

# *THE Privileged* *AND THE Oppressed*

Progressives' latest narrative, revealed through Black Lives Matter

*About the author:* Anne Sorock is the president of The Frontier Lab, where she is a leading innovator on the application of private-sector market research methodologies to the marketplace of ideas. She is a leading expert in organizing the relationships Americans hold with political and cultural ideas using principles of behavioral science and has specialized in the understanding of mass movement appeal and motivating factors. She received her MBA in market research from Cornell University's Johnson School of Business and her BA from the Johns Hopkins University. She lives with her husband and children outside Chicago.

*About The Frontier Lab:* The Frontier Lab is a 501c3 nonprofit organization that studies how Americans relate to cultural and ideological themes. The Frontier Lab, based in Chicago, Illinois, using cutting-edge market-research approaches to discern the driving values and emotions that underlie the choices they make in the marketplace of ideas. Focusing on applying the best private-sector methodologies to the understanding of what makes Americans tick, the Lab mixes art and science to provide insights and education to the public. [www.thefrontierlab.org](http://www.thefrontierlab.org).

*Published July 2016*



*There will always be a segment of white America that is overtly, irredeemably racist. Forget about them. They're not worth your time.*

*There's a much larger segment, some of them are gathered right here. A segment of white America that considers itself enlightened. They outwardly reject the symbols of white supremacy, yet they aggressively protect their white privilege.*

*Deep in their heart, they despise your blackness more than anything else; forget about those folks, too.*

*There's a sliver, a sliver of white America that hates white supremacy and that hates capitalism. These are the folks that you need to organize with.*

*You've got to organize with class-conscious workers....You've got to organize with the undocumented. You've got to organize with the radical trans people....You've got to build a poor people's movement, a colonized people's movement.*

*We've got to build a grassroots, antiracist movement to defeat capitalism altogether and it's not going to happen at the ballot box. There can be no human system under capitalism. Capitalism is an anti-human system.*

*Professor Russell Rickford  
Cornell University  
Black Lives Matter Protest  
July 8, 2016*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*OCCUPY WALL STREET AND ITS DETRITUS* may have faded from the nation's public parks, but experienced far-left organizers are ecstatic over the influence of a new movement, Black Lives Matter (BLM). Founded in 2013 around the death of Floridian Trayvon Martin, BLM has within its grasp the radical revolutionary goals the Bill Ayers activists of old, and more recent new class of far-left operatives, had before now been unable to attain. The Frontier Lab's in-depth research, gained through unanticipated access to organizers, activists, and allies of BLM, deconstructs the movement's appeal and what the implications for marketers of freedom.

This report details our findings, including these *TOP 10 INSIGHTS*:

- Black Lives Matter's core message is built upon, depends upon, and has as its ultimate goal, the larger retelling of the American story as one of oppression and racism.
- The police, as representatives of the state, must be framed as exemplifying the Black Lives Matter framing by being themselves oppressive and racist.
- Black Lives Matter frames their cause as one against a systemic problem and necessarily utterly rejects the "one bad apple" counterargument
- BLM relies upon the elevation and equating of other underprivileged groups to a status "just as oppressed" as Black America in order to build a narrative of an America divided into the "Oppressed and the Privileged." For this reason causes such as undocumented workers, LGBTQ, and women's reproductive rights, are recruited and welcomed into the "Allies" category of supporters (see below).
- Supporters of BLM, for the most part, have moved on from desiring to silence dissent through amending free-speech laws; instead, Black Lives Matter (1) pressures authorities to do it for them, (2) creates an atmosphere of intimidation through threats of violence and shows of force, and (3) incorporates a culture of self-censorship in which those with "privilege" have a lesser voice than the oppressed.
- While social-media and cameras are utilized uniquely and effectively to communicate with and recruit new supporters, it is the framework of organizing learned from past attempts and overarching magna-narrative that in reality gives Black Lives Matter its edge.

- There are three distinct segments of supporters of the Black Lives Matter movement, each with their own emotional pathways to a deeply felt connection: Activists, Allies, and Operatives. These mental maps explain current reasons for support as well as provide strategic pathways for weakening that same support.
- Common across all segments is the emotion of fear of being ostracized from the left's cultural community.
- The specificity of the cause - injustice toward the Black community - is both central to its appeal and also a window into an Achilles-heel weakness of the movement's core positioning.
- The movement is at a critical juncture in its lifecycle, with maximum cultural influence but having failed to transition this influence into policy impact.

*THE RESULT:* we have uncovered key insights marketers of freedom need to understand in order to predict and plan for how their ideas will compete with an alternative framing of the American story. As young people continue to gravitate toward mass-movement, anti-freedom principles, it is imperative to de-market the appeal of these dangerous ideologies that threaten the future of America.

*On non-lethal uses of force, blacks and Hispanics are more than fifty percent more likely to experience some form of force in interactions with police. Adding controls that account for important context and civilian behavior reduces, but cannot fully explain, these disparities. On the most **EXTREME USE OF FORCE** – officer-involved shootings – **WE FIND NO RACIAL DIFFERENCES** in either the raw data or when contextual factors are taken into account. We argue that the patterns in the data are consistent with a model in which police officers are utility maximizers, a fraction of which have a preference for discrimination, who incur relatively high expected costs of officer-involved shootings.*

*Professor Roland Fryer, Jr.  
Harvard University*

*“An Empirical Analysis of Racial Differences in Police Use of Force”*

## INTRODUCTION

Despite labeling itself as a movement centered around one community in America, Black Lives Matter has succeeded in capturing the broader nation's attention. Young Americans, on campuses and in urban areas, are particularly drawn to its focus on righting injustice, taking action in the streets, and finally righting wrongs of the past.

And yet, as The Frontier Lab discovered through hour-long market-research interviews and questionnaire responses from nearly fifty activists and organizers with the movement, there are even deeper needs fulfilled for young Americans by connecting to the movement. Mapping these deeper needs – we refer to them as “Values” – allows us not only to understand why Black Lives Matter is succeeding in a more sustained and broader support base, but also the state of mind of a swath of young Americans.

We found that the upper-level organizers of the movement related to the movement for far different reasons than rank-and-file activists. Perhaps even more surprising, over the course of our interviews we found certain activists—those who were not Black—referring to themselves using the term “Allies” of the movement, and describing the unique (yet restricted) role they played, with accompanying unique motivations for their support.

As we proceeded with our research, operatives responsible for decision-making and strategic-planning within the movement shared with us their history with previous organizing, what strategic plans and concerns they held for Black Lives Matter as a potent cultural force, and their own goals, personal and political, they hoped could be realized through Black Lives Matter.

## THE LEFT'S MOMENT IS NOW

Black Lives Matter as a movement represents the hopes and dreams of leftist organizers who shared with us that, until now, they had never felt such a sense of hope and excitement that their goal – as one operative put it, “total social upheaval,” and



“systemic change” – could be realized in their lifetime. From veteran agitators like the Weather Underground’s Bill Ayers to a new crop of social-media-wielding female and LGBTQ leaders, Black Lives Matter is encapsulating the hopes and dreams of multiple generations of progressives in a way, they say, no movement has before.

The three female founders of the movement have made it clear, and the message has seeded itself as far down the chain as the operatives we spoke with, that Black Lives Matter is the vessel through which all progressive causes can flow. LGBTQ, illegal immigration, abortion, and countless other causes are simmering just beneath the public face of the focus on police violence. Even police violence flows neatly, according to Black Lives Matter, into economic violence – wage issues, workers rights... The panoply of leftist groups come together under this banner.

### *THE NEW HAVES AND HAVE-NOTS*

Perhaps unsurprising for all the emotion and promise the movement has ignited in the minds of organizers and everyday activists, we also see a blueprint for reviving the progressive philosophy’s worldview through new language and themes. Instead of the “haves and the have-nots,” we see deployed through Black Lives Matter the construct of the “privileged & the prejudiced vs. the oppressed.” This narrative has taken such a hold of young Americans involved with Black Lives Matter that many willingly and happily self-censor and self-segregate their speech according to their level of privilege. Instead of imposing restrictions on free speech, we see them welcomed by the very people whom they affect. For the progressives of Black Lives Matter, privilege serves as the ultimate divider, the reason that America has never been (and will never be), a unified entity.

---

<sup>1</sup> GenForward Survey, July 2016, Black Youth Project at the University of Chicago <http://genforwardsurvey.com>

## *YOUNG AMERICANS READY TO ACTIVATE*

Young Americans across the country are equally caught up in the Black Lives Matter fervor, if for different reasons than the organizers and operatives who are keen to bring them in. A nationally representative survey conducted in June 2016 nationally with 1,965 young adults ages 18 - 30 revealed that 51 percent of young adults support the Black Lives Matter movement, compared to 32 percent who said they oppose it. This freshman college class is more likely to participate in mass movement protest action than any of the classes of the past fifty years . And, as the research will show, they are emotionally vulnerable to the positive messages of community, excitement, justice, and purpose that Black Lives Matter provides, while also susceptible to the threat of exclusion from the left's cultural community.

