Resisting Repression: The Black Lives Movement in Context

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Please cite as: Oliver, Pamela. 2020. "Resisting Repression: The Black Lives Movement in Context." Pp. 63-88 in *Racialized Protest and the State: Resistance and Repression in a Divided America*, edited by Hank Johnston and Pamela Oliver. Oxford UK and New York NY: Routledge.

Abstract

Although some naïve observers saw Black Lives Matter protests as coming from nowhere in response to a new problem of publicity about police violence, the insurgency of 2014-2016 was continuous with and built on longstanding movements of resistance against repression and unequal treatment in the criminal justice system. Black activists in the US have long protested racially disparate policing and the repression of Black political action. These actions have meshed with efforts by other reform movements. This chapter reviews Black and non-Black movements addressing racial disparities or biases in US criminal justice with an emphasis on the movements between the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and the emergence of the Black Lives mobilization in 2014. The author's experiences in a local movement around racial disparities in criminal justice are shown to be consistent with what happened elsewhere. Prior to 2012, both radicals and moderates engaged in similar tactics of writing reports and seeking to influence criminal justice policy and there were periodic eruptions of protest about police violence or discrimination. Protests built upon longstanding organizations and networks and received external support as they grew.

The Black Lives Movement and protest wave of 2012-2016 built upon a long history of prior mobilizations about racially biased social control in the United States. Racial domination and racially organized violence were inherent features of the construction of the nation and central to maintaining its White supremacist character for at least the first 150 years of its existence. Non-Whites were not even imagined as full citizens by the White¹ majority until after the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. Movements by African Americans for equal treatment and access to resources were often met by aggressive and violent repression from both official police agents and White civilians. White mobs resisted racial integration in Chicago in 1966 and in Boston and Louisville 1974-1976. The Black urban rebellions of the 1960s were countered by militarized force and militant movements were subjected to an extremely high level of repression (Davenport 2012; Goldstein 2001) including surveillance by the CIA, NSA, US Army and the FBI's COINTELPRO; legalized wiretapping and eavesdropping; infiltration, disinformation and propaganda campaigns; entrapment and even assassinations against the Black Panthers (Bloom and Martin 2013; Davenport 2010), the Republic of New Afrika (Davenport 2015) and other militant Black groups (Marx 1970; Marx 1974; Dello Buono 1992). These tactics were then used in the 1980s and after to counter crime and illegal drug sales in Black communities in a manner than many observers argued effectively criminalized entire populations and put them under intense police surveillance (Marx 1980; Marx 1981; Marx 1982; Oliver 2008; Chambliss 1995; Gordon 1994; Mauer 1999; Tonry 1994; Wacquant 2001; Kristian Williams 2011; King 2017).

Although Michelle Alexander (2009) calls the system of mass incarceration the "new Jim Crow," many other observers highlight the way that "stop and frisk" policing after 2000 (Fagan, Davies, and Carlis

2012; Lerman and Weaver 2014; Vitale and Jefferson 2016) even more resembles the Jim Crow practices of everyday humiliation and degradation as people are expected to submit, without resistance, to suddenly being stopped and patted and groped (Jones 2018; Matthews 2015; Rios 2015). Byfield (2019) argues that the new predictive policing models are allowing for racialized surveillance.

This chapter sketches the history of reformist and radical Black and non-Black movements against state violence and mass incarceration, emphasizing the continuities between earlier efforts and the Black Lives protests of 2014-16. It shows how Black Lives activists sought to convert the energy and attention of the protests into a sustained and proactive movement for Black progress. The author's observations in one city are used to illustrate the continuities and the ways local actions both had their own trajectories and interacted with national events.

Resistance to Repression Before Black Lives Matter

Black Movements Against Repression

There were many Black activist campaigns against unequal justice prior to the Civil Rights era. The campaign against lynching was led initially by Ida B. Wells-Barnett (Wells-Barnett and Douglass 2005; Wells-Barnett 1895; Wells-Barnett 1969) and continued as the NAACP campaigned for a federal anti-lynching bill in the 1930s (Zangrando 1965). The Communist Party's International Defense League took up the cases of many Black people unfairly accused of crimes, most famously the 1930s Scottsboro Boys campaign which had broad support and also attracted NAACP involvement (Niven 2006), including Rosa and Raymond Parks (Theoharis 2013). Besides engaging in proactive litigation against segregation, NAACP lawyers defended Black people unfairly charged with crimes and Black victims seeking justice (Meier and Rudwick 1976; Theoharis 2013). Black protests about White mob violence and lynching pressured President Truman to support Civil Rights in 1946 (Bloom 2015). The Civil Rights Congress (CRC) 1951 We Charge Genocide campaign documented hundreds of incidents of lynching police and violence in all parts of the US in a petition to the United Nations (Civil Rights Congress 1951). The CRC also protested the death penalty and supported prisoners. An extended CRC campaign in the 1950s for clemency for Wesley Robert Wells gained wide support and Wells himself became a participant, writing from inside prison (Hamm 2000). This is reminiscent of the campaign since 1982 against the death sentence for Mumia Abu-Jamal (freemumia.com 2019; mumiaabujamal.com 2019; Timothy Williams 2011) and other extended campaigns on behalf of people believed to be unjustly incarcerated.

In the 1960s, violent police repressed nonviolent Civil Rights protests and police violence was the precipitant to most Black urban riots (Kerner, Lindsay, and Harris 1968). Taylor (2016, Chapter 4) cites a 1968 *New York Times* poll that found that 52 percent of Blacks blamed "police brutality" as a "major cause of disorder" compared to only 13 percent of whites, while 63 percent of everyone polled believed that "until there is justice for minorities there will not be law and order." Unpunished police violence was also the precipitant for the major riots/insurrections in Miami in 1980 and Los Angeles in 1992. About a third of the Black protest events described in news wire stories concerned unfair policing, including widely covered protests about police killings in New York in the 1990s and again in 2006, and protests and riots after police killings in Cincinnati in 2001 and Oakland 2009 (Oliver, Hanna, and Lim 2019).

