

Annex B: about *Black Lives Matter* (BLM)

The refusal to name classes

What characterises BLM, is the refusal of the notion of class and, by that, the class struggle. Blacks are presented as a homogenous population without contradictions within it. Even if the term “capitalism” is sometimes used in their reference texts, it is presented as one determination amongst others of “White” society which oppresses the “Blacks” (along with the others “of color?”). The Blacks must thus obtain reparations. Such is the extreme summary of the programme of BLM... Once reparations are won, the Blacks will be finally ready to build a Black counter-society, separated from other components of the population. A counter-society filled with Black neighbourhoods, Black businesses, Black associations, Black churches etc. This separatist project hardly contemplates the place of the others who don't have dark skin.

The ideal of BLM is to transform *Color blindness*¹ into *Non-Black blindness*, that is to say dissociating itself from all those who are not Black. To return to BLM's definition of capitalism, they identify capitalism with just the big banks which, of course, must be replaced by Black banks. A nice contradiction, if we consider that the financing of BLM, in the last months of 2020, was centralised by the speculative funds of Georges Soros. This reduction of capitalism to the credit system has its origins in alter-globalism for which finance is the enemy, thus whitewashing productive capital where, in fact, the exploitation of workers is located. In fact, BLM is only concerned with the “redistribution of wealth” in which, according to them, Blacks must get a bigger share.

Whatever might be the possibilities that the points of the BLM programme end up in, BLM never indicates how to obtain them from the state. And with good cause, because for BLM, the state is summed up as the forces of repression (Police, courts) AND public subsidies. In these conditions, it is normal that this organisation does not call on Blacks to organise for themselves but only to constitute themselves into pressure groups. It has to be said in passing, that whatever were the limits and errors of the programme of the Black Panther Party (BPP) in 1966, it is a mockery to claim that that of BLM is its inheritor....

A little history

Black Lives Matter was created in August 2013 by three Black women – Alicia Garza², Patrisse Cullors³ and Opal Tometi, all with an activist background⁴ – following the acquittal of George Zimmerman⁵, the murderer of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin, cold-bloodedly gunned down in February 2012. *Black Lives Matter* was in the beginning a simple “#hashtag” referring to this racist episode. In 2014, BLM obtained a national visibility after the events of Ferguson.

BLM is an amorphous grouping which comprises a site, a movement and a party, the whole thing an agglomeration of various pre-existing groups. Its network counts 34 sections, while the movement is decentralised and relies “*almost entirely on a local rather than national leadership*”. According to Patrisse Cullors, the organisation of the movement “*is often spontaneous and not directed by one person or group of people*”.

In 2016, a coalition of more than 50 organisations, known under the name of Movement for Black Lives published a platform, “Vision 4 Black Lives”⁶, taken in part from the 10-point programme of the BPP in 1966 (see below). Showing the frictions between the various groups of activists operating

¹ Supposed indifference to skin colour, in other words, denying the existence of racism.

² <https://www.npr.org/2020/10/18/924701747/black-lives-matter-co-founder-on-her-new-book-the-purpose-of-power>

³ <https://nypost.com/2020/06/25/blm-co-founder-describes-herself-as-trained-marxist/>

This is not a “progressive” site but there are plenty of videos where Patrisse admits “being a Marxist”.

⁴ <https://time.com/collection/100-most-influential-people-2020/5888228/black-lives-matter-founders/> and

<https://www.ft.com/content/71efd9a2-c1bb-47b6-b4c5-7795b1a66cac> and

<https://www.politifact.com/article/2020/jul/21/black-lives-matter-marxist-movement/>

⁵ George Zimmerman (born in 1983) was at the time of the events the coordinator of groups of neighbourhood vigilantes in the gated community of Twin Lakes in Sanford, Florida.

⁶ <https://m4bl.org/>

under the banner of the BLM Movement, in August 2015, *Campaign Zero*⁷ presented its own political programme and did not sign the general platform. In the meantime, the influential group *Black Youth Project 100*⁸ got involved in supporting numerous activist initiatives.

As for funding, it is estimated that the groups associated with BLM received \$133 million between 2013 and 2018. Organisations associated with the billionaire financier George Soros provided at least \$33 million to various BLM groups since 2016⁹. BLM published its financial statement for 2020¹⁰. It received \$90 million in 2020 with an operating budget of \$8.4 million.

