

A BLACK LIVES MATTER AT NYC SCHOOLS RESOURCE

What We Believe

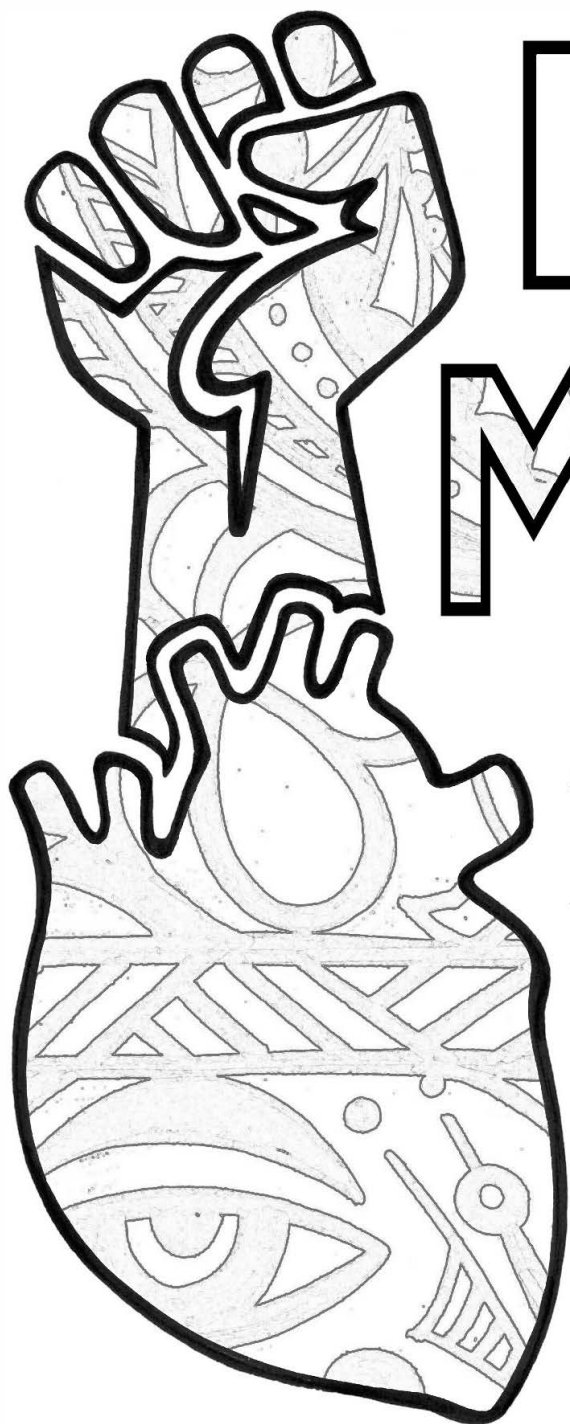


A BLACK LIVES MATTER

Principles Activity Book

ART & DESIGN BY CARYN DAVIDSON

BLACK LIVES MATTER AT SCHOOL



Black Lives Matter At School is a national coalition of educators organizing for racial justice in education. We encourage all educators, students, parents, unions, and community organizations to join our annual week of action during the first week of February each year.

Using this book

This book was compiled and edited by educators in the Black Lives Matter at NYC Schools group. The principles text was adapted from <https://blacklivesmatter.com/what-we-believe/>

We hope for students to connect these principles to personal experiences, and for educators to use the curriculum resources available on www.blacklivesmatteratschool.com to supplement the drawing and writing prompts included in this book.

Talking to youth about the Black Lives Matter Movement & Principles

Young people are aware of racial tensions and injustices in their own lives and in the media. They benefit from guidance from teachers, families, and other adult caregivers in discussing, analyzing, and processing what they see and hear around them. They also have critical, real, “expert” perspectives to offer based on their lived experience. In a given middle or high school classroom, many students will have heard the phrase *Black Lives Matter*, and have some associations with it. Providing them with context for what they are hearing and seeing will increase their cultural literacy and ability to engage in brave conversations and actions with their peers and adults. The 13 guiding principles of the Black Lives Matter movement serve as a helpful framework to structure these conversations. They provide a wonderful, powerful opportunity for us to gain awareness and understanding of the vision behind the movement, as many adults and young folks are not aware of the expansive clarity of the movement's vision.

All young people can benefit from conversations about the BLM movement and its guiding principles and connections can be drawn with any academic subject. Some youth may already know about the reality and some of the murders that sparked the Black Lives Matter movement and/or may be better equipped to handle topics of violence. We affirm that the movement is about *Black lives*: we celebrate the acts of resistance, creativity, and joy that uplift them while we also confront and mourn the injustices and atrocities that are continually perpetrated against Black communities. Rather than dedicating one week or one month to these conversations, we encourage approaching all your subject matter from a critical perspective. Education is not neutral, and the material we share with students matters.

Infusing These Principles Into Our Lives & Our Work

We invite you to use this book and the principles prompts as conversation starters with the teens and pre-teens in your life. These ideas will likely be new to some and familiar to others. If you are a teacher, you may have young people in the room who have been traumatized by systems of oppression, whether you know about it or not. Be mindful of your students' identities and realities when deciding how to engage with this material. The Black Lives Matter at Schools Start Kit (see below) has talking points and resources for engaging with this material, including consideration of resistance and pushback on the part of students, colleagues or administrators. Use the insets – quotes, article and interview excerpts, art and poetry – as well as the definitions and extension activities at the back of this book to deepen and extend your exploration. Whenever possible, make connections to lived experiences in your classroom, home, family, and local community, as well as the broader national and global context of the need and movement for racial justice. You can also supplement this book with the curriculum resources provided on the national website. Feel free to use the contacts below to share any activities you develop or facilitate using this book!



www.blacklivesmatteratschool.com
Click on HOW TO PARTICIPATE for Starter Kit
@BLMAAtSchool

NYC folks – Contact our local group at
blmeduny@gmail.com and follow us:
@blm_edu_ny

facebook.com/BLMedu
<https://blmedu.wordpress.com/>



BLM GUIDING PRINCIPLES



THE BLACK LIVES MATTER GUIDING PRINCIPLES

MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL VERSIONS OF THE 13 PRINCIPLES