In the late 1960s, the Black Panther Party openly carried weapons and called for armed self-defense against police violence, in addition to organizing self-help programs such as free breakfasts and schools (Bloom and Martin 2013), a strategy that was met with extensive state violence. There were local Black Panther chapters in dozens of cities that each had their own mix of self-help and self-defense programs (Jeffries 2007; Jeffries 2010; Jeffries 2018). The Black Guerilla Family was formed in 1970 as a political organization of California prisoners with ties to the larger Black Power movement as a response to the overt targeting of Black Muslims and Black militants in California prisons and the alliance of prison guards with the White Aryan Brotherhood prison gang (Friedman 2018). The Attica New York prisoner uprising in 1971 was tied to Black Power and brutally suppressed when police forces stormed the prison and killed 33 inmates and 10 hostages. Resistance by prisoners continued. In 2018, prisoners in a number of facilities around the country went on a two-week strike for better conditions (McFarland 2018) with demands including prevailing wages for work, opportunity for parole, rehabilitation and education services, ending racially disparate sentencing policies, and the right to vote for incarcerated people (Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee 2018).

After the massive violent repression of the Black Panthers and other militant Black Power groups, the Black Power movement of the 1970s shifted toward more institutional strategies focused on entering the professions (Bell 2014) and on gaining political and electoral power, including Black political conventions in the 1970s (Johnson 2007), which fed into and Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition campaigns of the 1980s (Pierce 1988; 2003). The 1978 Supreme Court Bakke decision weakening Affirmative Action put the movement on the defensive and portended the continuing erosion of Black gains after the election of Ronald Reagan as president in 1980 (Robnett 2020).

Black mobilization around policing issues rose in the 1990s. The 1992 not guilty verdict for the police who beat Rodney King led to a major insurrection in Los Angeles and a rise in Black political consciousness and mobilization in the 1990s. Louis Farrakhan of the Nation of Islam called for Black men to repent and take responsibility in the Million Man March of October 1995, an event that drew extensive discussion and publicity among African Americans and had somewhere between 400,000 and a million attendees. The build up to the Million Man March overlapped with extensive television coverage of the trial of Black football star OJ Simpson charged with murdering his White ex-wife and her boyfriend; polls showed most Whites thought Simpson was guilty while most Blacks thought he was not guilty and that police had planted evidence.

In 1997, Black activist scholars Angela Davis and Ruthie Wilson Gilmore along with Rose Braz founded Critical Resistance (Critical Resistance 2018), a mixed-race prison abolitionist organization that popularized the phrase “prison industrial complex” and held a 1998 conference with 3500 people in attendance. The organization is still active and the phrase “prison industrial complex” has wide currency in activist circles and is now used to refer broadly to the whole continuum of criminal justice institutions.

The Radical Black Congress was formed by 3000 people who came to a convening in 1998 in the wake of continuing attacks on Black gains and the enthusiasm generated by the Million Man March (Brewer 2003; Ransby 2018). In a retrospective, RBC leaders Will Fletcher and Jamala Rogers (2014) say it was ideologically diverse and encompassed experienced activists who were members of various left-wing and nationalist groups, as well as individuals, and made “education, not incarceration” its primary focus in 2001. The RBC became fragmented in the wake of the attacks of September 11, failed to integrate its younger members, and eventually folded in 2008 (Fletcher and Rogers 2014).

In the late 1990s, campaigns against racial profiling in traffic stops and the phrase “Driving While Black” were launched by the NAACP, the ACLU and other organizations that conducted empirical studies, wrote reports, and drew attention to the issue (Browne 1999). Al Sharpton led a protest against racial profiling that blocked I-95 in New Jersey (Taylor 2016).² Taylor cites data from 1999 that reported that 59% of Americans said the police engaged in racial profiling and 81% of those said it was wrong (i.e. about 48% of total). Camp and Heatherton (2016) and the activists they interview describe activist mobilizations in New York and other cities against stop-and-frisk policing and racial profiling in the 1990s and the connections between these mobilizations and the later community mobilizations.

Black feminists began in the 1970s to develop an intersectional analysis that critiqued the racism of the [White] women’s movement and the sexism of the [male] Black movement and, as part of its larger agenda, theorized a continuum of intimate, community and state violence toward Black women expressed in a 1980 conference of the National Conference on Third World Women and Violence (Richie 2012; Thuma 2015). Black feminists argued that as the domestic violence movement went mainstream and gained external funding, it failed to prioritize services for poor Black women and supported a rise in punitive social control that both increased state violence against Black women and worsened issues of intimate and community violence (Ransby 2015). Incite! was founded in 2000 by women of color who attended the Color of Violence Conference and addressed the integration of intimate partner violence, police abuse, prison abuse, and healthcare abuse (Richie 2012; Ransby 2015). It is still active as an organization of women, trans people, and gender nonconforming people with chapters in a dozen cities. Its activities now center on confronting the state as the main organizer of violence, focusing on both violence against minority communities and within them. Incite! supports broad coalitions with other oppressed groups, is critical of the “non-profit industrial complex,” and partners with other groups, including Critical Resistance, with whom it issued a joint statement in 2001 (Incite! 2018). Ransby (2015) also stresses the activism of Black gay and lesbian people in the 1990s, especially around HIV/AIDS, as a precursor of the later prominence of queer people in the Black Lives movement, and Green (2019) similarly lifts up several decades of mobilizing by queer Black people as background to the prominence of queer people in the Black Lives Movement.

The energy of the mobilizations against discriminatory policing dissipated after the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001. Taylor (2016) and Fletcher and Rogers (2014) explicitly state that the attack dissipated the Radical Black Congress and Taylor stresses that poll data showed that Blacks had even higher support for profiling Arabs than Whites. Protest event data shows a steep drop in Black protests after 9/11 (Oliver, Hanna, and Lim 2019).

