



Jeffrey Rae (jeffrae@me.com)

Thousands march from Freedom Plaza down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C. (December 13, 2014).

---

# Black Lives Matter: Toward a Modern Practice of Mass Struggle

New Labor Forum  
2016, Vol. 25(1) 34–42  
Copyright © 2015, The Murphy Institute,  
City University of New York  
Reprints and permissions:  
sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav  
DOI: 10.1177/1095796015620171  
nlf.sagepub.com

Russell Rickford<sup>1</sup>

## Keywords

racism, politics, community organizations, labor, trade unions

Born as a Twitter hashtag, Black Lives Matter has evolved into a potent alternative to the political paralysis and isolation that racial justice proponents have faced since the election of Obama. In just over two years, the young movement has reinvigorated confrontation politics, giving voice to a popular and righteous rage, establishing a new touchstone of grassroots resistance, and ending the acquiescence that has crippled progressive forces in the age of Obama. The upsurge, which has centered on the crucial, galvanizing issue of police misconduct, also shows signs of addressing larger questions of social inequity. With continued momentum, Black Lives Matter may help reverse the counteroffensive against workers and people of color that has defined the long aftermath of the 1960s and 1970s liberation struggles.<sup>1</sup> To surpass the relatively ephemeral accomplishments of precursors such as Occupy Wall Street, however, the emerging movement must draw on and modernize the creative traditions of popular insurgency. It must become a sustained, truly mass struggle, confronting ferocious backlash and overcoming multiple challenges while developing its considerable strengths.

Black Lives Matter began, quite modestly, as #BlackLivesMatter. The hashtag was created in 2013 by Patrice Cullors, Alicia Garza, and Opal Tometi—California and New York-based organizers active in incarceration, immigration, and domestic labor campaigns—after the acquittal of George Zimmerman for the murder in Florida of seventeen-year-old Trayvon Martin. The slogan’s deeper significance as the rallying cry for an incipient movement crystallized in 2014 during the Ferguson, Missouri uprisings against police brutality. In the words

of activists, the hashtag leapt from social media “into the streets.” Black Lives Matter, which Garza has called “a love note” to black communities, now serves as shorthand for diverse organizing efforts—both sporadic and sustained—across the country. The most recognizable expression of widespread black outrage against police aggression and racist violence, the phrase has engendered a spirited, if decentralized, movement.

## Birth of a Contemporary Human Rights Movement

The variety of local campaigns associated with Black Lives Matter confounds attempts to portray the movement in fine detail. Still, the contours of a modern human rights struggle are discernible. Black Lives Matter is youthful, though it has reenergized older activists who are eager to connect with a new generation of organizers. It arises from an organic black protest tradition, while drawing impassioned participants of all colors. Its leadership departs sharply from the model of the singular, charismatic clergyman or politician. Founded by black women, two of whom are queer, the movement has galvanized an array of grassroots activists in multiple communities. Few are full-time organizers, though many have had encounters with racialized policing or otherwise are personally affected by mass incarceration. Many are also feminist, LGBTQ, working-class or low-income, social media

---

<sup>1</sup>Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, USA

## Corresponding Author:

Russell Rickford, rr447@cornell.edu

savvy, and streetwise. Like other members of the movement, they are waging an unpretentious, democratic, militant crusade, determined to remain autonomous both from the American political establishment and from old guard leaders, such as Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton, seen as more invested in punditry than in popular struggle.<sup>2</sup>

***[Members of Black Lives Matter are] . . . determined to remain autonomous from both the American political establishment and from old guard leaders, such as Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton.***

It is this commitment to independence and militancy that has shaped the tactics of the movement. Demanding accountability for racist violence and an immediate end to the murder of black people at the hands of the state, Black Lives Matter activists have used a host of disruptive techniques to advance their cause. Their mainstay has been occupation—of highways, intersections, sporting events, retail stores, malls, campaign events, police stations, and municipal buildings. They have organized “die-ins,” marches, and rallies in multiple cities, viewing creative disturbance as a means of dramatizing routine attacks on black life.<sup>3</sup> Tellingly, the mantra of such demonstrations has evolved from “Hands up, don’t shoot!” to the more emphatic “Shut it down!” Whether the movement categorically rejects—or simply mistrusts—electoral politics remains unclear. What *is* evident is that most Black Lives Matter adherents recognize the inherent shortcomings of appeals to politicians, the courts, and other “acceptable” channels of redress, and have wholeheartedly embraced the arena of the street.

