

**Czech University of Life Sciences Prague**

**Faculty of Economics and Management**



**Bachelor Thesis**

**Economic Causes and Consequences of the Black Lives  
Matter Movement in the USA and UK**

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## BACHELOR THESIS ASSIGNMENT

John Mulenga

Business Administration

Thesis title

**Economic Causes and Consequences of the Black Lives Matter Movement in the USA and UK**

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### Objectives of thesis

The primary goal of this thesis is to examine the economic motivations, causes and effects of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (US). Although the movement arose in response to a range of social and political issues, the thesis will focus primarily on the economic context, in particular on economic equalities and injustices, including barriers to employment, poverty and disparities in income. The thesis will also examine the efforts taken by the movement to address these issues, and consider the actual and perceived consequences of this movement for the economic opportunities of black people in the UK and USA. This will be carried out through analysis of publicly available documents, news and media reporting, and a survey of university students.

### Methodology

The literature review will summarize the history of the Black Lives Matter movement, and present the economic context that gave rise to it, putting it in the context of theoretical discussions about the economic causes and consequences of social movements, as well as concepts of structural and systematic racism and inequality. The practical part will involve comparative analysis of publicly available documents and materials, and a survey of university students about their perceptions of the movement and its influence.

## The proposed extent of the thesis

40-50 pages

## Keywords

Black Lives Matter (BLM), structural inequality, socioeconomic status, social divisions, social movements,

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## Recommended information sources

GIUGNI, Marco and GRASSO, Maria T. (2019). 'The Economic Outcomes of Social Movements'. In The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Social Movements. London: Wiley Blackwell.

IMOH, Collins. (2020). 'How the Failure of Multiculturalism Led to the Rise of Black Lives Matter'. The Conversation, September 30, 2020. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/how-the-failure-of-multiculturalism-led-to-the-rise-of-black-lives-matter-144463>

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STANLEY, Jason and GOODWIN, Jeff. (2013). 'Political Economy and Social Movements'. in The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements, London: Wiley Blackwell.

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## **Declaration**

I declare that I have worked on my bachelor thesis titled " Economic Causes and Consequences of the Black Lives Matter Movement in the USA and UK" by myself and I have used only the sources mentioned at the end of the thesis. As the author of the bachelor thesis, I declare that the thesis does not break copyrights of any person thereof.

In Prague on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2022

\_\_\_\_\_John Mulenga\_\_\_\_\_



## **Acknowledgement**

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# **Economic Causes and Consequences of the Black Lives Matter Movement in the USA and UK**

## **Abstract**

The struggles that black people experience, such as racism and discrimination, have persisted for so long. That is because they are embedded in the very fabric of our society and institutions. In other words, these struggles are somewhat systemic. The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement has been working toward ending these struggles by calling out injustices against black people and protesting against police brutality. BLM movement has also been a great promoter of diversity and inclusion in workplaces, as it understands that black people have not had the opportunities that white people have. This thesis will determine the Economic Causes and Consequences of the Black Lives Matter Movement in the USA and UK. The author will also discuss the social and economic hardships black people experience and what the BLM movement has done to combat these hardships as well as its motives. This will allow the author to determine whether the BLM movement has been effective in its fight against the struggles that black people experience. The author argues that the efforts made by the BLM movement have been effective at raising awareness of and reducing these struggles, while also acknowledging that it will take long to end them.

## **Keywords**

Black Lives Matter (BLM), structural inequality, socioeconomic status, social divisions, social movements.

# **Ekonomické příčiny a důsledky hnutí Black Lives Matter v USA a Velké Británii**

## **Abstrakt**

Projevy rasismu a rasové diskriminace, se kterými se černoši potýkají, ve společnosti stále přetrvávají. Je tomu tak proto, že jsou zakořeněny do samotné struktury naší společnosti a institucí. Jinými slovy, tyto problémy jsou systematického původu. Hnutí Black Lives Matter (BLM) se snaží o překonání těchto problémů tím, že poukazuje na nespravedlnosti mířené vůči černošům a protestuje proti policejní brutalitě. Hnutí BLM také významně propaguje diverzitu a inkluzi v pracovním prostředí, protože vnímá jako další související problém i to, že černoši nemají rovné pracovní příležitosti. Tato bakalářská práce zjišťuje ekonomické příčiny a důsledky hnutí Black Lives Matter v USA a Velké Británii. Autor se bude zabývat sociálními a ekonomickými těžkostmi a překážkami kterým černoši čelí, a tím, co hnutí BLM v boji s těmito těžkostmi udělalo. To autorovi umožní posoudit, zda bylo hnutí BLM ve svých snahách efektivní. Autor tvrdí, že úsilí vynaložené hnutím BM bylo účinné do té míry, že zvýšilo povědomí o těchto problémech a rovněž pomohlo tyto problémy zmírnit, zároveň ale uznává, že jejich úplné překonání bude trvat ještě dlouho.

## **Klíčová slova**

Black Lives Matter (BLM), strukturální nerovnost, socioekonomický status, sociální rozdělení, sociální hnutí.

## **List of Abbreviations**

BLM = Black Lives Matter

VC = Venture Capitalist

CEO = Chief Executive Officer

UK = United Kingdom

US = United States

ONS = Office for National Statistics

## Contents

1.	Introduction.....	10
2.	Objective and methodology.....	11
2.1	Objective.....	11
2.2	Methodology.....	11
3.	Literature Review.....	12
3.1	Economic policy and social movements.....	12
3.2	Social Movements' Economic Outcomes.....	12
3.2.1	Demanding Fair Government Regulation.....	13
3.2.2	Direct Market Interventions.....	13
3.3	What is the Black Lives Matter (BLM) Movement?.....	14
3.3.1	'All lives matter'.....	15
3.4	The tragedy that planted the seed of BLM movement.....	15
3.5	Economic hardships faced by Blacks in the UK and US.....	16
3.5.1	Business as a source of stable income.....	18
3.5.2	Factors that contribute to less VC funding for black businesses.....	21
3.6	Social hardships faced by Blacks in the UK and USA.....	23
3.7	Actions taken by BLM movement to combat these hardships.....	27
3.7.1	Promoting racial justice in education.....	28
3.7.2	Ending Police Violence.....	28
3.7.3	Stopping the adoration of history's racist and colonial icons.....	30
3.7.4	Using social media and celebrities to spread their message.....	31
4.	practical part.....	34
4.1	Research method.....	34
4.1.1	Choice of Participants.....	34
4.1.2	Remarks on the process.....	35
4.2	Documentary analysis.....	35
5.	Results and Discussion.....	38
5.1	Personal views on Black Lives Matter.....	38
5.2	Criticism of the BLM movement.....	39
5.3	How people's views on BLM affect their social lives.....	40
5.4	Achievements of the BLM movement.....	42

6. Conclusion.....	44
7. References.....	46
List of figures.....	49
List of pictures.....	49
List of tables.....	49

# 1. INTRODUCTION

As much as we would like to think that we live in a meritocratic society, we cannot deny that certain groups of people haven't had the opportunity or advantages that other groups of people have. For example, it is hard to miss the disparities that exist in the socioeconomic status between blacks and whites. Whites, for example, hold high-profile positions in Fortune 500 companies with just a tiny fraction held by blacks. Is it that black people are less deserving of these positions? Do more white people have more qualifications to hold these positions?

The civil rights movement of the 1960s campaigned against discrimination and segregation to bring equality between blacks and whites. Decades later, the fight is still not over, as seen from news reports. Blacks are still disproportionately underemployed, less likely to have a college degree, more likely to live in a poor neighborhood, and more likely to be incarcerated. Also, blacks are more likely to experience police brutality compared to whites. The civil rights movement may have bettered the lives of black people in other areas, but an average black person in the Western world experiences hardships that make his or her advancement socially or economically difficult.

The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement is our modern-day civil rights movement. It advocates for the rights of mainly black people but also other marginalized groups like immigrants, LGBTQIA, Afro-Asians, and Latinx. It has now been eight years since the founding of BLM and, in this period, many protests against police brutality have happened in its name. The acquittal of George Zimmerman in the shooting of Trayvon Martin in 2012 is what kick-started the movement, and it grew nationally in 2014 after the death of Michael Brown in Missouri and Eric Garner in New York. There have been many more protests, but the recent and biggest one happened in May 2020 following the death of George Floyd, who died of suffocation because a police officer, Derek Chauvin holding his knee on Mr. Floyd's neck as he gasped for breath.

It is also important to recognize that one reason BLM came about is that the concept of multiculturalism has failed black people. Colins Imoh defines multiculturalism as the practice of giving importance to all cultures in a society so that they coexist without domination; and encourages integration and representation of cultures in various institutions, which can help to foster tolerance, cohesion, and understanding. Imoh argues that as multiculturalism moved away from its original focus of ethnic minority rights and became integrated with various human rights campaigns, disadvantaged groups such as women, people with disabilities, people of different religions, languages, and social class also joined this struggle for equality against oppression. As a result, equality for everyone became a more prominent theme, thus multiculturalism failed to achieve transformation for black people in particular (Imoh, 2020). By bringing the struggles of black people at the center of the movement through protests, BLM is working toward rectifying that. The question is: To what extent have these protests impacted the lives of black people in the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK)? Put another way, has the life of an average black person in these countries improved socially and economically because of these protests? Alternatively, is the BLM movement a cause for division between black and white people in these countries?

## 2. OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Objective

The primary goal of this thesis is to examine the economic motivations, causes and effects of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (US). Although the movement arose in response to a range of social and political issues, the thesis will focus primarily on the economic context, in particular on economic equalities and injustices, including barriers to employment, poverty and disparities in income. The thesis will also examine the efforts taken by the movement to address these issues, and consider the actual and perceived consequences of this movement for the economic opportunities of black people in the UK and USA. This will be carried out through analysis of publicly available documents, news and media reporting, and a survey of university students.

### 2.2 Methodology

The literature review will summarize the history of the Black Lives Matter movement, and present the economic context that gave rise to it, putting it in the context of theoretical discussions about the economic causes and consequences of social movements, as well as concepts of structural and systematic racism and inequality. The practical part will involve comparative analysis of publicly available documents and materials, and a survey of university students about their perceptions of the movement and its influence. Furthermore, the author considers achieving this through a unique online survey. The criteria to consider for this research is geographical location, age category and ethnicity because participants views of BLM may differ according to age category and geographical location. Age category will be classified as follows; First category aged between 18-21, Second category aged between 22-24 and last category ranged between 25-28 while ethnicity will cover those who identify themselves as African American or black, European Americans or white. The geo-location as attributed in the Thesis title will be USA and the UK.



## 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 3.1 Economic policy and social movements

For many years, political economy has played an important role in many fundamental English-language studies of social movements. What students of social movements have in common is a focus on resources and how they are obtained, as well as opportunities, solidarities, and movement opportunities. Varied social movements have different techniques for reaching out to an audience. In most cases, the method is heavily influenced by who the movement is attempting to address or whose attention it seeks. In the example of Black Lives Matter, the audience is government or private-sector businesses.

According to Stanley and Goodwin's study, political economy provides a variety of principles that are useful for understanding social movements. It is vital to recognize that the interests of movements differ markedly from one another. When we analyze material interest as an actor within the structure of a firm, we can see how employers always aim to maximize profits while minimizing expenses through lowering labor costs. This is because rising costs/expenses have an impact on a firm's profitability. Employees, on the other hand, are generally interested in increasing their pay and improving their working circumstances. This example demonstrates clearly that interests can differ significantly depending on one's structural position, and that antagonisms might arise between the interests of various groups. Individuals with common interests may sometimes act together against others with opposing interests, as when organized workers struggle against employers. (Stanley and Goodwin, 2013)

Political economists distinguish between power that derives from a movement's scale and power that arises from the structural position of movement participants in political and economic processes, according to Stanley and Goodwin. For example, organized truckers can demonstrate "structural power" by disturbing regular persons' social and economic lives by halting companies or clogging traffic. This in itself demonstrates power that arises from structural position of certain movements. Political economy also aids in comprehending the emergence of new collective identities in the twenty-first century, but most importantly, it aids in comprehending the motivations, objectives, and goals of social movements. It makes elite splits, state fiscal crises, and other "political possibilities" more understandable. Furthermore, political economy is useful in demonstrating how individuals are connected and how they work together to attain common goals.