Black protests rose again in the latter half of the 2000s. Black Americans saw racial injustice in the mismanagement of the flooding in New Orleans after hurricane Katrina in 2005 and in the failure to rebuild housing in Black areas of the city. Disruptive protests received extensive news coverage about a police killing in New York in 2006 (Oliver, Hanna, and Lim 2019). In 2007 there was an extensive on-line mobilization organized by ColorOfChange.org over an incident in Jena, Louisiana. Six black high school students were overcharged for beating up a White student whom they believed had hung a noose on a tree at the high school. The noose apparently was in retaliation for the Black students’ sitting in an area traditionally reserved for Whites. The online campaign culminated in a march of 20,000 in Jena with numerous coordinated sympathy rallies around the country and a wave of follow-up protests calling for more punishment of noose-hanging and other hate crimes (Oliver, Hanna, and Lim 2019).

In short, the revived “Black Lives” movement that emerged after 2012 appears to have strong continuities with these earlier mobilizations of the 1990s, especially in their focus on aggressive street policing and police violence and in the strong leadership roles of Black women and queer people and the emphasis on criminal justice issues, as well as the revived mobilizations after 2005.

Criminal justice reform groups

Not all the resistance to escalated and disparate repression through the criminal justice system comes from social movement organizations, and not all of it is radical or critical. Even as there was substantial support given to the rise in mass incarceration and intensive surveillance through academic works on “broken windows,” “nothing works,” “incapacitation” and “super-predators” (among other buzz words that supported the rise in the punitive state) there were other academics who critiqued these policies (Oliver 2008). As I have described elsewhere (Oliver 2009), in 1999 I entered the arena of local discussions of criminal justice policy in Madison, Wisconsin, as a volunteer and then public sociologist. I found an array of different kinds of reformers: a faith-based advocacy group; partially overlapping Black and White networks of long-time activists; mostly Black criminal justice and social service professionals (e.g. police, judges, prosecutors, court commissioners, juvenile justice workers, school administrators, social workers) who promoted reform from within institutions; a variety of primarily-White foundation-funded advocacy groups; a few professors; and Black activists based in Black churches or Black organizations. As in other places (e.g., Owens 2014), a small organization of ex-prisoners was also visible. As Taylor (2016) and Bell (2014) remind us, Black college educated people often entered public employment, with especially high concentrations in criminal justice and social service institutions, and often took their concerns about social justice with them. While varying in the details, there is reason to believe that most larger communities have similar fields of organizations and activists.

The Wisconsin reform network was in contact with national organizations and networks. Cadora (2014) lists national policy groups working to reduce imprisonment rates including multi-issue groups (ACLU, The Urban Institute, Community Resources for Justice, the Brennan Center for Justice, the Council of State Governments, and the Pew Center on the States) and issue-specific advocacy groups (The Sentencing Project, Families Against Mandatory Minimums, the Drug Policy Alliance, the Justice Policy Institute, the Center for Effective Public Policy, Justice Strategies, the Safer Foundation, the JFA Institute, the Vera Institute of Justice). Recommendations from these national policy groups affected Wisconsin policy initiatives and discussions. Cadora says the most effective policy proposal was the Justice Reinvestment initiative focused on saving states money by reducing incarceration by providing community services; Wisconsin initially participated but pulled out when the state legislature refused to fund it. The Milwaukee district attorney participated in a Vera Institute initiative to reduce disparities in prosecution through focused data analysis. Cadora also discusses underwriting from private foundations and the support of the report by the National Research Council (2014). Dagan and Teles (2014) emphasize that since 2008 there have also been conservative advocacy groups opposing high incarceration, generally from concerns about fiscal crises and a shift of attention to terrorism. Michelle Alexander’s *The New Jim Crow* (2009) brought much wider public discussion to the issues of mass incarceration, both nationally (Ransby 2015) and locally. New activists were energized and a new group was formed in Madison, the local chapter of a predominantly-White faith-based community organizing network that had already been active elsewhere in Wisconsin around a race-blind “treatment instead of prisons” campaign. After 2010, both the local chapter and the state organization became much more race-focused. The local chapter attracted substantial mixed-race participation that included both older and younger people, ex-prisoners as well as professionals, and a range of ideological positions, including people articulating prison abolitionism. An active ex-prisoner’s group was spun off from and supported by the state organization. Although I went to a few meetings and stayed on the mailing list, I was not an

active participant in this group as it has evolved and went through some organizational conflicts, so my impressions of its politics are superficial, but it does seem to have portended the coming wave of mobilization.

Through 2010, the reformers I worked with were committed to reducing racial disparities in the system and saw both mass incarceration and racial discrimination as real problems, along with systems that penalized poverty and problematic behavior arising from unequal life conditions. Some reformers were connected to more radical networks. Reformers disagreed about how to weigh system bias versus consequences of poverty versus systemic racism versus capitalism as the main factors in incarceration, and there were tensions among groups with different positions. Nevertheless, regardless of ideology, the main activities of all groups in the field involved persuasion and report-writing and collaborative rather than conflictual relations between state and non-state actors. This changed with the coming of the Black Lives movement.

Black Lives Matter and Reinvigorated Resistance

Neither police violence nor disorderly resistance to police violence nor organized advocacy about criminal justice were new in the 2010s. What changed after 2012 was the way that protests about police violence built on each other and cascaded into a larger movement. The protest wave was a product of the larger political context and built upon substantial pre-existing community organizing and social movement networks. Taylor (2016) emphasizes the context of disillusionment with the Obama presidency, including his failure to stay the execution of Troy Davis, and the Occupy protests of 2011-12, especially in New York, Oakland and Atlanta where there were large numbers of Black protesters. In addition, Black people and other minorities dissatisfied with the White-dominated Occupy movement created Occupy the Hood (Morrow 2011; Paye 2012; Taylor 2016; Grainger 2013). Substantial mobilization and media attention built around the killing of Trayvon Martin by George Zimmerman in 2012 and Zimmerman's not guilty verdict 2013 (Ransby 2015). National activist mobilization was well underway in 2012 and 2013, before the protest wave of 2014. Of the 20 organizations identified as part of Black Lives Matter on the partial and non-random list compiled by Alisa Robinson (2017), seven (35%) were founded before 2012, six (30%) were founded in 2012 or 2013; only seven (35%) were founded in 2014 or 2015.

