

**COMMENTS ON BLM BANNER VIA EMAIL**  
**(Edited to exclude any identifying data)**

yes to the banner!

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The fact that there is any resistance to us publicly declaring our values saddens me deeply. That attitude really makes me question being in this congregation because it's antithetical to UU principles and is also off-putting to any "outsiders" or younger people who might be interested in this church and whom we need in order to grow the congregation. I have two teenagers who are also outraged by this. ESPECIALLY in light of the systemic racial issues going on at the top level of the UU. The discussion of this banner is an exact example of the pervasiveness of the systemic white comfort and privilege in the organization as a whole. I am ashamed that we don't have a banner up right now.

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For what it's worth, I think a lot of teens were a bit dismayed after our Black Lives Matter service did not lead to hastier results, and I think many folks of all ages share her sentiments. I am glad that this group is finally making headway on a banner and particularly appreciate the intentionality behind hearing from children and youth as part of the process.

I do, however, think that perhaps some thought should be given to answering the question "why did this take so long?" and perhaps some tough inward-looking reflections need to go along with that. I think our denomination as a whole is doing this kind of work really well at the moment and I found GA to be a very inspiring recent example of such. We are not alone.

It is my sincerest hope that this process, while thoughtful, nonetheless pushes forth a resolution as swiftly as possible in terms of a banner, but more so opens the door to these kind of vital and faith-emboldening conversations that so many of our congregations are having right now.

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I've seen a nice UU alternative to the Black Lives Matter banner /sticker. It is the rainbow stripes with different sayings in each one. I'll look for a picture of it. I'd vote for that as our banner.  
<http://www.uua.org/worship/words/image/we-believe>

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Another banner suggestion: Working Against Racism in our Country

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I like the sign on the WMCN's latest email:  
Racism Hurts Everyone  
or we might say  
Let's Fight Racism Together

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This is one of the most embarrassing matters I have yet observed at WUS. It's like the classic old UU joke about forming committees. By the time you get around to finishing deliberating this, the nation will be primarily PoC and it will be white lives that are being disparaged.

We are so behind the times on this as to be laughable (or cryable, if there is such a word).  
Get with it!

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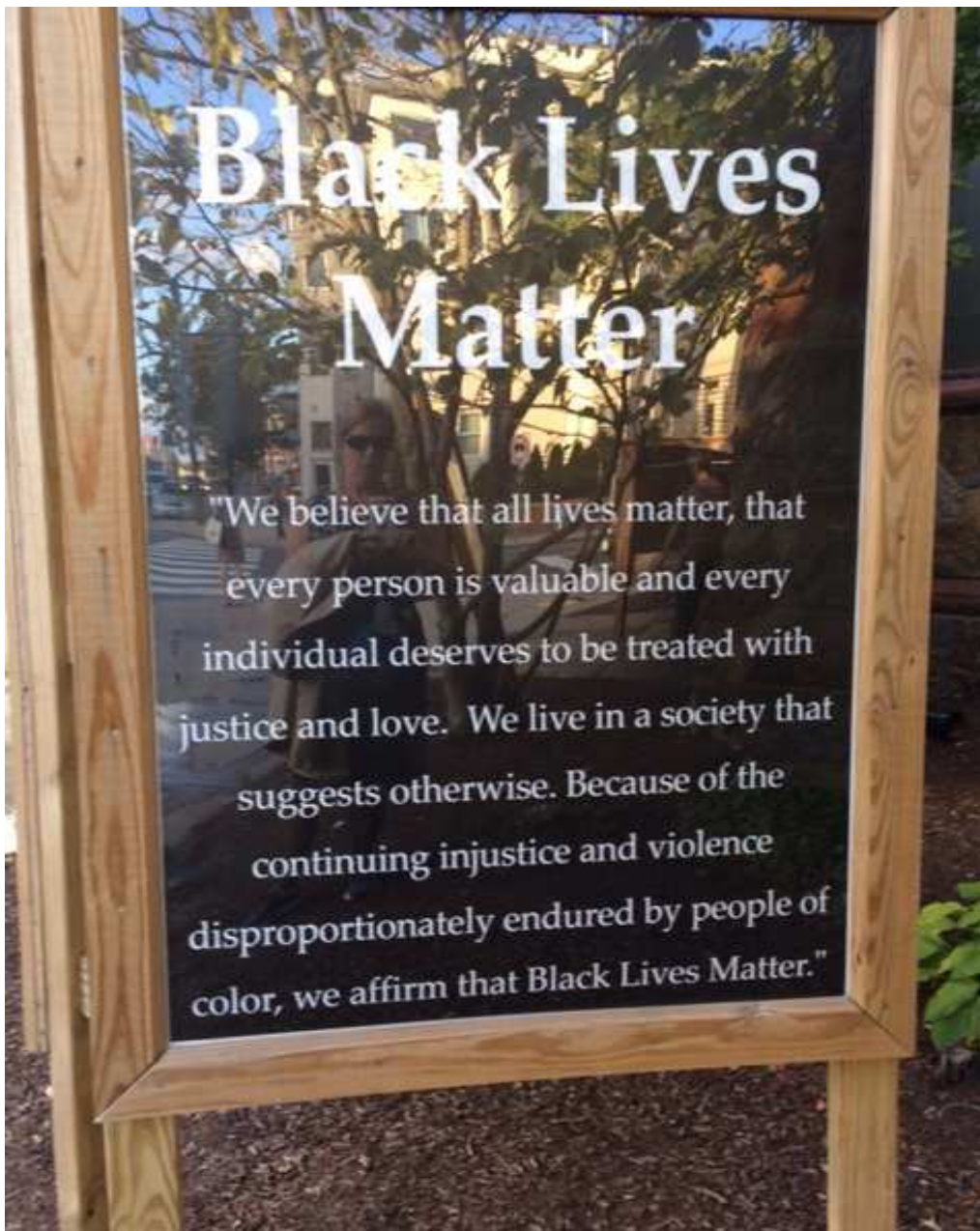
### Sudbury UU BLM banner

