

## Black Lives Matter

On 25 May 2020, George Floyd was killed by police in the city of Minneapolis in the USA, he was detained on suspicion of using false money. A police officer knelt on his neck for almost nine minutes, causing him to stop breathing and die. His death, sparked mass activism across the world, including the UK, against police brutality and in support of anti-racism. Since then, the police officers involved have been arrested and charged.

This was not the first time an unarmed Black person has been killed in the USA by the police or by other civilians in the last few months. Ahmaud Arbery was shot by two men when he was jogging in a park on 23 February in Georgia. The men have since been arrested for murder. Breonna Taylor was shot when police opened fire in her home in Kentucky on 13 March. An investigation has started. These are just a few recent examples of the reality Black communities experience. Legal action was taken in these cases because people drew attention to these incidents and demanded answers.

This situation has increased support and awareness of the 'Black Lives Matter' movement which began as an outcry to this issue of violence against people of colour. It has encouraged people worldwide to talk about racism and anti-racism. Racism is a common problem across the world, but it affects systems and people differently in different places.

Use this resource to explore the news and encourage young people to reflect on people's stories and experiences. Think about what this moment symbolises and take the time to reflect on our own behaviour and actions. We have started to reflect at the British Red Cross, and we have found that we can do better. We can all do better.

### Learning objectives

Learners will:

- be informed of the current anti-racism movement
- focus on how people might experience racism and how it might feel
- listen to other's experiences
- begin to plan how we can learn more about these issues
- reflect on the actions we can take to be anti-racist

### Definitions activity: Words in the media

Look at the table of definitions related to the current news stories on slide 3 of the PowerPoint presentation. Try and match the definition to the correct words. Use the next slide to check your answers. Did you know what each term meant?

Black Lives Matter movement	was created in 2013 to campaign against violence towards Black people and institutional racism.
Movement	a loosely organised effort of a large group of people to bring about a goal or goals: the Red Cross Red Crescent is also one. We work together for common goals.
Racism	the belief that people of different races have a different value in society and using power and influence against people of a race you value less.
Anti-racism	more than just being "not racist", it means you oppose racism through your beliefs and actions.

Institutional/systematic racism	the racism that is built into the structure of society and different institutions (e.g. schools, police, government).
Unconscious bias	this means that you think positively or negatively about different things without even realising you are doing it.
White privilege	suggests you have some things others do not. Acknowledges that people experience life differently because of their race.
Police brutality	when the police use too much force and violence against people without a good reason.
Activism	a type of campaigning which uses actions and resources to bring about change or accomplish goals.
Ally	in this context, a person who supports a cause, even if you haven't directly experienced it e.g. a White person who supports Black Lives Matter.

### Discussion activity: The meanings behind the words

People protesting this week have used some statements to express how they feel. Read the statements, what do you think they mean?

- > "Black Lives Matter"
- > "Silence is violence."
- > "I can't breathe."
- > "Say his/her name."

Why did they choose to use these sentences – what do they want people to think about?

Some people dislike the statement "Black lives matter" and respond by saying "All lives matter" – What do you think about this?

Some people have explained the statement "Black lives matter" by saying this:

"We never said only Black lives matter. We know all lives matter. We just need you to help with Black lives matter right now"

What are your thoughts on this? Do you understand why they use the statement Black Lives Matter?

### Reflection and debate activity: activism and resilience

Across the world and throughout history persecuted groups have used protesting and other forms of activism to draw attention to their experiences and the need for change. In the UK and USA Black communities have fought against racism for a long time.

- > Rosa Parks, refusing to move so a white passenger on her bus could sit down, started the Montgomery bus boycott (meaning they refused to use the bus), which lasted 381 days.
- > inspired by Rosa Parks, a group of Black people in Bristol staged a bus boycott on a service that refused to interview a Black driver. It lasted 3 months.
- > Freedom Riders, a group of people who purposefully rode buses from state to state where it was illegal for black and white passengers to be on the same bus together, rode for seven months.
- > In the 1980s in Brixton, a predominantly Black community in London, there were many examples of activism, from protests to legal cases, against the unfair treatment of Black people by the police.

- > the Greensboro sit-ins, where Black people sat in places that it was illegal for them to go like restaurants and diners, lasted from February to July 1960.

Protests are just one kind of activism, but they have been used many times in history to draw attention to important issues and to demand social change and equality.