Most visible to outsiders was the phrase Black Lives Matter, created as a Twitter hashtag on the day of the Zimmerman verdict in 2013 by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi. These three were experienced community organizers who had met through Black Organizing for Leadership and Dignity (BOLD Black Organizing for Leadership and Dignity 2018), a national organization based in Washington, DC that trains community organizers. When the Ferguson protests started in August of 2014, Black Twitter was an important conduit of information about the protests (Bonilla and Rosa 2015; Ray, et al. 2017; Ray, Brown, and Laybourn 2017). Johnetta Elzie, DeRay McKesson, and Brittany Packnett were especially prominent for frequent tweeting and producing a newsletter *The Movement Today* (Thrasher 2015; Randle 2016). Black Twitter used the hashtag #Ferguson in the initial protests, but the power of the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag and message caught on and was used much more often after November 22-24 when Tamir Rice was killed and, two days later, the grand jury declined to prosecute Darren Wilson, the officer who killed Michael Brown (Anderson and Hitlin 2016).

Although the initial protesters in Ferguson after the killing of Michael Brown in August of 2014 were neighborhood residents, the massive police response in the context of heightened media attention,

including the death of Eric Garner in New York two weeks previously, drew in other protesters. Most initial protestors came from the surrounding St. Louis area, but activists quickly converged from all around the country (Taylor 2016; Rogers 2015; Weddington 2018a; Ransby 2018). A “Black Lives Matter Freedom Ride” of 500 people from 18 cities organized by Garza, Cullors and Tometi came to Ferguson on Labor Day weekend (Solomon 2014). Weddington (2018a) stresses that the initial protests around the deaths of Eric Garner and Michael Brown were by local activists, not national movement organizations nor “Black Lives Matter.” He discusses the criticisms community organizations have of the “official” Black Lives Matter organization, and emphasizes the importance of studying local Black activism, not just large national-level named organizations. Ransby (2018) and Taylor (2016) similarly give detailed attention to the wide range of local organizations in many cities that undergird the Black Lives movement.

Protests using the phrase Black Lives Matter spread around the country in the fall of 2014. Weddington (2018b) analyzes 29 generally small and legal protests 2014-2017 of a local Albany, NY SMO founded in 2013, finding that most protests focused on local issues, while were solidarity protests tied to national events. Analyzing crowd-sourced data on police killings and Black Lives Matter protests 2014-15, Williamson, Trump, and Einstein (2018) find more Black Lives Matter protests where there had been more people killed by police, even after subtracting those who had been unarmed.

Black Lives Matter in Madison, Wisconsin

Madison events intertwined with national events and built upon existing organizations and networks. Discussions of racial disparities in criminal justice had been going on for at least 15 years. On October 2, 2013 a local NGO published and received extensive local publicity for a report that had been in preparation for at least a year titled “Race to Equity” (Wisconsin Council on Children and Families 2013) documenting Madison’s racial disparities in criminal justice, education, and economic well-being. In December 2013, Rev. Alex Gee, a Black activist minister whose church had a longstanding community development arm (Nehemiah 2018), published a local newspaper editorial titled “Justified Anger” that cited this report and personal experiences (Gee 2013). A local foundation and the newspaper funded several public meetings in 2014, both mixed-race meetings to promote discussion and Black-only meetings led by Rev. Gee to form a broad coalition called Justified Anger to demand change.

Younger Black Madison activists who had traveled to Ferguson in the fall of 2014 became impatient with what they saw as a glacial pace of change and negotiation in the Justified Anger meetings, as well as the emphasis on older professionals, and formed a coalition of three younger activist groups that began protesting in Madison after the Ferguson non-prosecution in November 2014, initially under the name Ferguson to Madison and then under the name Young, Gifted and Black (YGB) Coalition. The initial demands referenced ongoing local issues: (1) no new jail, (2) community led resources, (3) release those incarcerated for crimes of poverty. Two of the YGB groups were small and had been recently formed around local issues, including the police killing of a White man a few years before. The third, Freedom, Inc. (Freedom Inc. 2018) is a community service and advocacy group with paid staff founded in 2003 by a Hmong woman who believed in culturally specific programming, hired Asian staff to run programs for Hmong and other Southeast Asians, and hired Black staff to create and run programs for African Americans. M. Adams, the Black co-director of Freedom, Inc., originally hired as an intern, emerged as one of the most visible leaders of YGB. YGB was a Black-only group but it sponsored and worked closely

with a non-Black ally group and did a great deal of outreach to the White community. YGB itself has no staff, but most of its leaders are employed by local nonprofit organizations or the university.

The YGB Coalition in Madison had already held several protests in opposition to a new jail and about police violence in general when an unarmed young man, Tony Robinson, was killed by a Madison police officer on March 6, 2015. Street protests ramped up after that and drew in more widespread participation of people of all races. Freddie Gray was killed in Baltimore in April 2015, an event that led to protests and then riots in Baltimore and gained massive national media attention (Ransby 2018). In May 2015, Justified Anger presented a document called *Our Madison Plan* calling for significant financial investment in developing the Black community in Madison and held a large roll-out meeting with a buffet dinner provided by the funders that was attended by several hundred people of all races. The campaign to stop the jail, a coalition of several groups including YGB and several non-Black groups that had previously been involved in criminal-justice issues, won a temporary victory in May 2015 that called for three task forces over the summer to develop alternatives to a new jail.

In July 2015, the national network of the Movement for Black Lives held a national conference in Cleveland attended by over 1000 people and drafting the Vision for Black Lives that would be rolled out in August of 2016. Freedom, Inc. represented by its Co-Director M. Adams, participated in this meeting and the 2016 roll-out.

