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The History of the Black Lives Matter Movement: Interviews at Ohio State

Patrisse Cullors idea of the black lives matter movement has been distorted since the inception of the movement she started with an idea and a hashtag. Cullors initially sought to create a movement that supported black queer and black trans lives and fought for their lives to matter as well as all black lives but it was hushed to the tune of a new narrative that black men lives matter with the police killings of Michael Brown and Trayvon Martin. Here dialogue is incorporated in the video to educate the audience on her initial reason for creating the movement and the

The media has also had a part in distorting the image of the movement. Black individuals protesting or rioting tend to be grouped into the black lives matter movement even if they have not publically stated their involvement with the movement and as a result their actions have reflected on the group. News anchors have reflected their sentiments of the group based on these associations and paint the black lives matter movement as violent and unproductive. The world then sees this negative connotation cast onto the movement and it distorts peoples image of a peaceful and productive movement depicted far from such civility.

Black Lives matter was an ideology founded by 3 black queer women. Before Black Lives Matter was a movement, it was an important narrative and political intervention founded in a world where Black lives were systematically and intentionally targeted for demise. In Ferguson, Missouri after a police officer named Darren Wilson shot and killed eighteen-year-old Michael Brown, the phrase “Black Lives Matter” reached a public, national stage. Demonstrators in Ferguson began used “Black Lives Matter” as a chant and hashtag during their protests. The media identified the protest movement in Ferguson as the “Black Lives Matter Movement” before appreciating the organization that preceded the phrase. From this point on, the media has associated the BLM movement with the protests of police brutality, which has allowed most of the public to remain ignorant of the original message.

The interviews conducted by our group in the Ohio Union demonstrate a positive view of the Black Lives Matter Movement, but one that is altered by how the media portrays it. Although the majority of participants claimed to support the movement, numerous interviewees also noted the “violence” that is associated with Black Lives Matter. Many of them indicated that they are conscious of the founders’ goal to facilitate equality in a peaceful manner, but continued to mention that society often misconstrues the intention of Black Lives Matter rallies and events. The common theme throughout the responses we received was that the Black Lives Matter Movement is generally misunderstood, and the root of that problem was often addressed. Several volunteers claimed that, on a larger scale, society disregards the prevalence of racism and police brutality entirely. However, not all individuals were able to recall a number of instances of police brutality that recently occurred or define what exactly the goals of the movement are. The student population at Ohio State appeared to generally be in support of the Black Lives Matter Movement and claim it is commonly misunderstood, but fail to research the sufficient information to completely understand it themselves.

Another consistency found in the interviewees’ responses is distrust for law enforcement. Most students agreed that, in specific cases, the police are of direct fault for their violent actions against black lives and that there should be reform in the criminal justice system. Whether this is implemented through a restructuring of training or the hiring of independent prosecutors, it is of popular opinion that recent instances of violence call for a change on our current legal system. These responses shed a positive light on the future of the Black Lives Matter Movement by proving that, even amongst those who are less familiar with the movement, young communities are willing to make changes to respond to structural violence. Therefore, future generations of African Americans will likely face less resistance to calls of reformation than they do today.

There are many factors that have influenced the public’s view on what the black lives matter movement is and stands for. News outlets have played a major role in displaying the movement, while also expressing their interpretations. Social media posts, not only from friends but also from celebrities and politicians, are able to impact a person’s outlook on what the Black Lives Matter Movement really is. Lastly, the founder’s original ideology is able to influence the public’s view. To determine how students at Ohio State have perceived the black lives matter movement, we asked students what their impressions were of the movement.