³⁶ Opal Tometi, 2020, black lives matter, *The Guardian* available at <https://guardian.ng/life/on-the-cover/opal-tometi-black-lives-matter/>

³⁷ Ibid.

range of activists, organizers, and community members who work together towards a common goal. Tometi's leadership, international perspective, and dedication have played a critical role in mobilizing communities, building alliances, and advocating for racial justice. Opal Tometi has played a crucial role in the Black Lives Matter movement. Her leadership, advocacy, and commitment to international solidarity have been instrumental in challenging systemic racism, amplifying marginalized voices, and fostering connections between activists worldwide. Through her work, Tometi has helped shape the movement's mission, inspire action, and build a more inclusive and equitable society.³⁸

Civil Rights movement and Black lives matter

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s and the Black Lives Matter movement of the present day are revolutionary social justice movements that have confronted racial inequality and advocated for the rights and dignity of Black individuals in America. The civil rights movement achieved the Passage of landmark legislation e.g., Civil Rights Act, Voting Rights Act through winning legal cases and strong action like the Brown v. Board of Education, Montgomery Bus Boycott, March on Washington. These great achievements were built upon by the BLM movement through advancing issues like the end systemic racism and police violence; Address socioeconomic disparities and racial profiling; Advocate for criminal justice reform and community empowerment

Both the Civil Rights Movement and Black Lives Matter movement have played pivotal roles in the fight for racial justice in the United States. While the Civil Rights Movement paved the way for legal victories and changed societal attitudes, the Black Lives Matter movement has brought issues of systemic racism and police violence to the forefront of public consciousness. To a large extent the BLM movement has integrated into the civil rights movement Intersectionality and Coalition-Building; The need to Embrace intersectional perspectives and acknowledging the interconnectedness of social issues; building alliances with other marginalized communities to fight against various forms of oppression and engaging in international solidarity and highlighting global issues of racial injustice.³⁹

The Revolutionary Dimensions

The Black Lives Matter movement has emerged as a powerful force in the fight against racial injustice and police violence. This research paper seeks to analyze whether the BLM movement can be considered a revolution, defined as a fundamental and radical change in societal structures. By exploring the defining characteristics of revolutions and assessing the BLM movement's goals,

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Dana R. Fisher and Stella M. Rouse, 2022, Intersectionality within the racial justice movement in the summer of 2020, *PNAS Volume 119 Issue 30*. DOI <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2118525119>

strategies, and impacts, we can gain a deeper understanding of its revolutionary potential. To this extent the following revolutionary dimensions of the BLM movement give a revolutionary tilt that is very distinctive; The movement challenged the Status Quo by confronting systemic racism and demanding structural change; Questioning the legitimacy of existing power structures; Inspiring a paradigm shift in public opinion and discourse on race; Mobilizing Mass Participation; Grassroots organizing and community engagement; Utilizing social media and digital platforms for mass mobilization; Broadening the movement's reach and facilitating collective action; Disrupting Institutions and Systems; Targeting and exposing systemic racism within law enforcement and criminal justice systems; Advocating for comprehensive police reforms and defunding initiatives; Demanding changes in policy, legislation, and institutional practices; Creating Cultural and Political Shifts; Influencing popular culture, art, and media representations; Shaping political agendas and electoral discourse; Fostering solidarity and coalition-building across social justice movements.⁴⁰

While the Black Lives Matter movement shares some characteristics with revolutions, such as challenging the status quo, mobilizing mass participation, and disrupting systems of oppression, it is important to recognize the distinctiveness of the movement's goals and strategies. The BLM movement represents a unique form of social and political activism, driven by a desire for racial justice and an end to systemic racism. While it may not conform to all aspects of traditional revolutions, it possesses the potential to bring about transformative change by reshaping public discourse, inspiring collective action, and pressuring institutions to address systemic racial inequalities. The continued impact and evolution of the BLM movement will shape its revolutionary potential and determine its role in the pursuit of racial justice and social transformation.⁴¹

The classification of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement as a social revolution is a subject of debate among scholars and analysts. While the BLM movement has undoubtedly brought about significant changes and challenged societal norms, the categorization of "social revolution" requires a nuanced examination of its goals, strategies, and long-term impact. Consequently, the BLM movement can be seen as a revolutionary force in several aspects:

1. Challenging the Status Quo: The BLM movement has confronted systemic racism, police violence, and racial inequalities, questioning the legitimacy of existing power structures and demanding fundamental changes to societal norms.

