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# 6 Reasons 'All Lives Matter' Doesn't Work—in Terms Simple Enough for a Child

Looking for a way to explain the difference between "Black Lives Matter" and "All Lives Matter"? Try one of these six metaphors.

By [Maressa Brown](#) | Published on June 8, 2020



As the world stands up and speaks out for social justice, more parents are having conversations among themselves and with their children about the past, present, and where we go from here. But language matters just as much as learning. For example, given various U.S. systems and institutions act as though Black lives are dispensable, it is imperative to say "Black lives matter," as opposed to "all lives matter."

"The reason 'Black Lives Matter' went from hashtag to a movement illustrates exactly why saying it out loud was necessary in the first place," notes Ginna Green, a political strategist, writer, and mom of four from Stamford, Connecticut. "Anti-black racism is hardwired into America's DNA, and it touches Black lives every single day—from cop killings to predatory lending to poorly-funded schools. To say 'Black lives matter' acknowledges that in many ways we never did—not to suggest that anyone else matters any less."

Explanations of the statement and the importance of not saying “all lives matter” have been popping up all over social media. Here, six examples that nail it.

## 1. “We Never Said Only Black Lives Matter”



PHOTO: COURTESY SARAH SMITH WILLS

In a moving viral photo, a 6-year-old girl named Armani from Paris, Tennessee holds a poster that reads, “We said ‘Black lives matter.’ We never said ‘only Black lives matter.’ We know ‘all lives matter.’ We just need your help with #BlackLivesMatter for Black lives are in danger!”

Her mother, Shalyndrea Quanise, tells Parents.com, “The message itself came from another post on Facebook I had seen, and I just thought it was a strong message that needed to be seen. I explained to Armani what was going on, what we were going to do, and what the sign meant. After explaining it all to her, she was all in with smiles!”

Quanise believes it’s important for children to be informed and involved in current events. “They are the future,” she says. “Twenty years from now, Armani will be a woman, and I pray to God she doesn’t have to do what we are doing now!”

## 2. It’s This House That’s on Fire





[View more on Instagram](#)



102,946 likes

**givensharp**

I had no idea this video would take off like it did. I just want to thank anyone who has shared it and anyone who has received the message. This is the same analogy that helped me understand the #BLM movement when it first began. To those of you who still say "All Lives Matter": of COURSE all lives should matter. But the fact is that white lives have ALWAYS mattered in the eyes of the government and police force. The same cannot be said for POC. No one is saying your life doesn't matter. However, until the day comes that Black Americans aren't being shot in their homes, in the street, and in their cars, you CANNOT tell me that all lives matter in the eyes of our society. All lives won't matter until black lives do. [#nojusticenopeace](#)

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[\*EDIT\* Thank you to everyone in the comments that have let me know of the originator of the analogy! I had seen it used on a lot of different pages so I wasn't sure who to credit. Inspired by [@krisstraub](#) [@talibkweli](#) ❤️]

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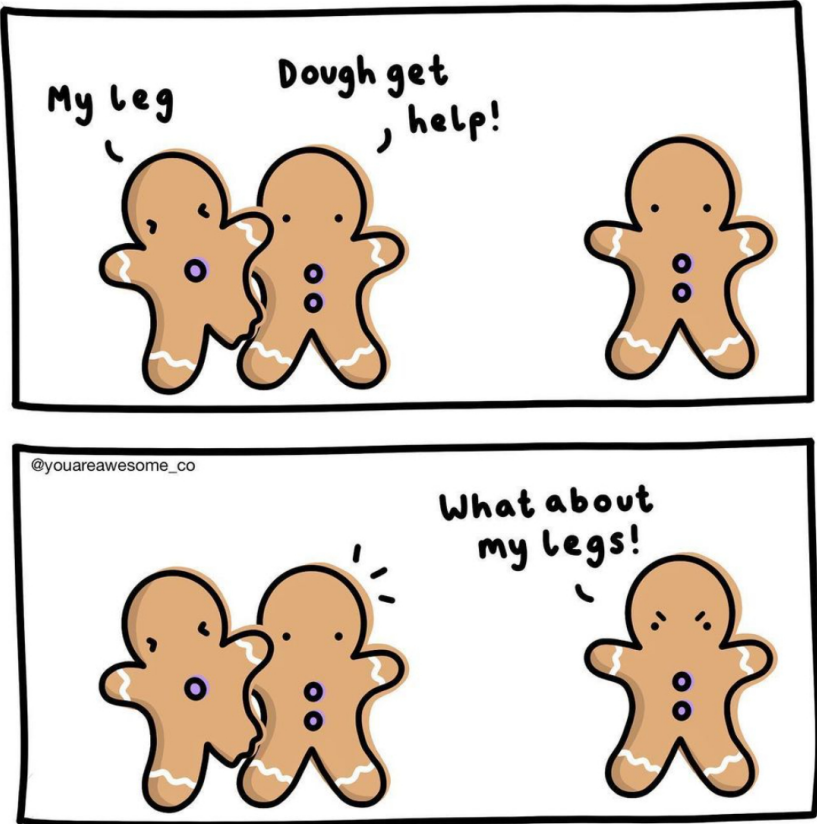
Actress Given Sharp explains in a popular TikTok video that "all lives matter"



is like saying "all houses matter" when one in the neighborhood is on fire. On Instagram, she elaborated, "The fact is that white lives have ALWAYS mattered in the eyes of the government and police force. The same cannot be said for POC. No one is saying your life doesn't matter. However, until the day comes that Black Americans aren't being shot in their homes, in the street, and in their cars, you CANNOT tell me that all lives matter in the eyes of our society. All lives won't matter until black lives do."

