

Black Lives Matter in the Classroom: A Conversation with Experts

Laleña Garcia, *What We Believe: A Black Lives Matter Principles Activity Book*

Caryn Davidson, *What We Believe: A Black Lives Matter Principles Activity Book*

Denisha Jones, *An Uprising For Educational Justice: Black Lives Matter at School*

Jesse Hagopian, *An Uprising for Educational Justice: Black Lives Matter at School*

Moderated by: Katie Potter, Senior Literacy Specialist at Lee & Low Books

Black Lives Matter in the Classroom: A Conversation with Experts

This webinar is being recorded and the link to view the webinar and the Anti-Racism Booklist will be shared within the week. Please contact kpotter@leeandlow.com for a certificate of completion.

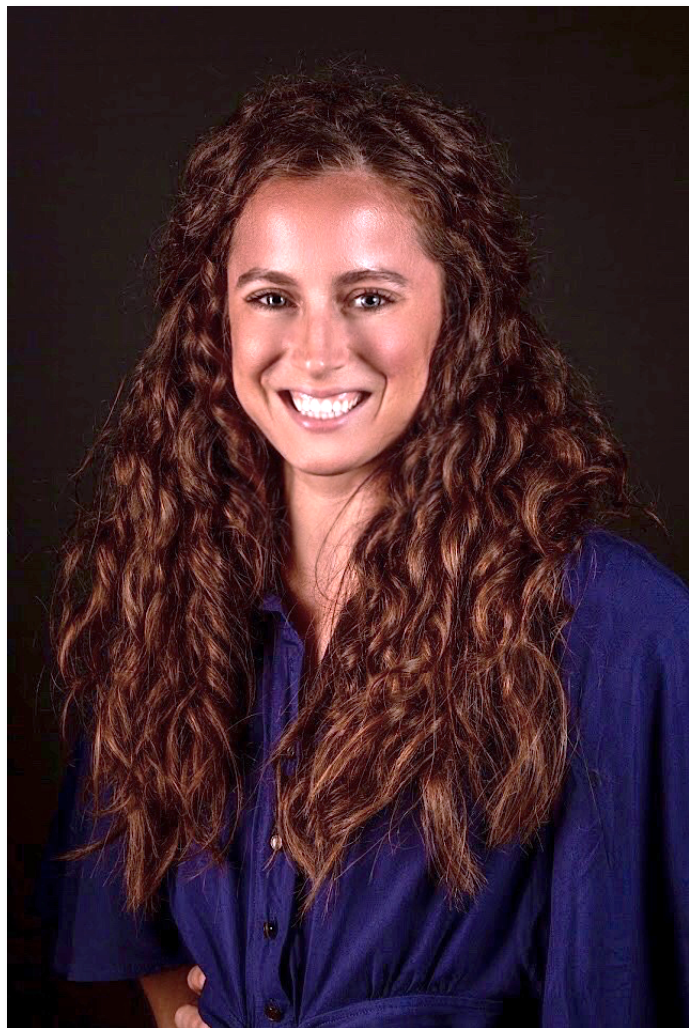
Agenda

- Bios/Introductions
- Book Talks
- Book Deep Dives
- Black Lives Matter in Schools & Libraries
- Engaging with Families at Home
- Addressing Resistance & Pushback
- Question & Answer



What We Believe: A Black Lives Matter Principles Activity Book
written by Laleña Garcia, illustrated by Caryn Davidson
leeandlow.com/books/what-we-believe

An Uprising for Educational Justice: Black Lives Matter at School
Edited by Denisha Jones & Jesse Hagopian, foreword by Opal Tometi
<https://www.haymarketbooks.org/books/1554-black-lives-matter-at-school>



Katie Potter is the Senior Literacy Specialist at Lee & Low Books. She is responsible for writing and developing the rigorous Teacher's Guides and Educator Resources for all frontlist titles, in addition to working with university professors and nonprofit organizations on how to incorporate diverse, multicultural literature into curriculum and syllabi. Prior to Lee & Low, Katie worked as an educational researcher, teacher, and literacy instructor. Katie has a dual Bachelor's Degree in Psychology and Spanish from Skidmore College and a Master's Degree in Childhood General Education Grades 1-6 and Literacy from Bank Street College of Education.



Laleña Garcia has taught in New York City early childhood education programs for more than twenty years. *What We Believe* grew out of her work with Black Lives Matter in Schools, a teachers' organization striving for racial equity in education, and she has presented at local and national conferences on teaching the principles of the BLM movement to children. A graduate of Yale University and the Bank Street College of Education, she lives in Brooklyn, NY. Please visit her website at rootedkids.org and follow her on Instagram at [@blm_in_kindergarten](https://www.instagram.com/blm_in_kindergarten).



Caryn Davidson studied Anthropology and Visual Art at Brown University and received her MA in Arts Education from NYU. Since the start of her career in education in 2004, she has founded and developed the arts programs at three public schools in New York City, and led initiatives to promote culturally relevant pedagogy and socially just practices within those school communities. She now teaches art at the high school level in Brooklyn, NY, where she also lives. She is a Steering Committee member of the Black Lives Matter at NYC Schools organizing group and a designer for the national Black Lives Matter at Schools movement. Please visit her website at caryndavidson.com.