### 3.2 Social Movements' Economic Outcomes

Contemporary scholars have had a look at how social movements are aggressive towards the market and how this aggression is likely to bring about market change. According to Giugni and Grasso, Market Capitalism as a system generates and reproduces inequality which in return centralizes power in the hands of a few. In turn, this castigates contestation in the attempt to change such negative outcomes. Today, on the other hand, economic outcomes are more likely to be associated with reformist trends such as corporate responsibility, ethical business, sustainable development, social enterprise, and the green economy. (Giugni and Grasso, 2013).

Depending on who the target is, movements have adopted three pathways namely: (1) directly challenging the corporations; (2) creation of market alternatives through institutional entrepreneurship; (3) forming of transnational systems of private regulations.

### 3.2.1 Demanding Fair Government Regulation

Much of the activities of social movements in modernity is directed toward the state, with the goal of enacting or opposing new legislation and policies. Although much of the current study on social movements in markets concentrates on their direct interference, scholars have also examined movements' attempts to achieve government regulation and the methods in which they attempt to achieve economic goals through state challenges. In the broadest sense, actions aimed at destabilizing a particular political regime, if successful, result in economic outcomes, such as the development of a new economic system because of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. Several historical and present movements might be considered as striving to create economic results. Scholars have emphasized the importance of disruption, as well as other endogenous characteristics, in determining economic policy results. Such has been seen, for example, in antiprivatization demonstrations in India (Uba, 2005). Studying if and how social movements may be successful by addressing the state in order to win stronger government regulation of markets necessitates further research into the state's reaction to movement mobilization as well as the variables that lead to it. This question is discussed in greater detail below.

### 3.2.2 Direct Market Interventions

According to King and Pearce (2010), most new research on markets focuses on movements' direct interventions in the market rather than their attempts to persuade governments to regulate markets (Bartley 2003; Ingram and Rao 2004). Frequently, social movements try to avoid the state by focusing on nonstate actors, such as corporations and businesses. When states favor the elites and exclude disadvantaged groups, the market can provide an alternative entry point for some groups and movements. In this regard, King and Pearce (2010: 252) observe that "due to reputational concerns and stakeholder commitments, corporations are often more responsive to new types of social activism than the government." They cite the example of the US gay rights movement being more successful in securing domestic partnership benefits for Fortune 500 employees than for federal government employees (Briscoe and Safford 2008; Raeburn 2004). As a result, existing market companies are increasingly seen as relevant political targets for social movement activism, as their reforms can have an impact on many people.

As a result of these issues, state regulation has become increasingly transnational. As a result, social movements aiming to address these issues have turned their sights on international institutions (Smith, 2001). Indeed, the rise of transnational movements and contention has brought local concerns to global forums, but they have struggled to find influence in international governance arenas that are seen as more capable of coercing market actors to their rules, as well as challenging the powerful cartels of international corporations. Social movements often employ a diverse set of strategies and modes of activity. As a result, social movements can use a variety of techniques to generate economic outcomes, whether as insiders or outsiders. According to Balsiger (2016), movements can play three different roles in market change: (1)

contention (insider and outsider tactics, public campaigns, boycotts); (2) collaboration (labels, certification); and (3) alternative niches (creation of new markets and categories, movements as market actors). Because there are few traditional pathways for enacting economic outcomes within firms, disruptive approaches are frequently the only way to force change (Weber, Rao, and Thomas 2009). Disruption can be a powerful tool for influencing business players and, more broadly, for effecting market change. Disruptive actions by social movements, such as boycotts or protests, can impose considerable costs on their targets and cause major economic repercussions, such as a loss of profits, driving firms to change their more negatively viewed policies (Luders, 2006). Scholars have consistently demonstrated the significance of the greater context – social, political, and cultural – for the outcomes of social movements. Economic outcomes are no different. Thus, research on market movements has emphasized the importance of corporate and industry characteristics in determining the influence of market movements (King 2008). Similarly, the cultural background influences the economic outcomes of a movement. Movements must adapt to their environments to have a greater influence (McCammon, 2012).

The media is a particularly essential piece of the broader background for market movements. Outsiders frequently rely on the media to mobilize public support for their cause (Koopmans, 2004). The media may be quite helpful in interpreting movement frameworks for the general public to consume. They can aid movements in "shaming the company" (Bartley and Child 2014) and communicating a bad picture of a specific target to harm its public image and reputation (O'Rourke 2005; Schurman 2004). Under some conditions, such a "name and shaming technique" can be effective, shaping both the market and the field in which firms operate (Bartley and Child 2011). Negative media coverage of corporations can be especially damaging as certain organizations become linked with unethical consumer practices.

### 3.3 What is the Black Lives Matter (BLM) Movement?

In the summer of 2013, three female Black organizers — Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi — created a Black-centered political will and movement building project called Black Lives Matter (BLM). Following the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the shooting death of Trayvon Martin back in 2012, BLM began with a social media hashtag, #BlackLivesMatter (Black Lives Matter). The movement grew nationally in 2014 after the deaths of Michael Brown in Missouri and Eric Garner in New York.

Since then, it has established itself as a worldwide movement, particularly after the death of George Floyd. As written on the Black Lives Matter website, "Black Lives Matter is an ideological and political intervention in a world where black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise. It is an affirmation of Black folks' humanity, our contributions to this society, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression." Most recently, #BlackLivesMatter has spearheaded demonstrations worldwide protesting police brutality and systematic racism that overwhelmingly affect the Black community.

The BLM movement also has a philanthropic arm called Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation. According to the BLM website, the purpose of the foundation is to support "Black-led movements in the U.S., 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.” The foundation has committed to struggling together and as well as to imagining and creating a world free of anti-Blackness, ensuring that every Black person has the social, economic, and political power to thrive.

Both the movement and the foundation are working to fight the oppression of and discrimination against black people, but also other minority groups. The #BlackLivesMatter is the hashtag that rallies social media groups to voice their grievances whenever an injustice happens to these minority groups.

### 3.3.1 ‘All lives matter’

What exactly does it mean when someone says, "all lives matter"? Some people interpreted the Black Lives Matter motto as confrontational and divisive when it first appeared. They used it as an excuse to exclude people of other races. In response, the phrase "all lives matter" was coined, supposedly to argue that all lives are equal because we are all humans. But even so, Black Lives Matter doesn't at all imply that other lives are insignificant. Black Lives Matter simply recognizes that Black lives matter in a world where they are reviled, disadvantaged, and treated unfairly.

It's not a simple phrase - replying to "Black Lives Matter" with "all lives matter" sidetracks the discussion about racism against Black people. The phrase is interpreted as dismissing, disregarding, or disputing these issues, effectively shutting down this important debate.

## 3.4 The tragedy that planted the seed of BLM movement

If we were to single out the seed that planted the movement which we now know today as Black Lives Matter (BLM), the death of Trayvon Martin would be it. George Zimmerman, a neighborhood watch volunteer spotted Trayvon Martin walking through a Sanford, Florida community and wearing a hoodie. Despite being unarmed, Zimmerman deemed Martin suspicious and called the police. The 911 operator instructed Zimmerman not to get off his SUV or approach Martin, but he disregarded the instructions. Later, Zimmerman started a confrontation that resulted in a fight that ended with him shooting seventeen-year-old Martin dead (Lebron, 2017). Upon learning about Martin's death, many saw it as an unfair death. Lebron writes that despite Martin's younger age and the important fact that he was unarmed, “his character quickly his character quickly became the center of speculation and conversation—he was a black teenager wearing a hoodie, walking through someone else's neighborhood; if Zimmerman suspected him, he must have been suspect-worthy.” (Collins, 2020)

To the surprise of many, in the summer of 2013, Zimmerman was found not guilty of all charges related to Martin's death. This was the moment that birthed the BLM movement. The movement started as a hashtag when three black women—Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi—took to social media with #BlackLivesMatter to voice their grievance over the treatment of black people. As Alicia Garza wrote, “I created #BlackLivesMatter with Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi, two of my sisters, as a call to action for Black people after 17-year-old Trayvon Martin was post-humously placed on trial for his own murder and the killer, George Zimmerman, was not held accountable for the crime he committed.” (Garza, 2014)

Today, the BLM movement has grown beyond its founders. It has become a force for change in America and across the world. In talking about the current state of the movement, Lebron writes, “the [BLM] movement cannot be identified with any single leader or small group of leaders... Much like the way a corporate franchise works, minus revenue and profit, #BlackLivesMatter is akin to a social movement brand that can be picked up and deployed by any interested group of activists inclined to speak out and act against racial injustice (Lebron, 2017).” It’s not uncommon to see #BlackLivesMatter trending on social media whenever there is news about the shooting of a black person in the US or the UK.

### 3.5 Economic hardships faced by Blacks in the UK and US

Black people in both the UK and the US lead lives of hardships compared with their white counterparts. Many factors contribute to this. By providing evidence from reputable sources, the author will bring to light what these hardships are, as well as some reasons they exist.

We can trace the economic inequalities that exist between blacks and whites in both the UK and the US back to slavery. The enslavement of black people made it impossible for them to own property as they were considered property themselves. They were owned by their slave masters the same way those slave masters owned cattle and other property. This went on for many years, that it was unthinkable for any black person to dream of owning property. Slavery made it impossible for black people to get an education—something very essential to one’s economic advancement. Although slavery was abolished more than a hundred years ago in both countries (1833 in the UK and 1865 in the US), its effects still linger to date.

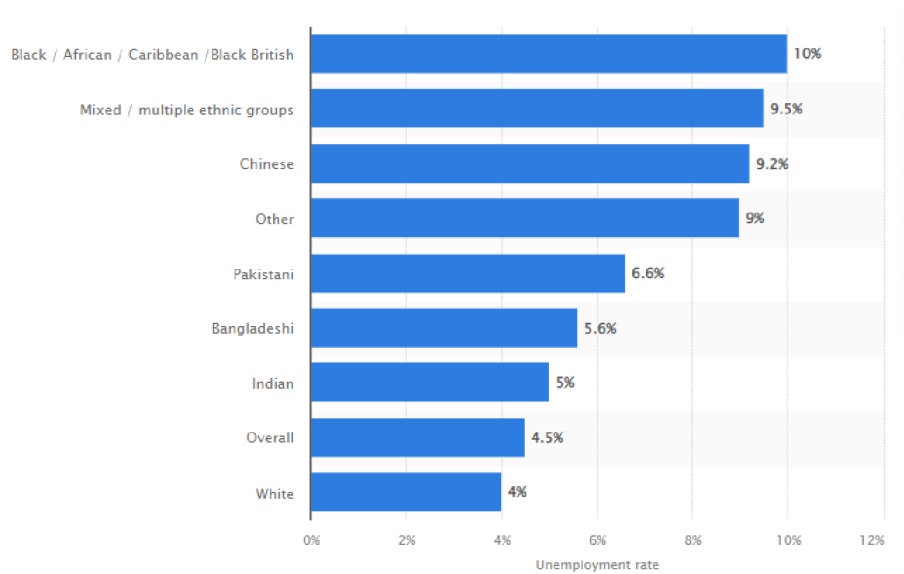
After slavery ended, the first generation of freed blacks could only complete far fewer years of education on average than whites. In the US, for example, black people only attended racially segregated public schools, mostly in the south. These schools were mainly underfunded, making it difficult for the students to get a quality education. Bertocchi and Dimico in their research commentary, point out that this combination of low educational attainment and inferior educational quality contributed to the continuity of large wage and income gaps between blacks and whites.

Education, particularly further education, among blacks has not seen significant improvement. In England, for instance, the percentage of participants in further education for blacks in 2011 was 6.5% and 6.8% in 2019, increasing only by 0.3%. By comparison, the Asian ethnic group had 8.4% in 2011 and 9.6% in 2019 (GOV.UK, 2021). Likewise, in the US, there has not been a significant improvement in the number of blacks who attain further education. In 2010, the percentage of adults aged 25 and older who had completed a bachelor’s or higher degree for blacks was 18%. This number slightly increased in 2016 to 21% (National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Educational Attainment). The numbers from both countries show that there has been little improvement among blacks who attain further education. This, of course, is problematic as the modern labor market has become more and more competitive. To stand out from the large pool of applicants, a candidate needs a certain level of education—and the more high-profile the job is, the higher that level becomes. It would not be surprising, therefore, to discover that fewer blacks get employed in those high-profile jobs. This

subsequently increases the income gap between blacks and whites, as many blacks, because of their lower education level, would be employed in lower-paying jobs.

