

The Planner's Beginner Guide to the #BlackLivesMatter Movement

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Image Credit: blacklivesmatter.com

This compilation of resources is meant to be a starter guide for those looking to educate themselves on the #BLM Movement. This document was compiled solely by myself, Danielle Dirksen, from outside sources and does not necessarily reflect on the views of METRANS Transportation Center or its partners. I do not claim creation of any materials listed.

This is from my point of view as a white USC student and as a future transportation planner looking to do better, both from the white-privilege and urban planning perspectives. I hope that you choose to make positive change in the (transportation) planning profession for all, especially for Black folks.



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What is Black Lives Matter? Where can I read more about the #BLM Movement and Blackness/being Black in America in general?

Black Lives Matter was a response to the acquittal of [Trayvon Martin](#)'s murder in 2013. Martin was an unarmed, innocent 17-year-old Black boy who was fatally shot and killed by neighborhood watch member George Zimmerman. Martin's death and subsequent murder acquittal triggered pent-up rage by Black people and by people everywhere.

Black Lives Matter is a movement in response to racism; to continued police violence against and racial profiling of Black people; to the numerous murders of Black people. BLM works to spread awareness of such issues, and to eliminate white supremacy while uplifting all Black lives, including LGBT folks and women. All lives do not matter until all Black Lives Matter.

I recommend starting with the Black Lives Matter [website](#), then making your way to your [local chapter's website](#). As a white person, though, I am not best suited to entertain all of your BLM questions, so here are some resources to help speak on the movement. I did my best to include mostly Black (or at least POC) authors particularly for this and the following two sections:

- The Making of Black Lives Matter by Christopher J. Lebron ([view summary here](#))
- Making All Black Lives Matter by Barbara Ransby ([view summary here](#))
- Framing Blackness: The African American Image in Film by Ed Guerrero ([view summary here](#))
- The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas ([view summary here](#))
- An oldie but a goodie on [#AllLivesMatter](#)
- How to Be An Antiracist by Ibram X. Kendi ([view summary here](#))
- NPR's review of a multi-perspective [list of LA Riot films](#)
- Women, Race, and Class by Angela Davis ([view summary here](#)), and her other reads
- The Transformation of Silence into Language by Audre Lorde ([view paper here](#))
- So You Want to Talk About Race by Ijeoma Oluo ([view summary here](#))
- Marcia Chatelain's [How Black Lives Matter Evolved](#) in Dissent
- The Stonewall Reader, in honor of Marsha P. Johnson ([view summary here](#))
- And, if you prefer listening, here are a few podcasts to get you started:
 - John Hanson's [In Black America](#)
 - [The Nod](#), with a recent episode in light of Floyd's murder
 - Glynn Washington and [Snap Judgment](#) for storytelling with a beat
 - [In Search of Black Power](#) from New Timbuktu

How do race and Blackness relate to urban planning? What should I check out to learn more about the intersection of #BLM and/or the history of Black people and urban planning?

Race is inherently tied to the field of urban planning because planners often address or, rather, neglect to address how people of different races will be able to use their projects. Let's look briefly at a modern issue: the [open streets argument](#). Open streets are great! They're for everyone to bike, walk, run, and do almost whatever they please in the middle of the street. Cars, be gone. But is that really how that works? What about [Ahmaud Arbery](#)? Would he have been safe on an open street? What about any other Black person who wanted to use an open street in a predominantly white neighborhood, or even in a mixed neighborhood where the police often drive by? Those Black people are more likely to be targeted by police and discrimination. These are issues directly relevant to planning, but they are too often not discussed in detail, if at all.

