

## Why do some of us say that our faith calls us to affirm that Black Lives Matter?

*“Two hundred fifty years of slavery.  
Ninety years of Jim Crow.  
Sixty years of separate but equal.  
Thirty-five years of racist housing policy.  
Until we reckon with our compounding moral debts, America will never be whole.”  
– Ta Nehisi Coates*

*“If there is a fundamental challenge... it is simply to change our lurking suspicion that some lives matter less than other lives.”  
– Father Gregory Boyle*

*“If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time,  
but if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine,  
then let us work together.” – Lila Watson*

"I feel it is important to proclaim that Black Lives Matter because I work with a diverse set of teenagers, many of whom experience personal and institutional racism. One boy talked about the day his dad was stopped by a police officer and forced to the ground at gunpoint for making eye contact. No young person should grow up with the threat of being mistreated by those who are supposed to serve and protect." - *Deb O.*

“My brother is a police officer. My heart aches for him and everyone especially in poor inner cities because the divisions of color and economics have caused suspicion and anger for all people. When I say ‘Black Lives Matter’ I want him and everyone to know that there is a way to justice for all, for tension to ease, for equality across all lines of bias. ‘Be the change’ I want to say, treat every single person as you would want to be treated, educate yourself about the institutional racism that has been allowed to go unchecked...” – *Diane E.*

“When our daughter listens to the news with us, there are stories nearly every day that illustrate that people with brown or black skin have less worth in our society. She deserves to hear a strong message to counteract what she hears in the news, and to know that there are people working for more justice in the world.” - *Cara M.*

“My faith calls me to say ‘Black Lives Matter’ because I have watched a lifetime of brutality against black bodies. I watched fire hoses and dogs turned on black children in the 1960s, and had the chance to see the memorial at the church in Birmingham where four little girls died from a bomb blast. I watched in horror as New Orleans flooded and communities of black people and poor people were destroyed. My heart broke for the families of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, Sandra Bland and others- and for the parishioners of Mother Emmanuel in Charleston. I say ‘Black Lives Matter’ in solidarity with professional colleagues and friends who live with the legacy and day to day reality that, for hundreds of years in our society, black lives have not mattered.” – Gail F.

“As a Buddhist practitioner and teacher, Black Lives Matter to me. Buddhist teachings are grounded in a fundamental understanding of interdependence and a deep commitment to reducing suffering in the world. For many of us, we are just now learning about systemic racism, our own hidden biases, and the impact of white privilege. We are just now opening our eyes to the extent of violence and injustice being perpetrated on our brothers and sisters of color, largely unnoticed, for so many years, and it is horrifying. Our hearts and our minds call us to stand up and acknowledge that eradicating the causes of this suffering is our collective responsibility. We are all ‘us’; there is no ‘them’.” – *Laura H.*

“To me, one reason it is important to say ‘Black Lives Matter’ is to draw attention to and rectify the disproportionate number of black Americans whose lives are derailed by mass incarceration or ended in police shootings. There are many excellent police departments in our nation, but there are others where there is a clear need for anti-bias training and accountability. In 2015, black men represented just 6% of the U.S. population but they made up nearly 40% of those who were killed unarmed. About a quarter of those killed by police- regardless of ethnicity- displayed signs of mental illness.

How many deaths can we prevent by putting more money into training police instead of funding the increased militarization of police departments? How many police officers can be saved from the emotional and spiritual ramifications of having killed an unarmed or mentally ill person while in the line of duty?

As we enter our Meeting House each week, a banner reminds some of us of a long haul commitment to the work of racial justice. It shows our children and their parents who are black that their church supports them. This banner also gives us an entry point to conversations with all of our children and youth about identity, about systems that privilege some at the expense of others, the ways that bias affects us all, and how to live out of our first UU principle—affirming and promoting the dignity of *all* people. It reminds me of my own unearned privileges that our society grants me as a white person, and to use some of those privileges and my position of power to engage in justice making.

On a personal note, my extended family includes black people, including my cousin’s sons who are close in age to my children. She shouldn’t have to worry about their safety in our country any more than I do for my kids.” --*Rev. Lee B.* (statistics from *Boston Globe*, 1/7/16)