<i>PRINCIPLE</i>	<i>DESCRIPTION</i>
<i>RESTORATIVE JUSTICE</i>	Restorative Justice is the commitment to building a loving community that is sustainable and growing. If someone in the community hurts someone else, we focus on communicating and solving the problem instead of on punishment.
<i>EMPATHY</i>	We practice empathy. We do our best to listen and learn from people so we can connect with them and their experiences.
<i>LOVING ENGAGEMENT</i>	Loving Engagement is the commitment to practice justice, liberation and peace.
<i>DIVERSITY</i>	We acknowledge, respect, and celebrate all the ways we're different and all the things we have in common. We work hard for freedom and justice for Black people and, by extension, all people.
<i>GLOBALISM</i>	Black people around the world have all different circumstances, and some of them have it easier than others. We are all part of the global Black family.
<i>TRANSGENDER AFFIRMING</i>	We make space for transgender people to participate and lead. We know that cisgender (not trans) people in our society have privilege, and we want to uplift trans people, especially black trans women who often experience violence.
<i>QUEER AFFIRMING</i>	We don't assume anyone's sexuality - everyone has the right to say for themselves how they identify. Our community affirms and celebrates queer people.
<i>COLLECTIVE VALUE</i>	We are guided by the fact that all Black lives matter, no matter a person's sexuality, gender, economic status, ability, disability, religious beliefs or disbeliefs, immigration status, or where they live.
<i>INTERGENERATIONAL</i>	We believe that all people, regardless of age, show up with the ability to lead and learn.
<i>BLACK FAMILIES</i>	We make our spaces family-friendly and enable parents to fully participate with their children. We do that so parents - especially mothers who are sometimes expected to stay home with children - can be part of the movement.
<i>BLACK VILLAGES</i>	We are a community; we support each other and help each other. We are united like family, even if we don't live together or aren't related by blood.
<i>BLACK WOMEN</i>	We build a space that centers and affirms Black women and girls. We work to dismantle sexism and misogyny in society and in our communities.
<i>UNAPOLOGETICALLY BLACK</i>	We don't apologize for who we are or what we believe! We say Black Lives Matter because we know that if some of us aren't free, then none of us are free.

ADAPTED FROM WWW.BLACKLIVESMATTER.COM/WHAT-WE-BELIEVE

EMPATHY

Think of a time you had to work to understand someone who was different from you. How could you have learned more about them and how they felt?

"You think your pain and your heartbreak are unprecedented in the history of the world, but then you read. It was Dostoevsky and Dickens who taught me that the things that tormented me most were the very things that connected me with all the people who were alive, or who ever had been alive. Only if we face these open wounds in ourselves can we understand them in other people." - James Baldwin

**"EMPATHY IS NOT JUST AN
EMOTIONAL BUZZWORD —
IT'S A POLITICAL NECESSITY."**

-JAMES BALDWIN



"Implicit and explicit bias in this country is allowed not only to exist, but to flourish because we only hear from a few viewpoints. No matter what the issue, the perspective rarely changes. Whether we are talking about issues that impact the Black community, White community or any community, news is primarily delivered via a White male perspective. This informs and influences the way the majority of the country thinks and understands or doesn't understand each other. We will not be able to move forward and become a more empathetic and pluralistic country until we hear from more diverse voices."

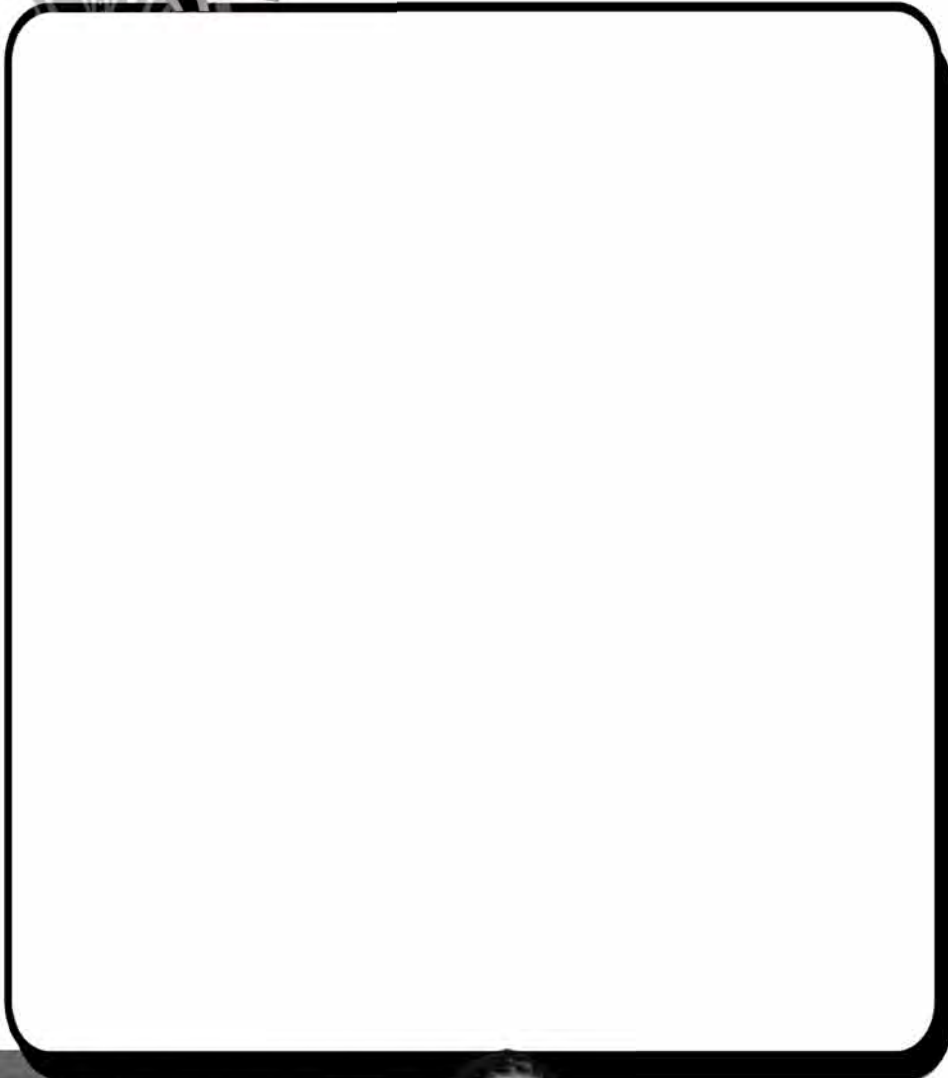
<https://www.colorlines.com/articles/why-movement-black-lives-using-media-build-empathy-op-ed>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2019/02/22/why-empathy-is-key-dismantling-white-racism/>



DIVERSITY

Think of spaces in your life that are not diverse or are segregated, and spaces that are more diverse or integrated (i.e. neighborhood, school, friends group, religious spaces). Do you spend more time in diverse or segregated spaces and why? What kinds of diversity or differences exist within the spaces that seem to be homogenous/less diverse?