The lower education level among blacks is also reflected in unemployment figures. The Black ethnic group (i.e., African, Caribbean, and Black British) in the UK has the highest unemployment rate among ethnic groups at 10%, while that of the white group is only 4%. This difference is enough to exacerbate the income gap between the two groups.

Figure 1 Unemployment rate for ethnic groups in the United Kingdom as of 2nd quarter 2021



Source: Statista

The differences in unemployment rate between blacks and whites are also present in the US. Shown below is a table of these differences. All the numbers are percentages.

Table 1 Household data not seasonally adjusted quarterly averages

Age	White		Black or African American	
	3rd 2020	3rd 2021	3rd 2020	3rd 2021
Total, 16 years and over	7.9	4.6	13.2	8.4
16 to 19 years	15.7	9.6	22.1	15.9
16 to 17 years	15.3	9.2	20.7	15.9
18 to 19 years	16.0	9.9	22.9	15.9
20 years and over	7.6	4.3	12.9	8.1
20 to 24 years	12.6	7.4	24.4	14.3

Age	White		Black or African American	
	3rd 2020	3rd 2021	3rd 2020	3rd 2021
25 years and over	7.1	4.0	11.5	7.4
25 to 54 years	7.1	4.2	11.7	7.7
25 to 34 years	8.9	5.0	14.5	9.9
35 to 44 years	6.2	3.8	10.2	7.3
45 to 54 years	6.2	3.7	9.7	5.2
55 years and over	7.0	3.6	10.9	6.2
55 to 64 years	6.7	3.4	10.9	6.4
65 years and over	7.6	4.2	10.9	5.5

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

From table 1, we can see that from all age ranges and in both years, the unemployment rate for blacks is always higher than that of whites.

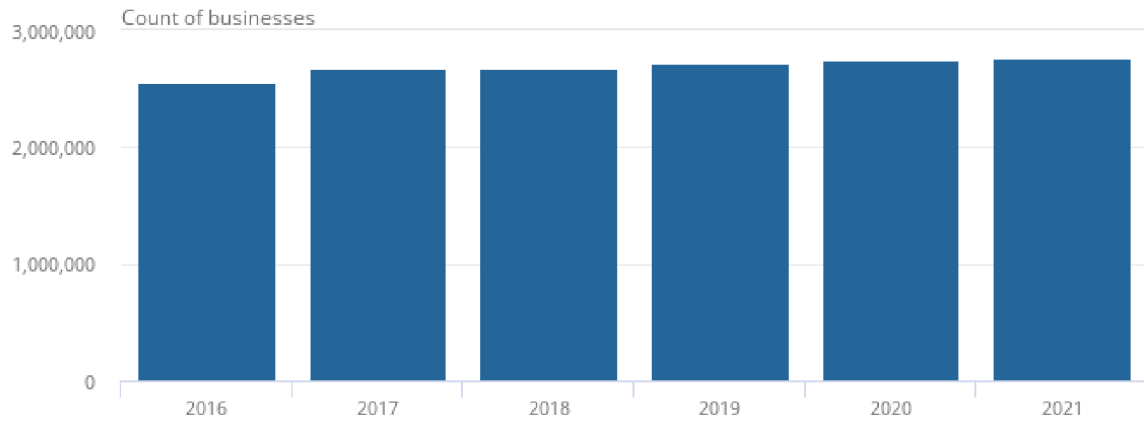
The high unemployment rate among blacks may arguably be one of the chief reasons for their economic hardships. Without a stable source of income, it is very difficult for anyone to be economically stable—and employment provides that stable source of income. Therefore, if the black ethnic group continues to be underemployment in both the UK and the US, members of this ethnic group will continue to experience economic hardships.

### 3.5.1 Business as a source of stable income

For the unemployed, an alternative to a stable source of income is business. Besides providing income to the owner, the business also provides employment. Private businesses, whether large or small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play a huge role in the economies of both the UK and the US. It is no wonder both countries encourage their people to create and manage businesses. The media too has made celebrities out of entrepreneurs, making the professions highly sought after by young and middle-aged people. Unsurprisingly, the number of businesses has continued to increase in the five years as depicted in the chart below.



Figure 2 Number of VAT and/or PAYE based businesses, UK, 2016 to 2021

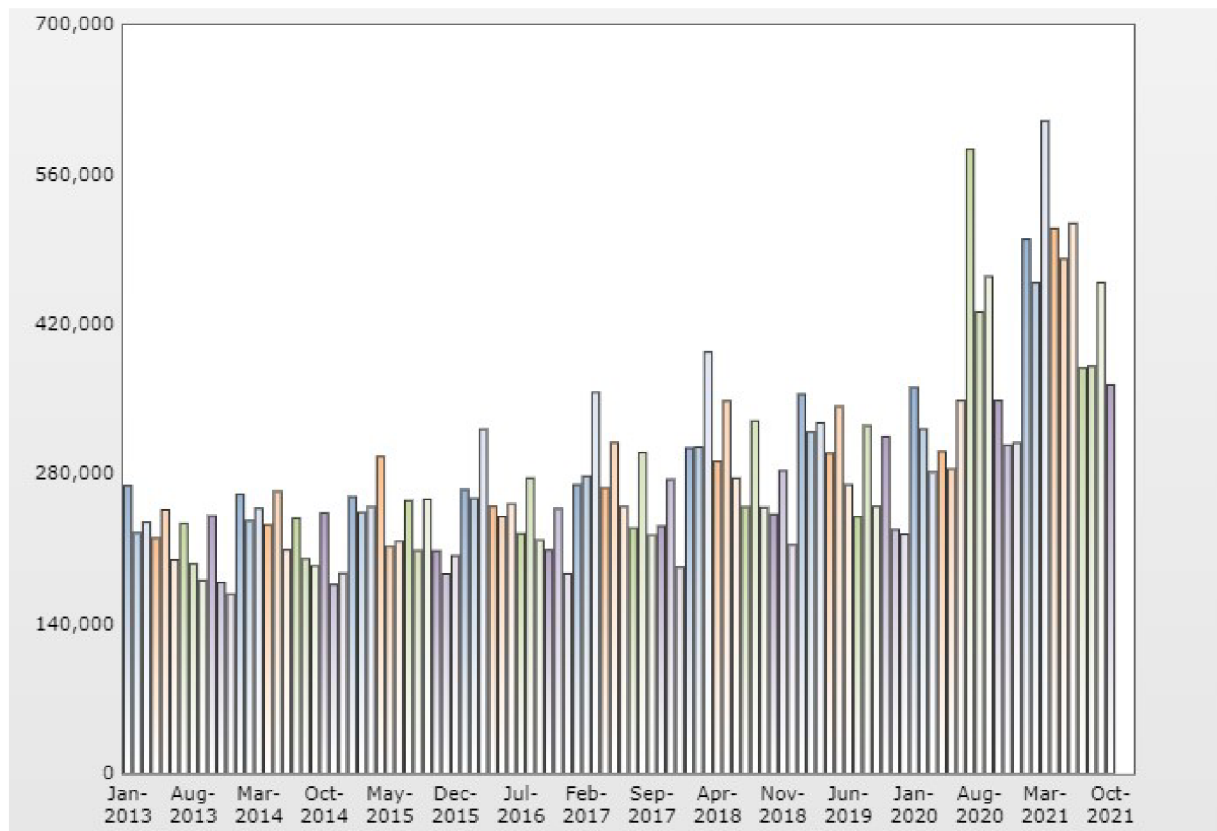


Source: Office for National Statistics – Inter-Departmental Business

The Office for National Statistics reports that “the number of VAT and/or PAYE businesses in the UK as of March 2021 increased to 2.77 million, an increase of 0.6% from March 2020.” Similarly, the US has had a steady increase in the number of businesses created over the years. The chart below shows the trend of businesses created in the US from 2013 to 2021.



Figure 3 Number of new businesses created each year in the US



Source: Business Formation Statistics, U.S. Census Bureau.

If there is this steady increase in the number of new businesses created each year in both the UK and the US, surely blacks can escape the unemployment problem by being among the people creating businesses. After all, when you own a business, you are your own employer. However, it is not so easy. For one to create a business, one needs funding. It is not enough to have a great business idea because investors do not invest in ideas. Besides having a good business, one must show proof of concept if they are to receive funds. Proof of concept is evidence that the business you are proposing is not merely an idea, but something workable. Put another way, one needs to show that the business is practical by showing the period in which it has been in operation. Therein lies the problem. To show proof of concept, one needs to have some capital for the operation of the business. Unfortunately, many black people in both the UK and the US lack the startup capital to show the feasibility of their business ideas, which further reduces their chances of getting funding. Starting a business may solve unemployment for many, but many black people still face hurdles even in this area.

The aforementioned two sources of funding are individual funding, i.e., they come from personal savings of the people investing. The next two sources of funding: venture capital and bank loans/line of credit, fall under institutional funding. Unlike funding from family, friends, and fools, and angel investors which may be readily available for a business in its early stages,

bank loans and venture capital require a business that is successfully running. Business owners usually seek investment from these sources to expand their businesses. It is important to note that bank loans are difficult to get. To begin with, the business owner needs to provide collateral, in addition to showing that his/her business is successfully running. Therefore, to receive a business loan from a bank, the business owner needs to have some valuable assets, such as a house that can act as collateral. This is another deterrent for black people both in the UK and the US, as many of them come from working-class backgrounds with no valuable assets to provide as collateral.

Venture capital is another institutional source of funding that is even more difficult to get. Companies that have been in business for years are the ones that usually get venture capital. In their book *Entrepreneurship*, Bygrave and Zacharakis write, "Venture capital is almost always invested in companies that are already in business and have demonstrated the potential to become stars or, better yet, superstars in their industry. Nothing excites venture capitalists more than a company with a product or service that is already being bought by satisfied customers." Bygrave and Zacharakis also remind us that a person has a better chance of winning \$1 million or more in a lottery than obtaining seed- or startup-stage venture capital (Bygrave & Zacharakis, 2010). Hence, getting venture capital is not easy, but it is even harder for an early-stage business. When we consider businesses in the UK and the US with the potential to become "stars or superstars" in their industries, we would notice black founders lead very few of those companies. This explains why a tiny fraction of venture capital funding goes to black founders. In 2020, black founders received 0.6% of all venture capital deployed. In 2021, the number increased to 1.2% (Bienasz, 2021). Notwithstanding the increase, the overall percentage is too small to celebrate. Clearly, there must be barriers that prevent black founders from getting venture capital.