### 3. A Broken Bone

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'aLI LiVeS mAtTeR' - don't be that gingerbread person

Inspired by the wonderful @amii.illustrates

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#blm #blacklivesmatter #antiracist #istandwithyou #gingerbreadpun  
#alllivesdontmatteruntilblacklivesmatter #blacklivesmatterart #blmart #art #illustration  
#youareawesomeco #youareawesome #punny #puns #positivitypuns #cutegingerbread  
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#blacklivesmatter 🍌🍌🍌

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Through a cute gingerbread drawing, a U.K.-based illustrator showed how saying “Black Lives Matter” is like giving necessary attention to a friend who has a broken leg.

On Twitter, Semaj Mitchell offered a similar version of the same analogy involving a broken arm.

#### 4. The Implicit “Too”

This Reddit thread uses an analogy of a family dinner to explain that “too” is implied at the end of the statement “Black lives matter,” and to say respond with “all lives matter” is to dismiss the statement “by falsely suggesting that it means ‘only Black lives matter,’ when that is obviously not the case.”

#### 5. All Plates Matter



This video from Peace House, an organization dedicated to art and activism, features three friends and a food analogy too.

#### 6. A Simple Breakdown

[#BlackLivesMatter](#)

the next time u wanna say "all lives matter\*" understand what the movement is actually about  
[pic.twitter.com/t6PiY32uc7](https://pic.twitter.com/t6PiY32uc7)

— jite (@JITEAGEGE) [July 7, 2016](#)

This viral video clip created by Twitter user @JITEAGEGE, who was just 15 when she filmed it back in 2016, makes it clear: "Black lives matter" does not mean Black people are "superior." The content creator says, "We're all people, of course we all matter. But are all races getting routinely killed by the police for no reason other than the fact that they are Black?"

The bottom line: Until Black lives matter, there's really no truth to the statement "all lives matter." As Aliza Garza, one of the creators of the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag, put it in a 2014 article for *The Feminist Wire*, "Black Lives Matter doesn't mean your life isn't important—it means that Black lives, which are seen as without value within White supremacy, are important to your liberation. Given the disproportionate impact state violence has on Black lives, we understand that when Black people in this country get free, the benefits will be wide-reaching and transformative for society as a whole. When we are able to end the hyper-criminalization and sexualization of Black people and end the poverty, control and surveillance of Black people, every single person in this world has a better shot at getting and staying free. When Black people get free, everybody gets free."

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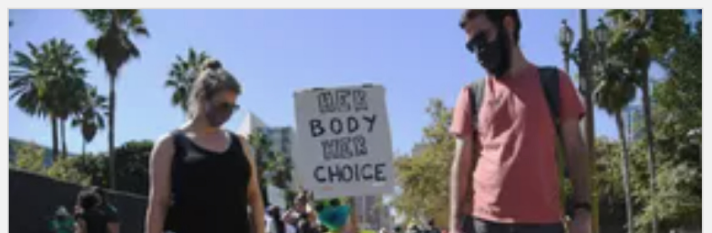
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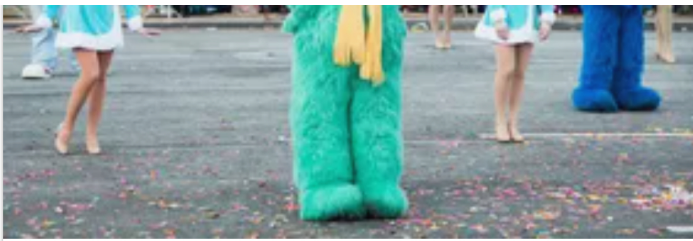
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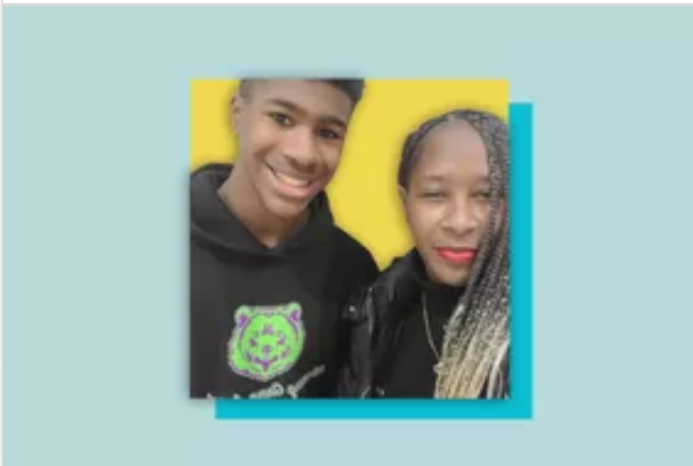
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