The Black Lives Movement Elsewhere

A similar pattern of new mobilizations building on and expanding existing networks appears elsewhere. Taylor (2016) discusses three of them: (1) a broad Cleveland coalition, Cleveland Action, that formed in response to the Tamir Rice killing and included clergy, academics and the Council on American-Islamic relations; (2) a Philadelphia group called the Philly Coalition for REAL Justice 2014-15 that organized against police brutality; and (3) Dallas Mothers Against Police Brutality organized solidarity between the anti-police-brutality and immigrant rights movements. Other national groups that predated Black Lives Matter but were founded amidst the broader mobilizations after 2010 are also mentioned by Taylor (2016). These include Dream Defenders (Dream Defenders 2018), a Florida organization of Black, immigrant and poor people founded in 2012 and currently being sued by GEO for saying it cages children; and Million Hoodies (MillionHoodies 2018), a chapter-based organization founded in 2012 a month after the death of Trayvon Martin that initially focused on tracking police violence and now has 11 paid staff. Ransby (2015) discusses many of these same organizations and devotes also attention to the organizations in Baltimore and Chicago.

In Chicago, the Black Lives Matter organization web site (Black Lives Matter Chicago 2018) says that it is entirely volunteer run and is active in policing and other issues. Among other activities, it links to a campaign led by Mariame Kaba that began in 2010 for reparations for the actions of Chicago police officer John Burge who tortured over 100 people into confessing crimes they did not commit between 1972 and 1991 (Chicago Torture Justice Memorials 2018). Mariame Kaba also led a grassroots Chicago campaign in 2014-2016 called "We Charge Genocide" (We Charge Genocide 2018) using the slogan and tactic of the 1951 campaign by the Civil Rights Congress: they collected reports of oppressive policing in Chicago, prepared a report, and sent a delegation of young people to Geneva to present it to the UN. The group's "about" says that it is entirely volunteer and avoids the "nonprofit industrial complex." The organization Assata Daughters (Assata's Daughters 2018) is a Black women's organization founded in

2015 that identifies with the radical tradition of Assata Shakur and defines itself as part of the larger Black Lives Matter Movement. Its web site says it is volunteer run and solicits donations for expenses.

Another key organization, BYP100 (BYP100 2018a), grew from a conference of 100 young Black activists convened in 2013 by University of Chicago professor Cathy Cohen's Black Youth Project (an information hub founded in 2004). Attendees, led by Charlene Carruthers, a Black queer feminist community organizer, decided to create the organization when the Zimmerman verdict was announced at the time of the conference. It organized in Chicago and elsewhere around police violence issues but quickly established itself as a multi-issue organization (BYP100 2018b) and now has 11 paid staff members and chapters in nine cities. Its history is also described by Ransby (2015).

Ransby (2015) also stresses the actions of MXGM (Malcolm X Grassroot Movement), an organization founded in 1990 that grew out of the Republic of New Afrika and has chapters in New York, Atlanta, Washington, DC, Dallas-Fort Worth, New Orleans, Oakland, Detroit and Jackson, Mississippi, where it promotes cooperative economic development, self-sufficiency, and sustainability.³ In Jackson, Mississippi, the organization successfully contested for political power (Spence 2015; Florini 2014). After the killing of Trayvon Martin, it also published Operation Ghetto Storm (Eisen 2012) documenting police killings which inspired subsequent efforts by others, including the *Washington Post*.

The founders of the national Black Lives Matter organization encouraged the formation of chapters and sought to control the use of the "Black Lives Matter" name. Many of the groups that affiliated with Black Lives Matter had existed under other names prior to affiliating with Black Lives Matter, or created a Black Lives Matter chapter as a front or coalition of activists already involved in other groups. Many groups in many cities that were part of the larger Black Lives mobilization never took the Black Lives Matter name. The national Black Lives Matter organization still exists. It has been criticized by some other organizations that are part of the broader Black Lives movement for seeking to portray itself as "the" movement and monopolize resources, for failing to acknowledge other grassroots groups, and for its move toward electoral politics and a liberal agenda.⁴

The Black Lives Movement Seeks a Proactive Agenda

As the protests ramped up, longtime Black activists expressed interest and enthusiasm but also concern about keeping the movement nonviolent and channeling it into sustained mobilization. Taylor (2016) describes these conflicts as being primarily between the Black masses and the Black elites. While that is certainly one axis of contention, the conflicts appear multi-dimensional. Newly mobilized people with no clear ideology beyond a generalized Black consciousness worked with activists with a wide variety of specific ideologies. Those ideologies included Black nationalism, various types of race-conscious socialism/Marxism, liberal Democrat, various religious or communitarian traditions, and race-conscious conservatism. Tactically, there were splits between those favoring electoral strategies, those favoring community organizing, those favoring disruptive direct action, and those favoring separatism and self-help.

The network of community organizations from which the movement grew quickly sought to seize the momentum and broaden its agenda beyond "don't kill us." A Movement for Black Lives agenda meeting that included 1200 people met in Cleveland in late July 2015. The *New York Times* apparently did not cover the event at all. An Associated Press article reported some of the speeches from the opening session and the goal of creating a movement (Gillispie 2015). A Cleveland news source covered the

event itself (Blackwell 2015a; Morice 2015) and published multiple stories giving competing accounts of an incident in which conference participants confronted an officer arresting a Black boy and were pepper sprayed by the officer (e.g., Naymilk 2015; Blackwell 2015b). *Essence* reported that attendees would include Cleveland Action, Ferguson Action, Million Hoodies Movement for Justice (Lewis 2015). NPR (Florida 2015) featured an interview with conference organizers Maurice Mitchell and Waltrina Middleton along with Nat Williams, director of the Hill-Snowdon Foundation. Williams stated that Hill-Snowdon stressed the importance of founding conventions, comparing the Cleveland meeting to the 1909 Niagara Falls conference called by W.E.B. DuBois, and said his organization had committed nearly a million dollars in grants over three years to the group. Coverage of the conference by Socialist Alternative called attention to the meeting's importance as the first major event since the 1998 Black Radical Conference, but also expressed concerns about funding from George Soros and the Ford Foundation grants that support the groups organizing against police violence, worrying that this leads movements into safe channels that do not challenge capitalism (Hawkins 2015).