EDUCATION UNSCREENED CAMPAIGN

TEENS *take* CHARGE

STRIKE FOR INTEGRATION

NO MORE SCREENS
EQUITABLE RESOURCES
INTEGRATED SCHOOLS FOR ALL

EVERY MONDAY MORNING
UNTIL MAYOR DE BLASIO AND
CHANCELLOR CARRANZA
MEET OUR DEMANDS!

STAND UP • SPEAK OUT • JOIN THE MOVEMENT

#IntegrateNOW teenstakecharge.com @teentakecharge

The News

65 YEARS LATER RETIRE SEGREGATION

Youth leaders demand action towards integration and equity in New York City schools.



Above: Teens Take Charge and Integrate NYC organizing documents

"We're hearing a lot about diversity...I hate that word so, so much....it's a medicinal word that has no emotional resonance, and this is a really emotional issue...It's emotional for artists who are women and people of color to have less value placed on our worldview."

- Ava Duvernay, Filmmaker

"She prefers that the issue be talked about using terms like 'inclusion' or 'belonging'."

<https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2016/01/ava-duvernay-oscars-so-white-diversity-academy-awards-language/429225/>



"DIVERSITY IS NOT THE PEOPLE OF COLOR OR QUEER PEOPLE. WE DO NOT BRING 'THE DIVERSITY' AND ARE NOT IN AND OF OURSELVES CARRIERS OF 'DIVERSITY.' DIVERSITY IMPLIES A CONTEXT; EXISTS IN A CONTEXT IN WHICH DIFFERENCE IS CELEBRATED AND IS CONSIDERED USEFUL AND EDIFYING. WHITE PEOPLE HAVE RACE AND ARE PART OF DIVERSITY, NOT THE ENCOURAGERS OF DIVERSITY." - Danielle Legros Georges, Haitian-American poet, essayist and academic

R1 RACE AND ENROLLMENT

WE, THE STUDENTS, demand that NYC public schools must provide a diverse and inclusive environment for every NYC public school student.

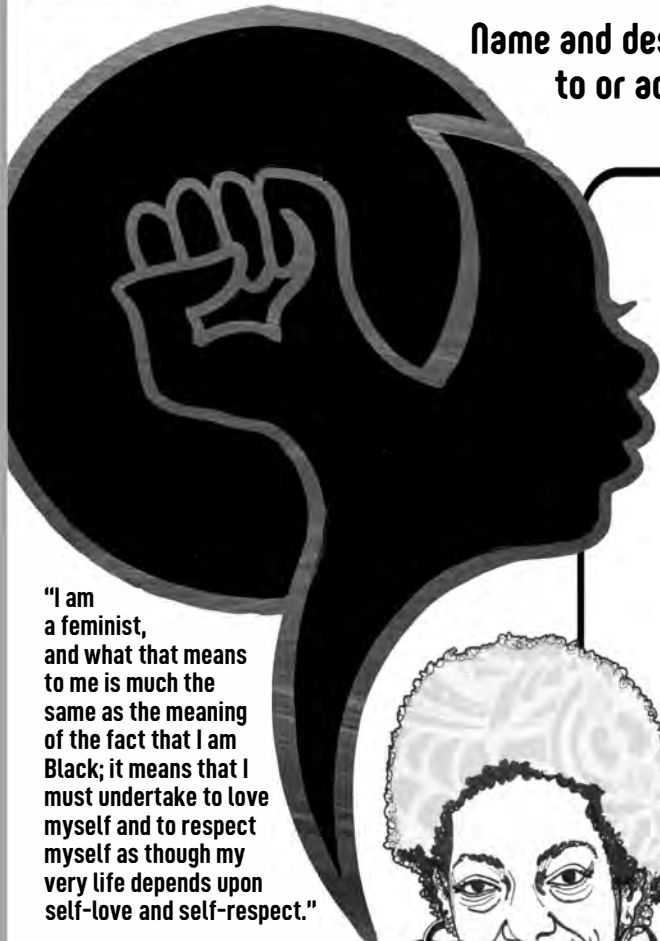
We believe NYC public schools currently isolate many students of color, rely on racist and classist admissions policies, and have perpetuated school segregation and white supremacy due to a complex, inefficient, and hyper-competitive high school admissions process.

WE, THE STUDENTS, stand for every NYC public high school reflecting the diversity of the city. We want every NYC public high school to give equal opportunities to all students regardless of the color of their skin, income of their parents, or where they live.

See Integrate NYC full 5 R's of Integration platform at www.integratenyc.org/realintegration

BLACK WOMEN

Name and describe one or more Black women you are connected to or admire. If you have limited relationship with actual black women, share why you think that is the case.



"I am a feminist, and what that means to me is much the same as the meaning of the fact that I am Black; it means that I must undertake to love myself and to respect myself as though my very life depends upon self-love and self-respect."

"And who will join this standing up and the ones who stood without sweet company will sing and sing back into the mountains and if necessary even under the sea: we are the ones we have been waiting for." - Poem for South African Women

-THE WORDS OF JUNE JORDAN



MOTHERS OF THE MOVEMENT

"Since the 1955 murder of teenager Emmett Till, whose mother insisted on an open casket for her son's mutilated body, the civil rights movement has often articulated its grievances through the suffering of mothers. The Mothers of the Movement – parents of some of the most high-profile black victims of police violence in America – each found themselves raising and losing children in a system stacked against them. But this is a time when black women are no longer just faces co-opted for the cause – both Black Lives Matter and We Charge Genocide, an anti-police violence group in Chicago, were founded by black women."

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/nov/22/mothers-of-the-movement-trayvon-martin-sandra-bland-eric-garner-amadou-diallo-sean-bell>

"I've been an advocate for [women's rights]: making sure we keep our communities safe and encourage safer gun laws so we are not jeopardizing our families, our communities, and our futures. I think this has to be more than just a national push for women to stand up for their families and their communities now. Women are going to have to start literally mobilizing on their state and local levels because that is where all the power is, [and] that's where all the changes are made."