⁴⁰ Tatiana Cozzarelli and Julia Wallace, *From Black Lives Matter to Revolution*, 2020 available at, <https://www.leftvoice.org/from-black-lives-matter-to-revolution/>.

⁴¹ Melina Abdullah, 2017, *Black Lives Matter is a revolutionary peace movement*, available at <https://theconversation.com/black-lives-matter-is-a-revolutionary-peace-movement-85449>

2. Mobilizing Mass Participation: The movement has effectively mobilized large-scale protests, demonstrations, and acts of civil disobedience, engaging a broad cross-section of society and fostering grassroots activism.

3. Disrupting Institutions and Systems: BLM has targeted and exposed systemic racism within law enforcement and criminal justice systems, advocating for comprehensive police reforms and pushing for changes in policy, legislation, and institutional practices.

4. Cultural and Political Impact: BLM has influenced popular culture, art, and media representations, shaping political agendas and electoral discourse. It has also fostered solidarity and coalition-building with other social justice movements, demonstrating its capacity to effect broader societal change.

However, there are also arguments against classifying BLM as a social revolution and they are elaborated on below.

1. Scope and Scale: Some scholars argue that a social revolution implies a complete overthrow of existing systems and structures. While BLM has prompted significant changes and generated widespread attention, it may not meet the traditional criteria of a revolution in terms of entirely reshaping societal institutions.

2. Institutional Transformation: Critics argue that a social revolution involves the replacement of existing institutions with new ones. While BLM has called for institutional reforms, the movement's primary focus has been on changing policies, practices, and public attitudes, rather than entirely dismantling and replacing institutions.

3. Long-Term Impact: The long-term impact and sustainability of the BLM movement remain uncertain. Social revolutions are characterized by lasting systemic changes that endure beyond the immediate protest phase. It is yet to be seen if the BLM movement will bring about enduring transformative change in terms of dismantling systemic racism and achieving racial equality. Whether the Black Lives Matter movement can be classified as a social revolution is a complex question that lacks a definitive answer. While the movement has exhibited revolutionary characteristics and sparked significant societal changes, the ultimate impact and sustainability of these changes will determine the extent to which it can be considered a social revolution.

Global Reach

BLM created a strong global awareness and solidarity move that gave the struggle for civil rights and social justice of African Americans support in foreign communities by highlighting local problems. The role of social media in disseminating BLM's message worldwide helped to connect instances of BLM-

related protests and demonstrations in different countries.⁴² This created transnational solidarity Movements leading to the adoption and adaptation of BLM slogans and tactics by activists in other nations. It also led to the formation of global networks and alliances to support BLM's goals and International recognition of systemic racism and the need for change. In Europe, anti-racist movements and protests were inspired by BLM bringing to the fore the challenges of addressing colonial legacies and systemic racism in European societies. In Africa connections between the BLM movement and anti-colonial struggles were highlighted while raising awareness about police violence and racial discrimination within African countries became standard fallout of the BLM solidarity movements in African Countries. A prominent example of this was the 'End SARS' movement in Nigeria that focused on dealing with issues of police brutality.⁴³

In Latin America, mobilization against racial inequality and police violence was a key focus of the BLM solidarity activity there. Their protests Highlighted the intersectionality of race, class, and gender in social justice movements. In Asia on the other hand, Solidarity movements addressing racial discrimination and police violence dominated the BLM trend. They largely focused on the challenges of addressing complex dynamics of race and ethnicity in diverse Asian societies.⁴⁴

The global reach of the Black Lives Matter movement demonstrates its resonance and significance as a catalyst for change beyond national borders. Through social media, transnational solidarity movements, and protests, BLM has ignited conversations about systemic racism and police violence on a global scale. While challenges exist in adapting the movement to different cultural contexts and achieving sustainable policy changes, the global reach of BLM signifies the urgent need to address racial inequality worldwide. By fostering international solidarity and building coalitions, the BLM movement has the potential to contribute to the global fight for racial justice and reshape the future of social activism.⁴⁵

Impact of black lives matter on race relations all over the world

The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement has had a profound impact on race relations worldwide. Since its emergence in 2013, BLM has become a powerful force in the fight against systemic racism and inequality, inspiring a global movement for racial justice and transforming the way people discuss and address issues of race. One of the most significant impacts of the BLM