Think about activism and resilience. Many people from a whole range of backgrounds supported these movements. Their support helped to draw attention to Black people's voices and experiences. Look at the statements below. How far do you agree (10 is a lot, and 1 is not at all) with these statements? Why? Discuss with others who may have different ideas than you.

- > Supporting people when they have problems is a kind act
- > Listening to people is an excellent way to support them
- > Listening to others helps you to understand them
- > Listening to others is a kind thing to do
- > Helping people fix problems makes the community stronger
- > Helping people fix problems makes the community a nicer place to live
- > Communities should work together
- > Working together and supporting each other helps people cope with challenges

### **Reflection activity: Online activism**

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Supporters have used lots of methods to show their support for the movement. Many people used social media as a tool to show their support. On Tuesday 2 June many people took part in "Blackout Tuesday". It was initially started by Black people working in creative industries like music and film. Its purpose was to ask people to disconnect from social media and spend this time to educate themselves on the Black Lives Matter and anti-racism movements.

Why is it important to take time to think and reflect?

Do you think social media is a distraction from social causes or a good tool to promote them? Why? Discuss with your friends and classmates.

For other examples of how you can use social media as a tool for activism look at the [using social media for good resource](#).

Have you heard of any other ways people have used social media to draw helpful attention to this cause or share resources?

### **Listening activity: Black voices**

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Listening to other people's stories is an important way to build empathy and understanding. The current movement has given many people the courage and determination to speak out about their experiences outside of the US. Here are some examples of Black people you may know, and what they have said about their experiences.

#### **Clara Amfo**

Listen to [this speech by the BBC radio presenter Clara Amfo](#). Reflect and discuss:

- > how does she feel?
- > what does she say about racism and "anti-blackness"?
- > why does she say "You want our culture, but you don't want us"?

- > can you understand why she said these things?

### **Leigh-Anne Pinnock**

Leigh-Anne Pinnock from the girl band 'Little Mix' has also spoken out about her experiences. Read some of the things she said, how do you think she felt when she said these things?

"There comes the point in every Black human's life when you realise racism does not exclude you,"

"My reality is feeling anxious before fan events and signings because I always feel like I'm the least favoured."

"My reality is constantly feeling like I have to work ten times harder and longer to make my case in the group because my talent alone isn't enough."

"My reality was feeling lonely while touring to predominately white countries where I sing to fans who don't see me, don't hear me, don't cheer me on."

"My reality is, all the times I have felt invisible within my group, I am fully aware my experience would have been even harder to deal with had I been dark skinned."

Reflect and discuss:

- > how do you think she feels?
- > think about how racism affect people's wellbeing.
- > have you ever felt this way, can you understand how she feels?

### **John Boyega**

Think about these words from the actor John Boyega, who spoke at a protest in London.

"Black lives have always mattered, we have always been important, we have always meant something, and we have always succeeded, regardless." "And now is the time, and I ain't waiting."

- > how do you think he feels?
- > how does "and we have always succeeded, regardless" link to ideas of resilience?

When he shared his worries that he "might not have a career after this" many directors came out to support John, saying they would work with him.

- > how do you think it feels to be supported by your community?
- > what can you do to support others in your community?

### **Video activity: Understanding privilege**

Watch [this video about privilege](#) and listen to the woman's story.

- > what is the point of the story?
- > how did the woman at the shop treat the speaker and her sister in law differently?
- > why do you think she treated them differently?

- > imagine you were her daughter that she talks about. If this happened to your mum, how would you feel?
- > has this ever happened to you? How did it feel? If this is too painful you to share, you can choose not to.
- > if you saw someone being treated like this, would you say something? Why?

### **Reflection activity: How can we do better?**

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One of the things we can do to better understand people and their experiences is listening to their stories. There is a long history and many human beings behind this news story. It is everyone's responsibility to do more to learn this history and listen to these stories. Reflect on your own life and your own community. Think about your actions and your assumptions. Talk to your friends and family about them.

Let's think about what we can do in our lives to be kinder and more humane. Here are some ideas for us to start:

- > Listen to Black voices
- > Educate ourselves
- > Reflect on privilege and discrimination
- > Think about the ways we can all support anti-racism
- > Be kinder to everyone
- > Be supportive and help build resilient communities who work together to improve life for everyone