### **Political Tendencies within the Movement**

This bold strategy has by no means stopped or even slowed the crescendo of violence. The achievements of Black Lives Matter are

nevertheless striking. First, the movement has remained largely unfettered by “respectability politics,” the belief that subjugated groups can win support for their cause simply by adhering to conventional standards of decorum. As exponents of Black Lives Matter are keenly aware, rituals of propriety will not dignify dark skin that society as a whole detests and degrades. Movement participants have refused to engage in victim blaming. They have resisted dead-end narratives that emphasize “black-on-black crime” or that prescribe cultural rehabilitation while eschewing righteous dissent. (Such perspectives reinforce the racist premise that black pathology—not white supremacy—is chiefly responsible for the state’s systematic assault on black people.)

***. . . [R]ituals of propriety will not dignify dark skin that society as a whole detests and degrades.***

They have amassed concrete victories, too. Scattered instances of police officers being charged and disciplined for misconduct suggest that popular outcry can help force concessions from even the most repressive system.<sup>4</sup> The movement’s real success, however, lies in popularizing radical discourse and providing a vibrant model of democratic participation. As the movement’s founders have written,

When we say Black Lives Matter, we are broadening the conversation around state violence to include all of the ways in which Black people are intentionally left powerless at the hands of the state. We are talking about the ways in which Black lives are deprived of our basic human rights and dignity . . . How Black women bearing the burden of a relentless assault on our children and our families is state violence. How Black queer and trans folks bear a unique burden from a heteropatriarchal society that disposes of us like garbage and simultaneously fetishizes us and profits off of us, and that is state violence.<sup>5</sup>

Such rhetoric suggests that far-reaching change—not the mere amelioration of police abuse—is the objective.

Black Lives Matter’s elements of spontaneity and self-organization reflect a grassroots surge rather than a measured and conciliatory airing of grievances. Although by no means consistent or complete, its attempts to center those closer to the margins—women, queer people, and various non-elites—through the production of blogs, reports, missives, and by simply invoking the names of unsung victims of police violence (“Say Her Name,” as a related campaign is dubbed), signal an ethos of inclusiveness and a desire for a fundamental rearrangement of power relations.

**... [D]etermination to preserve black life in the face of white supremacist violence has always been a radical principle ...**

Similar traits have defined past social movements. One thinks immediately of the uncompromising spirit of the civil rights–Black Power era, and particularly of the militancy of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Like Black Lives Matter participants, SNCC’s young members also belonged to a generation radicalized by a shocking, highly publicized murder—the 1955 killing of Emmett Till by southern racists. Other historical analogies may be drawn. The street insurrectionists (labeled “rioters”) of the 1960s in some ways anticipated modern activists who face militarized police in urban centers.

In the current generation of protests, one detects resonances of Black Power’s insistence on self-definition and human rights rather than on mere social inclusion. Of course, determination to preserve black life in the face of white supremacist violence has always been a radical principle, from the anti-lynching crusades of Ida B. Wells around the turn of the twentieth century, to the Negro Silent Protest Parade of 1917, to the protests surrounding the Scottsboro Boys case of the 1930s, to the 1951 *We Charge Genocide* petition by the Civil Rights Congress, to the exertions of the Deacons for Defense and the Black Panthers

at the peak of the postwar movement. What animated these struggles—and those of countless leftist and labor causes—was their insurgent nature and the uncompromising character of their rank and file participants, traits that Black Lives Matter exemplifies.<sup>6</sup>