<https://peaceisloud.org/mother-movement-lucy-mcbath/>



"I HAD TO CHANGE MY MOURNING INTO MOVEMENT, MY PAIN INTO PURPOSE." - GWEN CARR, MOTHER OF ERIC GARNER

BLACK VILLAGES

Who are the people who feel like family to you, even if you're not related?
Do you feel responsible for caring for people in your community, beyond your nuclear family?



**"IT IS IN COLLECTIVITIES THAT WE FIND
RESERVOIRS OF HOPE AND OPTIMISM."**

—ANGELA Y. DAVIS

"Even as Nelson Mandela always insisted that his accomplishments were collective—also achieved by the men and women who were his comrades—the media attempted to sanctify him as a heroic individual. A similar process has attempted to dissociate Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. from the vast numbers of women and men who constituted the very heart of the mid-twentieth-century US freedom movement. It is essential to resist the depiction of history as the work of heroic individuals in order for people today to recognize their potential agency as a part of an ever-expanding community of struggle."

<https://www.thenation.com/article/qa-angela-davis-black-power-feminism-and-prison-industrial-complex/>

BLACK PANTHER PARTY (BPP)

"In January 1969, the Black Panther party's Free for Children Breakfast Program held its first gathering at St Augustine Episcopal church, less than a mile from Saturday's [anniversary] festivities. On that first morning, BPP members fed 11 children. By the week's end, the number had grown to 135."

"Though the breakfast program is the most famous of the party's Survival Programs, more than 60 others directly addressed the needs of the black community that were being systematically ignored...Other schemes including a free of charge senior escort program, a monthly bus to prisons to see incarcerated loved ones, and the establishment of 13 medical clinics across the country."

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/oct/17/black-panther-party-oakland-free-breakfast-50th-anniversary>



"AN ATTACK AGAINST ONE IS AN ATTACK AGAINST ALL."

UNAPOLOGETICALLY BLACK

Think of a time when you had to hide a part of yourself. What could you have done or said to be more unapologetic - meaning, how could you proudly share and be who you are without shame?

UNAPOLOGETIC QUOTES FROM CHARLENE CARRUTHERS

"I think one of our strengths overall in the black community is that we can be direct about what we think and what we feel. Being honest, being upfront, being direct and actually being really clear about what it is that we want is nothing short of transformation, [but it] is a challenge, because we are oftentimes met with reforms that actually don't shift our conditions into the types of conditions that we truly want to live in."

"[Transformation] doesn't mean black capitalism. It doesn't mean race-first strategies, and it doesn't mean where some people have to wait their turn. What we want has to be about all of us or none of us, as Fannie Lou Hamer said... That requires the dismantling of multiple systems of oppression: capitalism, patriarchy, anti-Blackness and white supremacy—and then all of the babies of those things, like ableism, homophobia, transphobia—all of those things. Those have to be a part of the North Star if we're going to be serious about liberation."

"There's a reason why somebody like me can do this work the way that I do it. It's because Marsha P. Johnson did it first, because Audre Lorde did it first, because Ella Baker did it first—it's because Joseph Beam did it first... It's super-important to me that people know that the work that exists today is building on the black radical tradition. We didn't create this work; we're building on it."

Charlene A. Carruthers is a Black, queer feminist community organizer and writer with over 15 years of experience in racial justice, feminist and youth leadership development movement work.

"YES I AM BLACK, YES I AM A LESBIAN, YES I AM QUEER, WOMAN AND MY EYES ARE SQUARELY CENTERED ON BLACK LIBERATION." – CHARLENE CARRUTHERS



RESTORATIVE JUSTICE



Have you ever been punished without a chance to talk through what happened and work out a solution with the people impacted? How did it feel? If not, how do you think conflicts can best be resolved to serve the growth and healing of everyone involved?

URBAN YOUTH COLLABORATIVE

"The School-to-Prison Pipeline is the direct and indirect push out of young people from the school system and into the juvenile justice and criminal justice systems. Across the country, and in New York City, we experience this through the over use of suspensions, zero tolerance policies that involve the police in minor incidents, school based arrests, referrals to juvenile detention, and incarceration.

Students know that punitive discipline practices do not reduce conflict or get at the root of behavior problems, disproportionately impact students of color, students with special needs and LGBTQ students, and fail to make students safer." <http://www.urbanyouthcollaborative.org/>

UYC SUCCESSES: ENDING THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE

- 1) The passage of the Student Safety Act: first-of-its kind legislation that mandates the DOE and NYPD to publicly report the number of arrests and suspension in school.
- 2) Secured \$2.4 million from the New York City Council for investment in a citywide RJ Initiative.



RJ IN THE NYC DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

NYC to curb suspensions longer than 20 days, a major victory for discipline reform advocates

"Changes to the discipline code, which will be open to public input at a series of hearings over the summer, will be paired with additional training. All middle and high schools will be expected to receive instruction in "restorative" approaches to student discipline over three years, a constellation of practices that favor peer mediation and conflict resolution over ejecting students from their regular schools or classes. Those trainings will come as the city adds over 200 social workers to city schools; about 85 of them are part of the effort to address students' needs before they escalate into misbehavior or crisis, officials said."

<https://chalkbeat.org/posts/ny/2019/06/20/nyc-is-capping-suspensions-at-20-days-a-major-victory-for-discipline-reform-advocates/>

City preparing to expand restorative justice programs

"In this era of mass incarceration, there is a school-to-prison-pipeline system that is more invested in locking up youth than unlocking their minds. That system uses harsh discipline policies that push Black students out of schools at disproportionate rates; denies students the right to learn about their own cultures and whitewashes the curriculum to exclude many of the struggles and contributions of Black people and other people of color; and is pushing out Black teachers from the schools in cities around the country." - BLACKLIVESMATTERATSCHOOL.COM/ABOUT

Restorative Justice is one of the four demands of the BLM at schools movement.



"ARE BLACK STUDENTS OR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS MORE DISRUPTIVE, OR MORE DANGEROUS THAN THEIR WHITE PEERS? NO, OUR RESPONSE TO THESE STUDENTS IS THE DANGER!"

- MARÍA C. FERNÁNDEZ, SENIOR COORDINATOR AT UYC

QUEER AFFIRMING

In your school or community, do people **ASSUME** other people's sexuality or do they help create a space where people feel comfortable and **AFFIRMED** no matter how they identify?



In 2013, three radical Black organizers — Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi — created a Black-centered political will and movement building project called #BlackLivesMatter. It was in response to the acquittal of Trayvon Martin's murderer, George Zimmerman. The project is now a member-led global network of more than 40 chapters. Our members organize and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes.