On August 1, 2016, the Movement for Black Lives (M4BL) rolled out its comprehensive proactive agenda "A Vision for Black Lives" posted at <https://m4bl.net/> in a well-organized social and mass media campaign timed to follow the Democratic and Republican conventions. The preamble states that the agenda is rooted in Black communities but also recognizes the shared struggle with all oppressed people. Additionally, it stresses that it is intentional amplification of the "particular experience of state and gendered violence that Black queer, trans, gender nonconforming, women and intersex people face." The agenda lists six major policy areas: End the War on Black People, Reparations, Invest-Divest, Economic Justice, Community Control, Political Power. Each policy area includes a series of more specific demands and each of these is backed up by a longer policy paper. The platform received coverage from many left-liberal blogs and news sources, and serious mainstream news media coverage from the *St. Louis Dispatch*, two articles in the *Christian Science Monitor* and several in the *Atlantic*, as well as on the NBC news web site. The *New York Times* gave only vague coverage of the platform in an article that did not list the details of the proposals or link to them (Alcindor 2016); two *New York Times* articles in September discussed the cancellation of a benefit for M4BL because of the small part of the platform that condemned Israel's treatment of Palestine, and two other articles in August mentioned that it, in addition to the NAACP, opposed charter schools.

Debates about Funding

Sustainable movements require activists who have sources of food and shelter and can provide for dependents. Who is paying or supporting activists become important elements of movements (Oliver and Marwell 1992). By 2015, the Black Lives movement was drawing in White progressive donor and foundation support (Taylor 2016), as the NPR and Socialist Alternative coverage of the 2015 Cleveland meeting made clear. Several meetings were held and articles written in the summer of 2015 encouraging progressive donors to give money to the Black Lives movement (Schlegel 2015), and there was some news coverage of this (Vega 2015; Vogel and Wheaton 2015). As mentioned above, the Hill-Snowdon Foundation launched the Making Black Lives Matter Initiative in May 2015, committing \$900,000 over three years to support Black-led organizing, leadership development, and strategic convenings (Hill-Snowdon Foundation 2018). Cordery (2016) describes other funding: Solidaire, founded in 2012 in response to the Occupy movement, gave \$300,000 in rapid response support to Movement for Black Lives groups in Ferguson, Baltimore, Minneapolis, and Chicago; Resource Generation, an organization of young wealthy people, gave \$1 million to various groups; the North Start Fund quickly

gave \$280,000 to New York Groups, and the Women Donors Network pledged to raise more than \$1 million for racial justice. Cordery advocates that funders seek to be more flexible for rapid-response funding and says that most of the funding for the 2015 Cleveland meeting was raised within a few weeks from individual donors. Writing for *Politico*, Vogel and Wheaton (2015) emphasize the role of the Democracy Alliance, a major liberal funding club close to the Democratic Party, whose members were funding St. Louis's Organization for Black Struggle, and less disruptive groups that have provided support for the Black Lives movement, including Black Youth Project 100, Center for Popular Democracy, Black Civic Engagement Fund, and ColorOfChange.org, and Advancement Project. In July of 2016, the Ford Foundation announced that it would make six-year investments in organizations that are part of the Movement for Black Lives in partnership with other donor groups with a stated goal of channeling \$100 million into Black Lives movement groups (McGirt 2016; Kelly-Green and Yasui 2016). In short, Black Lives movement organizations are on many donor lists.

There are longstanding debates about the role of funders in movements. Taylor quotes Aldon Morris (1984) on how foundations funding SNCC sought to channel it into voter registration efforts and away from more disruptive tactics. Francis (2015) describes how the Garland Fund moved the NAACP away from its focus on racial violence in the 1950s to a focus on education. Many writers have criticized the political agenda of the Ford Foundation. Marquez (2003) describes how external funding shaped the agendas of key Mexican American organizations, including the National Council of La Raza, the Southwest Voter registration Education Project, and the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, as well as the Texas Industrial Areas Foundation network of grassroots organizations. Ferguson (2015; 2013) examined Ford Foundation funding of Black Power and argues that Ford funded inward-looking segregated programs that treated Black people as a problem to be kept separate.

Incite! published a collection entitled *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded* over a decade ago (2007) whose writers discussed the ways in which programs were distorted by funding issues, and many activists since have debated the NGO-ization of reform or the "nonprofit industrial complex." In the introduction to *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded*, Smith (2007) argues that funding is a cover for White supremacy by providing relief that does not challenge hierarchies, and in the same volume, Rodríguez (2007) argues that funding moderate groups provides a cover for violent repression of radicals. Kohl-Arenas (2015) studied negotiations between funders and groups addressing migrant poverty in California and argues that funders operate as consensus brokers that exclude challenges to power relations. Oyakawa (2017) discusses the conflict in the Ohio Organizing Collaborative between funders' priorities and the populist logic of the organization. Frantz and Fernandes (2018) also found that funders pulled workers' centers away from confrontational politics.

Black Lives movement funders associated with the Democratic Alliance doubtless have a partisan agenda, and other funders doubtless also have a channeling agenda. At the same time, there is a wide diversity of arrangements between funders and the groups they fund, and some donor money supports groups that are contentious and challenge the system. Cordery (2016) discusses the importance of movement building and relationships of trust between philanthropists and the groups they fund, so that they do not need to ask for accountability reports, and stresses that many local groups self-fund, including crowdfunding to raise bail money or expenses for activists. The alternatives to donor funds are to do what can be done on a volunteer-only basis, charge dues, sell products such as T-shirts or newspapers, write and sell books, get a job with a non-profit or university, or become a paid public speaker. All these options have been pursued by some organizations and activists.

