

# **Semiotics of Black Lives Matter**

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# What is a myth?

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- They answer questions and offer solutions.
- A snake in myth is never just a snake.



# Myth

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- The connotative meaning that signs carry wherever they go. This idea of myth makes what is cultural seem natural.
- Myths are powerful structural beliefs. They are built out of language and images, which can be studied as signs. Signs are objects with meaning attached to them.

# Semiology

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- Semiotics was founded by Ferdinand de Saussure by expanded on by Roland Barthes. The goal of semiotics is interpreting both verbal and nonverbal signs
- Ferdinand de Saussure was a Swiss linguist who coined the term semiology
- Ferdinand de Saussure in 1916 wrote a book called general linguistics. In this book is where he coined the term sign.

# What is a sign?

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- A sign- Something that stands in for something else
- Example: Stop sign



# A sign has two elements:

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- Signifier and Signified definition were made by Ferdinand
- A Signifier- is called the signifier because it creates meaning
- Signified – The idea the person is communicating is trying to invoke



- Signifier: Red rose with a green stem
- Signifies: a **symbol** of passion and love - this is what the rose represents



- Signifier: Brown cross
- Signifies: a **symbol** of religion, or to be more specific this is a **symbol** of Christianity



- Signifier: Heart
- Signifies: a **symbol** of love and affection

# Every sign is the result of two interconnected sign systems.

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- A. Denotative sign system- A descriptive sign without ideological content. Denotative system which is strictly descriptive.
- B. Connotative sign system- Connotative system which is based on connotation. This means that a neutral sign can become an ideological tool. The original meaning is not lost but it changes.

# Roland Barthes

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- Roland argues if a sign used a lot it becomes a myth.
- Mythical Signs or Symbol create specific meaning. Signs have a huge amount of influence.
- It is up to the semiologist to expose or deconstruct a mythic sign.
- Deconstruction The process of unmasking contradictions within a text; debunking.



# Why is this important?

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- Extremist take that the Black Lives Matter is against police and is a movement take down the United States.
- Black lives matter is a movement that gets deep into ones pathos. This how someone can be against “BLM.” A counter movement called Blue Lives Matter is actively trying to shift the narrative.



**BLACK  
LIVES  
MATTER**

# Black Lives Matter Myth

- Black Live Matter Myth is rooted in the slogan Black Lives Matter. We can deconstruct the slogan black lives matter to show that is not against police, America, or white people.



# Black

- Black is a term which refers to African Americans. It is immediately clear that there is a racial group associated with this movement. The term Black, does not refer to a specific black person or victim of police brutality.



# Lives

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- The term Lives refers to the women, children, and fathers who have lost their lives. It also refers to men, women, and children who are still living.



# Matters

- The term Matters is very important because of the amount of lives lost, betrayal by police, and an injustice justice system. Black people in America as victims and they are speaking up and stating that their lives matter. Black refers to an oppressed, marginalized people by legal and institutional prejudice.



# Blue Lives Matter

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- The Blue Lives Matter slogan is a countermovement, they make a statement that police are in danger. Here is the breakdown of their slogan.



# Blue

- The term blue is a reference to police officers. It does not refer to a specific police officer. Unlike Black Lives Matter, there is not an association with a racial group of people.
- Lives in the slogan refer to officers who now serve or did serve. Police officers can also identify themselves in this myth.



# Blue

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- The term matters refers to the loss of police lives. They try to make an argument that there are a significant amount of police lives being lost. The problem with this Mythic sign is whether or not this is true the emotions are still there.
- launched in response to the Black Lives Matter movement, many believe it connotes opposition to the goals of ending police brutality and systemic racism.



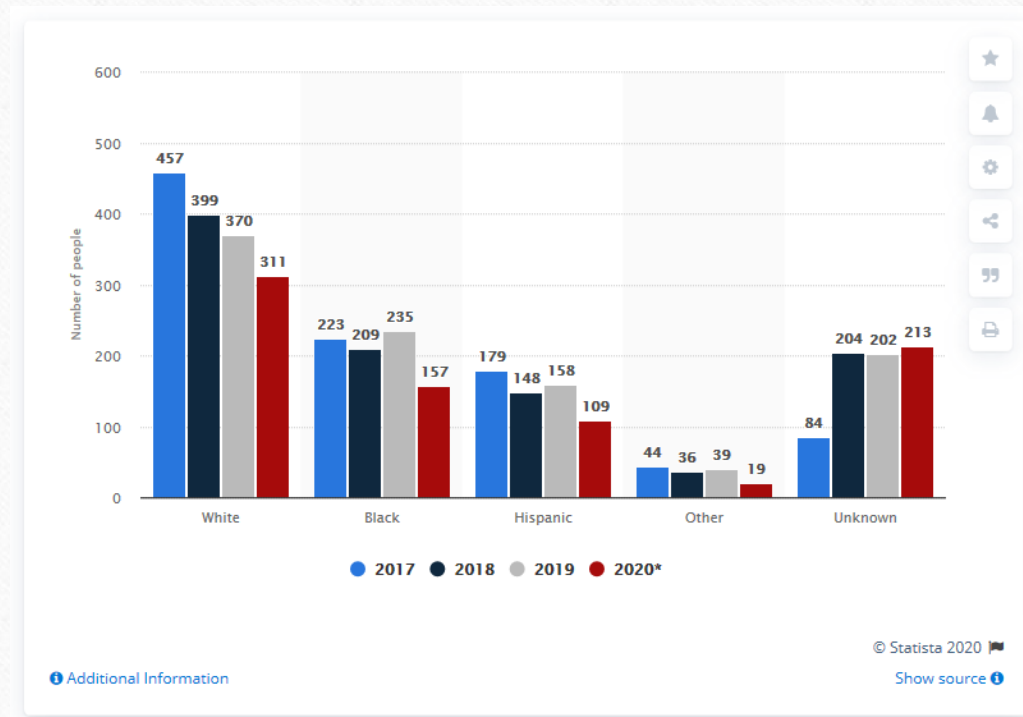
The problem with this Mythic sign is whether or not this is true the emotions are still there.