In contrast with The Frontier Lab's 2015 "Freedom Buzz" study documenting how young Americans relate to freedom of speech, where we discovered that many viewed free speech as a way to enjoy a life free from judgment of their peers, the Black Lives Matter activists proactively sought to demonstrate their alliance with the culturally acceptable mores of the progressive left. If the Solace-Seekers segment of the Freedom Buzz report sought to live their lives without the stress of being asked to conform, the Black Lives Matter adherents jumped straight to conformity without avoidance.

## *BLACK LIVES MATTER VS. RULE OF LAW*

Black Lives Matter presents an alternative view of the American story, rooted in Marxism and one that thrives on encouraging division. Many have criticized its avoidance of facts about bias in policing - facts that would directly counter the Black Lives Matter narrative. Nevertheless it has captured the nation's attention through its use of social-media and cameras but also by recruiting the young Americans who will fill the streets with their presence and engage the public's interest with their fervor.

If Black Lives Matter succeeds, it will have reengineered the minds of America to view our system, our history, and our future, through the lens of division and hate. In its dishonest weakening of public trust in the police officer, the representative of law and order and equality before the law, Black Lives Matter weakens the very foundations of our country.

To counter this advance, marketers of freedom must understand why they are losing mindshare to the left's Black Lives Matter ideology if they are to effectively counter their messages and rebuild demand for our principles.

---

<sup>2</sup> "Today's Freshman Class Is the Most Likely to Protest in Half a Century," The Chronicle of High Education, February 2016. <http://chronicle.com/article/Today-s-Freshman-Class-Is/235273>

<sup>3</sup> "FreedomBuzz," August 2015, The Frontier Lab [www.thefrontierlab.org](http://www.thefrontierlab.org)

## METHODOLOGY

While many have struggled to make sense of the growing success of anti-freedom, anti-free speech fervor on campuses and amongst the communities of young Americans, The Frontier Lab's uniquely personal, hands-on market research provides actionable insights derived from mapping the underlying emotions and values that explain the appeal of Black Lives Matter.

*OUR RESEARCH SOUGHT TO ANSWER:* why does Black Lives Matter appeal to some young Americans, and what can this tell us about 1) the best strategy for promoting freedom to the same young Americans, and 2) the mechanics of implementing such a strategy?

We began our process by seeking out high-intensity supporters of Black Lives Matter through two channels: an online survey targeting young Americans aged 18-34 about their involvement with, and enthusiasm for, the Black Lives Matter movement. We were seeking those with high-intensity support for Black Lives Matter and who had been involved with the organization either as an organizer or activist – attended an event, been to a meeting, joined a Facebook support group, etc. We used this survey instrument to identify and then contact 47 strong supporters of Black Lives Matter whom we probed at-length about the meaningful underlying reasons for attachment in 30- to 60-minute telephone interviews and written questionnaires. The interviews employ the “Laddering” in-depth interview market-research methodology. We also advertised a separate screener survey on the Facebook pages of Black Lives Matter and the Black Youth Project (a separate but affiliated organization) to recruit more interviewees.

The resulting interviews were captured in separate flowcharts that described each individual's responses to the general question, “why do you support Black Lives Matter?” Each individual was classified as an “Activist,” “Ally,” or “Operative.”

- **ACTIVISTS:** the rank-and-file participants in Black Lives Matter protest action and meetings, but who were not involved in high-level planning or strategy

- **OPERATIVES:** instrumental in the planning and organization of the movement.
- **ALLIES:** also rank-and-file activists who are not Black, they proactively referred to themselves using this term

The distinction between “activist” and “ally” came as a result of what the Black Lives Matter enthusiasts themselves told us: if you were not Black, you held a different status within the organization, a term they used to describe themselves routinely: “Ally.” This difference was reflected in the responses we captured during our interviews: the Activists and Allies held some overlapping motivations for their participation in and support for the movement, but contained several unique features that warranted separating into two different segments. The individual responses were consolidated into three consolidated charts, or “Hierarchical Value Maps,” that capture what aspects of Black Lives Matter each segment had in common. The motivating Values of the three Black Lives Matter segments:

1. Activists: empowerment, hope, community, excitement
2. Allies: guilt, security, solidarity, fear
3. Operatives: pride, confidence, excitement, purpose

The consolidated mental maps of each segment provide the hierarchies of affiliations that, taken together, explain each segment’s admiration for the Black Lives Matter movement.

## PART 1: UNDERSTANDING THE APPEAL OF BLACK LIVES MATTER

### MEET THE SEGMENTS

- ACTIVISTS
- ALLIES
- OPERATIVES

### THE *BLM* MESSAGE

### THE *BLM* STRATEGY

*“For me it’s about not having to worry about me or my boys – not having to think about systemic racism.”*

*Laura, “Activist”*

*“This movement is not about appeasing white people, it’s what makes it different – it’s not dependent on white people’s approval. In the past we didn’t have enough power. I’m proud to be a part of this time; to witness it, and to say I was on the right side.”*

*Reena, “Ally”*

*“The reason I’m an activist is because I want to make things better for myself primarily. The only way for my life to be better is to fight all forms of oppression.”*

*Kelly, “Operative”*

## MEET THE ACTIVISTS

Black Lives Matter *Activists* - distinct from the “Allies” segment in that they are Black themselves - view their participation in the movement as momentous and a source of pride as they live up to their responsibility to bring justice to Black America. Through their involvement, they have now entered into the history of what they view as the unresolved struggle for Black Americans to achieve equal rights in the United States

These are heady emotions; their friends and family will positively benefit, and they feel connected to the community in deeper ways through their protest and organizing action. They reported that it was meaningful to them that they were surrounded by fellow Black activists - as they stood up for themselves, without delegating to others the righting of their situation, they felt they could even more effectively take on the system.

Aspects of the Black Lives Matter movement, which they view as peculiar to BLM and different from what characterized previous attempts to achieve justice for Black Americans, give Activists hope that this time their strategy will succeed in ways it has not in the past

First, the integration of social media into the movement’s communication means that they are able to wean off a reliance on mainstream media and those who wield power over the dissemination of information. Because they perceive the media to be part of the problem in getting their message out (for example, they believe the media does not adequately provide coverage of the injustices suffered by the Black community), circumventing the media provides them with greater control over their message and reach - a sense of empowerment that previous generations of activists did not have

Second, they cited the fact the Black Lives Matter is populated more exclusively by Black participants as both showing that Black Americans are taking the responsibility for fighting for equal rights on their own shoulders, rather than relying on others to do this for them. That America’s demographics are changing toward more minority



representation only further reinforces the Activists' view that this is the time to achieve lasting change.

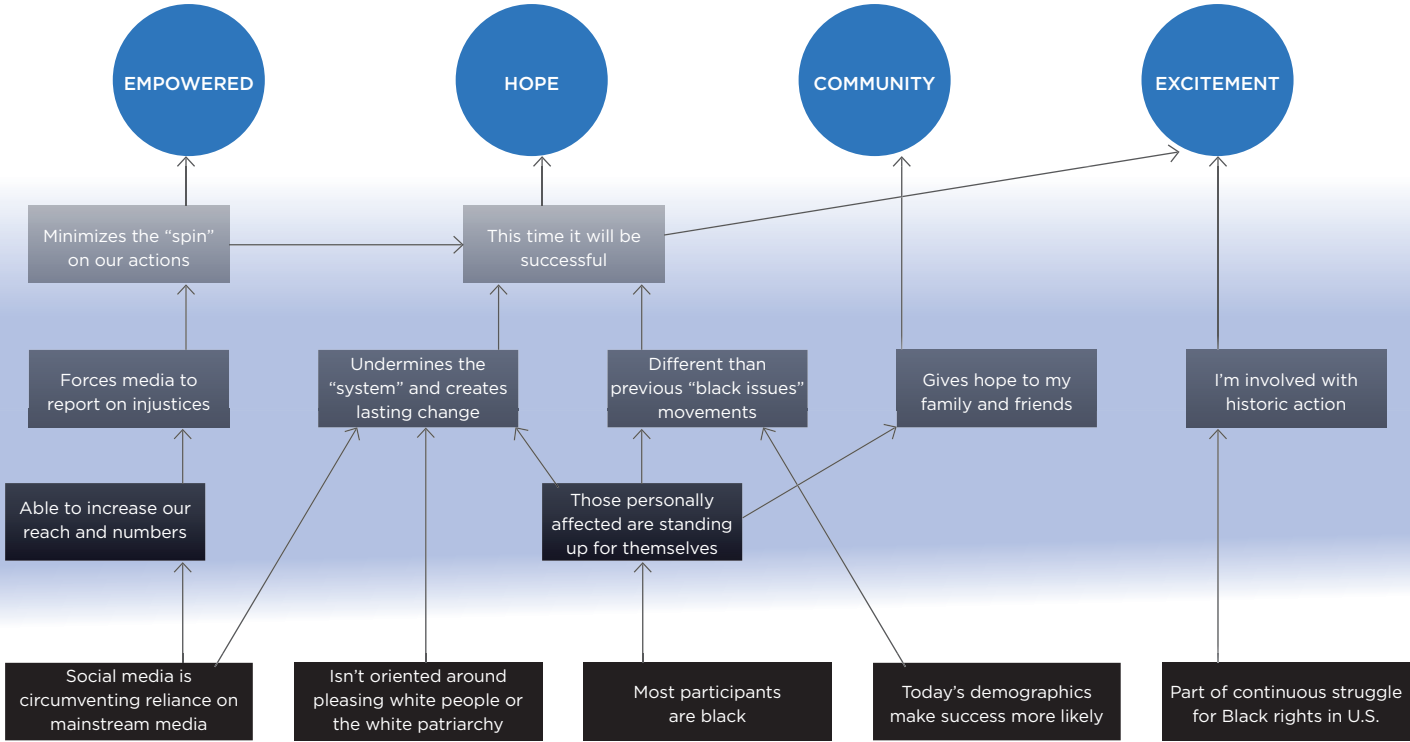
Third, because the focus of the movement is systemic change rather than allying with the current "white patriarchy" to make changes (such as small legislative victories), activists viewed this as a more lasting and promising approach, which together with the greater racial homogeneity of the movement, provided them ultimately with a sense of hope that "this time it will be successful."

Seemingly contradictory to their sense of hope and excitement about the future was Activists' struggle to answer what their exact goals were for the Black Lives Matter movement. There was little uniformity in the vague answers provided - "justice," "equality," and "reparations," characterized the types of specific hopes they had.

READ A "HIERARCHICAL VALUE MAP" FROM BOTTOM TO TOP;

- "ATTRIBUTES" DESCRIBE INITIAL REASONS FOR SUPPORTING BLACK LIVES MATTER.
- "CONSEQUENCES" DESCRIBE WHY THESE ATTRIBUTES ARE IMPORTANT.
- "VALUES" DESCRIBE THE UNDERLYING VALUES IDENTIFIED AS DRIVING THE PARTICULAR THOUGHT PROCESS.

\*\*EQUALLY IMPORTANT TO IDENTIFYING UNDERLYING VALUES ARE THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN EACH ELEMENT OF THE CHART, WHICH PROVIDE STRATEGIC DIRECTION FOR SELLING OR WEAKENING THE PRODUCT/IDEA.



PROTOTYPE  
*ACTIVIST*



*Female, Black, College Student / Friend/Family Got Her Involved / Supported Bernie Sanders / From Mid-Atlantic / Doesn't Trust Cnn, Fox / Optimistic That She Can Affect Political Environment*

VALUES: EMPOWERMENT, HOPE,  
COMMUNITY, AND EXCITEMENT

“Not having to worry about me or my boys - not having to think about systemic racism - that's what I'm hopeful for.”

## MEET THE ALLIES

The Black Lives Matter *Allies* segment hopes to make amends for a sense of privilege and accompanying guilt through their involvement with Black Lives Matter. Allies told us one of most fulfilling aspects of their connection to Black Lives Matter was that it afforded them the opportunity to demonstrate to their peers that they were actively pursuing good. It is important that they demonstrate their solidarity with Black protesters and in doing so make amends for their culpability as unfairly privileged members of society.

In this way their participation both satisfies a moral obligation to level the playing field, due to their non-Black privilege, while also providing a tangible demonstration of loyalty to the community. This outward show of solidarity cements their connection to a group that is perceived as positive within their community and further reinforces their image of having taken responsibility for the unfair advantage of “privilege.” In this sense, fear was a driving emotion for many Allies who desperately desire to demonstrate in no uncertain terms their support for Black Lives Matter and their community of peers.

“AT THE PROTEST FOR THE RELEASE OF LAQUAN MCDONALD, THERE WAS A LOT OF CONFUSION BECAUSE ORGANIZERS WANTED ONLY BLACK PEOPLE. IT ENDED UP BEING CRACKED DOWN ON - AND THE DEBATE HADN'T REALLY BEEN RESOLVED. THEY WERE SAYING TO US, “WE NEED HELP!!” BUT WE WERE LIKE, “WAIT, ARE WE ALLOWED TO COME?” --ALLY

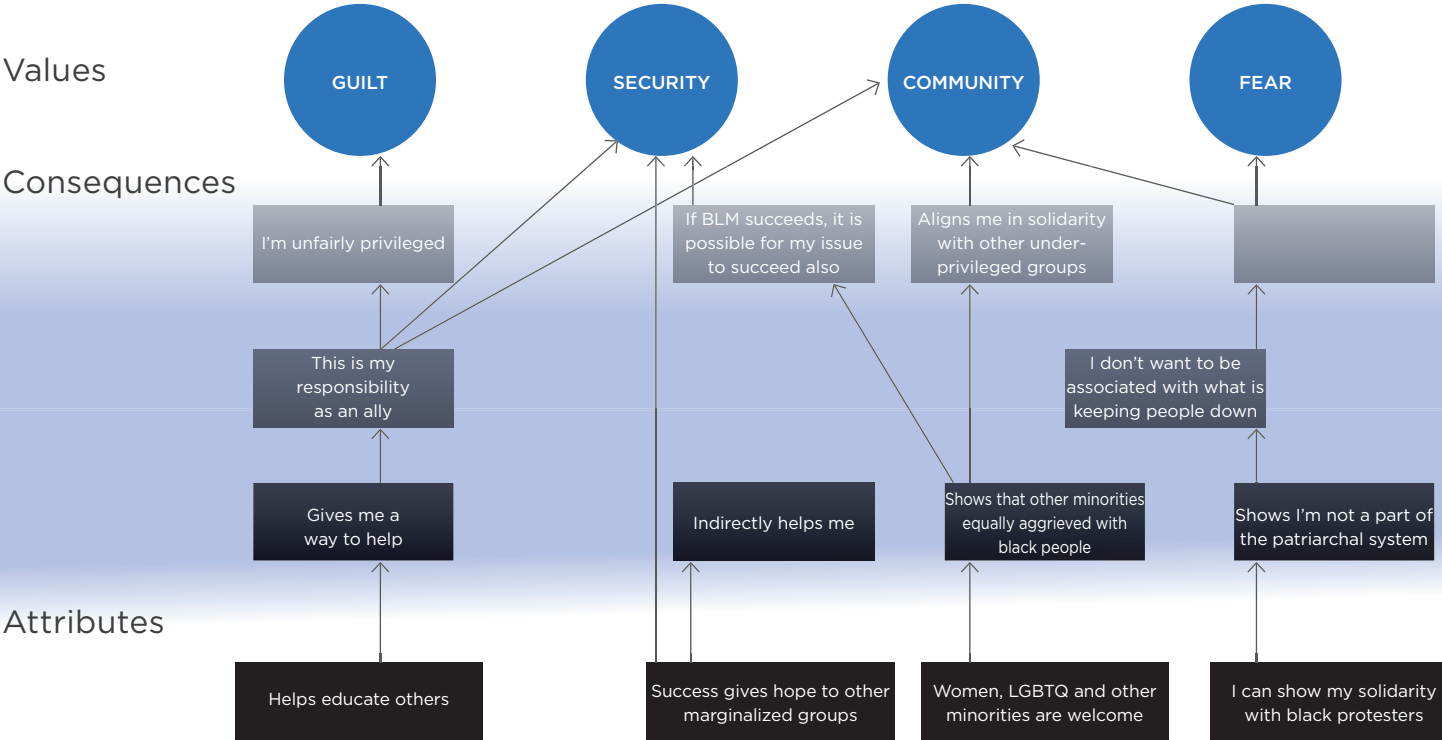
We found that many of the Allies who are not Black, but are a member of another

“I'M LEARNING A LOT OF EMPATHY; I NEED TO KNOW MY PLACE AND NOT OVERSTEP MY BOUNDARIES. WITH BLACK LIVES MATTER, I KNOW I HAVE TO TAKE A STEP BACK BECAUSE I'M NOT BLACK.” - ALLY

minority group, referred to themselves as a “person of color” - and see their marginalized status as being helped through the success of Black Lives Matter. For them, it is important that Black Lives Matter become a movement not just of Black activists but for all “people of color,” a strategy articulated by those (discussed later) Operatives who are planning the future trajectory of the Black Lives Matter and left operations. To the Allies “of color,” their involvement with the movement and observing its success ultimately, then, creates a sense of security about their own status.

In a similar way, Allies who belong to non-race-based minority groups such as members of the LGBTQ community or women, welcomed the way the Black Lives Matter movement is both populated by, and welcoming to, myriad other minority causes. This equating of all minority groups as similarly situated “less privileged,” or “have-nots,” reinforced their membership in a community that would see to their needs and better position their futures.

“ALLY” MENTAL MAP



PROTOTYPE

*ALLY*



*Female, “Person Of Color” / Aware Of Privilege Level / Post-Graduate Students / Follows International News / Not Patriotic / Involved With Other Causes / Feels Responsibility To Maintain Freedom*

VALUES: GUILT, SECURITY,  
COMMUNITY, FEAR

“This movement is not about appeasing white people....In the past we didn’t have enough power. I’m proud to be a part of this time; to witness it, and to say I was on the right side.”

## MEET THE OPERATIVES

Those who were involved in the planning and strategizing for Black Lives Matter, the *Operatives*, were motivated by four core emotions, “Pride, “ Confidence,” “Excitement,” and “Purpose.” These driving values help place the Black Lives Movement within the greater context of left-wing organizing, for the Operatives overwhelmingly saw this particular movement as rippling out through diverse and seemingly unconnected issues across the progressive mass-movement spectrum. Nearly all of the Operatives we studied had been involved with prior leftist organizing, but remarked that this was the first time they felt the momentum provided through tangible victories that would propel them to a more lasting outcome.

To begin with, Operatives were reassured by their participation in a mass-movement action that is part of a long line of anti-racist struggles over the course of America’s history. By understanding Black Lives Matter in this context, Operatives felt a sense of being “on the right side of history,” which in turn provides a sense of pride in their having chosen correctly.

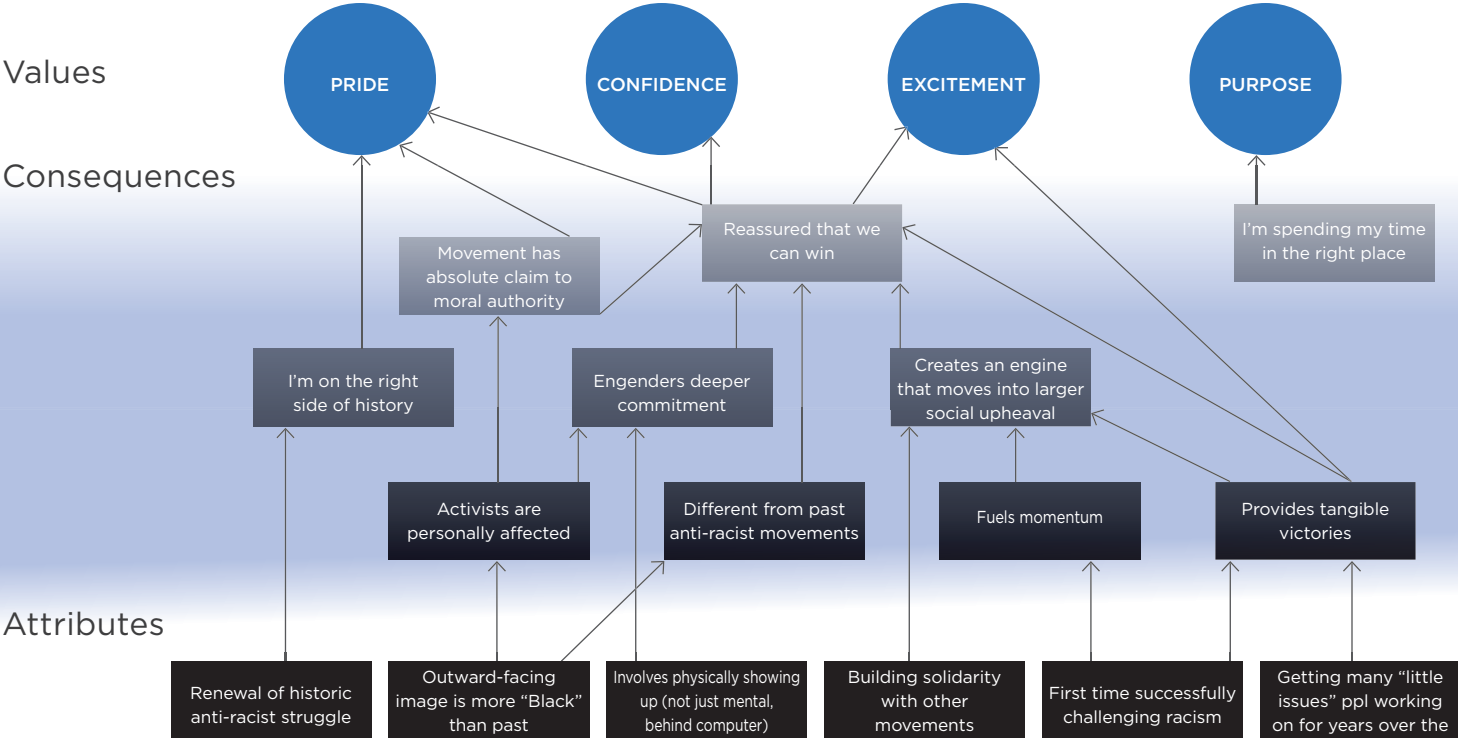
The Operatives are pleased by a few distinguishing features of Black Lives Matter that signal to them that this time they might be more successful than the perceived failure of past movements to achieve lasting change. First, they view the fact that because there is (partially through what they told us were concerted efforts sometimes to discourage non-Black participation in public-facing activities) an image of less diversity and more purely Black participation, that this will better position them to argue they hold moral authority. At the same time, the lack of public-facing diversity is important from an organizing standpoint as it engenders a deeper commitment from participants who witness the same thing and are reassured that they are on a wise and well-positioned path to victory.

The Operatives are buzzing with a sense of excitement and confidence that, again, “this time it will be different.” They observe that, through the Black Lives Matter, they have

already been able to push “little issues” the movement has been working on for years “over the finish line.” These tangible victories, along with the success at incorporating other movements within the left into the Black Lives Matter organizing efforts, is remarkably exciting as they “build an engine the moves into larger social upheaval.”

As they see Black Lives Matter achieving tangible victories where prior efforts, such as Occupy, had failed, they feel a sense of excitement and even efficiency in being involved with a “winning” plan.

“OPERATIVE” MENTAL MAP



PROTOTYPE  
*OPERATIVE*



*White, Middle-Class / Taking Responsibility For Privilege / Hopeful For Victory / Seeking Social Upheaval / College-Educated / Wants To Be Part Of History / Involved With Occupy, Fight For 15, Ferguson*

VALUES: PRIDE, CONFIDENCE,  
EXCITEMENT, PURPOSE

“The reason I’m an activist is because I want to make things better for myself primarily. The only way for my life to be better is to fight all forms of oppression.”



*This whole anti-police rhetoric is based on a lie. There is no data, and you know this. There is no data, there is no research that proves any of that nonsense. None. That law enforcement officers treat black males differently than white males in policing in these urban settings...*

*There is no place in American discourse for that sort of vile, vitriolic hate coming out of this ideology. This has fueled and fanned the flames of this anger toward the American police officer. There is only one group in America—one, Don—that truly cares about the lives of Black people in these urban ghettos. And that is the American police officer, who goes out there on a daily basis, puts their life out there on the line, to protect who? Black people.*

*Sheriff David Clarke  
Milwaukee County  
CNN's Don Lemon  
July 17, 2016*

## *THE BLM MESSAGE*

The Black Lives Matter narrative is built upon three pillars that are essential to the larger goals of its strategists: the retelling of the American story as one of the privileged against the privileged-not; using the police as a stand-in for the larger institution of state power, and an indictment of the system and not individual actions. These pillars provide insight into the larger aims of the Black Lives Matter movement: at the very least, BLM is concerned with setting up a more comprehensive narrative than one relating solely to the Black community. Understanding how the message pillars function within the Black Lives Matter narrative is critical to designing a strategy to undermine it.

### *RETELLING THE AMERICAN STORY*

Black Lives Matter's core message is built upon, depends upon, and has as its ultimate goal, the larger retelling of the American story as one of oppression and racism.

