

BLACK LIVES MATTER

- I In the United States and many other countries around the world, people are protesting against the mistreatment of Black people, especially by (mostly white) police officers, whose job is to serve and protect them. Hundreds of thousands of people in the US and around the world are going into the streets holding signs and marching to raise awareness of the problems faced by people in the Black community. For many decades, Black people have been treated unfairly compared with people of European descent and others. Often they have not been given the same advantages—for instance, not hired for jobs or unfairly harassed. Time and again, Black people have protested this unfair treatment. While there have been some improved changes and accountability in policing, there continue to be many challenges.
- II Then on May 25, a Black man named George Floyd was killed by police officers in Minneapolis, Minnesota. They were arresting him for a relatively minor alleged offense. He did not deserve the treatment he got and he did not deserve to die. Because it was caught on video, everyone around the world saw the brutally unfair treatment of Floyd at the hands of the police. The four police officers who killed George Floyd were fired from their jobs and have been charged with murder (in one case) or aiding and abetting murder or manslaughter (in three cases).
- III After Floyd's death, as well as other recent racist incidents (in the US and other countries including Canada) many protests took place. Hundreds of thousands of people in many countries have marched to raise awareness about racism against Black people and the need to find a solution. Many protesters use the slogan "Black Lives Matter." and many of the protests in the United States and around the world have been peaceful although some of the protests, especially in the US, became violent.
- IV Many peaceful protests have been held before. In 2017, American football player Colin Kaepernick and others began "taking a knee" during the American national anthem. That meant they knelt down before their football games. They did it to protest Black people being treated unfairly by police. It was a peaceful way to protest a very important issue. However, Kaepernick and others who "took a knee" faced enormous opposition to this peaceful action, including from Donald Trump, the president of the United States, as well as many of the owners of the football teams. (Those owners this week admitted they had been wrong.) Often, there are many sides to complex issues. However, there is never "another side" to racism. Racism—judging someone by the colour of their skin—is always wrong.
- V On the weekend, Minneapolis' city council (the politicians who run the city where George Floyd was killed) said their police force needs to be dismantled (taken apart). They want a new system of law enforcement and new laws to better protect Black people. Some cities are having discussions about defunding police forces, and using that money to create a better system of policing that is more fair for everyone.
- VI On Saturday, however, Minneapolis' mayor, Jacob Frey, said he is opposed to abolishing the police force completely. People around the world are following this situation carefully to see what will be done. The protests are continuing and people are discussing what can be done to make things better for Black people. Many people of all races are listening to what Black people have to say, so they can better understand and support them.



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Image by Patrick Behna from Pixabay.

Text adapted for educational purposes from "Black Lives Matter", written by Joyce Grant for Teaching Kids News

1. Find in the text words or expressions that mean:

- increase public understanding (I)
- responsibility (I)
- repeatedly (I)
- assisting a crime (II)
- happened (III)
- walked in protest (III)
- phrase, motto (III)
- questions, matters (IV)
- confronted (IV)
- taking money from the budget of (V)
- ending (VI)

2. Transform these sentences found in the text into passive or active voice without changing the meaning:

- They have not been given the same advantages—for instance, not hired for jobs or unfairly harassed
- A Black man named George Floyd was killed by police officers in Minneapolis
- They were arresting him for a relatively minor alleged offense
- The four police officers who killed George Floyd were fired and have been charged with murder
- Many peaceful protests have been held before
- People are discussing what can be done to make things better for Black people

3. Rewrite these sentences by replacing the words or expressions in bold with different ones. Do not change the meaning:

- a. **While** there have been some improved changes and accountability in policing, there continue to be many challenges
- b. **Because** it was caught on video, everyone around the world saw the brutally unfair treatment of Floyd at the hands of the police
- c. They did it **to** protest Black people being treated unfairly by police.
- d. Many people of all races are listening to that, so they **can** better understand and support them.

THINK AND DISCUSS

Write a brief opinion essay about these questions:

1) This has been a traumatic time for Black people. Non-Black people have become more concerned and are troubled by what they are learning about the experiences that Black people have with the police. In your opinion, what are some things that need to happen now? How should they happen (for instance, “*who* should do *what*?”)?

2) Some racist people are posting bad comments on articles about the Black Lives Matter movement. How do you think social media platforms, like Twitter, Instagram and Facebook, should handle racist comments?

3) What does “black lives matter” mean to you?