Surviving the White Counter-revolt

Even as the Movement for Black Lives was attracting substantial White ally support and rolling out its proactive agenda in the summer of 2016, the White counter-revolt was in full swing. In the campaign of Donald Trump, White supremacy moved from covert “dog whistle” language to overt attacks on immigrants and rejection of Black movement demands. Although the Black Lives movement had attracted substantial White support, it (along with the Obama presidency) had also heightened White racial threat. Ironically, the peak in “Black Lives Matter” as a phrase in Google trends occurred in mid-July. On July 7, as activists and news media were gearing up for the second anniversary of Michael Brown’s killing and the Vision for Black Lives was being prepared for its August 1 rollout, a Black sniper shot 12 police officers, killing five of them, at a peaceful Black Lives Matter march in Dallas that was protesting police killings in Minnesota and Louisiana. Police killed the sniper with a robot at the scene after a standoff where he told police negotiators that he was upset about police shootings and wanted to kill white people, especially police officers. His Facebook page showed support for the New Black Panther Party (Fernandez, Pérez-Peña, and Bromwich 2016). Within 24 hours, news articles were characterizing this as the end of the Black Lives Matter movement and police and other officials were blaming Black Lives Matter protests for police killings. Although there had been sprinklings of “All Lives Matter” and “Blue Lives Matter” in Google Trends before, there is a strong peak in those terms as well at the same time, although they never eclipse Black Lives Matter.

After the surprise election of Donald Trump in November, national [White] media attention turned from the Black Lives movement to the mass protests against his election and then the ongoing dance of presidential announcements of yet another anti-immigrant action or Republican Congressional attacks on the Affordable Care Act or passage of massive tax cuts, or news about Russian hacking of the US election, or pecuniary and sexual scandals of public officials. Although I do not have confirmation of time or place, I saw statements by Black Lives activists that movement activists were already planning in September and October for a possible Trump victory.

The Black Lives movement has left center stage, but it has not gone away. Alisa Robinson’s compilation⁵ of Black Lives Matter protests or demonstrations lists 2638 events as of April 6, 2019, including 429 demonstrations in at least 168 locations that occurred in 2017 (per a report) and at this writing in the spring of 2019 is still reporting one or two dozen events a month.⁶

Most of the organizations that existed before the wave of mobilization that began in 2012 are still operating, as are many of the newer organizations. Ransby (2018) describes the ongoing work of the Movement for Black Lives (M4BL) coalition, including a 2017 electoral-justice project that obtained funding and trained leaders, including Madison’s M. Adams. Anspach (2018) reviews the state of the movement in the fall of 2018, arguing that it is moving forward on many of the campaigns outlined in the 2016 Agenda, including campaigns to restore voting rights to felons and to build Black voting power generally, strategies of shifting funding from criminal justice to other programs, a campaign against cash bail, and a campaign against GEO, the firm that contracts for immigrant detention centers and gives money to political candidates.

Other groups continue to address criminal justice issues. The Million Hoodies Movement for Justice (MillionHoodies 2018) was co-founded in 2012 by Daniel Maree, a social media strategist initiated a “Million Hoodies” online campaign around the Trayvon Martin case (Ehrlich 2013), and Dante Barry, who had previously worked for the Roosevelt Institute, a liberal think tank. It initially focused on collecting

incidents of police misconduct and now focuses on developing a new generation of human rights leaders among students and young people of color. Johnetta Elzie and DeRay McKesson, who became well known for frequent tweeting of Ferguson protests and producing a newsletter *The Movement Today* (Thrasher 2015; Randle 2016) went on to win a Howard Zinn Freedom to Write award and collaborated with data scientist Samuel Sinyangwe and fellow Ferguson Tweeter Brittany Packnett, who was on President Obama's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, to create "Mapping Police Violence" and a larger Campaign Zero (Campaign Zero 2018) that is focused on criminal justice issues, including ending broken windows policing, cutting school to prison pipeline, and seeking alternatives to incarceration.

Conclusion

This chapter has put the Black Lives movement into context, to show how this movement focusing on resisting police violence was not new but arose from the fundamental divisions of US society and built on prior movement activism. After the gains of the Civil Rights era and the intensive repression of the Black Power movement at the end of the 1960s and the early 1970s, the Black movement shifted into a more institutional and self-help phase. A series of Black conventions sought to build Black political power. Black organizations like the NAACP, the SCLC, and the Urban League continued to pursue reforms in an increasingly hostile climate. Black electoral politics expanded along with Black Power cultural organizations. But, as the Robnett chapter in this volume explains, the Black movement lost the proactive initiative in the 1970s and was increasingly in a defensive mode against attacks on Affirmative Action in the context of a political emphasis on attracting White voters. The massive repression of Black urban rioters and Black militants morphed into intensive policing of Black neighborhoods and mass incarceration.

Regardless of their political ideology, be it radical or reformist, most of the resistance to this repression took the form of advocacy: collecting data, writing reports, giving speeches, advocating legislation, and filing lawsuits. Across the decades since 1970, this has been punctuated by periodic eruptions of relatively spontaneous mass protest to egregious acts of police violence. Some of these eruptions included property damage or assaults on persons and became riots or insurrections. In other cases, particularly in New York, activists helped convert the protest energy into sustained disciplined peaceful disruptive protests around specific incidents.

Despite the lack of consistent attention from mainstream White news sources or academics, African American groups developed the ideologies and networks that undergird the more recent Black Lives mobilization. Local activist networks or what Aldon D. Morris (1984) calls local movement centers built on those established in the Civil Rights and Black Power (Jeffries 2007; Jeffries 2010; Jeffries 2018) eras and continued to do what they could. There was a mobilization wave in the 1990s that probably was sparked by the widely publicized video of Los Angeles police beating Rodney King in 1991 and the not guilty verdict for the police who beat him followed by the Los Angeles riot in 1992. There was a growth of Afro-Centric celebrations and bookstores in the 1990s, the massive mobilization around the 1995 Million Man March and the extensive publicity around the OJ Simpson trial. There was a great deal of Black political action in the latter half of the 1990s to resist repression. The NAACP and other reformist Black organizations, in alliance with some White organizations including the ACLU, developed the "driving while black" and "racial profiling" campaigns, and there were at least some disruptive protests that were part of these campaigns, although they got little attention in the White press. Incite!, a woman of color organization addressing issues of violence and incorporating queer voices, was formed

in the late 1990s, and Black queer people were mobilizing in other organizations as well. The Black Radical Congress adopted “education not incarceration” as its central focus, and Black radicals along with White radicals founded Critical Resistance. Protests and “riots” about police violence were regular occurrences in Black communities, and a few of them received national news coverage, including several cascading protest waves in New York City in the 1990s, as well as the 2001 Cincinnati riot. In the broader social movement scene, widespread mobilization in the anti-globalization movement and the role of the anarchists led to the Battle of Seattle in 2000 and an overall increase in disruptive politics.