### 3.5.2 Factors that contribute to less VC funding for black businesses

It is common knowledge that businesses run by blacks receive less funding compared to businesses run by whites. The question is: why is this the case? In the Harvard Business Review article titled *A VC's Guide to Investing in Black Founders*, James Norman identifies four challenges that venture capitalists need to overcome when investing in black business founders. i) We Solve Different Problems and Have Different Solutions ii) Different Surroundings, Different Resources iii) Different Culture, Different Communication iv) The Continuous Threat of Unconscious Bias. It is worth pointing out, before going any further, that white men have historically dominated the venture capital industry.

i) *We Solve Different Problems and Have Different Solutions*; Black founders often come from different circumstances than the typical founder, which means they frequently have alternative world views. Hence, it is common that they notice different large-scale problems and solve problems with different solutions. When a black founder is pitching a venture capitalist (VC), it is not uncommon for that VC to engage in pattern matching, i.e., evaluating a company and gaining a frame of reference through all the other deals they have already seen. It is not surprising that this typical framework has not yielded diverse investments because most VCs do not meet many black founders (Norman, 2020). The black founder Tristan Walker had trouble

raising funds for his business Bevel, a subscription shaving system built around a single-blade razor. In an interview with Guy Raz on the *How I Built This* Podcast, Walker said that many VCs did not want to invest in his business because they could not understand the problem the business was solving. Despite explaining to them that shaving blades that were currently on the market were not suitable for the hair texture of men of color and cause razor bumps on their faces, the VCs, who were mostly white, could not see a business opportunity because they had never experienced the problem Walker articulated (Company, 2019). Another black founder, Sheena Allen could not secure funding from a VC for her company CapWay, a digital bank that creates financial access and opportunities for everyone. As she said, “Once I had a VC ask if I made up the word ‘unbanked.’ After explaining it in detail, he couldn’t understand how there are people in 2019 without a bank account. So, naturally my company was a big ‘no’ for him” (Norman, 2020). We can only wonder how many black businesses with the potential to grow are turned down by VCs.

ii) *Different Surroundings, Different Resources*; Most black founders grow up in environments that are more financially disadvantaged, so receiving fifty or hundred thousand dollars from family and friends is not part of the average black founder’s journey. Because of a lack of social networks that can readily offer them the needed capital, many black founders resort to personal loans, credit, and day job salaries to fund the early stages of their businesses. Black communities tend to be less familiar with the ins and outs of the technology sector because of limited exposure to technology. Norman, who is also a black entrepreneur, points out that “where we come from dictates our personal network and how we interact with it. If you’re the first person from your family to go to college, it’s unlikely that you had anyone in your network who could help propel your entrepreneurial dreams forward prior to the age of 18.” Another hurdle black founders—especially tech founders—is choosing a co-founder. As Norman underscores, “this is considered one of the most important signals to an investor in Silicon Valley during a stage that’s all about the people. The typical pattern match for this signal is that teams should be composed of two or three co-founders who have known each other for years.” Norman concludes that most black founders do not have that. Having a co-founder, you have known for years is also a key signal for top startup accelerators and a reason why black founders are not often accepted by these accelerators (Norman, 2020).

iii) *Different Culture, Different Communication*; According to Norman, people in Black culture say what they mean and often expect direct communication in return. For a black person, their word is their most valuable asset. He argues that it is out of the norm for a black founder to purposely deceive or withhold key information when pitching a VC. That is why black founders are more declarative in their answers than other founders when asked about the market, product, or next step in their product. Norman adds that the hardened journey of a black founder is only traveled through by someone with above-average confidence. “When stepping into a realm where we know we’ll be challenged, it is our culture to arrive triple buttoned up; we’ve never had an option to do otherwise. Do not automatically misconceive our confidence as arrogance, ego, or ignorance. This is perseverance. We are not meeting with you to attack your position or intelligence, we just want it to be clear that we’ve done our homework and that we unquestionably belong in the room.” Sean Green, a black founder and CEO of Arternal, complained about this very problem. He talks about pitching a VC and telling him that he knows the game better than everyone else in the space, only to receive this response: “Your confidence comes off as arrogance.

It'd serve you well to dig deeper on your competition because you should never take them lightly." Green could not believe that the VC thought he had not done his research (Norman, 2020). It is a shame that culture—something that any group of people should embrace—is a hindrance to getting funding for black people.

iv) *The Continuous Threat of Unconscious Bias*; We all have unconscious bias, which can be positive and negative. This bias comes because of deep-seated beliefs we have about certain groups of people. Many people think Asians are good at math and black people are good at basketball, which are both positive biases. Unfortunately, most bias against blacks is negative. It is difficult for most people to perceive a black person as smart. Many would not associate a white-collar profession with a black person. In an interview with Kirsty Young on *Desert Island Discs*, the African American lawyer and social justice activist, Bryan Stevenson shares a time he experienced unconscious bias in a courtroom. Steven was sitting in a courtroom at the counsel table with his suit on, getting ready for the court session. The judge walked into the courtroom, looked at him, and said, "Hey, you get out of here! I don't want any defendants sitting in my courtroom without their lawyers. You go back there in the hallway and wait till your lawyer gets here!" When Stevenson replied he was the lawyer, the judge started laughing (Young). In a similar vein, Frederick Hutson a black founder and CEO of Pigeonly had a hard time being taken seriously when pitching to VCs. "There was one VC in particular who said he just couldn't wrap his brain around investing in an [ex-inmate]. A second VC that I pitched told one of my co-investors he hesitated to invest because I look like I spent more time working out in prison than reading books" (Norman, 2020). Because these biases are deep-seated, it is difficult for us to erase them. What we can do instead is to know that we have them and try to catch them whenever they interfere with our decision process.

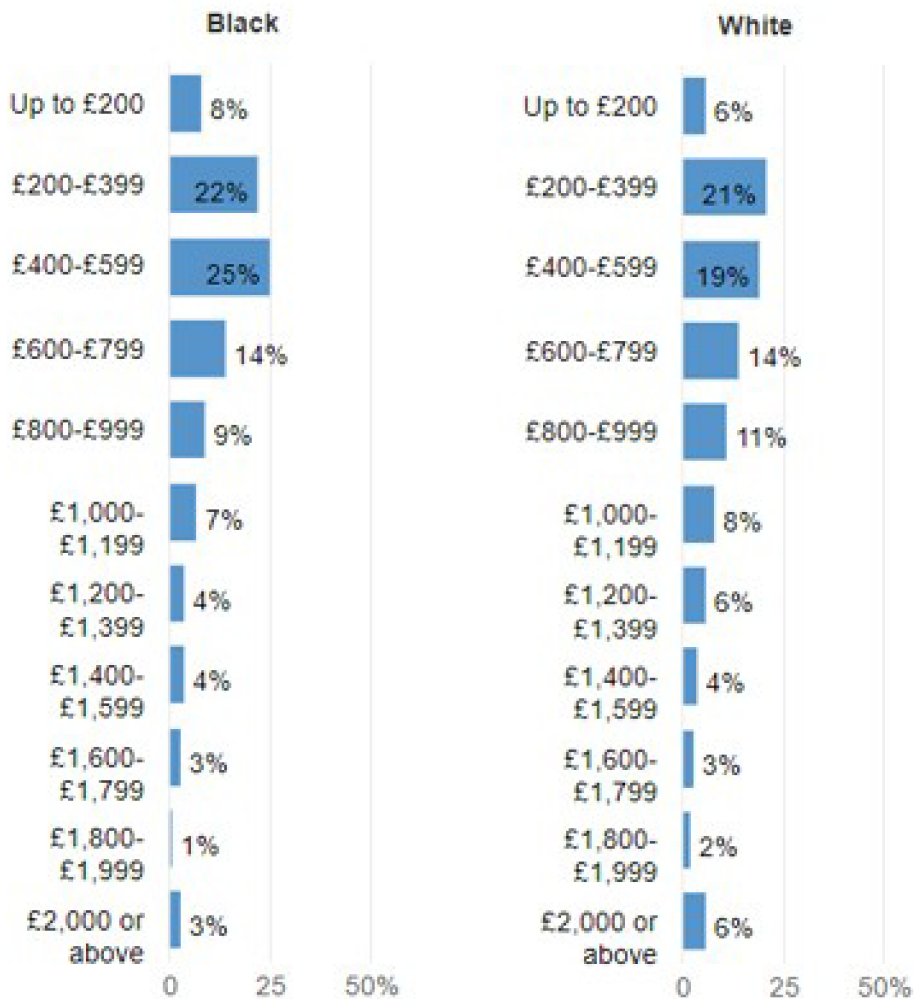
The four challenges discussed above make it difficult, if not impossible, for black founders to secure funding from institutional investors even if their businesses show potential to grow. This explains why we rarely hear about successful businesses run by black founders. There just aren't many of them.

### 3.6 Social hardships faced by Blacks in the UK and USA

Most of the social problems black people face in the UK and the US are because of their economic standing. Since many come from working-class backgrounds where money is scarce, problems such as poverty, lack of opportunity, discrimination, child abuse, crime, and neglect are likely to be present. A child growing up in an environment replete with these problems, as many black children do, finds it difficult to excel at school, let alone in life.

Let's begin by looking at poverty. We know that households with lower incomes or unstable sources of income tend to be victims of poverty. The chart below compares household incomes for black and white households.

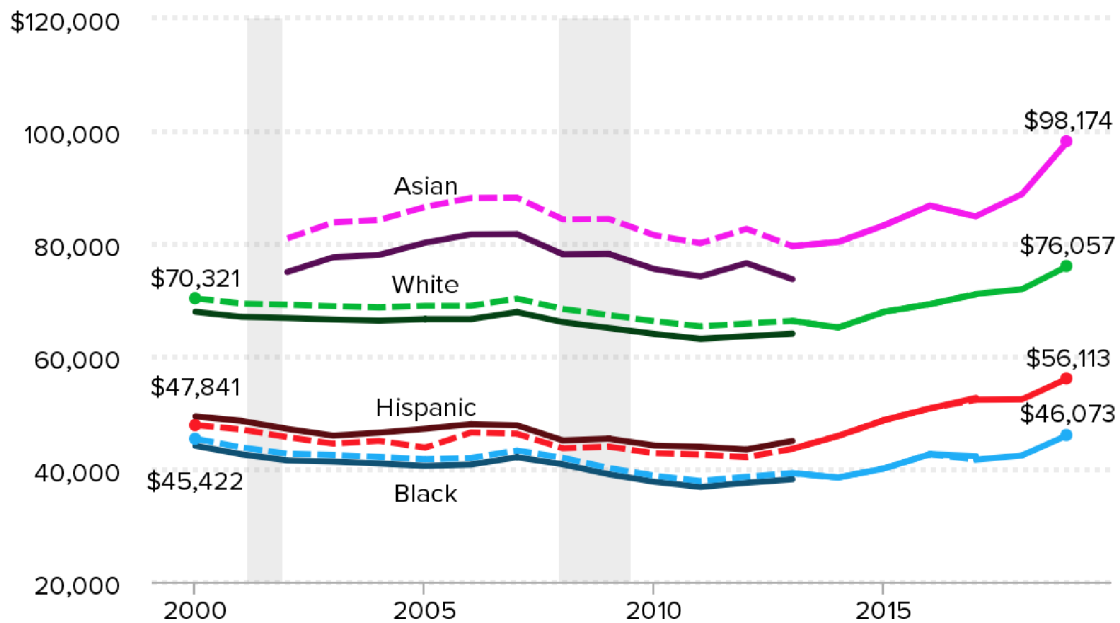
Figure 4 Percentage of households in average weekly income bands for blacks and whites in the UK from April 2017 to March 2020



Source: Ethnicity facts and figures, GOV.UK.

Gov.UK reported that during the three years to March 2020, 45% of households in the UK had a weekly income of below £600 before tax. Black households (55%) were most likely out of all ethnic groups to have a weekly income of less than £600. This means that black people earn less than the average household weekly income. In the US, blacks fall behind all racial groups when it comes to household income. According to the Economic Policy Institute (EPI), the Black racial group was the last to surpass its pre-recession median income 12 years after the start of the Great Recession in 2007. The chart below shows how household income compares among races and ethnicities in the US.

Figure 5 Real median household income by race and ethnicity in the US from 2000 to 2019



Source: Economic Policy Institute

That the household income for whites would be higher than that of blacks is expected, but Black household income falling behind the Hispanic household income is a surprise. To think that they can work their way up and surpass the Black household income only proves that the challenges black people face in the US are persistent and ongoing.

Crime is another social problem faced by black people in the UK and the US. To begin with, many black people live in poor neighborhoods that are highly prone to crime and drug use. According to ethnicity facts and figures gathered by Gov.UK, “Black people as a whole were the most likely to live in the 10% of neighborhoods most deprived in relation to crime (16.3%) and barriers to housing and services (31.2%)” (GOV.UK, 2021). It is not surprising that black teenagers engage in crime. This, in turn, reduces their chances of finding employment in the future if they have a criminal record. In the US too, blacks are forced to live in poor neighborhoods owing to their lower household incomes. Like in the UK, these poor neighborhoods have high crime rates. The south of Chicago and the Bronx in New York, which are largely inhabited by blacks, are examples of neighborhoods with high crime rates. Black kids growing up in such neighborhoods are likely to take the path of crime and gangs, as most of the successful people they see in those neighborhoods are drug lords or criminals. If no people or individual in your surrounding is a computer scientist or a surgeon, the idea of becoming a surgeon or computer scientist may not be as appealing because it may seem too distant.