- *Free ebook download until June 5th:* on [Police Violence and Resistance](#)
- *Free JPER downloads this week:* thanks [Dr. Lisa Schweitzer](#) (this is also referenced below)
- [Segregated by Design](#) -- the name says it all
- Black in Place by Brandi Thompson Summer ([view summary here](#))
- [Rewriting the Urban Planning Canon](#) in APA Viewpoint
- [Racial and Class Bias in Zoning](#) in JAPA
- A [Social Equity](#) gold mine in APA, with additional resources at the bottom - more general planning with some discussion of POC (rather than Black, explicitly)
 - Similarly, APA's [Planning for Equity Policy Guide](#)
- From StreetsBlogLA, [An Interview with Kristen Jeffers](#), whose website is [here](#)
- Planetizen's [Violence Against Black Americans](#)
- StreetsBlogUSA on being [Antiracist](#) over simply being 'not racist'
- Campaign Zero's discussion on [Broken Windows policing reform](#)
- Peaceful demonstrations in [rich neighborhoods](#) reported by the LAist
- The Warmth of Other Suns by Isabel Wilkerson ([view summary here](#))
- The curious and angering case of [LA Metro buses](#) used against protestors in protests in the LAist (also check [L.A. Taco's site](#) and protest coverage)
- Racism is not just a human rights issue and a planning issue, but it's a [climate issue](#), says Ayana Elizabeth Johnson
- Nipsey [Hussle's love for his community](#), shared by Sahra Sulaiman
- General [KCRW coverage](#) (though you typically shouldn't expose protestors' faces for safety reasons)
- [A Letter to White Urbanists](#) (from a White Urbanist)

- [ITE and Equity](#) in a magazine issue
- Urban Planning and the African-American Community by June Manning Thomas ([view summary here](#))
- A [personal piece](#) from Black planner Dee P.
- Watch [Fruitvale Station](#) on [Tubi](#) for free or on various subscription platforms
- Then there's [Black Kids from Outer Space](#), a blast from the (2018) past
- The Black Skyscraper by Adrienne Brown ([view summary here](#))

Who are some good voices to listen to about Blackness and planning?

- [Gigi the Planner](#) (who you can [literally listen to](#) via her podcast)
- [Tamika Butler](#)
- [Naomi Doerner](#)
- [Lynn Ross](#)
- [Jerome Horne](#)
- [Dr. Destiny Thomas](#)
- [Dara Baldwin](#)
- [Kristen Jeffers](#) (whose radio show is on a hiatus, but [still worth a listen](#))
- [Veronica O'Davis](#)
- [Dee P.](#)
- [Courtney Cobbs](#)
- [David Sorrell](#)
- [Odetta MacLeish-White](#)
- [Byron Nicholas](#)
- [Danielle Harris](#)
- [Willow Lung-Amam](#)
- This amazing [list](#) compiled by Lynn Ross!

What are some good some resources on social media for #BLM and planning?

- [Twitter thread](#) on fear of speaking out in planning professions
- Everything that Tamika Butler has ever tweeted, [including this thread](#), and her [recent blog post](#)
- [Why Do People Say Defund the Police?](#) on Instagram
- [Abolish the Police? But how would we stay safe?](#) on Instagram
- Dr. Lisa Schweitzer's [handy compilation](#) of reads on Blackness and planning
- This Instagram post for [massive police reform](#)
- Senator Scott Weiner's [Twitter page](#), especially for those in SF/the Bay Area

- A [harrowing Instagram tale](#) of arrest at a peaceful protest
- Mona Chalabi's [story-telling art](#)
- [Recent posts](#) on Blackandurban's Instagram
- My [own thread](#) on how #BLM relates to transportation planning and mobility, though I think we need many more specific discussions and threads on this particular issue from both planners and Black voices (and both)
- Dr. Destiny Thomas' [blunt words](#) -- hey, they needed to be said
- Sahra Sulaiman's Twitter account, [with this thread](#) as an example, and articles
- (For every section, really) There are too many resources to name; Twitter and Instagram are frequently updated -- trying scrolling through your timeline or people's stories daily. Even if you don't have an account, you can access some information as a guest or Internet user.

What are some reputable #BLM foundations/nonprofits/charities to donate to?