## **The Struggle for Racial Justice in the Age of Obama**

That said, calling “the movement for black lives” (a broad designation encompassing the many formations informally linked to Black Lives Matter) a “new civil rights movement” may obscure how dramatically the social landscape has shifted in recent decades. If Obama’s presence in the White House symbolizes acceptance by many Americans of the ideal of a multiracial society, the modern era also has witnessed the construction of a mass incarceration regime that viciously targets black communities. Dominant conceptions of “race relations” posit interpersonal relations, or the visibility of black elites, as critical indexes of progress. Such measures obscure both the persistence of systemic racism and the extent to which racialized practices have fueled the explosive growth of the carceral state. Enforcing racial hierarchy has been a central task of policing since the days of slave patrols. Today, however, the criminal justice system performs social control tasks—the regulation of black bodies, the harnessing of black surplus labor in the name of corporate profit—once fulfilled by Jim Crow segregation and other overt forms of discrimination.<sup>7</sup>

**Enforcing racial hierarchy has been a central task of policing since the days of slave patrols.**

Ironically, the sheer scope and intrusiveness of the modern carceral state provide distinct opportunities for organizers. By confronting racist patterns of policing, Black Lives Matter is addressing a reality that touches the lives of a wide segment of people of color. Structural racism in the post-segregation era generally has lacked unambiguous symbols of apartheid

around which a popular movement could cohere. Yet mass incarceration and the techniques of racialized policing on which it depends—“broken windows,” stop-and-frisk, “predictive policing,” and other extreme forms of surveillance—have exposed the refurbished, but no less ruthless, framework of white supremacy. In poorer black and brown communities, recognition that cops serve primarily to monitor and subjugate rather than “to serve and protect” has fostered both deep resentment and radical, oppositional consciousness.<sup>8</sup>

**... “[B]roken windows,” stop-and-frisk, “predictive policing,” and other extreme forms of surveillance—have exposed the refurbished ... framework of white supremacy.**

It has also created the potential for multiracial, class-conscious movements. However, despite the emergence of Black Lives Matter offshoots such as “Native Lives Matter,” no national alliance of people of color has coalesced on the issue of police violence. More extensive collaboration with Latinos and undocumented populations—both groups that have participated in Black Lives Matter protests—would signal a major victory for the movement. For the moment, the relative diversity of many Black Lives Matter formations has yet to engender a consciously multiracial political surge from below, as in the “rainbow radicalism” that marked some phases of Black Power organizing during the 1960s and 1970s. Lingering interethnic tensions and divisions, as well as the burdens of daily economic survival, continue to militate against the rebirth of such an expansive “rights” consciousness and ethic of solidarity. The existing movement has drawn the backing of white leftists and certain student organizations. Yet confrontations between Black Lives Matter proponents and presidential hopeful Bernie Sanders, in which activists interrupted campaign events to demand more robust engagement with questions of structural racism, have elicited deep hostility from some of the candidate’s supporters. Thankfully, such

interventions have revived debate about the dynamics of race and class (and the role of white privilege) in American progressive politics.<sup>9</sup>

**... [C]onfrontations between Black Lives Matter proponents and presidential hopeful Bernie Sanders ... have elicited deep hostility.**

The relationship of Black Lives Matter to white working-class and poor people, who also face elevated rates of police abuse, remains unclear. The false universality of the assertion that “All Lives Matter” appeals to many white workers, especially those inclined to dismiss black claims in the name of a fictive post-racial ideal. However, racially diverse groups of workers, including active members of the Fight for \$15 minimum wage campaign, have joined Black Lives Matter protests. (Collaboration between the movements has remained informal and fairly sporadic.) And although labor as a whole is split on the issue, some unions with large memberships of people of color have urged the AFL-CIO to withdraw its support for police unions, which often serve as mechanisms for suppressing civilian challenges to, and oversight of, law enforcement. The Service Employees International Union (SEIU) has issued statements of support for Black Lives Matter, but has yet to grant the movement the vigorous backing it has offered the Fight for \$15 struggle. Complicating the relationship between labor and the movement for black lives is the reality that the livelihood of some workers (e.g., prison guards) depends on the carceral state. Ultimately, Black Lives Matter may help intensify the growing pressure on the contemporary labor movement to revive its social justice roots. As a whole, however, Black Lives Matter activists have largely neglected to engage progressive trade unionism or to identify labor as a major ally.<sup>10</sup>