With crime comes incarceration. Neighborhoods with high crime rates have huge numbers of incarcerations—and because these neighborhoods mainly comprise of black folks, it means more black people face incarcerations than whites. This has damaged the reputation of black people in society, as most of them are suspected of being criminals, even when they are



not. Black people, for example, are more likely to be stopped by cops when driving. In Los Angeles, California, 28% of all persons stopped by Los Angeles police officers during the last six months of 2018 were black, even though black people account for just 9% of the city's population. Even more alarming, the black population in San Francisco has shrunk over several decades to just 5% of the city's total population, but 26% of all stops carried out by the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD) from July through December 2018 were of black people. Also, black people are much more likely to have firearms pointed at them by police officers besides being detained, handcuffed, and searched. Interestingly though, when the police search Black, Latino, and Native American people, they are less likely to find drugs, weapons, or other contraband compared to when they search white people (BondGraham, 2020). This is unfair for the black population. It is as if black people have an aura that brands them as dangerous and elicits suspicion, and therefore must be stopped before they cause any damage.

Neglect is another social problem black people face. Many black kids are raised by single parents who do multiple jobs to sustain their families. Mass incarceration of black people is one factor that contributes to the problem of single-parent households in the US. For instance, "in 2017, blacks represented 12% of the U.S. adult population and 33% of the sentenced prison population. Whites accounted for 64% of adults but 30% of prisoners" (Gramlich, 2020). For most black kids, the only time they see their other parent is during prison visits. Raising kids is not easy, but it is even tougher when you are doing it alone. That is why most kids raised by single parents suffer neglect. Sadly, neglected children are also easy targets for child abuse. When a child is usually alone at home because the single parent cannot afford daycare but has to work multiple jobs, other people can take advantage of the kid by abusing that kid or introducing him/her to all sorts of bad habits. Is it any wonder why many black teens are recruited by gangs?

Perhaps, lack of opportunity is the biggest social problem faced by black people both in the US and the UK. The reason is that most of the problems black people face stem from a lack of opportunity. Let's begin with education. We know that the school you attend affects the number of doors of opportunity that open for you. In the UK, for example, alumni of Oxford or Cambridge are likely to land many opportunities than those from a less-known university. Owning a degree from these two prestigious universities comes with many perks. For instance, high-paying companies favor graduates from prestigious universities. The same is true in the US. You have the Ivy League colleges (Harvard, Yale, Princeton, etc.), and other prestigious universities like Stanford. Not only do graduates from these universities have more opportunities, but they also have better opportunities compared to graduates from lesser-known universities. The only problem is getting into these universities is not an easy feat. To get in, one needs to have high test scores in addition to being world-class at a particular thing. As Ben Mezrich wrote of Harvard in *The Accidental Billionaires*, "To get into Harvard, you had to either be incredibly well rounded—like a straight-A student who was also the captain of a varsity sport. Or you had to be really, really, really good at one thing—maybe better than anyone else in the world. Like a virtuoso violinist, or an award-winning poet." That is how difficult it can be to get into these prestigious universities. Unfortunately, this almost automatically excludes blacks. Most black families cannot afford to take their kids to private schools where the quality of education is high, making it difficult for them to produce high test scores, which further reduces their chances of getting into these prestigious universities.

Moreover, many white families supplement their kids' education with private tutoring. These private tutors also help students to achieve high test scores on the SAT, the aptitude test

required by most American universities. Many black families cannot afford to pay for a private SAT tutor to help their kid achieve a higher score. This, in part, explains why on average blacks have lower SAT scores than whites. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, the average SAT score for blacks was 933 while that of whites was 1114. The SAT has 1600 points. This is just one example of how lack of educational opportunities disadvantages black kids from getting admitted into prestigious universities. Being an alumnus of a prestigious university also increases the influence of your social circle. People in power are more likely to appoint someone they went to university with than a stranger. This further creates the problem of concentrating power in the elites, a group that fewer black people belong to.

Some black people overcome these hardships, get into a prestigious university, and eventually hold a managerial position in a bigger company. However, it is still difficult for black people in these positions to advance their careers. Tonya Harris Cornileus argues that black men experience a special type of racism called gendered racism, meaning “they are subjects of prejudice, negative stereotypes, and oppression because they are both Black and men—‘blackmen.’” She adds that black men experience covert gendered racism in the hiring process. The rise of “soft skills,” which are broadly defined as interaction and motivation skills, have made it difficult for black men to gain access to jobs. Cornileus concludes that African American men have a slim chance of landing a job requiring higher levels of soft skills, which signals trouble for their ongoing career development (Cornileus 445-446) (Cornelius, 2013). Why is the rise of soft skills detrimental to the career development of black men? Cornileus also includes an excerpt from the 1991 Harvard Law Review which explains her conclusion with an argument that “many black men—although certainly not all—are more verbally direct, expressive, and assertive than white men, who provide the standard against which black male behavior is measured” (Cornileus 446) (Cornelius, 2013).

### 3.7 Actions taken by BLM movement to combat these hardships

The struggle for black people in the UK and the US is too strong and serious to be solved by a single reform or policy. It is something that requires a lot of effort from all groups of people—not just black people alone. It is also a struggle that cannot be solved overnight, but one that will require years and years of diligence and hard work. The BLM movement understands this full well. That is why it has incorporated other groups of people into the movement, such as immigrants, LGBTQIA, Afro-Asians, and Latinx as allies. As one founder of the movement Patrisse Cullors, said in an interview, “It will take all of us. It has to be all of us to change the system, to change this place, to collectively come together and make a decision. As many of us say in Black Lives Matter, when black people get free, everybody else gets a little freer” (Cullors, 2018)

As Stanley and Goodwin put it, political economy is useful in demonstrating how individuals are connected and how they work together to attain common goals, if we analyze cultural interest as the actor within the structure of a society, we can see how Black Lives Matter movement aims to highlight racism, discrimination, and inequality in the economic and social lives of black people in the USA and UK. Different social movements have different techniques for reaching out to an audience. In most cases, the method is heavily influenced by who the



movement is attempting to address or whose attention it seeks (Stanley and Goodwin, 2013). In the example of Black Lives Matter, the audience is government or private-sector businesses.

Black Lives Matter movement has in the past used what some may call disruptive methods. Though one may wonder, is it acceptable to use disruptive or illegal methods to pursue political goals? The important question is not force, violence, or legality, but whether action strengthens democracy. Militant protest, when done properly, can strengthen democracy by allowing the voices of marginalized people to be heard better. Martin Luther King called riots “the language of the unheard”. Stephen D’Arcy argues that militant protest, even violent protest, can strengthen democracy because it makes it possible for people to resolve problems that it was not possible to resolve before, and can help empower groups that have previously lacked power and influence.

Following the assassination of George Floyd, various protests occurred in Japan, including a 1,000-person rally in Osaka on June 7, 2020. Tens of thousands of people gathered across Germany on June 6, 2020, to support the Black Lives Matter campaign. More than 1,500 people joined an anti-racism march in Berlin on July 18, 2020, to criticize police violence. After emerging as a movement in the UK in 2016, The Black Lives Matter movement organized a protest against police brutality in that same year on July 11 in Manchester. A series of similar protests followed course e.g., in France where thousands of protesters marched near Paris on July 18, 2020, to mark the fourth anniversary of Adama Traoré’s death. Similar protest took place in Canada, Australia, Brazil and Denmark.

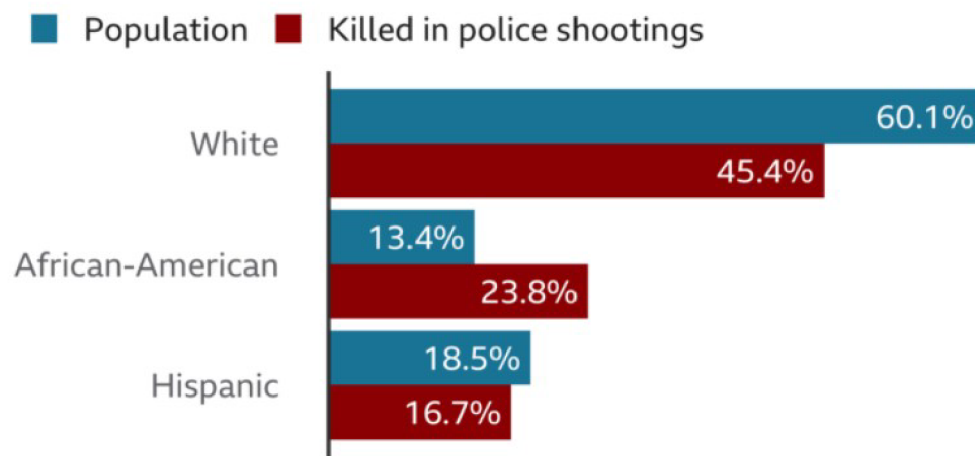
### 3.7.1 Promoting racial justice in education

The BLM movement inspired the creation of the Black Lives Matter at School movement, which first started in Seattle in the fall of 2016. It is now a national coalition organizing for racial justice in education. Its goal is “to spark an ongoing movement of critical reflection and honest conversation and impactful actions in school communities for people of all ages to engage with issues of racial justice” (NEA EdJustice). Every year during the first week of February, BLM at School encourages all educators, students, parents, unions, and community organizations to join their annual week of action. In an article in *The Atlantic* Conor Friedersdorf reports that in the spring of 2019, the local teachers’ union in Evanston, Illinois proposed to work with administrators to develop a local BLM School curriculum and by autumn, the school board had approved a week of lessons. Other strategies used to promote racial justice include talking about race, having discussions on racism and other difficult topics with students.

### 3.7.2 Ending Police Violence

The shooting of Trayvon Martin is what inspired the creation of the BLM movement; therefore, it is only logical that the movement would take action against police violence. We know that, in relation to their population in the US, African-Americans are more likely to get fatally shot. Below is a bar chart illustrating this.

Figure 6 Total police shootings of three major ethnicities reported between Jan 2015 to Mar 2021 in the US



Note: Remaining fatal shootings among other minorities or unknown ethnicities

Source: US Census Bureau, Washington Post police shootings database

In a BBC article, the Reality Check team reported that the population of African-Americans in the US is less than 14%, yet they accounted for almost 24% of over 6,000 fatal shootings by the police since 2015. The team added that “the rate that police fatally shoot unarmed black people in the US is more than three times as high as it is for white people” (team, 2021). You do not have to be a BLM activist to see this as a cause for concern. Unsurprisingly, many BLM activists have risen to fight against police and shootings on black people. Although these activists have a commend end, their means to reaching that end differ. In an article published by *Time*, Charlotte Alter identifies three camps of activists that make up the movement for racial justice in America. First, those who advocate for a series of reforms to create more accountability for police departments. Second, those who focus on defunding police departments and directing taxpayer money away from law enforcement. Third, those who want to defund the police and eventually abolish policing altogether. Some leaders in the reform camp, inspired by the Ferguson protests in Missouri, formed an organization called Campaign Zero (ALTER, 2020).

According to their website, Campaign Zero “encourages policymakers to focus on solutions with the strongest evidence of effectiveness at reducing police violence.” The organization’s goal is to reduce all police violence in the US to zero, hence the name. The launch of Campaign Zero in 2015 was a game-changer because it provided answers to BLM activists to critics demanding specific policy proposals. Campaign Zero has ten categories for its policy ideas. Among those categories is ending broken windows policing, which goes after minor crimes and activities, arguing that letting them go unaddressed can foster and lead to even worse crimes in a community. This, however, disproportionately affects minorities. Another one is equipping officers with body cameras to provide recorded proof of their interactions with would-be casualties (Lopez). Most major cities in the US have implemented the use of body-worn cameras by police officers. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), seven states now mandate the statewide use of body-worn cameras by law enforcement officers.

### 3.7.3 Stopping the adoration of history's racist and colonial icons

UK history is filled with figures who were firm proponents of colonialism and those who engaged in the slave trade. What is astonishing is the level of adoration that these people receive. There are even statues of them built and buildings named after them. Well, we now know the atrocities that resulted from colonialism and slavery, which begs the question: why are we still giving these racists and colonialists the adoration they do not deserve? The Stop Trump Coalition, a UK organization founded to challenge Donald Trump's politics of hatred and division, created a map of problematic statues across the UK as a crowd-sourced project. They did this to support the BLM movement and the topplers of Edward Colston—a seventeenth-century English merchant in the Atlantic slave trade. The aim of the project is “to highlight the complicity and history of Empire and slavery” (Stop Trump Coalition). In a press release published on their website on June 10, 2020, they wrote that it did not take long after the statue of Edward Colston went into the river to see a sweeping wave of changes from colleges, councils, and cultural institutions. Suddenly, authorities were taking action to remove or rename monuments to slavers. They added that this would not have happened at such a speed had it not been for BLM protestors in Bristol, so we offer our full solidarity.