"As organizers who work with everyday people, BLM members see and understand significant gaps in movement spaces and leadership. Black liberation movements in this country have created room, space, and leadership mostly for Black heterosexual, cis-gender men — leaving women, queer and transgender people, and others either out of the movement or in the background to move the work forward with little or no recognition. As a network, we have always recognized the need to center the leadership of women and queer and trans people. To maximize our movement muscle, and to be intentional about not replicating harmful practices that excluded so many in past movements for liberation, we made a commitment to placing those at the margins closer to the center."

[BLACKLIVESMATTER.COM/HERSTORY/](https://blacklivesmatter.com/herstory/)

"...As a queer Black woman, Garza's leadership and work challenge the misconception that only cisgender Black men encounter police and state violence. While the tragic deaths of Trayvon Martin and Mike Brown were catalysts for the emergence of the BLM movement, Garza is clear: In order to truly understand how devastating and widespread this type of violence is in Black America, we must view this epidemic through a lens of race, gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity."

[HTTPS://BLACKLIVESMATTER.COM/OUR-CO-FOUNDERS/](https://blacklivesmatter.com/our-co-founders/)



affirmation [af-er-mey-shuh n]

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT OR ENCOURAGEMENT; THE ASSERTION THAT SOMETHING EXISTS OR IS TRUE

"When we speak we are afraid our words will not be heard or welcomed. But when we are silent, we are still afraid. So it is better to speak."

"What are the words you do not yet have? What do you need to say? What are the tyrannies you swallow day by day and attempt to make your own, until you will sicken and die of them, still in silence?"

- AUDRE LORDE

Writer, feminist, librarian, and civil rights activist



TRANS AFFIRMING

Black trans women are more vulnerable and mistreated in our society. Share why you think that is. Include any other questions you have about transgender identity.



This poster was created in November 2015, as part of the Trans Day of Resilience Art Project. The artist Ethan H. Parker made it in collaboration with Breakout!, a Black youth-led organization in New Orleans that seeks to end the criminalization of LGBTQ youth. In 2015, Breakout! organized the first Trans Day of Resilience march, and put out a national call for similar actions to celebrate the resilience and resistance shown by queer and trans youth of color every day. The artist wrote:

As trans/nonbinary people, we create ourselves along with our art and poetry. We are the divine. Our love of mythology, passion for poetry and imagery, and a desire to push the boundaries of what it means to exist as a resilient trans/nonbinary person made us want to craft new mythologies for the black, trans experience. Rewrite our cosmic birth.

POETRY EXCERPT BY MALACHI LILY + MIA S. WILLIS @POETINTHEWAT

Trans Day of Resilience Art Project uses art and activism to celebrate trans people of color in their lives and leadership, not just in death. It is supported by Forward Together.

LEARN MORE AT
TOOR.CO

"THIS PROJECT ALLOWED ME TO FURTHER EXPLORE BLACK TRANS COMMUNITIES AND FEEL MORE CONFIDENT STEPPING OUT INTO THE WORLD UNDERSTANDING THAT I AM NOT ALONE IN FIGHTING FOR EQUALITY, UNDERSTANDING AND ACCEPTANCE."

JUSTSEEDS.ORG/PRODUCT/BLACK-TRANS-LIVES-MATTER/



"Marsha P. Johnson was an activist, self-identified drag queen, performer, and survivor. She was a prominent figure in the Stonewall uprising of 1969. Marsha went by 'Black Marsha' before settling on Marsha P. Johnson. The 'P' stood for 'Pay It No Mind,' which is what Marsha would say in response to questions about her gender. It is the consideration of who 'Black Marsha' was that inspired The Marsha P. Johnson Institute." <https://marshap.org/about-mpji/>

THE
Marsha P.
Johnson
INSTITUTE

<https://marshap.org/>

There are many organizations that are working toward trans liberation, including the Transgender Gender-Variant & Intersex Justice Project (www.tgijp.org/), Solutions Not Punishment Collaborative (www.snap4freedom.org/home) and the Marsha P. Johnson Institute (MPJI), to name just a few. ORGANIZATION HIGHLIGHT: "MPJI protects and defends the human rights of BLACK transgender people. We do this by organizing, advocating, creating an intentional community to heal, developing trans-formative leadership, and promoting our collective power."



LOVING ENGAGEMENT

Think about the neighborhoods you move through, your school community, your family, your social life and social media life. What situations are you most **LOVING** in, and in which spaces could you do more to defend and affirm people's dignity?



"thank you. to all the queer, trans, non-binary and two-spirit folks: your joy, your love, your existence is something profoundly healing, when arundhati roy wrote "Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing" — I could swear, this was written for you. about you. to all the fierce femmes and aunties. to black and indigenous communities. to all communities of colour. to all the folks leading the body love and fat acceptance movements. to all the qtbipoc and qt Muslims. thank you. for the courage it took to claim yourself, for yourself. for your vulnerability. for choosing you, again and again. for loving yourself on most days, because self-love is hard and we know that. thank you. because who you are gave so many of us permission to love ourselves, to choose ourselves, to live inside ourselves. and we are so grateful."

"a gentle reminder that you deserve the kind of love that feels nourishing. kind. patient. present. a gentle reminder that it can be messy. and still, walk with courage. with joy in its bones. and compassion in its spirit. It can be hard at times, and still make you feel seen, heard and honoured. because beloved, you deserve big love. spacious love that fits both of you. loud love, and sweet love, and honesty. that jada-and-will kind of love. that "I'll do my own work" kind of love. that "I hear your needs" kind of love. and yes, above all that, the kind of love that feels like a soft landing to heal. because you are worthy of this."



ART & WORDS BY @YALLAROZA

**"YOUR FRIENDLY NEIGHBOURHOOD AUNTIE
QUEER MUSLIM ILLUSTRATOR"**

[HTTPS://WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/YALLAROZA/](https://www.instagram.com/yallaroza/)



BLACK FAMILIES

How do you define family? In your family, who does the work of taking care of everyone?