Ulterior motives and things unsaid

The amorphous BLM covers a vast spectrum, from separatist and anti-White elements, to those who want to put pressure on elected representatives like the BLM PAC (Political Action Committee)¹¹. At the other end to the BLM PAC, you can find, for example, Daunasia Yancey¹², a BLM and LGBT rights activist, who says: *“We are a radical organisation, with radical politics, and we have radical tactics. There’s no getting round that”*. Whatever are the tactics adopted by the numerous components of the movement, we can state that BLM does not express “racial” hostility towards the Whites. On the contrary, it can be said without ambiguity that BLM is totally indifferent to the lot of the dispossessed of any colour other than Black.

*“The statement “black lives matter” is not an anti-white proposition. Contained within the statement is an unspoken but implied “too,” as in “black lives matter, too,” which suggests that the statement is one of inclusion rather than exclusion. However, those white people who continue to mischaracterize the affirmation of the value of black life as being anti-white are suggesting that in order for white lives to matter, black lives cannot. That is a foundational premise of white supremacy. It is antithetical to what the Black Lives Matter movement stands for, which is the simple proposition that “black lives also matter.” The Black Lives Matter movement demands that the country affirm the value of black life in practical and pragmatic ways, including addressing an increasing racial wealth gap, fixing public schools that are failing, combating issues of housing inequality and gentrification that continue to push people of color out of communities they have lived in for generations, and dismantling the prison industrial complex. None of this is about hatred for white life. It is about acknowledging that the system already treats white lives as if they have more value, as if they are more worthy of protection, safety, education, and a good quality of life than black lives are. This must change.”*³

Another element to keep in mind is the strong influence of religion on BLM. We have to remember that M.L. King was a priest and that Protestant churches (notably the Methodists) were already playing a big role in the civil rights movement in the 1960s. From an article¹⁴ in *The Conversation*, we can learn that BLM was not a demonic creation, as was claimed by the pro-Trump Pentecostals, but was bathed in benevolence, Buddhism, animist religion, and resilience. Tricia Hersey¹⁵ said that she considered human bodies as “sites of liberation” which linked Black Americans to “the creator, to the ancestors and the universe”. She describes relaxation as a spiritual practice for healing and resistance of the community naps as “gates of healing”. Hersey links this conviction to her education in the Black Pentecostal Church of “*God in Christ*”¹⁶, where, she explains, “*I could see the body to be a vehicle for the spirit*”. Finally, according to Erika Gault¹⁷, a researcher at the University of Arizona, with Black Lives Matter, “*we see in fact more religion, and not less*” even if “*The Black Church is not the only religious well from which Black movements have historically drawn*”.

⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Campaign_Zero

⁸ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BYP100>

⁹ <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/>

¹⁰ <https://apnews.com/article/black-lives-matter-90-million-finances-8a80cad199f54c0c4b9e74283d27366f>

¹¹ <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/10/09/black-lives-matter-pac-428403>

¹² <https://www.bostonmagazine.com/news/2015/01/29/education-daunasia-yancey/>

¹³ <https://www.phillyvoice.com/video-black-lives-matter-organizer-tells-white-people-get-back/>

¹⁴ Article on 14/09/2020 : <https://theconversation.com/far-from-being-anti-religious-faith-and-spirituality-run-deep-in-black-lives-matter-145610>

¹⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tricia_Hersey

¹⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_God_in_Christ

¹⁷ <https://africana.arizona.edu/people/egault>

The 2016 platform of BLM

The platform is expressed in six main points: reparations for previous and present wrongs against Blacks, investments in education and health, economic justice and reserved jobs, Community control of institutions, an overhaul of the American political system and respect for the rights of protesters¹⁸.

Reading this text, it comes across clearly that BLM is an inter-classist movement of contestation internal to the system if we judge it on the basis of its political objectives. Reform of the police and the judicial system is, in very brief summary, the most important theme of its programme. It is a reform which means notably reducing the resources allocated to the forces of repression, the purging of racist cops, a justice system less discriminatory towards Blacks etc. BLM thus sees its action in this area in terms of applying the US Constitution.

