Black Lives Matter: From Hashtag to Movement

Black Lives Matter is an activist movement which began as a hashtag (#BlackLivesMatter) when George Zimmerman was acquitted in the shooting death of Trayvon Martin, an unarmed African American teenager killed in Florida in July 2013.

The Black Lives Matter movement became more widely acknowledged and popularized after two high-profile deaths of unarmed African-American men (Eric Garner in Staten Island, NY and Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO) in 2014 and in which police officers involved in their deaths were not indicted. Due to the deaths of other unarmed African Americans, ongoing local and national protests and other actions have brought awareness of the issues and the movement to the general public.

Most recently, during the summer of 2016, the Black Lives Matter movement continued to grow as the nation watched two more high-profile killings of unarmed African-American men. First, on July 15, Alton Sterling was shot several times at point blank range while pinned to the ground by two white Baton Rouge Police Department officers in Baton Rouge, LA. Then, on July 6, Philando Castile was fatally shot by a [St. Anthony, Minnesota](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Anthony,_Minnesota) police officer, after being pulled over in his car. On July 7, a Black Lives Matter protest was held in Dallas, Texas and at the end of what had been a peaceful protest, a man opened fire on the crowd and killed 5 police officers, wounded 7 others, and injured 2 civilians as well.

While Black Lives Matter began as a hashtag on Twitter and other social media, it has since evolved into a “movement.” Thousands of Black Lives Matter demonstrations have been held worldwide. In 2015, four Black Lives activists released “Campaign Zero,” which includes ten policy solutions developed in conjunction with activists, protestors and researchers across the country, integrating community demands, input from research organizations and the President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing.