

Humanism and the Movement for Black Lives

Humanist Action Kit



Humanism emphasizes the **equal** value and **equal** agency of *all* human beings.

Humanism's investment in human accountability, social responsibility, and full dignity for all demands a concern with racism and white supremacy as these oppressive systems undermine the very aspirations of humanism.

[The Movement For Black Lives](#) (M4BL) is a coalition of more than 50 organizations representing the interests of Black communities as a response to anti-black policies and cultural norms that result in racist, unjust treatment impacting Black America.

Because humanists believe positive change comes about through human intervention, the [Black Humanist Alliance](#) has created this resource to both advance racial consciousness and catalyze action against racial injustice.

ANTI-BLACK RACISM GIRDS SOCIETY

Visualize a spider web when thinking of anti-black racism as a system. Anti-black racism manifests as a web of interconnecting, reinforcing institutions that includes [political](#), [economic](#), [cultural](#), [employment](#), [judicial](#), [healthcare](#), and [educational](#) systems.

We can't talk about realizing fuller Black humanity and dignity without recognizing the need for increased Black political will and power to transform racist systems that disenfranchise Blacks. M4BL exists to articulate a collective agenda to combat and reform anti-black racism's stranglehold on our social and political status quo.



[*"But What About Black-On-Black Crime?"*](#)

ANTI-RACISM IS ESSENTIAL

We recognize that humans are flawed, and that we are socialized to harbor all manner of unjust ideologies. A humanist recognizes that these pervasive unjust ideologies exist and seeks to challenge and transform unjust systems in order to contribute to the well-being and flourishing of all those existing within said society.

Essential to diminishing racial injustice is [anti-racism](#), the use of critical thinking to detect and confront values, attitudes, structures, policies, practices, and behaviors that perpetuate racial injustice.

Anti-racism is both a framework and an active response to racism. Racism is a form of social oppression that occurs at all levels of society. Social oppression is rooted in hierarchical social structures defining one or more groups as being inferior to others. This idea of inferiority is premised on delegitimizing the humanity of an individual or group to justify rendering a higher regard for the humanity of those belonging to the dominant social group.



[*"Is The Movement For Black Lives Anti-White?"*](#)

A RESPONSE TO ANTI-BLACKNESS: THE NEW CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT



It's essential to evolve with the times. Although the challenges might be similar, the new civil rights movement is tackling them in new ways compared to the often romanticized 20th-century movement. A new generation of tech-savvy activists has dramatically shifted the means of sociopolitical engagement for Black liberation. This new movement is powerful yet diffuse, combining localized power structures with an intentionally inclusive ethos that centers women and LGBTQ activists. [Watch Black Lives Matter co-founder Alicia Garza](#) as she both discusses state

violence targeting Black communities as well as responds to common questions about this new civil rights movement.

MORE THAN RESISTANCE

It's critical to understand the goals of M4BL beyond the frame of "resistance." Civil rights advocate and author of *The New Jim Crow* [Michelle Alexander communicated how and why this sociopolitical movement is more than a "resistance."](#)

Resistance is inherently defensive. As I see it, we are part of a bold and beautiful revolutionary movement that aims to rebirth this country...

If we are going to do the work that is required to build truly transformational movements in which there is any hope of us building a multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-faith, multi-gender democracy, in which every voice and every life truly matters, we are going to have to connect and tap into, embrace that revolutionary spirit and the spirits of the ancestors, the freedom fighters who came before us, and say: "We're not about resistance. We're about building a revolutionary movement for the collective liberation of us all."



["Why Does The Movement For Black Lives Hate The Police?"](#)

THE MOVEMENT FOR BLACK LIVES PLATFORM

The [M4BL's platform](#) was conceived as a way for the collective of racial justice groups involved in this movement to articulate ideas for policy changes they envision will achieve racial justice. These ideas include naming specific issues, suggesting local, state, and federal actions, presenting model legislation, and providing resources. The following is an overview of the M4BL's vision for policy reform:

[End the war on Black people](#) – a demand to cease to value systems, policies, and practices that dehumanize blackness and leads to the marginalization and killing of Black people.

[Reparations](#) – a demand to redress past and continuing harms fostered by the government, corporations, and various institutional practices that marginalize Blacks like housing redlining, mass incarceration, and surveillance.

[Invest-divest](#) – a demand to invest in the education, health, and safety of Black people, and to divest from exploitative forces that criminalize and cage Black people.

[Economic justice](#) – a demand for a reconstruction of the economy to ensure Black communities have collective ownership, not merely access.

[Community control](#) – a demand for increased influence and decision-making of laws, institutions, and policies that directly impact Black communities.

[Political power](#) – a demand transformation of the current U.S. political system to create a real democracy where Black people and all marginalized people can effectively exercise full political power.

SELF-EDUCATION CHALLENGES

- ❖ Learn more about anti-racism from psychologists: [Anti-Racist Action and Becoming Part of the Solution](#)
- ❖ Learn more about racism and white supremacy from anti-racism education provided by our partner, Showing Up For Racial Justice: [Racism 101](#), [White Supremacy Culture](#)
- ❖ Learn how respectability politics *harm* Black communities and run counter to the goals of the M4BL:
 - [Everyday Respectability Politics](#)
 - [Respectability politics: How a flawed conversation sabotages black lives](#)
 - [If Black Lives Matter, Respectability Politics Should Be a Thing of the Past](#)
- ❖ A Black humanist perspective on the M4BL: [Why White America Demonzes the #BlackLivesMatter Movement — And Why That Must Change](#)
- ❖ Specifically for white people seeking to increase awareness regarding issues related to the M4BL: [This is what white people can do to support #BlackLivesMatter](#)

ACTION CHALLENGES

Acting in solidarity with the Movement for Black Lives requires listening, coachability, and (within the context of racial justice) deliberate immersion in the insight of those in the trenches. There is no quick fix to racism. Anti-racism is an everyday, lifelong process. Approach the following action steps at a measured pace and work towards living anti-racist values.

- ❖ [Fulfill each of these steps](#)
- ❖ [Think and act like an accomplice](#)
- ❖ [Integrate these opportunities to disrupt white supremacy to the best of your ability](#)
- ❖ [Challenge yourself and others to watch these collection of documentaries on racial injustice](#)
- ❖ [Put solidarity into action](#)

NEW MEDIA CHALLENGES

Get plugged into the conversation. Consistent exposure to the insight of Black writers, Black social critics, and Black reporting is a necessary step in becoming more informed (and empathetic) regarding social issues that affect Black communities.

[Neuroscience research indicates](#) socialized racial biases foster and reinforce negative stereotypes. [Social psychology findings](#) suggest that perspective-taking can combat automatic expressions of implicit racial biases.

To that end, it's necessary to challenge yourself to get (and *stay*) connected to dialogues regarding race and racism on a more intimate level. Here are some social media critics and media outlets that share critiques or reporting that subvert the [white gaze](#) and routinely parse topical social and political issues consistent with the M4BL's ambitions for Black liberation.

- ❖ [Black Youth Project](#)
- ❖ [The Root](#)
- ❖ [For Harriet](#)
- ❖ [Son of Baldwin](#)
- ❖ [Ijeoma Oluo](#)
- ❖ [Clint Smith](#)

BE THE CHANGE

In "[Poem for South African Women](#)," feminist poet, essayist, and activist June Jordan presented an idea that has endured throughout humanism's history when it comes to finding ways humans can enjoy life, cooperate, and address social ills: *we are the ones we have been waiting for*.

Police officers are allowed to be judge, jury, and executioner. It's extremely rare that police officers involved in acts of state violence are ever held accountable. In order for us to live in a society where *all* lives are valued equally, it's imperative we pay attention to how and why Black lives are unjustly devalued and cut short.

It's imperative we take action to transform this critical discrepancy. This movement goes beyond a fancy slogan. What are you willing to risk, what are you willing to implement, what are you willing to change to ensure **Black Lives Matter**?



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