The other notable aspect of the politics of BLM is the demand for a more equitable redistribution of incomes in favour of Blacks, which corresponds to a trade union corporatist way of approaching problems. This is certainly not the terrain of combat of the proletariat because redistributive policies (notably through “progressive taxation” and the development of “public services”) represent the principal ideological obstacle in the advanced capitalist countries to any massive revival in struggles around wages. What’s more, in the spirit of BLM, such a fairer redistributive policy must solely concern African-Americans, clearly revealing the potential for division of the subordinate classes that the action and thought of this organisation contains.

DOCUMENTATION

THE 2016 PLATFORM

A) We Demand Repair for Past and Continuing Harms. The government, responsible corporations and other institutions that have profited off of the harm they have inflicted on Black people — from colonialism to slavery through food and housing redlining¹⁹, mass incarceration, and surveillance — must repair the harm done. This includes:

1. Reparations for the systemic denial of access to high quality educational opportunities in the form of full and free access for all Black people (including undocumented and currently and formerly incarcerated people) to lifetime education including: free access and open admissions to public community colleges and universities, technical education (technology, trade and agricultural), educational support programs, retroactive forgiveness of student loans, and support for lifetime learning programs.
2. Reparations for the continued divestment from, discrimination toward and exploitation of our communities in the form of a guaranteed minimum livable income for all Black people, with clearly articulated corporate regulations.
3. Reparations for the wealth extracted from our communities through environmental racism, slavery, food apartheid, housing discrimination and racialized capitalism in the form of corporate and government reparations focused on healing ongoing physical and mental trauma, and ensuring our access and control of food sources, housing and land.
4. Reparations for the cultural and educational exploitation, erasure, and extraction of our communities in the form of mandated public school curriculums that critically examine the political, economic, and social impacts of colonialism and slavery, and funding to support, build, preserve, and restore cultural assets and sacred sites to ensure the recognition and honoring of our collective struggles and triumphs.
5. Legislation at the federal and state level that requires the United States to acknowledge the lasting impacts of slavery, establish and execute a plan to address those impacts. This includes

¹⁸ <https://m4bl.org/policy-platforms/reparations/>

¹⁹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Redlining>

the immediate passage of H.R.40, the “Commission to Study Reparation Proposals for African-Americans Act” or subsequent versions which call for reparations remedies.

B) We demand investments in the education, health and safety of Black people, instead of investments in the criminalizing, caging, and harming of Black people. We want investments in Black communities, determined by Black communities, and divestment from exploitative forces including prisons, fossil fuels, police, surveillance and exploitative corporations. This includes:

1. A reallocation of funds at the federal, state and local level from policing and incarceration (JAG, COPS, VOCA) to long-term safety strategies such as education, local restorative justice services, and employment programs.
2. The retroactive decriminalization, immediate release and record expungement of all drug related offenses and prostitution, and reparations for the devastating impact of the “war on drugs” and criminalization of prostitution, including a reinvestment of the resulting savings and revenue into restorative services, mental health services, job programs and other programs supporting those impacted by the sex and drug trade.
3. Real, meaningful, and equitable universal health care that guarantees: proximity to nearby comprehensive health centers, culturally competent services for all people, specific services for queer, gender nonconforming, and trans people, full bodily autonomy, full reproductive services, mental health services, paid parental leave, and comprehensive quality child and elder care.
4. A constitutional right at the state and federal level to a fully-funded education which includes a clear articulation of the right to: a free education for all, special protections for queer and trans students, wrap around services, social workers, free health services (including reproductive body autonomy), a curriculum that acknowledges and addresses students’ material and cultural needs, physical activity and recreation, high quality food, free daycare, and freedom from unwarranted search, seizure or arrest.
5. A divestment from industrial multinational use of fossil fuels and investment in community-based sustainable energy solutions.
6. A cut in military expenditures and a reallocation of those funds to invest in domestic infrastructure and community well-being.