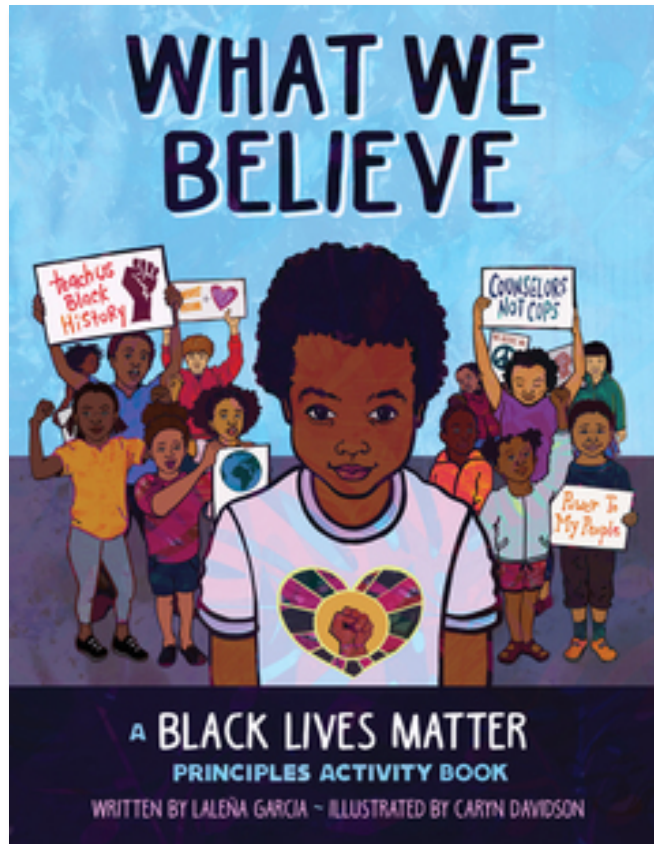
Denisha Jones is the Director of the Art of Teaching Program at Sarah Lawrence College. She is a former kindergarten teacher and preschool director who spent the past 16 years in teacher education. Denisha is an education justice advocate and activist. She serves as the Co-Director for Defending the Early Years, Inc, and is the Assistant Executive Director for the Badass Teachers Association. In 2017, she joined the steering committee for the national Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action.



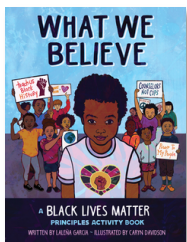
Jesse Hagopian teaches high school Ethnic Studies in Seattle and is a steering committee member for Black Lives Matter at School. Jesse is an editor for Rethinking Schools magazine, a writer for the Zinn Education Project, and the Director of the “Black Education Matters Student Activist Award.” Jesse is the co-editor of the new books, *Black Lives Matter At School: An Uprising for Educational Justice*, *Teacher Unions and Social Justice*, and *Teaching for Black Lives*. Jesse blogs at www.IAmAnEducator.com.

Book Talks

What We Believe: A Black Lives Matter Principles Activity Book
written by Laleña Garcia, illustrated by Caryn Davidson



This powerful activity book will engage hands, hearts, and minds as it introduces children to the guiding principles of the Black Lives Matter movement.



Book Talks

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BLACK FAMILIES



A family is a group of people who love and take care of one another. There are lots of different kinds of families, and we want to make sure that all families feel welcome in our community. We support Black families.

BLACK FAMILIES

Who are the people in your family?

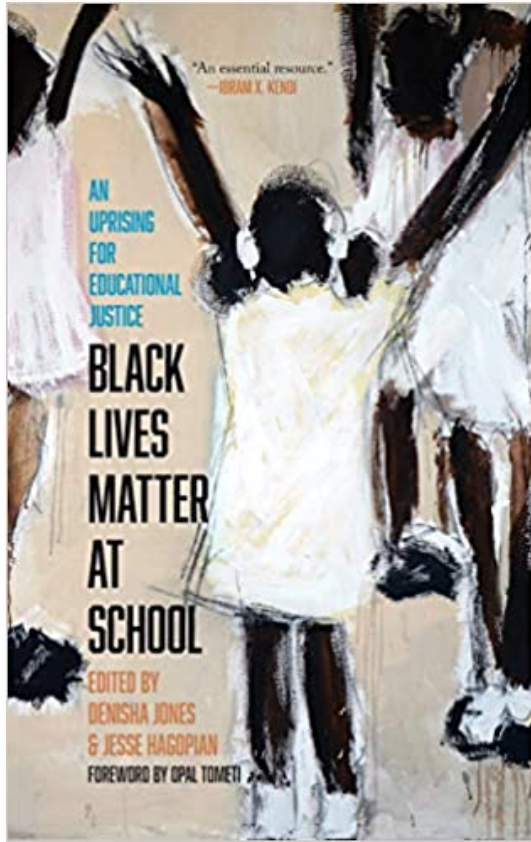
What is different and special about each member of your family?