- Some bigger names doing a lot of good:
 - [Black Visions Collective](#)
 - [NAACP Legal Defense Fund](#)
 - [The Loveland Foundation](#), which supports therapy for Black womxn
 - [Innocence Project](#)
 - [Communities United Against Police Brutality](#)
 - [Know Your Rights Camp](#)
- A few local (LA) organizations repping the "small(er) but mighty" title:
 - [People's City Council Freedom Fund](#)
 - [AWARE LA](#)
 - [The Bail Project](#)
 - [COVID-19 Mutual Aid Network](#)
 - [Dignity and Power Now](#)
- [Split a donation](#) amongst many bail funds
- Maximize your impact or if you simply don't have the funds to spare, [check this out](#). If you want to watch, [Zoe's video is here](#).
- Information for your company on [setting up a matching program](#) for donations

Consider any planning or mobility justice organizations, too, that you know work for a more equitable planning profession, either in a direct or more casual manner. [East Side Riders Bike Club](#) in Watts and [Pittsburghers for Public Transit](#) are two great examples.

What other actions can I take, especially as a planner, to support #BlackLivesMatter and Black people?

- Support black-owned businesses, especially for catering or events (since us planners do have plenty of networking events...hint, hint). I listed a few regions:
 - [Bay Area](#)
 - [Cincinnati](#)
 - [Los Angeles](#)
 - [Seattle](#)
- Encourage your organization, agency, or company to make a public statement proclaiming support for #BLM and to [take that statement into action](#); pledge to donate and take other actions to make sure that the statement is not forgotten about. See sample statements:
 - [Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust](#)
 - [SF Bike Coalition](#)
 - [Toole Design](#)
- Join a protest. If you choose to, please exercise caution and listen to Black folks directing the protest. [This features safety advice](#), from what to do if you get slammed with tear gas to proper protocol should you be arrested. And we can always take some [advice from Hong Kong](#)'s protests.
- Actively amplify Black voices by sharing materials and creations from Black people, [kind of like this](#). Spread awareness of #BLM, of course, but do your best not to overshadow those speaking from lived experiences and remember that Black people do not owe you, as a white person or non-black POC, anything. [Here's a handy guide](#) on white privilege.
- Educate yourself. You've made it to the last section of this resource guide, so that's a great start! Use some of the links in this document or sources from friends or social media as a springboard. Some of my favorite all-encompassing links that I've seen thus far:
 - [40 Ways You Can Help Right Now](#)
 - [6 Ways to Activate Beyond Social Media](#)
 - [5 Ways to Take Action](#)
 - [We as urban planners](#)
 - [Tangible tasks that non-black people can do right now](#)
 - [This google doc](#) has Everything if you're looking for a comprehensive guide.

- [Listen](#). And, more importantly, [listen to Black people](#). But also recognize that we are beyond the point where simply listening is enough. [We need to do more](#).
- Spread awareness to others, whether that be by reposting meaningful posts on social media or by starting conversations. Don't end your activism with the end of the protests. [Silence is complicit](#).
- Call out [inappropriate and racist behavior](#), including in [work settings](#).
- Recognize planning's [detrimental role in history](#), and its past rooted in problematic practices -- systemic racism, shutting out voices, isolating people, gentrifying.
- Practice [inclusive hiring](#)!
- Sign petitions to push for higher charges of the officers involved in Floyd's murder; to divert money from the LAPD's funding; and so on. [Here is one list](#), but there are many more petitions found on Google and through social media searches.
- Use your voice. In addition to signing petitions, call your councilmembers, write emails, and leave your congressmen voice messages. Demand justice. You can use [this example](#) or you can opt to use a template that's more representative of your voice.
- Create safe spaces at work and in communities for Black people, for People of Color, for women, for intersectional identities. Placemaking is what we do, after all! [Check out a piece](#) written by several Black folks, including Ascala Sisk and Odetta MacLeish-White.
- Spur conversation about race in as many planning meetings and about as many planning topics as you can. Think it doesn't matter? It does! Think about open streets. Can Black people use them without suspicion or being targeted? What about fare policing for transit systems? People of color, especially Black people, are targeted more often! [Dara said so](#). And it's definitely been proven true, as if that account wasn't enough.
- [Commit to being an ally!](#)

Thank you for reading. Please share with friends and family if you'd like, or on social media. Above all, remember the countless lives lost due to systemic racism and police brutality. Take action and take it now. I challenge you to use your white and non-black privilege.

#BlackLivesMatter Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow, and Always.



Art Credit: [@shirien.create](#)s on Instagram