*The Guardian* reported that “an estimated 39 names – including streets, buildings and schools – and 30 statues, plaques, and other memorials have been or are undergoing changes or removal since last summer's Black Lives Matter protests.” The University of Edinburgh renamed the David Hume Tower because of the philosopher's alleged racism. They have also renamed other UK streets, among them John Hawkins Square in Plymouth, and in London, Havelock Road, Black Boy Lane, and Cassland Road Gardens (Mohdin & Storer, 2021). In the US as well more statues of confederate generals and slaveholders were removed or toppled. The George Floyd protest precipitated this action. Among the statues removed were the statue of the president of confederate states called Jefferson Davis Memorial statue in Richmond, Virginia, on June 7, 2020; and a Christopher Columbus statue from Tower Grove Park in St. Louis on June 16, 2020, (Taylor, 2020).

Picture 1 A statue of Jefferson Davis lies on the street after protesters pulled it down in Richmond, Virginia, on June 10, 2020



Source: Alan Taylor, *The Atlantic*

Not everyone is in favor of removing statues. However, one can understand why BLM activists are in favor of it. For them, it is about confronting history and correcting the narrative. The truth must be known about the people being depicted in these statues. Moreover, allowing statues of racists a permanent place in the public sphere does hurt victims of racism.

### 3.7.4 Using social media and celebrities to spread their message

The BLM movement is a modern movement, and its leaders understand the power of the internet and social media. It is no surprise that the movement has gained fame around the world despite being in existence for only eight years. Today, more people use social media, which makes it ideal for spreading information. Many people today learn about BLM protests on social media before they hear about them on mainstream media. That is why BLM activists mainly use social media. They also employ clever hashtags and slogans that are not only catchy but also directly convey the message they want to deliver. For example, following the killing of Eric Garner, the slogan, “I can’t breathe” was created, which circulated on social media under #ICantBreathe. The hashtag gained momentum on social media after the killing of George Floyd when a police officer choked him by placing his knee on Floyd’s neck. Another one is #HandsUpDontShoot. This was the public’s cry for the disproportionate number of black people who get killed by police officers, despite being unarmed. By packaging the message in a simple slogan or hashtag, the movement can reach a wide audience. Also, it makes it easier for receivers of that message to share it, reaching an even wider audience.



The BLM movement has also turned celebrities into their messengers. Today, more high-profile celebrities support the movement and encourage their fans and followers on social media to do the same. Perhaps the first public protest by a celebrity supporting BLM was by National Football League (NFL) San Francisco 49ers quarterback, Colin Kaepernick. During the singing of the national anthem before a match in 2016, Kaepernick took a knee in protest against racism and police brutality on black people—things the BLM movement has been working to put an end to. Kaepernick said that he could not stand to show pride in the flag of a country that oppressed black people. This anti-racist gesture has since become prominent during protests and in other sports such as rugby, soccer, and basketball. For example, following the murder of George Floyd in 2020, the practice of taking the knee before football matches became widespread. Before Euro 2020 competition began, the England players would take the knee. Other teams, including Scotland, Wales, Belgium, Portugal, and Switzerland also did it (BBC Explainers, 2021).

The above examples show how movements influence the market through political consumerism. Political consumerism is an act where identity movements in the postindustrial society boycott or refuse to buy specific products for ethical or political reasons. Political consumerism can prevent firms from reaching their financial objectives

*Picture 2 England players taking the knee before their match against Czech Republic on 22 June*



*Source: BBC Explainers.*

Communications expert and co-author of *#Hashtag Activism: Networks of Race and Gender Justice*, Sarah J. Jackson said, “Organizers are savvy enough to know they need to get the attention of celebrities and get the attention celebrities can bring them.” She added that celebrities can best represent social movements when they are a part of activist communities and intimately familiar with the issues. Where they are not, it is more often about being a megaphone and bringing more attention to the issue (Rao, 2020). While many celebrities have publicly

supported the BLM cause such as singer Selena Gomez and filmmaker Jordan Peele, others have remained quiet for fear of losing their careers. As Jackson says, “For black celebrities in particular, as we saw with Colin Kaepernick, there are real consequences to speaking out beyond what is sort of the acceptable norm” On the use of celebrities by movements to spread messages, Jackson concluded that when “executed properly, it certainly helps” (Rao, 2020).

## 4. PRACTICAL PART

### 4.1 Research method

The research will be done in a form of a unique online survey which should at minimum help the author understand the general views of mostly university students, their perceptions of the Black Lives Matter movement and its influences. The results from the survey will be used in comparison to the data available in publicly available documents and materials. The criteria to consider for this research is geographical location, age category and ethnicity because participants views of BLM may differ according to age category and geographical location. Age category will be classified as follows; First category aged between 18-21, Second category aged between 22-24 and last category ranged between 25-28 while ethnicity will cover those who identify themselves as African American or black, European Americans or white

Therefore, the Author would like to understand if participants view on the movement is affected/influenced by their geographical location. Additionally, the author is interested to know whether those who identified themselves as Europeans in America, African American, Americans in Europe have different views on the movement, how they feel about it and if their current location affects this view. In short, hypothetically speaking, will there be a relationship between the views or opinions of the participants on the movement and their current location. The author also wants to understand if there is any relationship between the views of the participant and their political or social affiliations.

The idea behind the research is to question every student in the USA and UK. Due to this, the most probable method to use to attain the results will be done in the form of an online survey. Therefore, the author creates a questionnaire which will be shared across all credible media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp LinkedIn and all other legally recognized platforms such as email. The author ensures that the participation in the survey is completely random and unbiased to make sure participants do not feel coerced or pressured to answer in a way in which they otherwise wouldn't. The findings from the survey will be thoroughly analyzed in comparison to the publicly available documents and materials.

#### 4.1.1 Choice of Participants

The three main criteria of questions used by the author in the online survey were age category (stated earlier), geographical location and ethnicity (stated earlier). It may seem pointless not to ask only those who identify themselves as Black or White because this might give biased results which can lead to false results and conclusion. Also, it may be absurd to ask children to give their opinion on such a. It was therefore important to ensure that all participants were adults.

As stated earlier, the author thinks there is need to introduce certain strategies to raise awareness on the motives, economic causes, and consequences of the Black Lives Matter movement. Unfortunate enough, deriving one strategy maybe be inadequate because of different geographical locations as well age category as this is evident in the tables and figures present in

the work. The author realizes that responses in the survey will be somewhat interesting because of cultural differences. Every culture has certain perceptions towards something and react differently to different stimuli. This is why the author considers the questions of ethnicity and geographical location as important in the survey. The author is also aware that Blacks born and raised in Europe, either East, West or Central Europe might have different views on the movement compared to those born and raised in USA or UK.

## 4.1.2 Remarks on the process

A deep analysis of the results has been compelled in the results and discussion section below. All in all, there was a relatively good turnout (76 participants whose submission was valid, valid in the sense that they completely filled out the questionnaire) on the number of people that participated in the survey which makes the author hopeful that based on the participation rate, an accurate conclusion was reached. One thing that the author observed though, was that some participants did not really understand what Black Lives Matter movement is all about, instead decided to put their focus on “All lives Matter”.

## 4.2 Documentary analysis

In 2021, more elite universities in the US welcomed a diverse intake of freshman students. In a New York Times article, Anemona Hartocollis points out that “the aftermath of the George Floyd protests and a decreased reliance on standardized tests have led to more diverse admissions at elite universities.” One minority high school student named Jianna Curbelo got accepted into Cornell University—a feat she did not foresee. Curbelo attributes the success of her application to Cornell’s decision to suspend standardized test score requirements for admission during the coronavirus pandemic. She also believes that part of it was because of the protests that resulted from the death of George Floyd. Inspired by these protests, some admission officers at elite universities even “draft[ed] essay questions aimed at eliciting students’ thoughts on racial justice and the value of diversity” (Hartocollis, 2021).

However, Hartocollis points out that it is unclear whether college admissions’ decision not to consider standardized test scores is a long-term one. One thing is for sure though, “elite universities have admitted a higher proportion of traditionally underrepresented students this year — Black, Hispanic and those who were from lower-income communities or were the first generation in their families to go to college, or some combination — than ever before.” Jerome Karabel, a sociologist at the University of California, Berkeley, and a historian of college admission also supported this view stating that the wake of Floyd’s murder has exerted some influence on admissions officers of elite colleges. An even more remarkable example is that of an African American 18-year-old named Jaylen Cocklin. Cocklin’s two older brothers attend historically Black institutions, but he decided in middle school that he wanted to go to Harvard. In talking about how the events of last year factored in how he weighed his opportunities he said, “It was just another thing driving me to go to Harvard and prove everyone wrong, and defy the common stereotype placed upon so many African-American males today.” Now, Cocklin has to decide which institution to attend among Harvard, Emory, Yale, Princeton, Columbia, the University of Pennsylvania, Wake Forest, Davidson, and Georgetown. Hartocollis reports that the overall explosion in applications at top schools, both private and state, has, in part, caused the



growth in minority admissions. There has been a drastic increase in the number of applications to top schools across the board with an increase of 43% and 66% to Harvard and M.I.T respectively (Hartocollis). This is an achievement for the BLM cause as more and more institutions are not only recognizing the struggles black people go through but also taking action to ease them.

An area where there has been minor improvement, or none is in the top or executive positions of companies. In the UK, the proportion of black individuals in the top jobs has only increased by 0.1% since 2014 and remained static in the public sector. In the same article, Siobhan Palmer writes that a Business in the Community (BITC) report titled *Race at the Top: Revisited* found that out of the 3.9 million managers, directors, and senior officials in the UK, only 54,900 are black. Seeing what a serious problem this is, 29 business leaders, including the bosses of Tesco, John Lewis, and ITV, said more action had to be taken to address the lack of ethnic diversity at the top of British businesses. In the letter, the signatories wrote, “the sad truth is that organizations have not been ready to have a challenging and frank conversation about systemic racism within the four walls of their own offices.” It also included a pledge to set targets to improve minority representation at all levels of their respective companies (Palmer). Also in the US, the number of black chief executive officers (CEOs) in Fortune 500 companies remains very low. In the 2020 list of Fortune 500 companies, only five of them had a black CEO. That means black CEOs only make 1% of Fortune 500 even though their population in the US is 13.4% (Wahba). This underrepresentation of blacks in top jobs can be alleviated with the increase in the number of black students enrolling in elite universities. That is because many people who hold executive positions in companies tend to have degrees from elite universities. However, this route will take a while.

Book sales by black authors have also increased because of BLM protests. In 2020, Bernardine Evaristo and Reni Eddo-Lodge became the first black British women to top the UK’s fiction and nonfiction paperback charts. Meanwhile, black authors lined up to slam British publishing as a “hostile environment.” Waterstones staff urged the bookshop chain to donate to the BLM movement as sales for black authors soared. In their petition, the staff called on UK’s largest bookseller to use some of the “massive revenues” it has generated from online sales of anti-racist books to financially support the BLM movement (Flood). Similarly, in the US, book sales by black authors increase following the George Floyd protests. In that week, the New York Times’ bestseller list had for the first the top 10 entries on the “combined print and e-book non-fiction list” titles that primarily focused on race issues in the US. *White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo topped the list, followed by *So You Want to Talk About Race* by Ijeoma Oluo. Though excited, Oluo wrote on Twitter that she wishes bestseller lists were full of black writers all the time, not just in times of protests (Evelyn). This rise in book sales by black authors is not only good for spreading the anti-racism message but also in improving the socioeconomic status of these black authors. As Reni Eddo-Lodge said of her book that topped the chart, “This book financially transformed my life.” But she also added that “I really don’t like the idea of personally profiting every time a video of a black person’s death goes viral.” Eddo-Lodge had asked readers buying her book during the Floyd protests to match their purchase price with a donation to the Minnesota Freedom Fund, a civil rights advocacy group (Evelyn).