### **Internal Divergences and External Threats**

Even as it contemplates external alliances, Black Lives Matter is grappling with its own

internal tensions. The movement has avoided ties to mainstream electoral politics, which has long been a barren realm for the pursuit of genuinely progressive visions of transformation. Upon learning of their formal endorsement by the Democratic Party last fall, Black Lives Matter organizers promptly repudiated the statement of support and reaffirmed their commitment to autonomy. Yet elements within the movement (thus far not organized as distinct cliques) clearly wish to converse with, rather than merely confront, elites such as Hillary Clinton. A robust skepticism toward—rather than a strategic or ideological aversion to—electoral politics appears to characterize much of the movement. (This is an area of real potential conflict in the future.) Although many Black Lives Matter exponents see exerting mass pressure as their sole imperative, others have begun to formulate specific policy demands. Time will tell whether this impulse leads to substantive reform or merely to a conservative transition “from protest to politics.”<sup>11</sup>

Some organizers wish to transcend reformism altogether and pursue a revolutionary path. Leftists within and beyond Black Lives Matter have urged the movement to confront its ideological contradictions (including relatively ambiguous stances on electoral politics and the principle of class struggle), disavowing any trace of collaboration with the ruling class and identifying capitalism itself—and not merely white supremacy—as the enemy. Leaders of the movement have displayed signs of a race-class analysis that acknowledges the inseparability of economic justice and black liberation. (A Black Lives Matter website identifies both black poverty and “genocide” as forms of state violence.)<sup>12</sup> However, the movement has yet to articulate a clear analysis of the economic underpinnings of white supremacy. Until it does so, it is unlikely to develop a specific agenda of social redistribution with which to bolster its promising rhetoric of systemic change.

Questions of gender and sexuality appear to have generated the most significant fissures within Black Lives Matter. Although black women have been on the forefront of the movement, some supporters continue to frame the struggle in terms of a putatively masculine

prerogative of self-defense. The corporate media, for its part, consistently presents police brutality and extrajudicial killing as crises primarily for black men. By organizing vigils, rallies, and other events in the name of murdered women and girls, campaigns such as “Say Her Name” have fought the erasure or marginalization of the stories of black women, who face stunning rates of police assault and incarceration.

LGBTQ activists have used similar tactics to battle marginalization, even as they toil on the frontlines of struggle. Queer participants staged a constructive intervention during the Movement for Black Lives National Convening in Cleveland last summer, taking to the stage during one session to decry what they saw as elements of transphobia and heterosexism within the larger movement.<sup>13</sup> Willingness to reassess patriarchal and heteronormative leadership, it seems, will be a major test of Black Lives Matter’s long-term viability.

***By organizing vigils, rallies,  
and other events in the name  
of murdered women and girls,  
campaigns such as “Say Her Name”  
have fought the . . . marginalization  
. . . of black women.***

The competing political tendencies within Black Lives Matter have yet to become full-fledged factions. External opposition remains by far the greatest threat to the movement. The very phrase “black lives matter” has elicited tremendous anger and scorn in some quarters. (GOP candidates such as Ted Cruz have rallied their political base simply by reveling in the backlash.) Protesters in Ferguson, Baltimore, and elsewhere have been labeled “looters” and “thugs.” (The latter term appears to be the racial code word of the moment.) Conditioned to accept the premise of black criminality, a large portion of white America instinctively reads black demands as cases of cynical, special pleading. Many Americans continue to practice the art of evasion, embracing expressions such as “All Lives Matter,” “Police Lives Matter,” and most bizarrely, “Southern Lives Matter” (a response to criticism of the display of Confederate flags).

Even avowed opponents of anti-black violence have condemned militant resistance, choosing instead to issue “calls for healing and injunctions against anger.”<sup>14</sup> Like “All Lives Matter,” such appeals seek to deflect, discredit, or suppress black protest.

