

My Thoughts on the Black Lives Matter Movement

On August 28th, 1963, Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) delivered *I Have a Dream*, one of the most iconic speeches in American history. The speech itself was a call to action, a call for equality and freedom. King noted that African Americans were still “not free” and that the life of blacks was still “sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination.” Even before this speech, many Civil Rights activists in the 1940s and 1950s were already fighting for racial segregation and discrimination to end. However, over half a century later, we are still fighting for equal rights for African Americans.

Although founded in 2013, the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement has recently sparked in the media caused by the innocent death of George Floyd and many others, such as Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor. In fact, the BLM movement was started in response to such deaths. The question “Do Black Lives Matter or All Lives Matter?” has been causing many debates and conversations around America. Many All Lives Matter supporters believe that America is a post-racial society, saying that the BLM movement isn’t needed. But why would there be a movement in the first place if America has truly reached a post-racial society?

If someone were to have a heart attack in the same restaurant at the same time you broke your arm, they would get more medical attention. It’s not that your pain wasn’t pain, it’s that their suffering was much worse, and more attention was needed. This is the same logic as BLM. The Black Lives Matter movement wasn’t made to diminish any other race, but to raise awareness to what is more severe. For the longest time, African Americans have been wrongfully discriminated against, arrested, and murdered. The media has played a prominent role in spreading information quickly to a large group of people. Under the hashtag entitled #BlackLivesMatter, many murders

and updates of cases can be found on social media platforms such as Instagram or Twitter. Phrases such as “All Cops are Bastards” (ACAB) and “Defund the Police” are common in posts spreading knowledge to the public. This does not mean that all cops are bad, as the word “bastards” is defined as “an unpleasant or despicable person” while “bad” is defined as “of poor quality or a low standard.” Police are simply unpleasant or despicable, not a low standard or of poor quality. Police have power that they shouldn’t have, the power to arrest and/or murder an African American just because “they fit the criteria.” The stereotype for African Americans, being drug dealers or gang people, is unacceptable. Many have responded negatively to the expression ACAB, saying that not all cops are bad and only a small percentage are violent. But with that being said, can’t we use their logic against them saying that “they fit the criteria” of police brutality?

Generation Z (Gen Z) has played a principal role in spreading awareness of the cause. As a part of Gen Z, I can say that our generation is being more mature than many of our older generations. As a 13-year-old, I am still a minor. I am not able to vote, drive, nor get a job. Even though I cannot do many things, I still have a voice. I can understand the disadvantages of African Americans. The fact that they have been segregated in schools and public areas. The fact that they have been denied the right to vote. The fact that they are judged the way they are based on their skin color, something they don’t control. The fact that they need to educate themselves and their children on how to act when stopped by a police officer. It upsets me knowing that some children have to be scared of seeing police officers. When I was in elementary school, I was taught that police officers were supposed to protect you. Fast forward several years, it saddens me to see all the police brutality not being acknowledged in the world currently.

The BLM movement was made due to ignored racism toward African Americans. Racism doesn't even have to be severe to be racist, it can be happening practically anywhere. I go to a school called Moody Middle school (Moody), which is in a community where the majority of zoned kids are African Americans. The school runs a program called International Baccalaureate (IB) which allows students zoned to other schools to attend the program at Moody. Our school is generally separated into two parts with the IB students and the Non-IB students. I've noticed that most of the racism happening in the school is towards Non-IBs, which are stereotypically African American. It's not just the students being racist, as I've heard a few teachers say things like "I enjoy my IB students better" or "Non-Ib's are usually the ones causing trouble." In addition, as an IB student, I've been able to get away with not having a hallway pass with me in the hallways many times, as a Non-IB wasn't. When you hear about a fight that might have happened in the school, most people will immediately jump to the thought that it was a Non-IB. In school, we learn that we shouldn't be racist, but how can we not be racist if the community we live in is based on stereotypes and discrimination? Especially in schools, these stereotypes should not exist no matter the circumstances.

In my opinion, the injustice fueling the BLM movement has gone on for way too long. Why, after 57 years, are we still fighting for that same justice and equality for African Americans as MLK and other activists? Why are we still in the same position today, calling for the end of racism? Even after so many years, we still have so much to do to improve the lives of African-Americans.