The BLM protests following the death of George Floyd encouraged the public to support black-owned businesses. In an article titled *Black-owned businesses seeing an increase in sales during protests*, Samantha Fields reports on the growth in sales for many black-owned businesses following George Floyd’s death. Tiffany Griffin owner of the candle company *Bright Black*

when she saw a spike in sales, she thought it would be a one-day thing, but sales continued to increase, she had to temporarily shut down the site to keep up. Also, protestors were posting on social media encouraging people to support a black-owned business. These posts went viral, and many black businesses saw an increase in likes and shares, which also translated into actual sales for most of those businesses. Jeffrey Blair, owner of Eyeseeme African American Children's Bookstore in University City, Missouri said that he received an email saying, "yeah, I saw this on social media, and I want to do my part in order to support what you guys are doing, and to support Black business." Blair added that he had seen nothing like it before and that there was a substantial increase in his online sales (Fields). These are just a few examples of black-owned small-scale businesses that have seen an increase in sales thanks to the BLM protests. All this is evidence that the protests work.

Big corporations have pledged vast sums of money towards racial justice. These companies include Amazon \$169.5M, Apple \$50.0M, Facebook \$257.0M Walt Disney Co. \$8.8M, and Walmart \$100.0M. Washington Post reporter Tracy Jan writes that "after the murder of George Floyd ignited nationwide protests, corporate America acknowledged it could no longer stay silent and promised to take an active role in confronting systemic racism." Of the 50 companies that pledged donations, 37 companies confirmed disbursing at least \$1.7 billion of the \$49.5 billion pledged. According to Jan, further analysis shows that "public companies are devoting the most resources to promoting upward economic mobility for Black people, through increased opportunities for homeownership, entrepreneurship and education." JPMorgan Chase is also devoting funds toward narrowing the racial wealth gap by pledging \$28 billion in housing and business loans in Black and Latino communities. PayPal too, is investing \$500 million in Black and Latino financial institutions and venture capital funds. Google is donating \$50 million to historically Black colleges and universities to increase Black representation in the tech sector (Jan, et al.). These are vast sums of money which, when deployed properly, will positively impact the economic lives of blacks in the US. All this would not have happened had it not been for the BLM protests calling out on the systemic racism and the lack of opportunities negatively impacting black people.

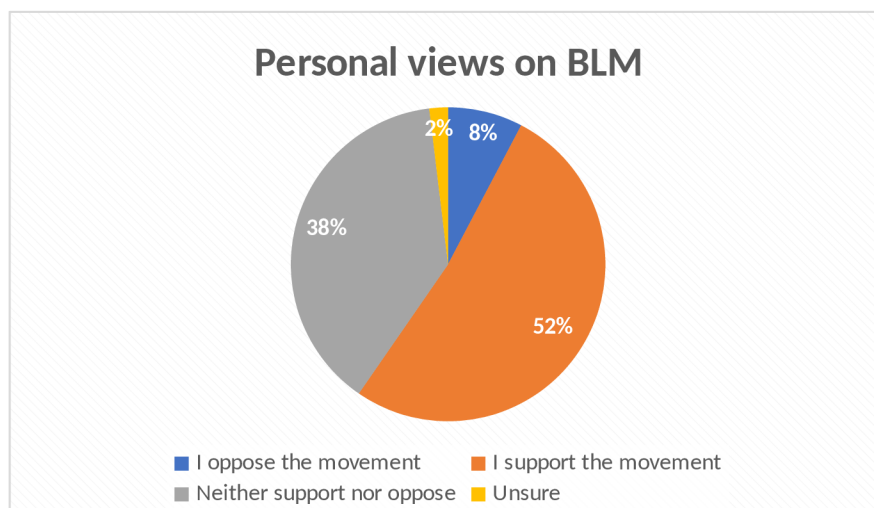
Finally, direct market intervention has clearly paved way to the elevation of certain business entities through protests etc. Above all, it is easy to notice how social activism has been a major player in achieving economic and social goals. Just like Rao, Weber and Thomas put it "because there are few traditional pathways for enacting economic outcomes within firms, disruptive approaches are frequently the only way to force change." (Weber, Rao, and Thomas 2009).

## 5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Personal views on Black Lives Matter

The first thing one notices when analyzing the results of the survey conducted is that, on balance, people are for the BLM movement regardless of their current location. In the survey, 52% of participants indicated they support the movement and only 8% said they oppose it. A mere 2% indicated that they were unsure about their views. Although 38% of people said they neither supported nor oppose the movement.

Figure 7 Personal views on the BLM movement



Source: Own research

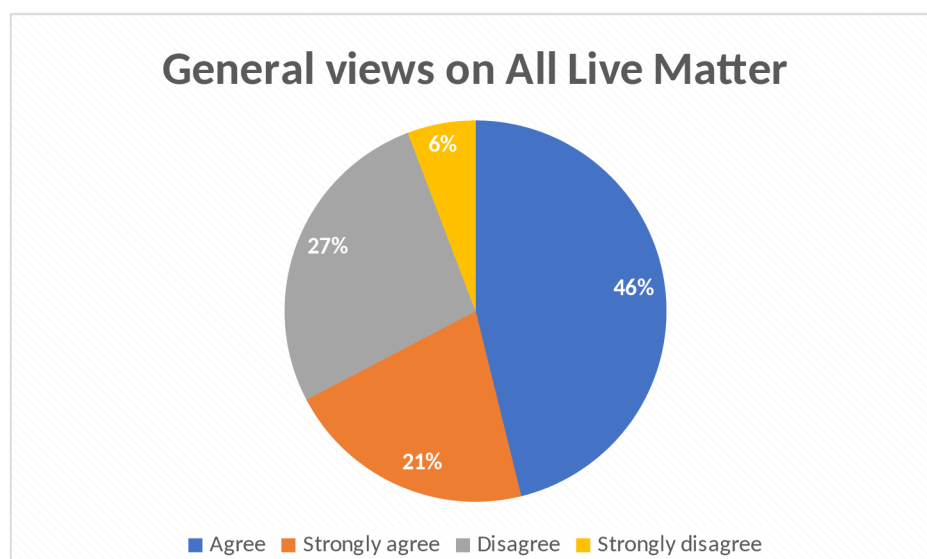
That over 50% of people support the BLM movement is not surprising. It is quite difficult to deny the struggles and inequalities black people face both in the UK and the US, and anyone who understands what the movement stands for would support it. The interesting group is the 8% that opposes the movement. Why would someone oppose the BLM movement? The first thing to remember is that in white-dominated societies, almost any demand for equality by people of color faces a backlash. This is because many white people view themselves as victims when a movement tries to take away what they perceive as their privilege. This backlash is not unique to the BLM movement. The Civil Rights movement in the 1960s also faced a similar backlash. Many well-intentioned white people were not welcoming to the ideas of the movement like ending segregation so that black and white kids could go to the same school. This could explain why those with privilege would want to hold on to that privilege and any movement that threatens to take away that privilege is subject to their opposition. Positions of privilege are not only unique to whites. There are privileged people from ethnic minority groups, too. Likewise, these people would be more likely to hold on to the status quo. Six participants (8%) out of 76 opposed the movement of which 2 identified themselves as black while the remaining 4

identified themselves as white or Caucasian. The survey shows an almost equal representation of ethnic groups for those who opposed the BLM movement.

## 5.2 Criticism of the BLM movement

The challenge is that many proponents of the phrase do not fully understand its underlying implication on the BLM movement. To them, saying “black lives matter” takes away the significance of other lives, valuing black lives above every other life. Unsurprisingly, in the survey conducted, the majority of participants indicated they agreed with all lives matter.

Figure 8 General views on the All Lives Matter



Source: Own research

The results of the survey only underscore the argument that many do not understand what all lives matter does to the cause of the BLM movement. All lives matter is not merely a reminder that we should give every life equal attention. On a deeper level, it attempts to dilute and diffuse the potency of the BLM message. Activist leaders also agree that all lives matter, but their aim in highlighting black lives is to bring to light the struggles that black people face. Barbara Ransby in her book, *Making All Black Lives Matter* wrote of the response of activist leaders to the “All lives matter” challenge that it was responding to “the systematic devaluation of Black life in particular. If we were all equally vulnerable, there would be no need to underscore the importance of Black life, but that was clearly not the case” (Barbara, 2018). Patrisse Cullors also challenges the notion that BLM takes away the significance of other lives by arguing that currently, the argument is not that all lives matter because all lives do better. “Black Lives Matter is really just black lives matter too. Black Lives Matter is not about exclusion, it’s about focusing” (Cullors, 2018). The treatment of black people as if they were second-class citizens has always been what the BLM movement has been attempting to bring to people’s attention—especially those in authority.

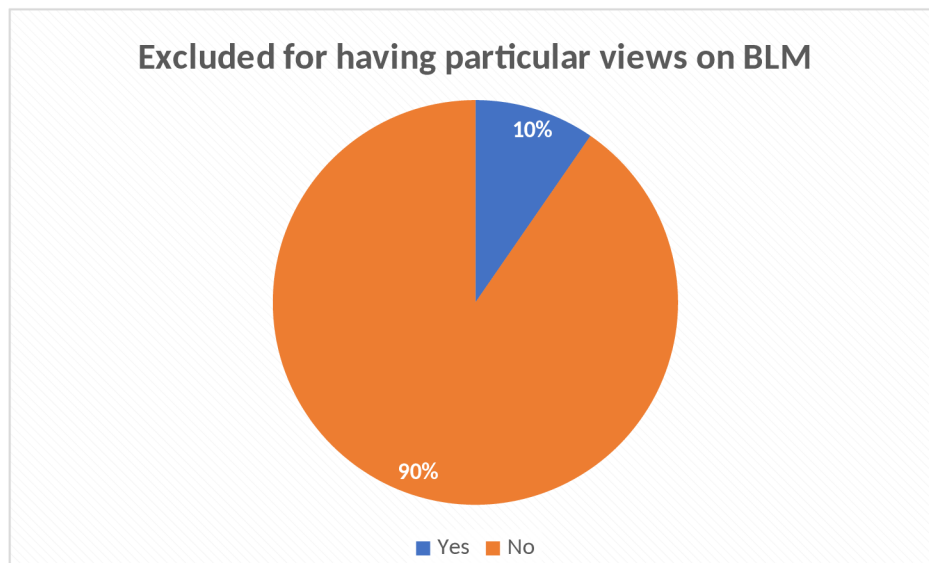
Celebrities like Jennifer Lopez, Christina Milian and Keke Palmer, who did not fully understand the #AllLivesMatter hashtag deleted their tweets after using it. Fetty Wap, a rapper, expressed his apology for using the #AllLivesMatter hashtag in a tweet, which he later deleted, “I didn’t fully understand the hashtag” (Victor, 2016). Maybe the survey result on the “All lives matter” issue would not have turned out this way had the participants understood the nuance behind “All lives matter.”

Another criticism for the BLM movement is the argument that the lives of police officers matter too. This is usually condensed in the slogan “Blue lives matter.” *In an article titled 'Blue Lives Matter' was always about*, Ryan Cooper writes that originally, Blue Lives Matter started as a troll. “It’s a reference to the leftist slogan Black Lives Matter, of course, intended to both deflect attention from the ongoing plague of police brutality and to suggest that the left doesn’t care about police lives” (Cooper, 2021). Supporters of BLM tend to be on the far right of the political spectrum—and in the US, they tend to be Trump supporters. On the storming of the US Capitol, the putschists fighting against American democracy thought the police were on their side, and they were partly right. Cooper reports that “a number of Capitol Police were reluctant at best to do their jobs, taking selfies with the mob or giving them directions.” The Blue Lives Matter attack on the BLM movement is similar to All lives matter. It purports supporters of the BLM movement do not care for the lives of police officers. Of course, this is not true; nevertheless, Blue Lives Matter has garnered many followers, particularly from the far right. This can prove to be a problem for the BLM movement because they already won the support of the left, now the need to win the support of the far-right.

### 5.3 How people’s views on BLM affect their social lives

We are often told that it is important to interact and engage in discussions with people who have opposing views with us. Doing so stimulates our intellectual curiosities, so goes the argument. Yet we know that engaging in discussions with someone who strongly objects to your views on important matters can be frustrating. In the survey, data was gathered on people who have been excluded from their social group because of their views on BLM. Only 10% admitted to being excluded from their social group for having particular views on BLM.