Police themselves have been the most forceful agents of the Black Lives Matter backlash. The anti-racist movement is facing the kind of intense state repression that crushed Occupy Wall Street. Police spokespeople and apologists have encouraged the demonization of the struggle, and have propagated the absurd claim that Black Lives Matter actually provokes assaults on cops. Meanwhile, the apparatuses of state violence have mobilized for a disgracefully one-sided war. Urban police forces have repeatedly confronted unarmed protesters with military-grade weaponry, a symptom of despotism that Americans seem to tolerate only because the most visible targets of such deployments are black. Anticipating further unrest, some law enforcement agencies have amassed a fearsome arsenal, including acoustic cannons, weaponized drones, and the foul smelling “skunk spray” used by the Israeli military in the subjugation of Palestinians. It is not surprising to learn that U.S. police and military forces view Black Lives Matter protesters as enemy combatants, subject them to extensive surveillance, and discuss their conquest in precisely the terms of a colonial occupation.<sup>15</sup>

These acts of coercion show no signs of cowering the resistance. Black Lives Matter, though still young, has entered a decisive phase. Whether it can expand its popular base will depend on its capacity to strengthen links to other embattled groups and grassroots movements, explicitly address the spate of violence against transgender people of color, and develop a firm ideological foundation while retaining its resiliency and élan. If it can do so, the movement may well pose a deeper challenge to existing social and political arrangements, prefiguring a more humane future and forging a theory and practice of mass struggle for our time.

### Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

### Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

### Notes

1. See Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Picador, 2007).
2. Jamilah King, “#blacklivesmatter: How Three Friends Turned a Spontaneous Facebook Post into a Global Phenomenon,” *The California Sunday Magazine*, January 3, 2015, available at <https://stories.californiasunday.com/2015-03-01/black-lives-matter/>; Brit Bennett, “Ta-Nehisi Coates and a Generation Waking Up,” *New Yorker*, July 15, 2015, available at <http://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/ta-nehisi-coates-and-a-generation-waking-up>; Glen Ford, “Tamir Rice and the Meaning of ‘No Justice—No Peace,’” *Black Agenda Report*, June 17, 2015, available at [http://www.blackagendareport.com/tamir\\_rice\\_no\\_justice\\_no\\_peace](http://www.blackagendareport.com/tamir_rice_no_justice_no_peace); Khury Petersen-Smith, “Black Lives Matter: A New Movement Takes Shape,” *International Socialist Review*, Spring 2015, available at <http://isreview.org/issue/96/black-lives-matter/>; “Rev. Sekou on Today’s Civil Rights Leaders: ‘I Take My Orders from 23-Year-Old Queer Women,’” *Yes! Magazine*, July 22, 2015, available at <http://www.yesmagazine.org/peace-justice/black-lives-matter-s-favorite-minister-reverend-sekou-young-queer>; Alicia Garza, “A Love Note to Our Folks,” *N+1 Magazine*, January 20, 2015, available at <https://nplusonemag.com/online-only/online-only/a-love-note-to-our-folks/>; Steven W. Thrasher, “‘We’re Winning’: Jesse Jackson on Martin Luther King, Obama and #blacklivesmatter,” *The Guardian*, August 16, 2015, available at <http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/aug/16/jesse-jackson-martin-luther-king-obama-and-blacklivesmatter>.
3. Nina Shapiro, “Marissa Johnson Part of a New, Disruptive Generation of Activists,” *Seattle Times*, August 15, 2015, available at <http://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/marissa-johnson-a-generation-of-activists-who-believe-in-disruption/>; Bree Newsom, “When Oppression Is the Status Quo, Disruption Is a Moral Duty,” *The Root*, August 7, 2015, available at [http://www.theroot.com/articles/culture/2015/08/when\\_oppression\\_is\\_the\\_status\\_quo\\_disruption\\_is\\_a\\_moral\\_duty.2.html](http://www.theroot.com/articles/culture/2015/08/when_oppression_is_the_status_quo_disruption_is_a_moral_duty.2.html).