Then the attacks of 9/11 happened and largely stalled all that mobilization for about five years. Protests were centered in the movement against the Iraq War and, in 2006, in defense of immigrants against harsh proposed anti-immigrant legislation. In the second half of the 2000s, there were Black protests about police killings and the online organizing for the “Jena 6” protests about discrimination in criminal justice and failure to prosecute hate crimes. The most recent protest wave began with the right-wing anti-Obama Tea Party mobilization of 2009-10 and then, after the Republican victories in 2010, with left-wing opposition to austerity programs in the Occupy movement of 2011. Black people were important parts of Occupy protests in several cities and in spin-off Occupy the Hood movements in many other cities. Protests calling for the prosecution of George Zimmerman for killing of Trayvon Martin in 2012 and about Zimmerman’s not guilty verdict in 2013 heightened attention to police violence and set the stage for the mass mobilization to come. The police killings of Eric Garner in New York and then Michael Brown in Ferguson in August 2014 launched a protest wave that peaked in 2016. Many of the organizations fostering these protests and the broader advocacy campaign around repression had been formed before 2014 and many received substantial outside funding. The prominence of women and queer people in the Black Lives movement connects directly to the development of Black feminist intersectional politics and their analysis of the intertwining effects of state violence and personal violence, along with their call to attend to women and queer and trans people, not only men, as victims of state violence. Continuities with the themes and rhetoric of Black Power are also evident in the recent mobilizations.

Within a year, these activists were holding meetings seeking to shift all that energy around resisting police violence into a proactive agenda for social change that would address the underlying conditions creating subordination as well as the system of repression that reinforced subordination. By 2016, the movement was attracting widespread White support and elite allies and financial support, even as it was also threatening many White civilians and many police agencies. The unexpected election of Donald Trump in November 2016 shifted media and activist attention toward anti-Trump protests, anti-immigrant policies and pro-immigrant protests, and overt White supremacists. The Black movement did not demobilize but shifted ground as the political environment shifted. From the standpoint of mainstream news media coverage, the Black Lives movement appears to be in abeyance. This does not mean that it has gone away, but that it is shifting strategies to survive for the long haul in a hostile environment.

At this writing, in the spring of 2019, the Black Lives movement still exists and gives evidence of still having elite support, quite possibly as part of the partisan struggle among elites for control of government. At the same time, White civilians have become bolder in their harassment of Blacks and other minorities and overt White supremacists have been demanding attention. The intensive policing practices in poor Black communities show no sign of having been eased and have probably been reinstated in many places with federal support. Policing, internment, and deportation of immigrants is a

focus of attention. Given the configuration of external support that was documented in 2016 and obvious political realities, one substantial line of action is electoral, including both mobilizing Black voters and resisting efforts by Republicans to weaken Black voting rights. Another is continuing pressure on local criminal justice systems where local conditions are favorable. The movement against mass incarceration has gone mainstream, as conservatives as well as liberals are seeking to reduce prison and jail populations, and the more radical “prison abolitionism” movement continues to challenge the ideological underpinnings of the entire system. There are also growing efforts to highlight the treatment of Black immigrants and form stronger alliances between immigrant rights and Black groups, building on efforts that began in the mid-2000s. Traditional Black Civil Rights organizations are forming alliances with other groups seeking to resist conservative and racist policies and movements.

Predictions about where all these efforts will go in the coming years or decades are iffy at best. Both the physical and political environment are becoming more and more volatile and there are growing strains on both majority and minority populations. Movement actors cannot control outcomes and must make strategic guesses about how to respond to the actions of others in a complex and increasingly chaotic system.

Movements around major social cleavages do not have final conclusions, neither complete victories nor complete defeats. The only thing we can know for sure is that the actors on both sides are still there and there will be another round in an ongoing struggle.

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Notes

¹ I capitalize White for the sake of consistency in capitalizing the names of all racial/ethnic groups and use it as a synonym for European in the racial sense. I use Black and African American interchangeably, as members of this group are roughly balanced in their preferences for each term and generally find neither offensive. I capitalize Black because this is the preference of most Black people and is consistent with the capitalization of all other names for racial groups. I have explained the issues at stake in my essay *Race Names* Oliver, Pamela. 2017. "Race Names." *SocArXiv.com*, no. doi:10.31235/osf.io/7wys2 (November 11, 2017). <https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/7wys2/>.

² This was also reported in a May 26, 1998 article in the *Philadelphia Tribune*

³ The organization's current web presence is low on content, with archived pages containing much more material.

⁴ See for example <http://blacklivescincy.com/home/2018/03/28/why-black-lives-matter-cincinnati-is-changing-its-name/>

⁵ Alisa Robinson has collected news accounts of Black Lives Matter protests and organizations and policy statements and made them available through a creative commons license at <https://elephrame.com/textbook/BLM/chart> . She has also maintained an archive of organizations and policy statements List of BLM orgs <https://elephrame.com/textbook/BLMOrganizations/chart> List of BLM policy platforms <https://elephrame.com/textbook/BLMPlatforms/chart> summary of BLM published Nov 1 2016 <https://elephrame.com/textbook/What-is-the-Black-Lives-Matter-movement/article> report about BLM published in 2017 <https://elephrame.com/textbook/2017-Report-on-the-Black-Lives-Matter-movement/article>

⁶ I counted 23 events recorded for March 2019 and 12 for September 2018, each time counting for the most recent month.