There are two narratives that describe the foundational story of America, and they diverge both in how they view the past and the path they offer for the future. The first is that America's story is an attempt to match the institution of government with the premise that all men are created equal – that the system equalizes us and unites us through the law (Constitution) and that, despite failures to always deliver on this promise, the spirit of the country has been a departure from other cultures' impediments to advancement. The second presents a different view: an America of competing groups that should not place their faith in the law (or a promise of equal treatment), for the system—the governing structures rooted in the Constitution—are designed to preserve elites' power and preclude the rest of society from achieving equal status.

The second story, the story of division and systemic injustice, is the foundation for the Marxist “Haves and Have-Nots” class division, and reveals the philosophical underpinnings of the Black Lives Matter movement are deeply entwined with far-left Marxist ideology.

## ***THE POLICE REPRESENT THE LARGER STATE AND AMERICAN SOCIETY***

The police, as representatives of the state, must be messaged as exemplifying the Black Lives Matter framing by being themselves oppressive and racist.

Focusing vitriol against law enforcement officers is way to translate a political ideology (Marxism) into a tangible enemy that adherents can picture, encounter, and target. By seeking out stories of potential (founded and unfounded) injustices perpetrated by police and encouraging mass outrage in reaction to them, BLM is able to channel the emotion their message fosters against an enemy people can see.

## ***POLICE VIOLENCE REVEALS BROADER SYSTEMIC “VIOLENCE”***

Black Lives Matter frames their cause as one against a systemic problem and necessarily utterly rejects the “one bad apple” counterargument.

Black Lives Matter is organized around a simple premise: that there is unequal, systemic treatment of Black Americans by the criminal justice system, and in particular by the police, resulting in the disproportionate and racist victimization of this community. The system is inherently racist, and so therefore in order to effect change and justice, the system must be taken down. This premise has been hotly disputed; in July 2016, Harvard University’s Professor Roland Fryer, Jr., published a study for the National Bureau of Economic Research, adding to a growing body of evidence supporting a counter viewpoint – that in fact there were no racial differences in the application of deadly force against Black Americans:

On non-lethal uses of force, blacks and Hispanics are more than fifty percent more likely to experience some form of force in interactions with police. Adding controls that account for important context and civilian behavior reduces, but cannot fully explain, these disparities. On the most extreme use of force – officer-involved shootings – we

find no racial differences in either the raw data or when contextual factors are taken into account. We argue that the patterns in the data are consistent with a model in which police officers are utility maximizers, a fraction of which have a preference for discrimination, who incur relatively high expected costs of officer-involved shootings.

Nevertheless, Black Lives Matter has captured the nation's attention by arguing that a systemic problem exists in the use of deadly force in a disproportionate way against Black Americans. The message continues to resonate and be repeated, despite factual challenges.

Nearly every Black Lives Matter activist we spoke with, including the operatives responsible for crafting and selling-in the message of the movement, stressed that this was about a systemic problem in society – racism built into the fabric of the nation. But perhaps even more important, by proving to the American public that police violence exists, BLM is able to then jump to the conclusion that other types of “violence” against the community do as well: “economic violence,” for example, as low wages in the Black community signify.

---

<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.nber.org/papers/w22399> and [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/12/upshot/surprising-new-evidence-shows-bias-in-police-use-of-force-but-not-in-shootings.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/12/upshot/surprising-new-evidence-shows-bias-in-police-use-of-force-but-not-in-shootings.html?_r=1)

*There's a lot of mythology behind Black Lives Matter, assuming the only reason this is happening is because of social media and because of the use of cameras. That is fundamentally false. What is exciting is that the Black Lives Matter moment comes after decades and centuries of the serial assassination of black people.*

*The driving force of Black Lives Matter is organized young people who have been mobilizing for years around a lot of issues. Black Lives Matter's focus is state violence against black people. Its focus is also decent education, 'stop closing our schools,' jobs for everybody, health care, mental health, drug programs.*

*It is a comprehensive movement, and the folks involved in it in Chicago are long-time organizers.*

*Professor and Convicted Terrorist Bill Ayers  
University of Illinois-Chicago (ret.)  
Liberation Radio  
October 30, 2015*

## THE BLM STRATEGY

How do you convince an entire nation that a movement whose operatives admit that they are “seeking total social upheaval” is a genuine, grassroots, Black-community-oriented, movement with which young Americans should associate themselves?

### SILENCE DISSENT THROUGH FORCE, INTIMIDATION, AND FEAR

“The problem is, when we ask authorities to ban hateful speech, they could use it against us. So what we learned in Chicago is we could shut it down with our numbers. I learned that the best way to shut things down is to take matters into our own hands.” --Operative

The Black Lives Matter movement is wholly against dissent and freedom of speech and their success rests upon the silencing of dissent, but they are savvy enough to accomplish this through other means than solely legal. First, Black Lives Matter has created an atmosphere where forces more emotionally compelling than “truth-seeking” encourage fealty through the threatened stigma of being an outsider, and discourage diversity of opinion. Through our research, we found that both the Activists and the Allies were united by the fear of being ostracized from the left’s cultural community and clung to the community they were provided by publicly supporting Black Lives Matter.

Black Lives Matter frequently uses shows of force – either by seeking them from university administrators or through aggressive demonstrations – to silence dissent, as well. Activists recounted to us that they found it appropriate to ask administrators to step in and stop perceived “hate speech,” although they considered themselves to be supporters of free speech. Finally, by portraying criticism of their cause as *an attempt to stifle their speech*, they in effect demand freedom from criticism.

## USING “PRIVILEGE” TO SEGREGATE AND SILENCE

*“When someone says, ‘we have policies that can help!’ I say ‘Stop. You can’t talk about my world.’” - Activist*

*“The only people who should be able to talk about these issues are those adversely impacted by racism. Just as the only people who should have a say about abortion are those who have had their access restricted.” - Ally*

*“There have been times where I decide to take a step back because I can’t speak to what’s going on. I kind of take a background position.” - Ally*

*“I understand having to take a background role in Black Lives Matter – I hope they [those involved] wouldn’t be skeptical of me, but I’m ok with it.” - Ally*

There is another sense in which Black Lives Matter has created an atmosphere where freedom of speech is unwelcome: activists and operatives involved with Black Lives Matter told us how they had self-segregated themselves according to their level of “privilege.” Privilege, which describes the relationship to the state according to variables such as an individual’s race, gender, or sexual orientation – or even being raised in a two-parent home, lived in a stable community, etc. – removes you from feeling the full weight of what a less privileged individual’s experience has been. But it is the penalty Black Lives Matter exacts on those with higher privilege than others that shows how privilege is actually a system of suppression and dis-equality, for individuals recounted to us how they knew their voices, their opinions, their work, and their presence, matter less – and was even harmful to the optics of the cause. Frequently, white or non-black “persons of color” told us they had felt uncomfortable because of their relative privilege and removed themselves from seeking positions of power, or attending public events, so as not to offend.

## *AN AMALGAMATION OF DISPARATE OPPRESSED CAUSES*

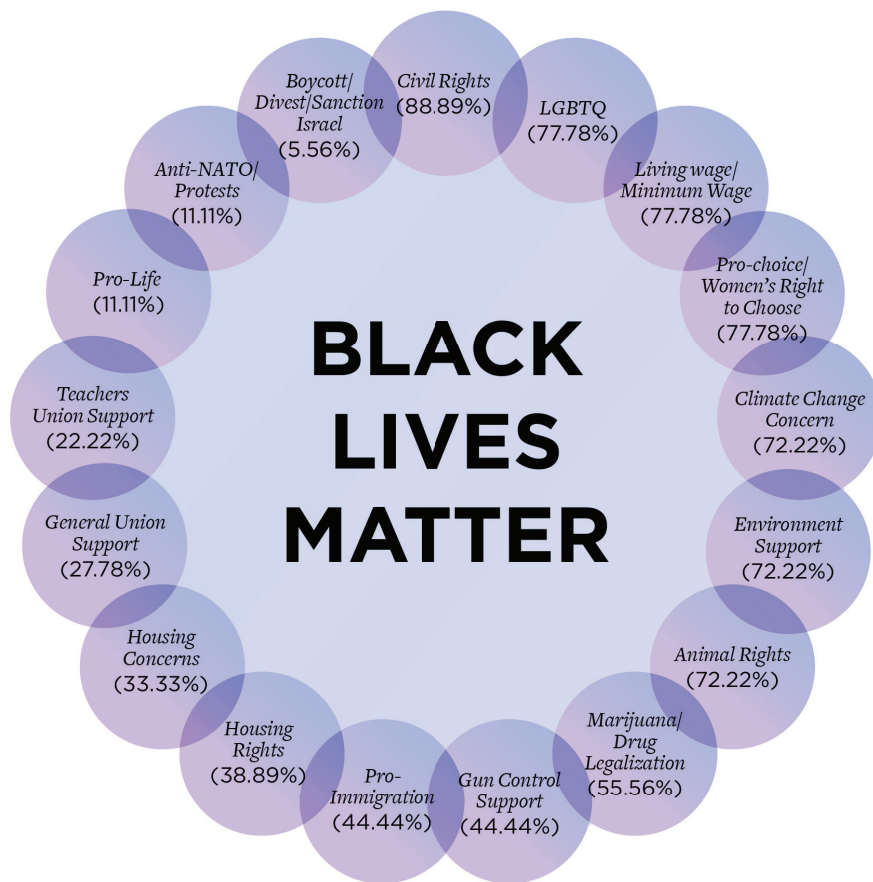
BLM relies upon the elevation and equating of other underprivileged groups to a status “just as oppressed” as Black America in order to build a narrative of an America divided into the “Oppressed and the Privileged.” For this reason causes such as undocumented workers, LGBTQ, and women’s reproductive rights, are recruited and welcomed into the “Allies” category of supporters.