4. Ken Klippenstein and Paul Gottinger, "6 Police Officers across the US Were Charged with Murder This Week, Proving Strength of Protests," *U.S. Uncut*, August 20, 2015, available at <http://usuncut.com/news/six-indictments-of-killer-cops-this-week-proves-blacklivesmatter-is-working/>.
5. "About the Black Lives Matter Network," available at <http://blacklivesmatter.com/about/>.
6. Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981); Gerald Horne, *Fire This Time: The Watts Uprising and the 1960s* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995); Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Holt, 2006); Paula J. Giddings, *Ida: A Sword among Lions* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008); Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction and Beyond in Black America, 1945-2006*, 3rd ed. (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2007); Roderick Bush, *The End of White World Supremacy: Black Internationalism and the Problem of the Color Line* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009); Robin D. G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002).
7. Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: The New Press, 2010). For more recent scholarship, see the March 2015 issue of *Journal of American History* (Vol. 102, no. 1).
8. Edward J. Escobar, "The Unintended Consequences of the Carceral State: Chicana/o Political Mobilization in Post-World War II America," *Journal of American History* 102 (2015): 174-84.
9. Sam Frizell, "Sanders and O'Malley Stumble during Black Lives Matter Protest," *Time*, July 18, 2015, available at <http://time.com/3963692/bernie-sanders-martin-omalley-black-lives-matter/>. For more on "rainbow radicalism," see Jeffrey O. G. Ogbar, *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 159-90.
10. "The #FightFor15 and the Black Lives Matter Movement March Together," #Fight for 15, available at <http://fightfor15.org/april15/main/the-fightfor15-and-the-black-lives-matter-movement-march-together/> Evan McMorris-Santoro and Jacob Fischler, "Unions Split, Take Sides after Ferguson," *BuzzFeed News*, August 22, 2014, available at <http://www.buzzfeed.com/evanmcsan/organized-labor-ferguson#.ypeP1eyM2w>; "Justice For Eric Garner," 1199SEIU, available at <http://www.1199seiu.org/justiceforgarner#sthash.PtVUi50a.dpbs>; "Denouncing Police Unions: A Letter to the AFL-CIO," UAW Local 2865, available at <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1QCWE4Tx0ti-vse9tbUBicL7v4IO-mOj2QC8Yk7HMMcEM/edit?pli=1>; Shawn Gude, "The Bad Kind of Unionism," *Jacobin Magazine*, Winter 2014, available at <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/01/the-bad-kind-of-unionism/>; Robert Korstad and Nelson Lichtenstein, "Opportunities Found and Lost: Labor, Radicals, and the Early Civil Rights Movement," *Journal of American History* 75 (1988): 786-811; David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 1991); Lois Weiner, "A Labor Movement That Takes Sides," *Jacobin*, September 7, 2015, available at <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/09/black-lives-matter-labor-day-dyett-strike/>.
11. Amanda Terkel, "Black Lives Matter Disavows Democratic Party's Show of Support," *Huffington Post*, last updated August 31, 2015, available at [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/black-lives-matter-dnc\\_55e48104e4b0c818f6188cab](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/black-lives-matter-dnc_55e48104e4b0c818f6188cab); "Black Lives Matter Infighting Leads to Splinter Group with Comprehensive Policy Agenda," *Your Black World*, August 21, 2015, available at <http://yourblackworld.net/2015/08/21/black-lives-matter-infighting-leads-to-splinter-group-with-comprehensive-policy-agenda/>; Bayard Rustin, "From Protest to Politics: The Future of the Civil Rights Movement," *Commentary*, February 1965, 25-31.
12. Bruce A. Dixon, "Where's the #BlackLivesMatter Critique of the Black Misleadership Class, or Obama or Hillary?" *Black Agenda Report*, August 6, 2015, available at <http://blackagendareport.com/node/4624>; Carmen Berkeley, "An Open Letter to the Black Community From 100 Black Youth," *Huffington Post*, July 15, 2013, available at [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/carmen-berkeley/an-open-letter-to-the-bla\\_b\\_3596688.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/carmen-berkeley/an-open-letter-to-the-bla_b_3596688.html); Matt Peppe, "The Baltimore Uprising and the U.S. Government's Record on Human Rights," *Global Research*, May 6, 2014, available at <http://www.globalresearch.ca/the-baltimore-uprising-and-the-u-s-governments-record-on-human-rights/5447509>; Barbara Ransby, "The