A POEM
BY AJA MONET

MY MOTHER WAS A FREEDOM FIGHTER

she testifies a night song on the woolly back of a mammoth, shadowboxing rivulets, a mother's cowl falls to her feet, a fist in the pouch of a honey-hipped negra hill towering over the country. the farmers of plantations, maid of motel and mansions, nurse of hospitals and camps, shamans in huts walking to work in dawn-fog. with heretic hands a chupacabra suffering in solos, or a black unicorn refugee panhandling at the border of an upside down dimension beguiled by bars bearing the burden of crimes of love, cold-sweat, gloom, despair, omens. denied a passport to mercy, a citadel of judgment. she was born in the bulwark of bordellos and brothels. poor women lease love in pawnshops shaped as men, traversing the sins of them, unyielding wind blows her back into dirt roads and waves, dimly seen. singed at the stakes or drowned at sea, she studies the way of water and gills: a mermaid. she is an archipelago of shanty towns, she is invention and necessity. found scraps, a bouquet of bloody music in her hands. cane of sugar, leaves of tobacco, a cluster of bananas, coffee beans, the husk of corn, a poppy seed, tea shrub, spikelet of wheat, rice flower, gold nuggets, diamonds & coltan—she is an incantation bellowing from the fields and mines. look for her in the ruins, at the funeral procession, drunk off palm wine, screaming in a traffic of arms. lonely, but not alone. on the shores of goree, she pinched yam and okra seeds in her baby's hair, carrying the wrath of their stories. for when the fowls come home to roost. enduring tides of licks and whips, she wept by a mangrove and carved a spear from her lover's bones. spitting on her thumb, she smeared shame from her children's cheek, blessed in esteem. blighted dreams born of zealous sires laying with her in a stretch of orchids, honeysuckles, daffodils, cotton bloomin or splayed on a cot during a conjugal visit. switch blade in her boot, straw hat sitting on her braids, she touches herself moaning, pleasure pours gently on her. she was captured, the middle of a gun fight in broad daylight, muzzle by averted ears, smarmy smiles, and what befell their humanity. if ever a drought, gray clouds gather on one accord and rally above her, for seasons. further than the choice of children, she is beyond what name her courage, she arrived quarreled by instinct, a petition for presence. it was a woman who nanny'd neglect in maroon parishes. hooting and hollering, she midwifed revolutions in rain forests, amazons, and cities. sediments of her sorrow beseeching. because the eye of the storm within her, they called her magic. merely more, she was a freedom fighter and she taught us how to fight.

My Mother Was a Freedom Fighter is poet Aja Monet's ode to mothers, daughters, and sisters—the tiny gods who fight to change the world.

Aja Monet is a Caribbean-American poet, performer, and educator from Brooklyn. She lives in Little Haiti, Miami, where she is a co-founder of Smoke Signals Studio and dedicates her time merging arts and culture in community organizing with the Dream Defenders and the Community Justice Project.

<http://www.ajamonet.com>



"MAY YOUR HANDS BE AN EXTENSION OF YOUR HEART AND MAY YOU DO THE WORK OF LOVE WITH THEM." —AJA MONET

INTERGENERATIONAL

Find an elder from your neighborhood or community and ask them to share a memory, story or life lesson that they've never shared with you before and record it on your phone if you can.

In this space - reflect on how stories (histories, herstories, theirstories) are shared and passed on in your family.

NATIONAL
MUSEUM *of*
AFRICAN
AMERICAN
HISTORY &
CULTURE

[HTTPS://NMAAHC.SI.EDU/](https://nmaahc.si.edu/)

"The Community Curation Program (CPP) at the NMAAHC is an innovative, digital first initiative bridging the generational digital divide. By bringing the Museum's digitization services to diverse communities across the country and creating a unique online platform, the program supports the preservation and sharing of community history and culture."

JOIN ONLINE @NMAAHC
#CuratedByCommunity

The digital platform program provides "a glance into black culture of the time that was often was left out of movies, TV and other media. The personal stories help give current and future generations an understanding of the individuals involved and their history...From these digital community efforts, African Americans of all ages will be able to join together to preserve the traditions of family and community organisations for current and future generations of Americans."

<https://www.lonelyplanet.com/articles/museum-digitising-african-american-family-memories>

"Some people just close when they get old...But if you're open, if you have been, you can rely on the lived wisdom of the elderly. It's not the book learning, it's the lived wisdom. I ask friends of mine, 'How old are you, inside?', and they always know. I know that I am 23. There's a moment when you just arrive."

- TONI MORRISON <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/apr/25/toni-morrison-books-interview-god-help-the-child>



"THEY ASK ME TO REMEMBER
BUT THEY WANT ME TO REMEMBER
THEIR MEMORIES AND I KEEP ON
REMEMBERING MINE."

WHY SOME PEOPLE BE MAD AT ME SOMETIMES
by Lucille Clifton - Poet, Writer, Educator



<https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/initiatives/oral-history-initiative>



What is Oral History?
Oral History is a field of study and a method of gathering, preserving, and interpreting the voices and memories of people, communities, and participants in past events.

GLOBALISM



ALICE WALKER WRITER + ACTIVIST



What parts of the world/countries do you know the most about and how did you learn about them? Which parts of the world do you wish you felt more connected to and why?

THE WORLD RISING

by Alice Walker

The world rising
Can put an end
To anything:
The murder of
children
Whales
Elephants
Forests
Oceans.
Get up. Roll over
On that part
Of you
That will not
Welcome
Recognize
Encourage
Or even see
Our rise.
A compassionate
roll:
We must be done
With cruelty
Especially



to ourselves,
To start again
Beaming like
the sun; Fresh.
But a roll that shows
We've reached the end
Of polite moves to
Repair and re-create
the Earth,
And will press hard
On any parts of us
Even those we've loved,
That insist
On remaining
Oblivious
and
Asleep.

alicewalkersgarden.com/

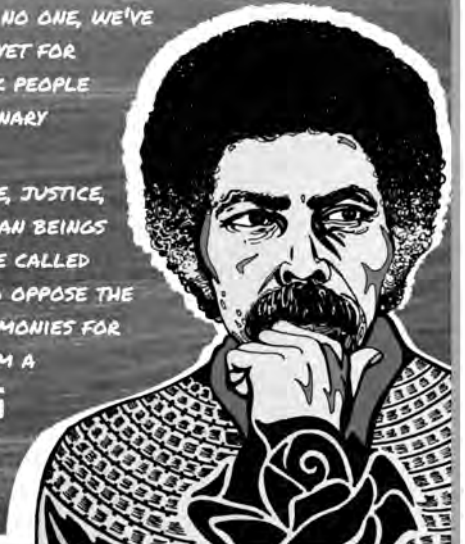
"I see children, all children, as humanity's most precious resource, because it will be to them that the care of the planet will always be left. One child must never be set above another, even in casual conversation, not to mention in speeches that circle the globe." - Alice Walker <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jun/25/alice-walker-gaza-freedom-flotilla>

"LOOK AT BLACK PEOPLE DYING AND SUFFERING IN SOUTH AFRICA. I ASK WHY. WE'VE DROPPED BOMBS ON NO ONE, WE'VE HARMED NO ONE IN THE WORLD, YET FOR SOME INCREDIBLE REASON, BLACK PEOPLE HAVE SUFFERED AT AN EXTRAORDINARY LEVEL ALL OVER THE WORLD."