Figure 9 People excluded from social group

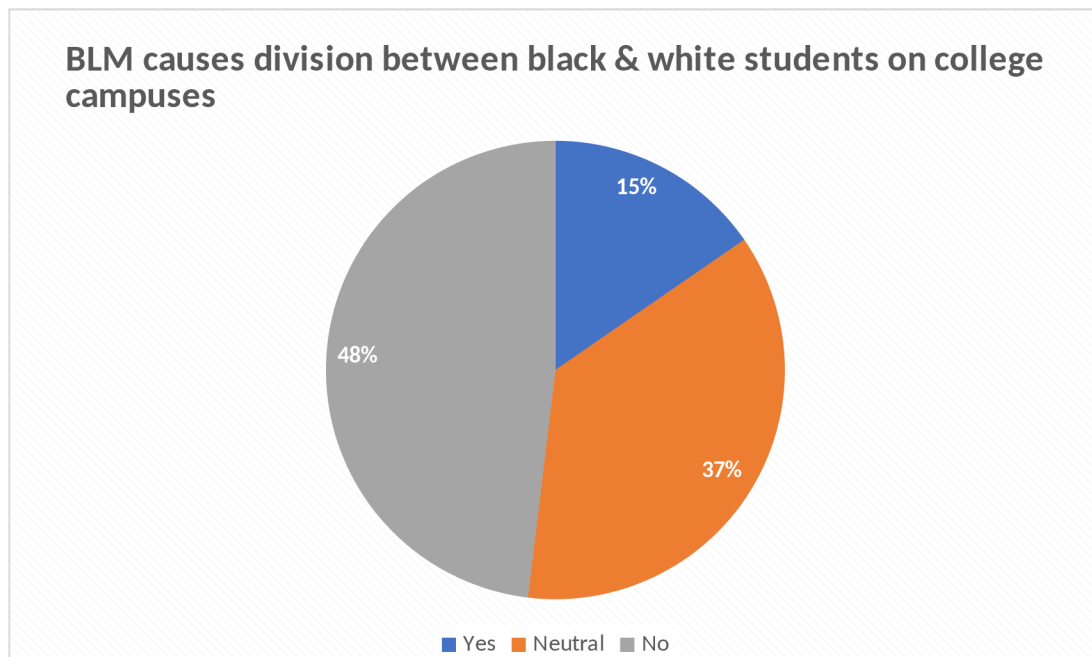


Source: Own research

This result is not only good for society because it promotes diverse opinions, but also for the BLM movement because it ensures that their message can be heard even in groups where most members do not support its cause. Another interesting finding from the survey was whether someone who supports BLM would be friends with someone who does not support BLM and vice versa. 87% of people who do not support BLM said they would be friends with a BLM supporter; while 79% of BLM supporters said they would be friends with someone who does not support BLM. This is indicative that supporters of BLM have a lower tolerance for people who do not support BLM. This is not good news for the group of the movement because if supporters of BLM only interact with fellow supporters, the message of the movement would not spread, as the messengers of the message would only preach to the choir. What is needed is more BLM supporters engaging with non-supporters to help them understand in deep context what the movement stands for and hopefully change their minds and eventually win their hearts.

To find out the atmosphere that the politics of the BLM movement create on college campuses, participants in the survey were asked if they thought BLM causes division between black and white students on college campuses. The chart below shows the results.

Figure 10 BLM causes division between black & white students on college campuses



Source: Own research

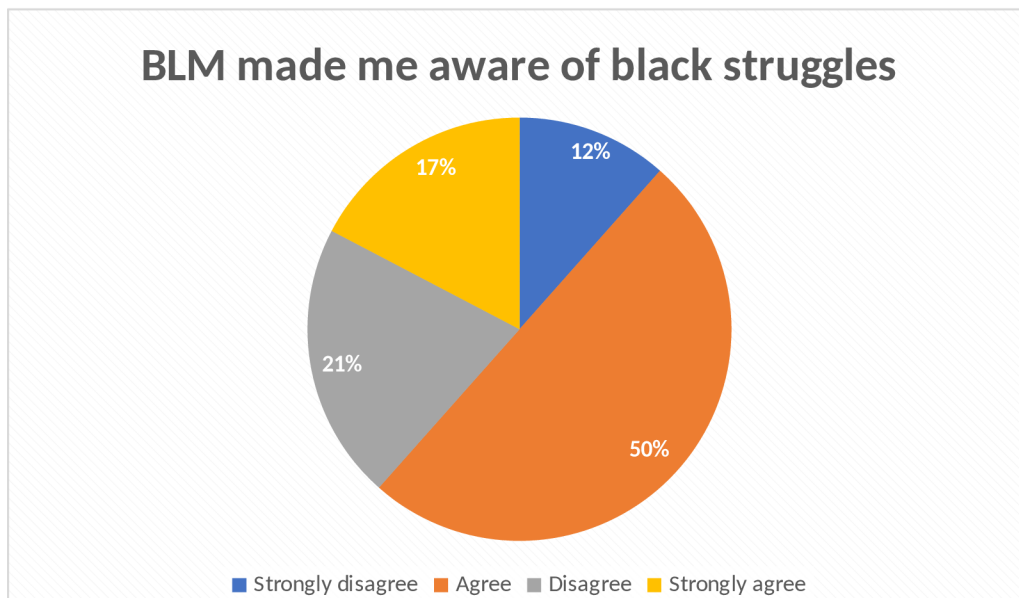
Despite the polarizing reports by the media on BLM, survey results illustrate that the BLM movement has not been a cause for division between black and white students on college campuses. However, it cannot be all perfect harmony as 15% of participants indicated BLM has brought divisions between these two groups of students. Also, there was a fair representation of ethnicities among the group who took this viewpoint, although the White or Caucasian group slightly outnumbered the rest. The explanation for this could be that the survey population had more participants who identified as White or Caucasian.

## 5.4 Achievements of the BLM movement

Undoubtedly, the single biggest achievement of the BLM movement has been bringing to light the systemic racism and inequalities black people experience. Whether one supports the movement, it is quite hard to deny that black people in both the UK and the US have it rough compared to white people. One question in the survey asked if the BLM movement made the participant aware of the struggles black people go through. The results are depicted in the chart below.



Figure 11 BLM has made me aware of struggles faced by black people



Source: Own research

More than half of the participants indicated BLM made them aware of the various forms of discrimination and inequalities black people face, with 50% (38 respondents) agreeing and 17% (13 respondents) strongly agreeing. This can be considered an achievement because awareness is the first step towards making change.

The results depicted in figure 11 line up with participants' views on the statement that: It's a level playing field and black people in the UK and the US should just work hard and stop complaining about discrimination. 58% disagreed with the statement with 10% strongly disagreeing. This can be attributed to the great work by the BLM movement in raising awareness of the hardships black people experience. Clearly, the current systems in the UK and the US do not offer an even playing field for blacks and whites.

Increased diversity of students on college campuses is another development that can in part be attributed to BLM. Elite universities like the Ivy League colleges in the US and Oxbridge colleges in the UK are notorious for having lower representations of minority students. Admissions in these colleges may not directly discriminate against black applicants, but the lack of opportunities for these black applicants makes it very hard for them to get accepted into these schools. As discussed earlier in the paper, many black families cannot afford to have SAT tutors, which explains why many black students do not score well on standardized tests.



## 6. CONCLUSION

After running an analysis on the main methodology of research and considering the idea of an online survey. The expectation was different from what was actually obtained. Evidently, the author is also human just like the participants and as they say, “Human beings are prone to error”. The author received different results than anticipated. One thing was clear though, regardless of ethnicity and geo-location. Most participants were in support of the movement. Some did not express any opinion on it while others did not agree with the Black Lives Matter movement and its motives and objectives. This is something the author purely understands. Like the author earlier stated, participants were prone to have different perceptions due to ethnicity, age, and geo-location. A deep analysis of these results has been compelled in the results and discussion above. All in all, there was a relatively turn out on the number of people that participated in the survey which makes the author hopeful that based on the participation rate, an accurate conclusion was reached. One thing that the author observed though, was that some participants did not really understand what Black Lives Matter movement is all about, instead they decided to put their focus on “All lives Matter”.

Participants who had strong views on All Lives Matter movement chose neither to identify themselves as black nor white. Actually, most of them, according to the author, possessed little knowledge on social movements as a whole

The discrimination and racism that black people face, particularly in the UK and the US is not caused by prejudice on an individual level. If that were the case, it would have been very easy to end. We could just educate the new generation of children with an emphasis on valuing individuals equally, regardless of their race. Eventually, even the unconscious bias that people have towards a particular racial group would go away. But alas, these problems are not just present on an individual level but are embedded in the very fabric of our society and our institutions. That is why it will take a long time for black people to have access to equal opportunity with white people and play on an even playing field with them. However, this does not mean that attempts to make things better for black people socially and economically should be abandoned.

When slavery was abolished in the US and the UK, black people were free in that they were no longer under the governance of a slave master. But they did not have the same rights and opportunities as white people; for example, they could not vote. Likewise, the Civil Rights movement ended segregation, voter suppression, discriminatory employment, etc., but black people today still experience more social and economic hardships compared to whites. All to say that the fight for the struggle of black is a long-term fight.

The racism and discrimination preventing the economic and social progress of black people is something that the BLM movement has been working to end. Although the BLM movement has a long way to go to accomplish this goal, one cannot overlook the progress it has made in the space of eight years since its establishment in 2013. The protests made by the BLM activists and supporters have not been in vain. It is through the protests, for example, that the movement has brought to the public’s attention the injustices that black people face, such as police brutality. For a movement to gain support from the public, it needs to ensure that the

public sees the problems it is addressing or attempting to solve. This could be done by educating the public about the injustices or calling it out when they happen. The BLM movement has done both. Many black authors have written books on anti-racism, which have become bestsellers, teaching the public about the struggles of black people and what the public can do to be part of the solution. Examples of these books are *White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo and *So You Want to Talk About Race* by Ijeoma Oluo. Also, the BLM movement has been organizing peaceful protests whenever there is police brutality on black people. These protests are not only physical but also online with the use of hashtags such as #HandsUpDontShoot and #SayHerName. These hashtags make it easier for the message to go viral, i.e., spread to many people. All these methods have allowed the BLM movement to be effective at raising awareness for its cause.

Whenever something attempts to change the status quo, it faces resistance. The BLM movement's eight-year journey has not been all smooth. Some people have opposed the movement, going so far as to call it a terrorist group. But with unswerving devotion, the BLM movement has continued to work for its cause. In 2017, the Sydney Peace Foundation awarded BLM the Sydney Peace Prize "for building a powerful movement for racial equality, courageously reigniting a global conversation around state violence and racism. And for harnessing the potential of new platforms and power of people to inspire a bold movement for change at a time when peace is threatened by growing inequality and injustice" (Sydney Peace Foundation). Now, corporations, as well as learning institutions, are not only paying attention to these injustices but also taking action to reduce or end them. It would take long for the playing field to be leveled and for black people in the UK and the US to have as many opportunities as white people have, but at least society is taking steps toward achieving that goal—and it would not be much of a stretch to say that the BLM movement has been a catalyst in that process.

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## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Unemployment rate for ethnic groups in the United Kingdom as of 2nd quarter 2021.....	18
Figure 2 Number of VAT and/or PAYE based businesses, UK, 2016 to 2021.....	20
Figure 3 Number of new businesses created each year in the US.....	21
Figure 4 Percentage of households in average weekly income bands for blacks and whites in the UK from April 2017 to March 2020.....	25
Figure 5 Real median household income by race and ethnicity in the US from 2000 to 2019.....	26
Figure 6 Total police shootings of three major ethnicities reported between Jan 2015 to Mar 2021 in the US.....	30
Figure 7 Personal views on the BLM movement.....	39
Figure 8 General views on the All Lives Matter.....	40
Figure 9 People excluded from social group.....	42
Figure 10 BLM causes division between black & white students on college campuses.....	43
Figure 11 BLM has made me aware of struggles faced by black people.....	44

## LIST OF PICTURES

Picture 1 A statue of Jefferson Davis lies on the street after protesters pulled it down in Richmond, Virginia, on June 10, 2020.....	32
Picture 2 England players taking the knee before their match against Czech Republic on 22 June.....	33

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Household data not seasonally adjusted quarterly averages.....	19
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