Here's something I saw online that I thought brought up the "all lives matter" issue without being too wordy. I might change the wording a bit, although I don't have a suggestion at this moment. (The Banner Reads: Yes, all lives matter... Every person deserves fairness and compassion. However, because of the excessive injustice and violence faced by people of color, We affirm that **BLACK LIVES MATTER**)



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I am absolutely fine with the BLM banner at WUS. I am concerned about vandalism and I think the people of the town might appreciate an explanation for the position. There are several of these posters around Cambridge in conjunction with the BLM Banner in front of churches, and it is a solid explanation why black lives matter.



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- I'm reading "Shots Fired: The Misunderstandings, Misconceptions, and Myths about Police Shootings" by Joseph K. Loughlin, Kate Flora. I knew this book was soon to be available. I just received it today. I believe that you will hear more about this book in the coming weeks.

Given that much of the BLM impetus is motivated by police shootings I believe it is important for all of us to examine the facts about what is being reported through various sources. Respectfully, I have extracted the following from this newly published book because I think it is relevant to our BLM banner discussion. What I have extracted is not from soundbytes in the book. It comes from a continuous flow in that section of the book. I also would like to add this to our compendium of notes to provide additional perspective that I do not believe has been captured in our discussions thus far.

The following excerpt is from chapter Two: “The Harm that Misreporting Does”

“This kind of irresponsible reporting can create deep divides and suspicion between police departments and the public. It can cause tremendous damage both to those involved and to the communities they serve. Only time, and more statistical data, will tell whether there is indeed a “Ferguson effect”<sup>12</sup> resulting in increased numbers of attacks on police officers and a correlative rise in crime as officers are deterred by mobs, city regulations, new departmental procedures, the need to police in pairs, and a lack of community cooperation—but emerging statistics suggest that this is so<sup>13</sup>. Talk to officers on the streets in most major cities and they will tell you that things are extremely tense, and that they go out every day with heightened concern about the possibility of violence. The public outcry about “police brutality” and a narrative about an “epidemic” of police shootings is widening the divide between police and their communities and driving both dedicated officers and aspiring officers from the profession.