"IF BEING AN ADVOCATE OF PEACE, JUSTICE, AND HUMANITY TOWARD ALL HUMAN BEINGS IS RADICAL, THEN I'M GLAD TO BE CALLED RADICAL. AND IF IT IS RADICAL TO OPPOSE THE USE OF 70 PERCENT OF FEDERAL MONIES FOR DESTRUCTION AND WAR, THEN I AM A RADICAL."

-RON DELLUMS

Legendary antiwar activist, former Oakland mayor and longtime Democratic Congressmember



COLLECTIVE VALUE

In our society some people have more power than others, and are valued more. Do you think that you value some people/identities more or less than others (i.e. based on immigration status, disability, ability, appearance, religion, economic status, gender, etc.)?



"E-V-E-R-Y-T-H-I-N-G—is connected. The soil needs rain, organic matter, air, worms and life in order to do what it needs to do to give and receive life. Each element is an essential component." Organizing takes humility and selflessness and patience and rhythm while our ultimate goal of liberation will take many expert components. Some of us build and fight for land, healthy bodies, healthy relationships, clean air, water, homes, safety, dignity, and humanizing education. Others of us fight for food and political prisoners and abolition and environmental justice. Our work is intersectional and multifaceted. Nature teaches us that our work has to be nuanced and steadfast. And more than anything, that we need each other—at our highest natural glory—in order to get free."

<http://adriennemareebrown.net/>

"If Black women were free it would mean that everyone else would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all systems of oppression,"

— THE COMBAHEE RIVER COLLECTIVE STATEMENT

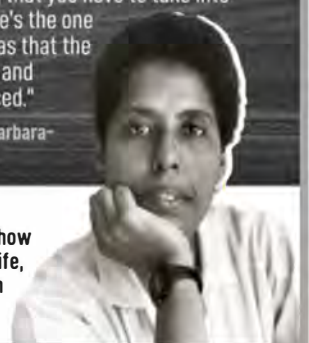


"In the [Combahee River] collective statement, we talked about interlocking oppressions and the simultaneity of oppression. That was quite similar to what was later termed intersectionality. If you're talking about the violence against women, for example, women of color have a different relationship to that because our communities have been terrorized by the state and by the police."

"Intersectionality is not a laundry list of identities. That's one thing to understand. It's the intersection of various identities, experiences, perspectives, and various oppressions others face [because of those things] that you have to take into account. Kimberlé Crenshaw, the legal scholar, she's the one that coined the term. What she made a case for was that the intersection of [people's] identities characterized and defined the types of discrimination they experienced."

<https://www.shondaland.com/inspire/books/a17048702/barbara-smith-feminist-interview/>

"In a fractal conception, I am a cell-sized unit of the human organism, and I have to use my life to leverage a shift in the system by how I am, as much as with the things I do. This means actually being in my life, and it means bringing my values into my daily decision making. Each day should be lived on purpose." —adrienne mares brown



DEFINITIONS

TO SUPPORT YOUR EXPLORATION OF THE 13 BLM PRINCIPLES

TERM	DEFINITION
PRIVILEGE	A special advantage a person has that not everyone has, but that the person didn't earn. For instance, people who are white have the privilege of seeing people who look like them represented in the media.
WHITE SUPREMACY	The belief that white people are better than other races. Some systems, like schools and jails, have white supremacy built into them because white people have had so much power for so long.
HETEROSEXISM	Heterosexism is assuming everyone is straight (heterosexual) without asking. For instance, asking a woman, "Do you have a boyfriend or a husband?" when you don't know her sexuality.
GENDER	Gender is how you feel - your sense that you are a girl, boy, both, or neither. There are many different genders.
TRANSGENDER	When your gender (the way you feel) doesn't match what a doctor said you were when you were born.
CISGENDER	When your gender (the way you feel) is the same as what a doctor said you were when you were born.
MISOGYNY	Misogyny means hating women or believing they deserve unfair treatment.
PATRIARCHY	When a system is controlled by men. When culture is dominated by the voices and perspectives of men.
DISMANTLE	To take apart a system or structure. To break down, understand, and work to change that system and the situations it shows up in.
MOVEMENT	A group of people working together to make change in society.
QUEER	People use the word queer to talk about lots of different sexualities and genders at once.
AFFIRM	To say yes to, to support. We affirm a person's identity when we acknowledge it and take it seriously.
RESTORATIVE	Something that's restorative makes things better, healthier, or stronger, especially after it has been damaged.
INTEGRATION	Bringing together people who were formally separated.

