

Khalid's Commentary What Is In A Name?



My City Hall Portrait

Last month, the official "portraits" of South Fulton's founding Mayor & Council went up at City Hall. In my portrait, I proudly wear a #BlackLivesMatter button. I am the youngest member of City Council, and the first #BlackLivesMatter Organizer elected to public office in the country.

[#BlackLivesMatter](#) was birthed on social media in an *Open Love Letter to Black People*, written by Oakland-based community activist Alicia Garza in July 2013 after the acquittal of George Zimmerman; the self-proclaimed neighborhood watchman who murdered unarmed teenager, Trayvon Martin. Garza ended her Facebook post with the benediction, "Black people. I love you. I love us. Our lives matter."

Fellow activist Patrisse Cullors amended the last three words to create a hashtag: #BlackLivesMatter, which the two began to promote vigorously. Brooklyn-based immigration-rights organizer Opal Tometi created Facebook and Twitter pages to connect other like-minded activists — and a movement was born.



#BlackLivesMatter Founding Mothers Cullors, Garza & Tometi

While nightly newscasts broadcast "mobs" of unapologetically Black millennials taking to the streets to protest police brutality, *off* camera, brilliant young people began organizing activists and academicians to develop multidisciplinary policies that "promote equality for all Black people (and by extension all people) regardless of actual or perceived sexual identity, gender expression, economic or educational status, ability or disability, religious beliefs or disbeliefs, immigration or incarceration status or location." I invite you to read this platform, and its dozens of cited examples of programs transforming communities around the county.

<https://policy.m4bl.org/platform/>

Like many young men, I came to the inaugural meeting of the [Atlanta Chapter of #BlackLivesMatter](#) angry about the unnecessary deaths of local victims like Alexia Christian, Anthony Hill, Nicholas Thomas, Caine Rogers, Ariston Waiters, and a list of others that is growing way too long. But I quickly became immersed in the local, interdisciplinary activism of #BlackLivesMatter, which includes fighting for livable wages, affordable housing and access to healthcare. I invite you to join this interdisciplinary dialogue **Sunday, July 23** at Kenny Leon's True Colors Theatre Company.

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1918670518407171>

And like my personal role model, John Lewis – the civil rights activist-turned celebrated Congressman, whose autobiography [Walking with the Wind](#) we studied in Black Lives Matter before meeting with him and other leaders from [SNCC](#) & the [Atlanta Student Movement](#) – I decided to move from protests to politics.

Disappointingly, though not surprisingly, my arrival on South Fulton's political scene has been met with the same skepticism that now-venerated figures like Dr. Martin Luther King encountered. There will always be those whom interpret calls for equal treatment of Black people as threatening "reverse racism." When you have grown accustomed to privilege, equality feels like oppression. But I remain focused on the goals of the #BlackLivesMatter movement, confident that history will vindicate me as it has vindicated others.

I may be the first #BlackLivesMatter activist elected to public office, but I will not be the last. I pray that my city hall portrait inspires countless young people to follow me into City Hall – and beyond.