Whereas Occupy and other leftist movements in recent years have received some support and then ultimately failed to sustain that connection, Black Lives Matter threatens to continue not only to appeal to young Americans and prepare them for future progressive organizing but also provide momentum to a network of seemingly unassociated left-wing causes.

Black Lives Matter incorporated those on margins of traditional black freedom movements, including women, the working poor, the disabled, undocumented immigrants, atheists and agnostics, and those who identify as queer and transgender. These marginalized black people played visible and central roles in the formation of Black Lives Matter and in their ongoing community organizing and protests.

When The Frontier Lab spoke with Operatives in the Black Lives Matter movement, they revealed that they had all been involved with other leftist movements, including Occupy Wall Street, but found that their involvement with Black Lives Matter was far more rewarding due to its success in the media and ability to create a sustainable and more widespread perception of moral authority. Operatives’ prior association with Occupy Wall Street reveals that their goals are not particular to the Black Community but to the Marxist ideals instead





Importantly, they revealed that their goal was not to help Black America, but rather to “create an engine that moves into larger social upheaval.” To achieve this goal, the Operatives are undertaking a concerted effort to take the undergirding philosophy of Marxism, where society is divided into the “Haves and the Have-Nots,” and reinvent it in the era of Black Lives Matter through the term “Privileged.”

As Cornell University’s Professor Russell Rickford, quoted at the beginning of this report, said at a Black Lives Matter protest, one of most important ways to gauge a potential ally of Black Lives Matter was not professed sympathy with the cause of injustice in the Black Community, but a jointly shared hatred for Capitalism:

---

<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.nber.org/papers/w22399> and [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/12/upshot/surprising-new-evidence-shows-bias-in-police-use-of-force-but-not-in-shootings.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/12/upshot/surprising-new-evidence-shows-bias-in-police-use-of-force-but-not-in-shootings.html?_r=1)

## WHITE AMERICA, ACCORDING TO BLM PROTESTER

*“There’s a sliver, a sliver of white America that hates white supremacy and that hates capitalism. These are the folks that you need to organize with. You’ve got to organize with class-conscious workers....You’ve got to organize with the undocumented. You’ve got to organize with the radical trans people....You’ve got to build a poor people’s movement, a colonized people’s movement. We’ve got to build a grassroots, antiracist movement to defeat capitalism altogether and it’s not going to happen at the ballot box. There can be no human system under capitalism. Capitalism is an anti-human system.”*



Some of the original organizers of BLM take enormous pride in the success of this coalition of disparate leftist causes under what is perceived as a more specific orientation -- something Occupy had failed to accomplish. Here BLM organizer Alicia Garza recounts her own happiness at seeing BLM coalesce “people of color” into one movement:

...Critics like Garza say that those in the [Occupy] encampment failed to make substantial considerations of race and gender in their critiques of economic injustice and police violence. Many argue that this failure contributed to its downfall—its inability, mostly, to galvanize a broader community.

Black Lives Matter, Garza hoped, would succeed where the Occupy movement had faltered. This meant establishing a broad but singular mission statement, one that addressed all intersecting injustices afflicting the black community.

Many of the Allies we spoke with, who took on the term “Ally” in order to denote their relative surfeit of privilege with relation to Black Americans, were eager to refer to themselves as “people of color.” They explained that this term gave them a sense of shared victimhood, and when one of their member groups prospered, it would signify that they all had a better outlook.

Taken together, “privilege,” “people of color,” and the function of uniting previously unaffiliated causes like that of the LGBTQ community, under the banner of Black Lives Matter, is helping to make this movement the true engine for social upheaval on a broad scale that its organizers hope it could become.

## *MESSENGERS AND CHANNELS: THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND CAMERAS TO TELL THEIR STORY*

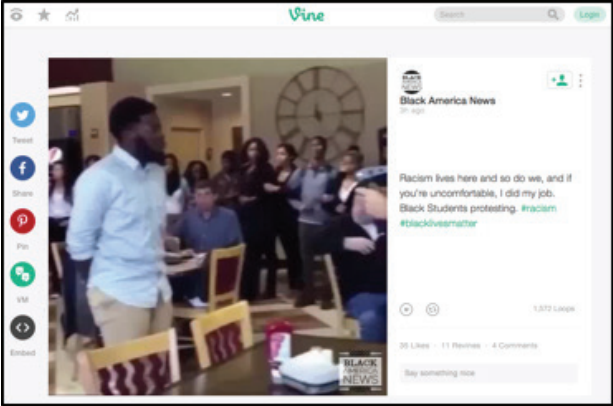
The Black Lives Movement’s lore describes it as “born from a hashtag,” in response to the Trayvon Martin killing by George Zimmerman. There is a sense of pride amongst the activists, too, who believe they are circumventing the mainstream media by embracing

“TA-NEHISI COATES, SHAUN KING, THAT’S WHAT I TRUST. I DON’T TRUST CNN, I DON’T TRUST FOX. THEY ARE THE SAME.”  
- ACTIVIST

“I TRY TO STAY AWAY FROM NEWS ORGANIZATIONS THAT HAVE ANY SPONSORSHIP; AND ESPECIALLY FROM ANY GROUPS THAT HAVE ‘BAITING HEADLINES.’” - ACTIVIST

social media -- and seeing success in seeding their narrative because of it. The Activists and Allies of Black Lives Matter simply believe the mainstream media will not tell their story fairly; social-media empowers them to do this themselves.

When we questioned strong supporters of Black Lives Matter about the influences on their initial involvement, we found that the primary influencers were family members, followed by friends and political leaders. Teachers or professors were the fourth most influential in getting them inspired about the movement.



<sup>6</sup> "The motivating forces behind Black Lives Matter," July 2015 <https://www.good.is/features/black-lives-matter-feminism-history>

Once engaged, activists choose specific social-media platforms for different connection purposes. In 2015, Wired Magazine reported on the key ways in which the movement communicates with its activists : for video, Vine, Instagram, or Periscope; for more clandestine group communication, GroupMe; for rapid (private) mobilization, SMS text or WhatsApp, or if it can be public, Twitter.

Then, there are the “connector” types who are the messengers that reach out personally:

If, God forbid, you find yourself standing in front of the next Michael Brown or Walter Scott, and you know the nation’s attention needs to swerve hard to your town, your best bet might be to send a direct message to someone like DeRay Mckesson, one of a handful of activists who sit at the apex of social networks that now run hundreds of thousands strong...

We have already seen the importance of publicly demonstrating an allegiance to the community supporting Black Lives Matter - social media allows for the public presentation of just that sort of affiliation, and demonstrates an aspect of why the BLM movement may have been so appropriate for the young Americans who already use these channels to communicate with their community members.