- Class Politics of Black Lives Matter,” *Dissent*, Fall 2015, available at <https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/class-politics-black-lives-matter>; “About the Black Lives Matter Network,” available at <http://blacklivesmatter.com/about/>.
13. Kali Nicole Gross, “African American Women, Mass Incarceration, and the Politics of Protection,” *Journal of American History* 102 (2015): 25-33; Priscilla Ward, “My Anger Is Justified: Why Black Women’s Rage Is Necessary for Change,” *forharriet*, August 16, 2015, available at <http://www.forharriet.com/2015/08/my-anger-is-justified-why-black-womens.html?m=1>; Josh Kruger, “#SayHerName Protest Exposes Tension among Philly Activists,” *Philadelphia Citypaper*, July 27, 2015, available at <http://citypaper.net/philly-sayhername-protest-exposes-fissures-in-activist-community-calls-for-feminism-and-intersectionality/>; Amanda Teuscher, “The Inclusive Strength of #BlackLivesMatter,” *The American Prospect*, August 2, 2015, available at <http://prospect.org/article/inclusive-strength-blacklivesmatter>; Alicia Garza, “A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement,” *The Feminist Wire*, October 7, 2014, available at <http://www.thefeministwire.com/2014/10/blacklivesmatter-2/>; Danielle C. Belton, “The 5 Biggest Challenges Facing #BlackLivesMatter,” *The Root.com*, August 12, 2015, available at [http://www.theroot.com/articles/culture/2015/08/the\\_5\\_biggest\\_challenges\\_facing\\_blacklivesmatter.html](http://www.theroot.com/articles/culture/2015/08/the_5_biggest_challenges_facing_blacklivesmatter.html).
  14. David Weigel and Katie Zezima, “Cruz Leads a GOP Backlash to ‘Black Lives Matter’ Rhetoric,” *Washington Post*, September 1, 2015, available at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2015/09/01/cruz-leads-a-gop-backlash-to-black-lives-matter-rhetoric/>; Philip Holloway, “Police Lives Matter,” *CNN.com*, September 4, 2015, available at <http://www.cnn.com/2015/08/31/opinions/holloway-police-lives-matter/>; Ayo Coly, “Healing Is Not Grieving: We Must Not ‘Move Forward’ In the Wake of Massacre,” *Truthout*, July 3, 2015, available at [http://www.truth-out.org/opinion/item/31693-healing-is-not-grieving-we-must-not-move-forward-in-the-wake-of-massacresupremacists-without-borders.html?smid=nytcore-iphone-share&smprod=nytcore-iphone&\\_r=0](http://www.truth-out.org/opinion/item/31693-healing-is-not-grieving-we-must-not-move-forward-in-the-wake-of-massacresupremacists-without-borders.html?smid=nytcore-iphone-share&smprod=nytcore-iphone&_r=0).
  15. Rania Khalek Rights, “St. Louis Police Bought Israeli Skunk Spray after Ferguson Uprising,” *Electronicintifada.net*, August 13, 2015, available at [https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/rania-khalek/st-louis-police-bought-israeli-skunk-spray-after-ferguson-uprising?utm\\_source=twitterfeed&utm\\_medium=twitter](https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/rania-khalek/st-louis-police-bought-israeli-skunk-spray-after-ferguson-uprising?utm_source=twitterfeed&utm_medium=twitter); Lee Fang, “Acoustic Cannon Sales to Police Surge after Black Lives Matter Protests,” *The Intercept*, August 14, 2015, available at <https://firstlook.org/theintercept/2015/08/14/after-ferguson-baltimore/>; Jay Symopoulos, “New Released Documents Reveal U.S. Military Labeled All Ferguson Protesters as ‘Enemy Forces,’” *The Free Thought Project.com*, April 18, 2015, available at <http://thefreethoughtproject.com/released-documents-reveal-u-s-military-labeled-ferguson-protestors-enemy-forces/#JWHBw087vuzUiPQ.01>; Matt Aghost, “No Longer a Conspiracy Theory: First State Legalizes Weaponized Drones for Cops,” *The Free Thought Project.com*, August 26, 2015, available at <http://thefreethoughtproject.com/longer-conspiracy-theory-state-legalizes-weaponized-drones-cops/>; Paddy O’Halloran, “‘They Will Not Take the Street’: Ferguson and Colonial Histories,” *Counterpunch.org*, August 20, 2015, available at <http://www.counterpunch.org/2015/08/20/they-will-not-take-the-street-ferguson-and-colonial-histories/>.

### Author Biography

**Russell Rickford** is an assistant professor of history at Cornell University. A specialist in the Black Radical Tradition and African-American political culture after World War II, he is the author of *We Are an African People: Black Power, Independent Education, and the Radical Imagination*.