⁴² Daniel Odin Shaw and Saman Ayesha Kidwai, 2020, The Global Impact of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) Movement, *The Geopolitics*, available at <https://thegeopolitics.com/the-global-impact-of-the-black-lives-matter-movement/>

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Jason Silverstein, 2021, The global impact of George Floyd: How Black Lives Matter protests shaped movements around the world, Available at <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/george-floyd-black-lives-matter-impact/>

⁴⁵ Ibid

movement has been its ability to bring issues of racial inequality and police violence to the forefront of public consciousness. The movement's emphasis on the disproportionate targeting and mistreatment of Black individuals by law enforcement has sparked conversations and debates about systemic racism, shedding light on the deep-rooted biases embedded within societal structures.⁴⁶

The global reach of the BLM movement is evident in the widespread protests that have taken place in cities around the world. Following the deaths of Black individuals at the hands of police, people from diverse backgrounds have united in solidarity, demanding justice and an end to racial discrimination. These demonstrations have provided a platform for marginalized communities to voice their experiences and highlight the universal nature of racial injustice. In many countries, the BLM movement has sparked a broader examination of historical injustices and racial disparities. It has led to increased scrutiny of colonial legacies, such as the glorification of historical figures involved in slavery or colonization. Institutions and governments have faced pressure to address these issues and reassess policies that perpetuate inequality with racial tensions increasing to as high as 55 percent in the UK alone.⁴⁷ The movement has also prompted discussions on education reform to ensure a more accurate and inclusive representation of history.

Furthermore, the BLM movement has ignited conversations about economic disparities and the need for economic justice. It has drawn attention to the systemic barriers that prevent Black individuals from accessing equal opportunities in employment, housing, and education. This has led to increased calls for policies that promote economic empowerment and address wealth disparities. BLM has also had a significant impact on the media landscape, challenging dominant narratives and providing a platform for marginalized voices. The movement has exposed the biases and inequities within media coverage, highlighting the importance of diverse representation and accurate reporting. Social media platforms have played a crucial role in amplifying the movement's message, allowing individuals to share their experiences and mobilize support on a global scale.⁴⁸

Another notable impact of the BLM movement has been its influence on other social justice movements. The principles and strategies employed by BLM, such as grassroots organizing, intersectional analysis, and the use of digital platforms, have inspired and informed activists worldwide. The movement has fostered solidarity between different marginalized communities and facilitated collaboration in the fight against various forms of oppression. It is important to

⁴⁶ Kim Parker ET AL, 2020, Amid Protests, Majorities Across Racial and Ethnic Groups Express Support for the Black Lives Matter Movement, Pew Research Center, available at, <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2020/06/12/amid-protests-majorities-across-racial-and-ethnic-groups-express-support-for-the-black-lives-matter-movement/>

⁴⁷ *The Guardian*, 2020, Black Lives Matter has increased racial tension, 55% say in UK poll, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/nov/27/black-lives-matter-has-increased-racial-tension-55-say-in-uk-poll>

⁴⁸ Ibid

recognize that the impact of the BLM movement on race relations is ongoing and multifaceted. While progress has been made, significant challenges and inequalities persist. The movement has sparked important conversations and reforms, but systemic change requires sustained efforts and continued engagement.⁴⁹

The BLM movement has had a profound impact on race relations worldwide. It has brought issues of racial inequality and police violence to the forefront of public consciousness, prompting discussions, protests, and policy changes. The movement has challenged dominant narratives, fostered solidarity, and inspired activism against systemic racism. However, it is crucial to recognize that the fight for racial justice is ongoing, and sustained efforts are needed to address the deep-rooted inequities that persist in societies around the world. Overall, the Black Lives Matter movement has played a significant role in raising awareness about systemic racism, police violence, and racial inequality. It continues to mobilize communities, influence public opinion, and advocate for a more just and equitable society.⁵⁰

The contemporary movement for racial justice has been gathering momentum for years and reached a crescendo with the murder of George Floyd. The protests that followed his murder have arguably been the broadest in recent history, generating more media coverage, and inspiring activists world-wide against the intolerance and injustice they face in their home countries. Thus, the impact of the movement was global and spanned across all continents, evoking conversations beyond racial injustice.⁵¹

The revolutionary influence of the Black Lives Matter movement spanned all continents, evoking conversations beyond racial injustice and yielding positive societal changes. Its several impacts include encouraging activism, addressing colonial legacies, fostering solidarity, inspiring reforms, ensuring corporate accountability, positively influencing culture, and setting the pace for similar movements.