ADDITIONAL PRINCIPLES PROMPTS

<i>PRINCIPLE</i>	<i>REFLECTION QUESTIONS</i>
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE	Have you ever been punished without a chance to talk through what happened and work out a solution with the people impacted? What do you think about restorative justice after learning what it is? Or share what you DID already know about it.
EMPATHY	Do you know any people who have less empathy for certain people than others? Do you think you have MORE empathy for certain groups of people – i.e. you will never really know what it feels like to be...or I have never really thought about what it must be like to...
LOVING ENGAGEMENT	Are there any moments in your life where you do NOT act out of love – or see people NOT being treated with dignity or justly? Think about the neighborhoods you move through your school community, your family, your social life and social media life. What situations could you be MORE loving in and more mindful about the energy you give to other people?
DIVERSITY	It is easy for us to celebrate diversity – many people do it. What many people do NOT do is work through the ways that we do NOT confront segregation even in spaces that are diverse. Share which spaces in your life are segregated (i.e. neighborhood, school campus, friends groups) and which spaces of your life are actually diverse and integrated.
GLOBALISM	Share any countries in the world you feel like you know a lot about - where have you visited or where is your family from? Do you know about only certain groups or classes of people in those countries? If so, which stories and experiences from those places have you heard/learned about and NOT learned about?
TRANSGENDER AFFIRMING	Many people are judgmental or ignorant about the experience of transgender people. Other people are supportive of trans rights but might not know anyone personally impacted by the threat to those rights. Share any questions or experiences you have about what it means to be transgender or what people you know think about it.
QUEER AFFIRMING	Think of ways that your parents and society taught you about what it means to be a girl or a boy (or a man or a woman). Did you ever feel limited by expectations about who you are supposed to date or like, what you are supposed to look like or how you are supposed to act? These questions relate to both sexuality and gender. Share what you know and think about what it means to not identify as heterosexual or to fit within the “binary” of feminine girl or masculine boy.
COLLECTIVE VALUE	Who are you aware of – in your family, neighborhood, city, country or world – whose safety and happiness is threatened due to forces beyond their control? What would you do to protect and defend them? What do YOU need people to know about you in order to make YOU feel that you and/or your CULTURE is appreciated and respected?
INTERGENERATIONAL	Share times in your life when you are in a space with more than one generation. When do you feel like you learn the most from people older or younger than you?
BLACK FAMILIES	Do you spend more time with certain members of your family – which ones and why? Who do you consider to be your family (i.e. parent(s), uncles and aunts, guardian, grandparents, siblings, cousins, etc.)? Who has power in your family?
BLACK VILLAGES	Do you feel like you have a community or a “village” beyond your family? Where do you find a sense of belonging, where you know people are looking out for you? What do you think about our society being organized into separate, nuclear family units?
BLACK WOMEN	How many Black women have you studied in school – i.e. writers, artists, scientists, political or historical figures, etc? How many current black female political leaders can you name? See www.blackenterprise.com/a-new-force-in-politics-black-women-as-game-changers/ for examples!
UNAPOLOGETICALLY BLACK	Are you comfortable or uncomfortable talking about race? Does your family discuss issues related to race or racism? Have you encountered anyone who is critical of the Black Lives Matter movement or responds in a negative, defensive way? Share any other thoughts about what it means to be unapologetic and unapologetically Black.

Black Lives Matter Reflection

Write and/or draw any thoughts and feelings you have in response to learning about the 13 principles, or a response to one or more of the additional prompts.



THE 13 BLACK LIVES MATTER GUIDING PRINCIPLES

COLLECTIVE VALUE	Valuing all Black lives, regardless of actual or perceived sexual identity, gender identity, gender expression, economic status, ability, disability, religious beliefs or disbeliefs, immigration status or location
DIVERSITY	Acknowledging, respecting and celebrating difference(s) and commonalities
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE	Intentionally building and nurturing a beloved community that is bonded together through a beautiful struggle that creates justice for all in restorative, not depleting, ways
GLOBALISM	Seeing ourselves as part of the global Black family and understanding how we are impacted or privileged by our positioning in the world
BLACK VILLAGES	Disrupting the Western-prescribed nuclear family structure requirement by supporting each other as extended families and "villages" that collectively care for one another
BLACK WOMEN	Building a Black women affirming space free from sexism, misogyny, and male-centeredness
LOVING ENGAGEMENT	Embodying and practicing justice, liberation, and peace in our engagements with one another
EMPATHY	Practicing empathy by engaging comrades with the intent to learn about and connect with their contexts
QUEER AFFIRMING	Freeing ourselves from the tight grip of heteronormative thinking to create a queer-affirming network
TRANSGENDER AFFIRMING	Embracing and making space for trans brothers and sisters to participate and lead, while being self-reflexive and doing the work required to dismantle cis-gender privilege and uplift Black trans folk
UNAPOLOGETICALLY BLACK	In affirming that Black Lives Matter, we need not qualify our position. Loving and desiring freedom and justice for ourselves is a necessary prerequisite for wanting the same for others
BLACK FAMILIES	Making our spaces family-friendly and enable parents to fully participate with their children and dismantle patriarchal practices
INTERGENERATIONAL	Fostering an intergenerational, communal network free from ageism

<https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/what-we-believe/>

WEEK OF ACTION DEMANDS

- ★ **END ZERO TOLERANCE** RESTORATIVE JUSTICE IN ALL SCHOOLS
- ★ **HIRE BLACK TEACHERS**
- ★ **MANDATE BLACK HISTORY & ETHNIC STUDIES**
- ★ **FUND COUNSELORS NOT COPS**

EXTENSION

- ❖ **RESEARCH** one of the individuals referenced on any of the prompt pages and choose three pieces of information about them that most intrigue or perplex you. Share these with your group or whole class.
- ❖ As a group or individually, **CREATE** a short video or film that honors the principle, referencing any of the texts that resonate most with you and/or your group members.
- ❖ Work in pairs (or groups of 3 or 4) to **DESIGN** a creative presentation about the principle – either a skit, rap, song, or other mode of expression.
- ❖ Assign one of the texts to a group (quote, article excerpt, poem, etc) and instruct each group to prepare their own explanation and interpretation of the text to share back to the whole class/group. You can use any **GROUPWORK** strategies that you or your colleagues facilitate to support shared responsibility and accountability within the group.
- ❖ Create a **POEM** or **DRAWING** inspired by one of the texts.
- ❖ Use a **RESTORATIVE CIRCLE** to share responses to the principle in general or one of the texts. You can take turns reading the text as you move around the circle.
- ❖ **ANNOTATE** the text using whatever strategies students are learning in their English class. Use the annotations to inform a discussion about the meaning of the text or the most significant ideas therein.



ACTIVITIES

- ❖ **INTERVIEW** a friend, classmate, teacher, family member or stranger about what the principle means to them. Or ask for their response to one of the texts on the prompt page.
- ❖ **WRITE YOUR OWN** definition of the principle and include an example of how it shows up in your own life.
- ❖ Create an **ACTIVITY PAGE** for one or more of the principles — in other words, how would **YOU** design this activity book?
- ❖ Write a **LETTER** to someone in your life **OR** someone you have never met who embodies one of the 13 principles. Share what you appreciate about them and/or why the principle made you think of them.
- ❖ **DESIGN** a world in which one or more of these principles are fully realized. This world can be expressed through: a collage or other artwork, poem, video, creative writing piece, or any other form of expression.
- ❖ **WRITE** a short **STORY** that captures the meaning of one or more of these principles. It can address an injustice or example of justice related to the principle, or both.
- ❖ **PLAN** an event for your class, school, or family (or all) that honors one or more of these principles. This can be a cultural event or performance (art, poetry, music or dance show), a town hall, or a film screening.



BLACK LIVES MATTER

AT SCHOOL

WWW.BLACKLIVESMATTERATSCHOOL.COM



#BlackLivesMatterAtSchool