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- There is a lot of evidence that shows many Blacks are being murdered by police.
- One can choose their occupation, but not just their birth color or race.



# Rate of fatal police shooting among Black Americans was much higher than that for any other ethnicity



# Black people mostly likely to be killed by police

Black people are most likely to be killed by police

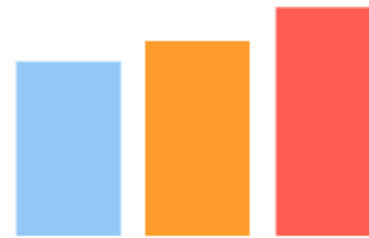
**3X** more likely to be killed by police than white people.



Black Hispanic White

Police Killings per 1 million population

**1.3X** more likely to be **unarmed** compared to white people.



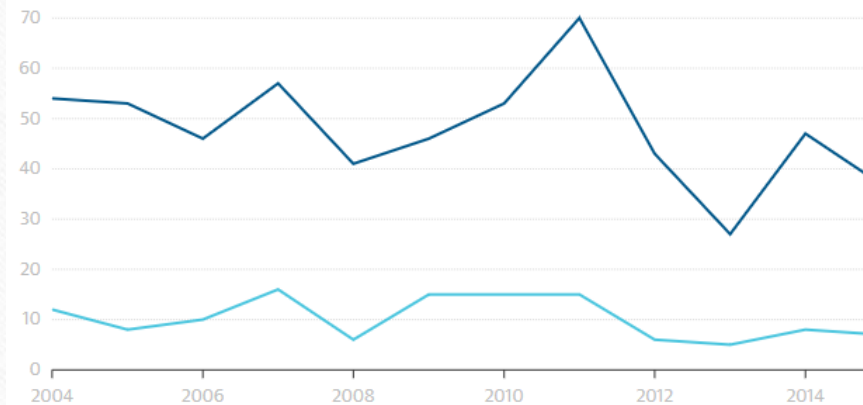
White Hispanic Black

% Killed by Police Unarmed, 2013-2020

# According to the guardian The FBI released data the showed a decline in police deaths in 2015

## Law enforcement officers feloniously killed or ambushed in the line of duty

Officers killed — Officers ambushed —



Note: Data does not include Puerto Rico or other US territories.

Source: FBI, "Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted" | Graphic: Jan Diehm/The Guardian

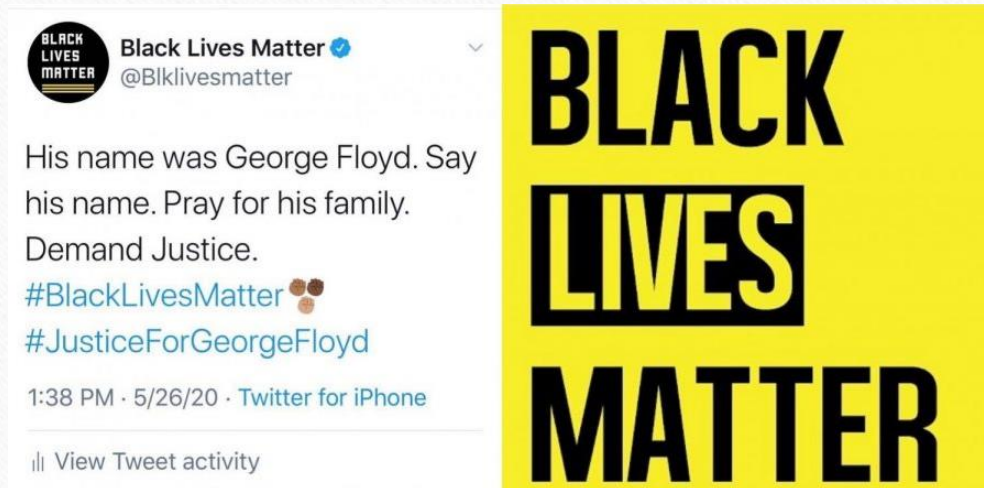
Many police officer never face prosecutions for homicides. Even when the killing are captured on video convictions are even

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# Digital Movement

- Black lives matter is a digital movement unlike no other. It has major following and activity on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Many claim it uses rhetoric against police and America.



# Myths

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- Myths are explanatory. The problems are made clear and the solution is even clearer. Black lives matter myth reduces factors such police shooting black men, prison reform, and racism to a single problem. The problems is black lives do not matter.



# Structure of the myth

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- Mythic heroes often have a basic narrative structure. There is chaos and the hero's bring about order. There is an order to chaos trope which is common in mythology. There is a savior and a fighter, while this person is not slaying dragons they are protesting.





# Myth are Powerful

- There is an undeniable communicative power of myths. The Symbolism empowers the movement and the historical progression of hashtag Black Lives Matter is understood.



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