The BLM movement had an immediate global impact in placing and sustaining racial discrimination in global discourse and shining a light on the many evils of injustice perpetuated against minorities in several communities, particularly in mixed Western societies such as France, the United Kingdom and the United States where race disparity discourse is increasingly popular⁵². The movement proved that while many of these Western countries promote the concept of a

⁴⁹ Ibid

⁵⁰ Unitarian Universalist Association, Black Lives Matter and Building a Movement for Racial Justice, available at <https://www.uua.org/multiculturalism/racial-justice/black-lives-matter>

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² Strickland, Christopher. "The Fight for Equality Continues: A New Social Movement Analysis of The Black Lives Matter Movement and the 1960's Civil Rights Movement." *Phylon (1960-)* 59, no. 1 (2022): 71–90.

uniform identity that eclipse marginality, they have been largely unable to address systemic racism brought forward by their colonial status⁵³. Thus, it helped create global awareness of systemic racism, police violence, and social injustice, sustaining the discourse even till now. It has thus far inspired many individuals and communities to take action and engage in activism to fight against various kinds of discrimination⁵⁴.

Another key impact was the demand to deconstruct colonial discriminatory structures, legacies and vestiges of colonial heritages that existed in some countries as reminders and acceptance of discrimination and racial superiority.⁵⁵ In the United States and Britain for instance, there was a relentless campaign to demolish discriminatory monuments and statues of racist colonial figures. Hundreds of these were gone within one year through destruction by protesters or removal by city authorities. And, although this was more viral in the United States and the United Kingdom, the wave also spread quickly to France, Ireland, Columbia, Cambodia, Barbados, India, Belgium, South Africa, Canada and New Zealand. Among others, BLM protests have occurred in Canada, France, the United States, the United Kingdom, India, Belgium, Australia, Columbia, Ireland, Brazil, New Zealand and South Africa, and these have drawn attention to local instances of racial discrimination, sparking conversations and calls for change, including the bringing down of discriminatory monuments and statues of racist colonial figures either through destruction by protesters or removal by city authorities⁵⁶.

The movement also helped to initiate varieties of administrative reforms. Several societies set up committees, such as the diversity commission in London to proffer solutions to issues that divide them. Also, in many communities, policies to censor the Police and hold them more accountable were put in place. In Minneapolis, a ban on using chokeholds by police was introduced, and officers were required to report and intervene when they witnessed a colleague's unauthorised use of force. In New Zealand, the government was forced to scrap plans to arm her police.

Solidarity: The movement's influence was also palpable in how I thus highlighted the cloverleaf of marginalized identities such as gender, race and sexuality, and emphasized the importance of solidarity among different

⁵³Shaw, Daniel Odin, and Saman Ayesha Kidwai. "The Global Impact of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) Movement." *The Geopolitics*, 2020

⁵⁴McKinsey Institute for Black Economic Mobility. "Corporate Commitments to Racial Justice: An Update. 2023.

⁵⁵Linn-Tynen, Erin. "Reclaiming the Past as a Matter of Social Justice: African American Heritage, Representation and Identity in the United States." In *Critical Perspectives on Cultural Memory and Heritage: Construction, Transformation and Destruction*, edited by Veysel Apaydin, 255–68. UCL Press, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv13xpsfp.21>.

⁵⁶Rejali, Saman. "Race, Equity, and Neo-Colonial Legacies: Identifying Paths Forward for Principled Humanitarian Action." *ICRC Law & Policy*, 2020.

oppressed communities, encouraging collaboration and support for one another's struggles⁵⁷. The world has been able to see the display of humanity, humaneness and brotherliness on issues of discrimination, such as how Nigerians across all divides joined in the campaign against police brutality in 2020. The movement has also been able to initiate change-oriented symbols, phrases and slogans, which were used to rally help for marginalized communities, promoting unanimity and stressing the value of all lives⁵⁸.

Societal Reforms: BLMM's demands for police reform led to a discussion on administrative and policy reforms in several countries on the urgent need for accountability and transparency. Policies to censor the Police and hold them more accountable were introduced, and reforms to address racial bias and excessive use of force were implemented⁵⁹. Several societies set up committees, such as the diversity commission in London, to proffer solutions to issues that divide them. Also, in many communities, such as Minneapolis, bans on no-knock warrants and body-worn cameras were implemented, and officers were mandated to intervene and report witnessing their colleague's use of force⁶⁰.