We now know that Michael Brown’s “hands up, don’t shoot” gesture was not what happened on that street in Ferguson and that many of the eyewitness reports were flawed. Brown’s attack on a police officer and struggle over possession of the officer’s gun was confirmed not only by witnesses at the scene, but by ballistics, the medical examiner’s report, crime scene investigation, and DNA from Darren Wilson’s gun. Analysis of entry and exit wound and patches of blood on the street show that Brown was moving toward Officer Wilson, not running away, when he was killed. But look at the results: with all the facts in, many still refuse to believe them because of the inflammatory distortions that became the public narrative of the incident. Politicians, sports figures, Hollywood stars, and musicians all perpetuated these inaccuracies.

A similar inflammatory distortion occurred in the shooting of Jamar Clark in Minneapolis. Eyewitnesses said that Clark was handcuffed at the time that he was shot. Police say he was shot while attempting to grab an officer’s handgun. Subsequent forensic examination supplied the facts: Clark’s DNA was on the officer’s gun and gun belt, the officer’s duty belt had been wrenched to the side, there were no physical signs that Clark had been handcuffed, and none of Clark’s DNA was on the cuffs. Yet the public narrative remains that the police shot an unarmed man while he was in handcuffs.<sup>14</sup>

Or consider the Boston case of a terror suspect, Usaama Rahim, who was being surveilled by the FBI because of threats that he had made. After intercepting cell phone conversations in which Rahim discussed beheading police officers, and knowing that he had purchased several tactical knives, Boston police and federal agents confronted Rahim in a CVS parking lot, where he turned on them wielding a large military-style knife. When he refused to comply with commands to drop the knife, they shot him. Following the incident, his brother, an imam named Ibrahim Rahim, posted this account on Facebook:

*This morning while at the bus stop in Boston, my youngest brother Usaama was waiting for the bus to go to his job. He was confronted by three Boston police officers and subsequently shot in the back three times. He was on his cell phone with my dear father during the confrontation needing a witness.*

For many, Imam Rahim’s account became the story, although none of it was true. As reported by the Boston Globe: “The surveillance video of the fatal shooting of Usaama Rahim by members of an anti-terror task force shows that he was not shot in the back and was not on his cell phone, contrary to an account posted on Facebook by his brother, a community leader said Wednesday after reviewing it with law enforcement officials.<sup>15</sup> “

There is a healthy debate in the post-election climate amongst democrats and liberals about the correct place of identity politics in our strategy and approach to the world, of which the Black Lives Matters movement is a part. The question is not about denying any massive level of past or current wrongdoing, biases, crime, or discrimination perpetrated against African Americans, Latinos, women, members of the LGBT community, or any other group. The question is whether liberals should strategically keep these critical items hot, but on the back-burner, in order to present a cohesive, new American, inclusive view that has the chance of winning governorships, congressional, and senate seats throughout the country. Democrats cannot govern without winning, and can't win without being inclusive. My reading is the tide is moving quickly in this direction.

I believe the above debate is quite active in our church, and believe there is definitely not a consensus about putting a BLM sign at the church at this time. It is of course very difficult to speak cogently about this in front of an audience, as the pitfalls are many, and the nuances are important, and it is even easy to look racist if you don't explain yourself well. So I will probably not speak out for that reason, but I believe a plurality of our members hold a position similar to mine.

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I was driving past the Follen Church in Lexington today and spotted their BLM banner. Although I strongly favor putting up an unadulterated black banner with white lettering, you might also pass along the Follen version, attached. The pic is grainy so I'll spell out the text:

**Our faith calls us to affirm  
BLACK LIVES MATTER**

That's not a bad editing. I'd word it slightly differently, if we MUST edit:

**Our faith calls us to affirm that  
BLACK LIVES MATTER!**



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I am writing to express my support for placing a BLM banner on the grounds of the church. I feel the banner would remind people that there are fellow citizens who feel unsafe, discriminated against, or

threatened and therefore would serve as discussion opener and as an opportunity to learn. In addition, I believe the local area would benefit from knowing that the WUS supports the BLM movement. Our country feels more divided than ever and a BLM banner would inform the public that the WUS believes in "the inherent worth and dignity of all people". Thank you for the invitation to share my opinion.