C) We demand economic justice for all and a reconstruction of the economy to ensure Black communities have collective ownership, not merely access. This includes:

1. A progressive restructuring of tax codes at the local, state, and federal levels to ensure a radical and sustainable redistribution of wealth.
2. Federal and state job programs that specifically target the most economically marginalized Black people, and compensation for those involved in the care economy. Job programs must provide a living wage and encourage support for local workers centers, unions, and Black-owned businesses which are accountable to the community.
3. A right to restored land, clean air, clean water and housing and an end to the exploitative privatization of natural resources — including land and water. We seek democratic control over how resources are preserved, used and distributed and do so while honoring and respecting the rights of our Indigenous family.
4. The right for workers to organize in public and private sectors especially in “On Demand Economy” jobs.
5. Restore the Glass-Steagall Act²⁰ to break up the large banks, and call for the National Credit Union Administration and the US Department of the Treasury to change policies and practices around regulation, reporting and consolidation to allow for the continuation and creation of black banks, small and community development credit unions, insurance companies and other financial institutions.

²⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glass%E2%80%93Steagall_legislation

6. An end to the Trans-Pacific Partnership and a renegotiation of all trade agreements to prioritize the interests of workers and communities.
7. Through tax incentives, loans and other government directed resources, support the development of cooperative or social economy networks to help facilitate trade across and in Black communities globally. All aid in the form of grants, loans or contracts to help facilitate this must go to Black led or Black supported networks and organizations as defined by the communities.
8. Financial support of Black alternative institutions including policy that subsidizes and offers low-interest, interest-free or federally guaranteed low-interest loans to promote the development of cooperatives (food, residential, etc.), land trusts and culturally responsive health infrastructures that serve the collective needs of our communities.
9. Protections for workers in industries that are not appropriately regulated including domestic workers, farm workers, and tipped workers, and for workers — many of whom are Black women and incarcerated people— who have been exploited and remain unprotected. This includes the immediate passage at the Federal and state level of the Domestic Workers Bill of Rights and extension of worker protections to incarcerated people.

D) We demand a world where those most impacted in our communities control the laws, institutions, and policies that are meant to serve us – from our schools to our local budgets, economies, police departments, and our land – while recognizing that the rights and histories of our Indigenous family must also be respected. This includes:

1. Direct democratic community control of local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies, ensuring that communities most harmed by destructive policing have the power to hire and fire officers, determine disciplinary action, control budgets and policies, and subpoena relevant agency information.
2. An end to the privatization of education and real community control by parents, students and community members of schools including democratic school boards and community control of curriculum, hiring, firing and discipline policies.
3. Participatory budgeting at the local, state and federal level.

E) We demand independent Black political power and Black self-determination in all areas of society. We envision a remaking of the current U.S. political system in order to create a real democracy where Black people and all marginalized people can effectively exercise full political power. This includes:

1. An end to the criminalization of Black political activity including the immediate release of all political prisoners and an end to the repression of political parties.
2. Public financing of elections and the end of money controlling politics through ending super PACs²¹ and unchecked corporate donations.
3. Election protection, electoral expansion and the right to vote for all people including: full access, guarantees, and protections of the right to vote for all people through universal voter registration, automatic voter registration, pre-registration for 16-year-olds, same day voter registration, voting day holidays, Online Voter Registration (OVR), enfranchisement of formerly and presently incarcerated people, local and state resident voting for undocumented people, and a ban on any disenfranchisement laws.
4. Full access to technology including net neutrality and universal access to the internet without discrimination and full representation for all.
5. Protection and increased funding for Black institutions including Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU's²²), Black media and cultural, political and social formations.

²¹ Political Action Committees, used to collect campaign funds during elections:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_action_committee

²² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historically_black_colleges_and_universities

F) We demand that the rights of protestors be respected and protected and that there be no abuse of powers. We Demand:

1. Violations of property should never be equated with the violation of human life.
2. That local and state officials ensure that there are no abuse of powers
3. No use of lethal force on protestors.

THE PROGRAMME OF THE BPP OF 1966

Published at the end of 1966, it appeared for the first time in their weekly paper *The Black Panther*, comprising, under the heading “*What We Want Now!*”, the following ten points, and, under the heading “*What We Believe!*”, ten explanatory comments²³.

1. We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black Community.
2. We want full employment for our people.
3. We want an end to the robbery by the capitalists of our black and oppressed communities.
4. We want decent housing, fit for shelter of human beings.
5. We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present-day society.
6. We want all Black men to be exempt from military service.
7. We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER of Black people.
8. We want freedom for all Black men held in federal, state, county and city prisons and jails.
9. We want all Black people when brought to trial to be tried in court by a jury of their peer group or people from their Black Communities, as defined by the Constitution of the United States.
10. We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace.

²³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ten-Point_Program