---

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.wired.com/2015/10/how-black-lives-matter-uses-social-media-to-fight-the-power/>

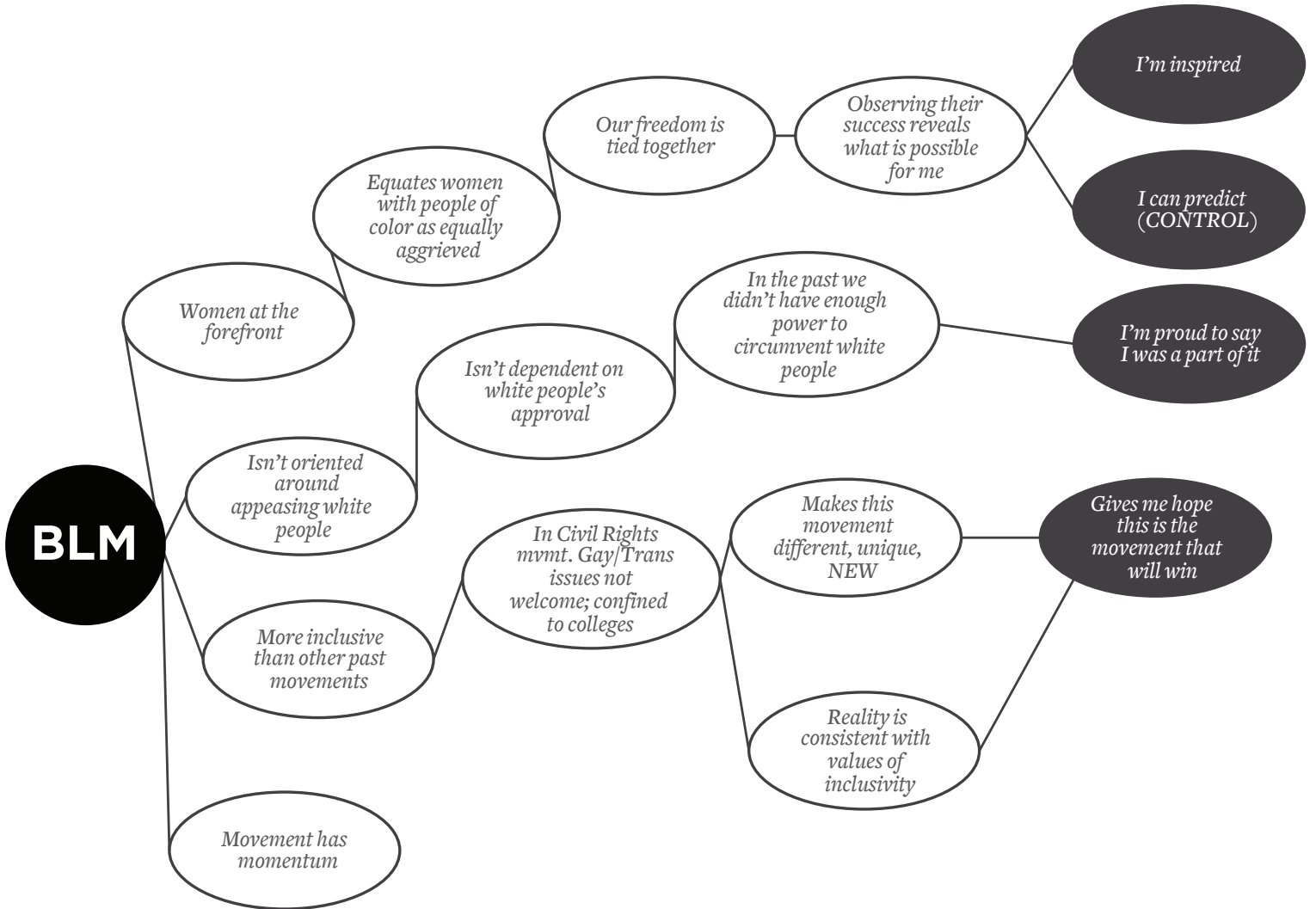
*“I observed older people with a saddened expression that young people were doing this. The elders told them you ought to be ashamed of yourself. But the youth said they were tired of the commercialization of MLK and that he was more about resistance. I never felt so much tension.”*

*- Sheila Pree Bright  
on documenting the Martin Luther King  
Birthday Parade in Atlanta, January 2015*

# APPENDIX

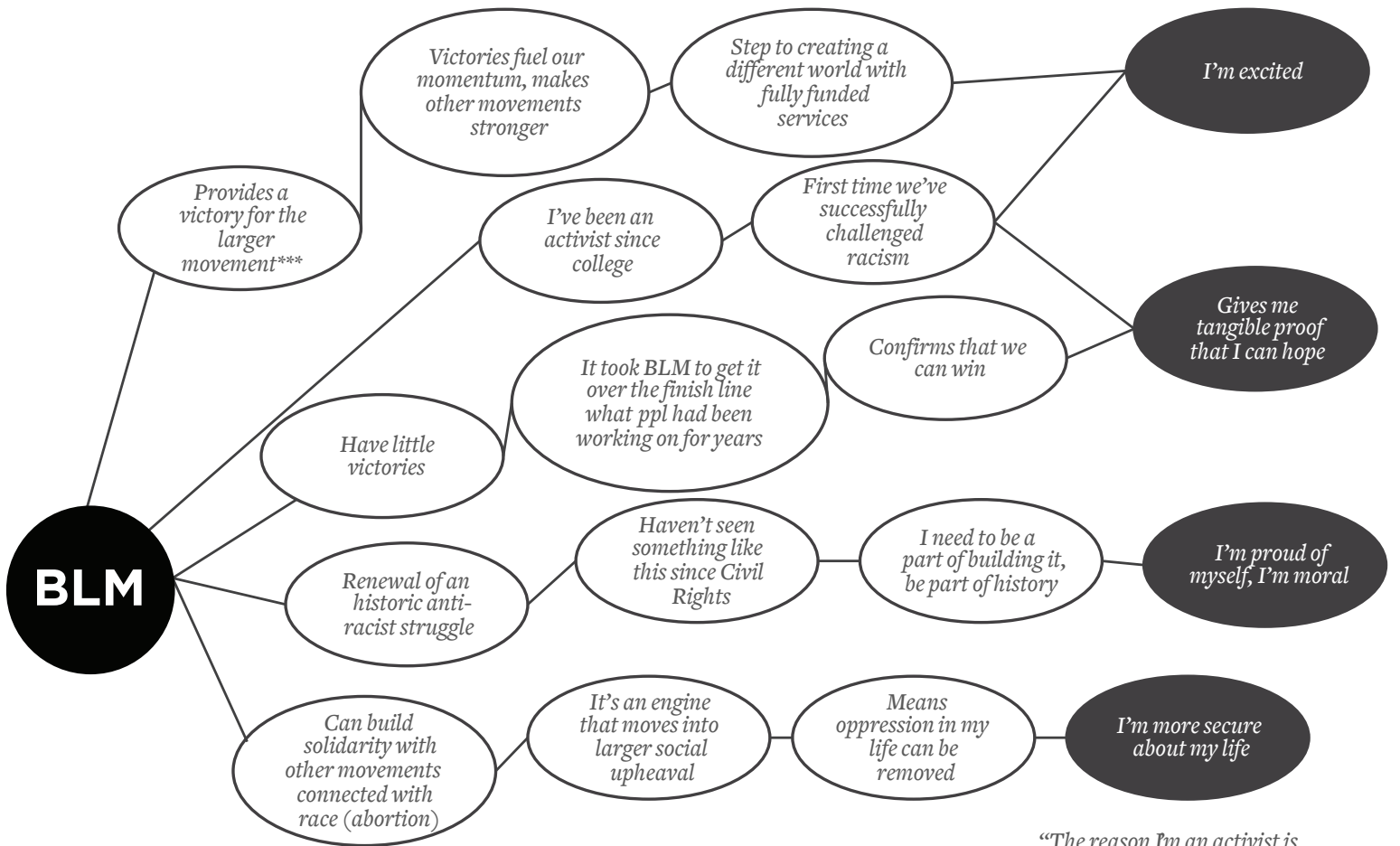
## Sample Individual Interview Charts

### ALLY LADDER 1



!"