Corporate Accountability: BLM Movement's influence inspired corporate accountability vis a vis biases in workplaces and corporate environments. Many organisations have had no choice but to address their internal practices, introducing and enforcing diversity and inclusion policies. Several are also usually eager to pledge donations and support movements fighting for equity and fairness⁶¹. The United Nations have had to hold special sessions centred on seeking justice for those in need, referencing the movement in these emerging conversations⁶².

Cultural, Social and Literary Influence: Its impact on these has been as profound as every other impact. The movement has inspired many literatures, works of art, movies and music that shed light on injustice and the experiences of oppressed individuals⁶³. Till now, several authors, producers, and artists still draw inspiration from the movement for their productions.

⁵⁷ Nguyen, Thu T., et al. "Progress and push-back: How the killings of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd impacted public discourse on race and racism on Twitter." *SSM - Population Health* vol. 15 (2021) doi:10.1016/j.ssmph.2021.100922.

⁵⁸ Garth, Hanna. "The 2020 Los Angeles Uprisings: Fighting for Black Lives in the Midst of COVID-19." UCL Press, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1j13zb3.11>.

⁵⁹ Ray, Rashawn. "Black Lives Matter at 10 Years: 8 Ways the Movement Has Been Highly Effective." Brookings Institution, 2022.

⁶⁰ Ibid, P.1

⁶¹ Hunter, Tatum. "22 Companies That Support Black Lives Matter (BLM)." Built In, 2022.

⁶² United Nations. "Third Committee Delegates Highlight Systemic Racism, Killings of People of African Descent, Ongoing Legacies of Colonialism, Slavery, in Rights Debate." Press Release. GA/SHC/4362. 31 October 2022.

⁶³ Glenn, James. "The Black Lives Matter Movement and the Black Public Art Tradition, Part 3." 2021.

Replica Movements: Drawing inspiration from the movement, many groups were formed, aiming to eliminate discrimination. Hitherto passive citizens of several countries were inspired to act against intolerance to the unjust aspects of their societies' everyday culture. The *EndSars* movement in Nigeria and the Coloured Lives Matter movement in South Africa, both fighting against police brutality, were partly inspired by it. So was the *Las Vidas Negras* Important- a movement formed to speak out against police brutality towards young Afro-Latino men and structural racism in Columbia. In Indonesia, activists came up with *All Paupan Lives Matter*, highlighting the decades-long tension between the minority Papuans and the ethnic Javanese majority in the country⁶⁵.

Conclusion

The Black Lives Matter movement has made significant strides in advancing the goals of the civil rights struggle. Through its efforts in raising awareness, mobilizing grassroots activism, promoting police accountability, and embracing intersectionality, the movement has sparked crucial conversations, influenced public opinion, and brought about policy changes. However, the struggle for civil rights remains ongoing, and there are challenges that need to be addressed to achieve lasting systemic change. By building on the foundation laid by the Civil Rights Movement, the BLM movement has created a platform for progress, pushing society closer to the realization of true racial equality and justice.

The BLM movement has had a significant impact on public discourse and policy discussions. It has prompted conversations about race, racism, and inequality in the United States, challenging societal norms and pushing for structural reforms. The movement's advocacy efforts have influenced political campaigns, policy initiatives, and calls for police reform at the local, state, and national levels. In recent years, the BLM movement has gained international recognition and has sparked solidarity protests in various countries. The movement has also expanded its focus to address issues of racial injustice and discrimination globally. The movement has not been without controversy and criticism. Some critics argue that the movement promotes divisiveness or that it overlooks or downplays issues faced by other racial and ethnic groups. However, proponents argue that the movement's focus on addressing systemic racism and police violence is necessary for achieving social justice and equality for all. It is important to note that the BLM movement is decentralized, with numerous local chapters and grassroots organizations working independently under the BLM umbrella. This decentralization allows for a diverse range of strategies and tactics to address racial injustice and advocate for change.

⁶⁴ La Force, Thessaly, Zoë Lescaze, Nancy Hass, and M.H. Miller. "The 25 Most Influential Works of American Protest Art Since World War II." *T: The New York Times Style Magazine*, October 15, 2020.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, P.4

