



BLACK LIVES MATTER FLAG



The history to the Black Lives Matter (BLM) flag starts with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), founded in 1909. The NAACP created a special committee in 1916 that was dedicated to raising awareness about lynching as well as passing anti-lynching legislation. NAACP created a flag in the 1920s, and until 1938 the organization flew the flag outside of its headquarters on Fifth Avenue every time there was a lynching anywhere in the country.

In 2013, three radical Black organizers — Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi — created a Black-centered political will and movement building project called #BlackLivesMatter (BLM), in response to the acquittal of Trayvon Martin's murderer. The BlackLivesMatter hashtag was first used on social media.

The flag was then updated in 2015 by Brooklyn-based artist and activist, Dread Scott, following the fatal shooting of Walter Scott by a police officer in Charleston, South Carolina. Scott used his artwork to highlight the parallel between the efforts of NAACP's anti-lynching campaign 90 years ago and the protest of police killings today."

BLM is a global organization in the US, UK, and Canada, whose mission is to eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes. BLM is grassroots and decentralized, and leaders have emphasized the importance of local organizing over national leadership. It is a political and social movement that seeks to highlight racism, discrimination, and racial inequality experienced by black people, and promote anti-racism. Its primary concerns are incidents of police brutality and racially motivated violence against black people. It started following the killings of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and Rekia Boyd, among others. The movement and its related organizations typically advocate for various policy changes considered to be related to black liberation. It is connected to collective efforts to mitigate racism and to build a more equitable society.

The black background with white text flag design was adopted as the symbol of racial injustice and protest in 2020 after the death of African American George Floyd. **The original branding for the movement was done by Design Action Collective, a California-based design studio which specializes in clients with social purposes.** The BLM wordmark – a simple white typeface, underlined three times – is easy to reproduce. And the black and yellow colorway is used throughout graphic communications – across social media assets, posters and on physical material like T-shirts. The branding has since been refined and updated, but those essential details remain the same.

People are encouraged to download the graphics and use them to spread awareness, as profile pictures for example.

Decades after these flags were developed, we recognize that individuals in these communities still experience discrimination, don't always receive the services they are entitled to, and are impacted in our communities every day. Displaying these flags is one step that Community Action Pioneer Valley is taking to reinforce that we still have work to do before we can say we are truly equitable and inclusive.