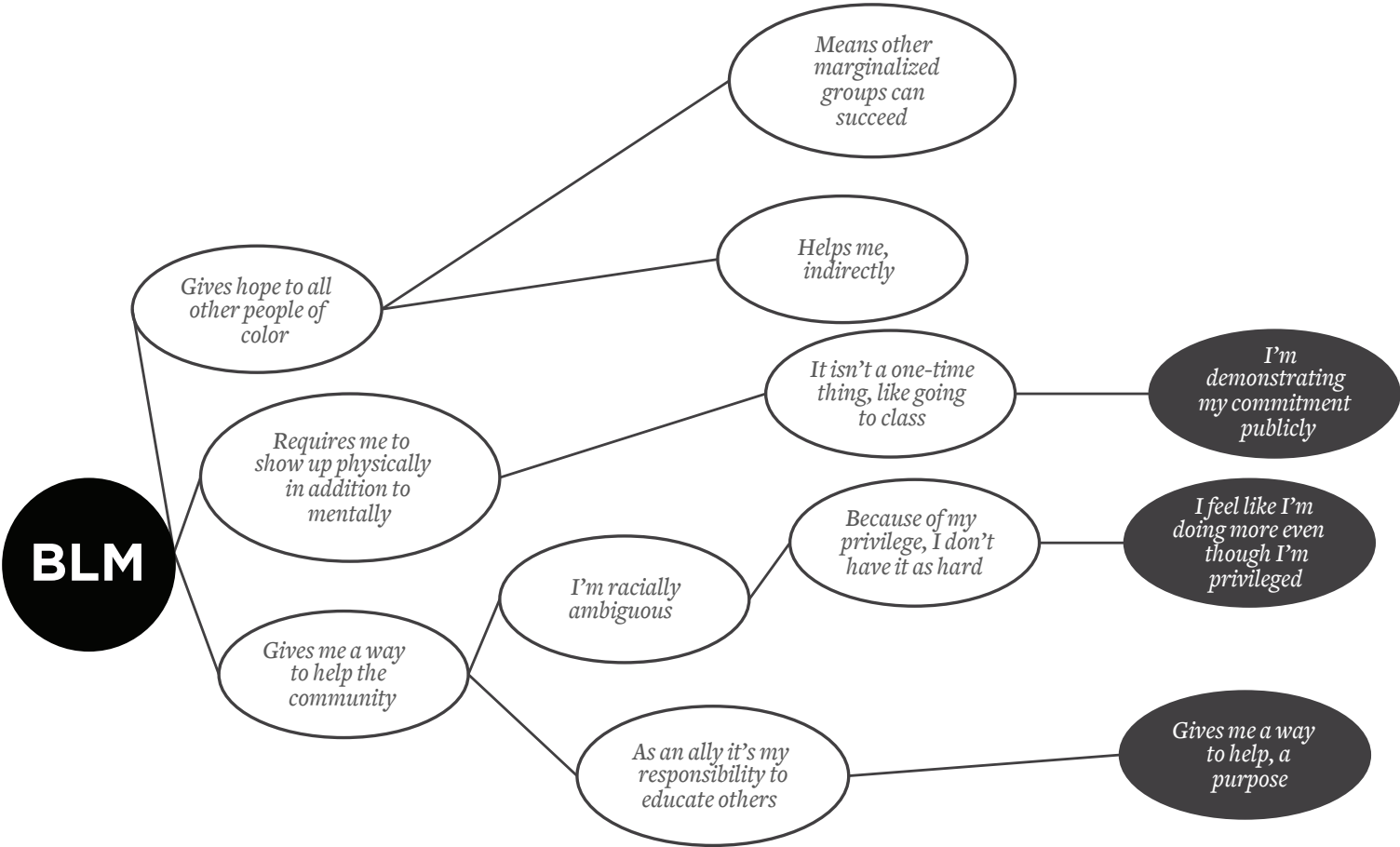
OPERATIVE LADDER 1



*“The reason I’m an activist is because I want to make things better for myself primarily. The only way for my life to be better is to fight all forms of oppression.” - Lauren*



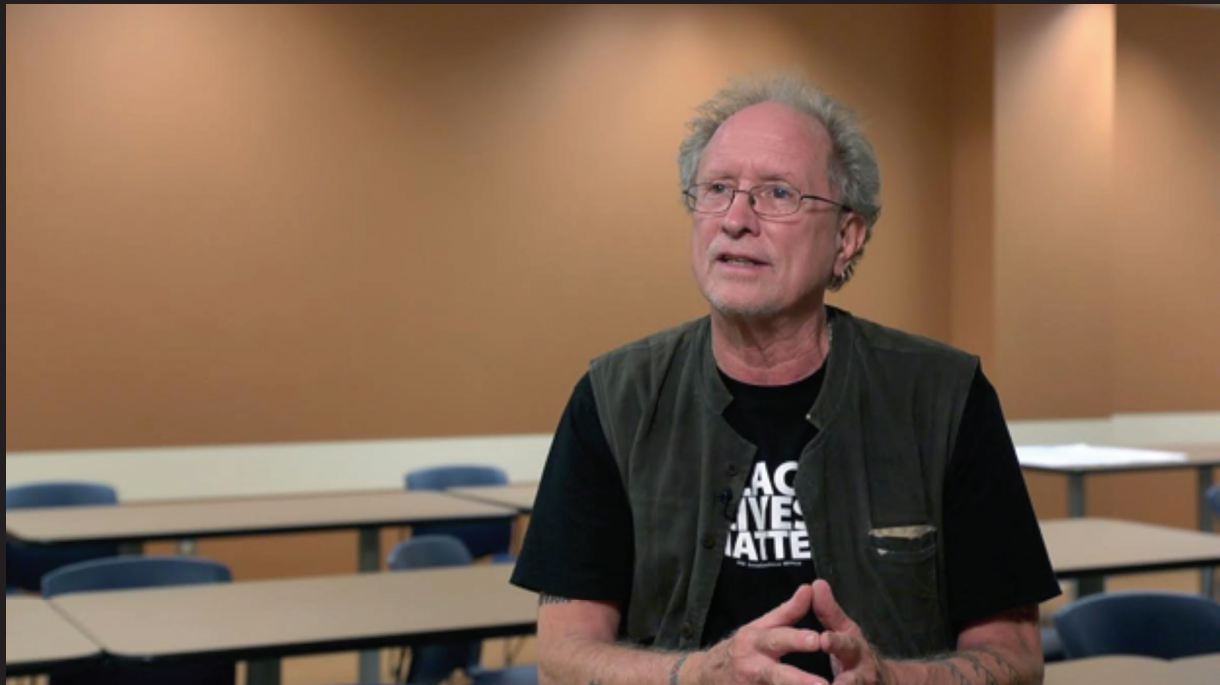
ACTIVIST LADDER 1



# BLM LEXICON

Term	Meaning	Example
Advocate	Spokesperson	"I became a social-justice advocate in my own home."
Ally	Someone who supports something but who has more privilege than the aggrieved party.	"We encourage other white allies to use their privilege, influence, and wealth to talk about white supremacy and state violence against black people." –Black lives matter website
Black Liberation Movement	The expressed aim of Black Lives Matter, per their website.	"BLM centers those that have been marginalized within Black liberation movements."
Marginalized Groups	There way of saying minority. I.E. LGBTQ, women	"Allows for other marginalized groups to succeed."
Multi Racial Solidarity	N/A	"Through research and cross-sector convening, we seek to revitalize a contemporary Asian American politics grounded in multiracial solidarity.."
Nonviolent Resistance Renaissance	Tactics updated in the current era to disrupt and confront oppression, in particular oppression by police; the new renaissance of nonviolent resistance confronts on new turf than before for example, shutdown of upper middle class shopping areas)	"The action represented a significant escalation of nonviolent tactics, directly confronting police on their own terrain, and modeled emergent forms of solidarity between communities of color. " – WarResisters.org
Oppressed	Converse to "privilege," refers to someone to whom the system is inherently unfair	See "Privilege"
Partner	Boyfriend/Girlfriend/Spouse	"My partner and I don't plan to get married anytime soon."

Patriarchy	Aspect of the U.S. government system that makes it inherently stacked against the oppressed	"...Contemplating if patriarchal values are ingrained within sections of the Black Lives Matter movement itself, especially among Black males."
Persons of Color	Anyone that isn't white – equating all persons of color as being under same form of discrimination	"Despite the media's disproportionate focus on cases involving men, intersectional analyses demonstrate that racialized police violence and misconduct are inflicted upon women and transgendered persons of color as well."
Political Activist	Establishment political operatives, considered "snobbish"	(See Social Activist Example)
Privileged	Converse to "oppressed," someone to whom the system is inherently biased in favor	"I can use my privilege because I am not black."
Racial Justice	Affirming people of color by addressing five types of violence: Physical, Political, Legal, and Economic	"We must pursue policies to transform this country into a nation that affirms the value of its people of color. That starts with addressing the five central types of violence waged against black, brown and indigenous Americans: physical, political, legal, economic and environmental."
Racially Ambiguous	Not outwardly identifiable as any particular race; in particular, able to pass as a white person.	"Because I'm racially ambiguous, I have privilege."
Social Activist	Grassroots activists, considered "disorganized"	"There is great distrust between the establishment/political activists (who are snobbish) and social activists (who are disorganized). I try to explain that everybody needs each other." -Activist
Social Justice	Promoting a just society by challenging in justice and valuing diversity, it exists when all people share a common humanity and therefore have a right to equitable treatment, support for their human rights, and a fair allocation of community resources.	"Although equality is undeniably part of social justice, the meaning of social justice is actually much broader."
Systemic Racism/Systemic Change	The type of racism (or change) that isn't unique to a person or situation but built into the system	"The mainstream media is covering issues about systemic racism."
Womanist Movement	Movement founded by Alice Walker for Black women who feel marginalized by white feminists.	"I learned about a history of white feminists overlooking, putting down, and shutting out feminists of color, and about the consequent womanist movement."



WEATHER UNDERGROUND'S BILL AYERS