What responsibilities does each person in your family have?

What are some ways the people in your family take care of one another?

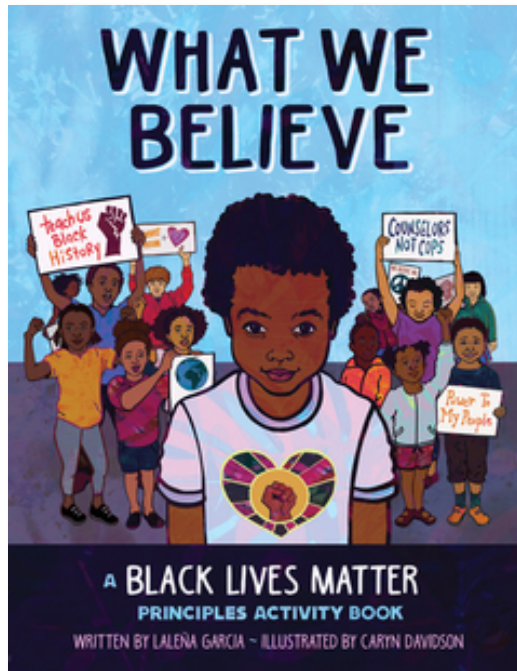
Book Talks

An Uprising For Educational Justice: Black Lives Matter at School
edited by Denisha Jones and Jesse Hagopian, forward by Opal Tometi



Black Lives Matter at School succinctly generalizes lessons from successful challenges to institutional racism that have been won through the Black Lives Matter at School movement. This book will inspire many more educators and activists to join the Black Lives Matter at School movement at a moment when this antiracist work in our schools could not be more urgent and critical to education justice.

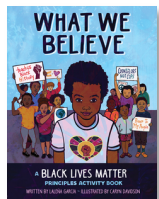
Book Deep Dives



The Guiding Principles of Black Lives Matter at School

THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF BLACK LIVES MATTER <small>as adapted by the Black Lives Matter at NYC Schools Steering Committee</small>	
UNAPOLOGETICALLY BLACK	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.
DIVERSITY	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.
EMPATHY	We practice empathy. We do our best to listen and learn from people so we can connect with them and their experiences.
LOVING ENGAGEMENT	Loving Engagement is the commitment to practice justice, liberation, and peace in our relationships, our work, and our everyday lives.
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE	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.
BLACK FAMILIES	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.
INTERGENERATIONAL	We believe that all people, regardless of age, show up with the ability to lead and learn.
BLACK VILLAGES	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.
BLACK WOMEN	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.
QUEER AFFIRMING	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.
TRANSGENDER AFFIRMING	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.
GLOBALISM	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.
COLLECTIVE VALUE	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.

What We Believe: A Black Lives Matter Principles Activity Book



How do you use this book in the classroom or other educational settings?

- First establish community norms
- Then, introduce and discuss the concept of Black Lives Matter with students
- Coloring book pages come after conversations about the BLM principles
- Remind students that the principles relate to everyone in the room
- Read corresponding books for each principle: see Resources
- Use alongside Black Lives Matter National School Curriculum as well as Extension Activities: see Resources
- Educators or other adults need to do the work on their part to upend racist ideologies



Laleña Garcia reading to her students during the Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action

An Uprising for Educational Justice: Black Lives Matter at School



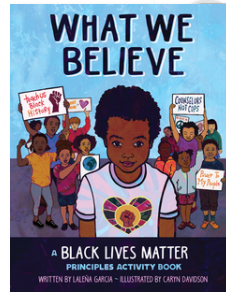
How can educators and other professionals use this book in their respective settings?

- Learn about how BLM at School was started and the movement's historical significance with the struggle for Black Liberation
- Read each section and discuss takeaways and questions regarding curriculum development, community organizing, securing union support, and organizing the week of action in schools and higher education.
- If you are preparing for your first week of action, use the book to explain to your administration and parents what the movement is about and why it is important.
- Learn about the impact of the movement on students.

<https://www.haymarketbooks.org/books/1554-black-lives-matter-at-school>

Black Lives Matter in Schools & Libraries

- See Resources section at the end of this webinar for more on how to participate
- Present the 13 guiding principles as a vision for a free and just world
- Schools and staff must decenter whiteness and examine white supremacy at its core
- Begin by exploring the 13-guiding principles as a foundation for positive Black development (i.e. move away from teaching about the enslavement of Africans and the struggle for civil rights).



DIVERSITY



Even though there are many ways we are the same, we know that there are also ways we are different. When we get to hear ideas from lots of people, we get smarter; when we work together, our communities get stronger. It's important that we have lots of different kinds of people in our community and that everyone feels safe. When that happens, our community shows its diversity.

Clockwise from bottom left: CIARA TAYLOR: Co-founder of the Dream Defenders, popular educator, grassroots organizer, and artist • JASILYN CHARGER: Cheyenne River Sioux Land Defender and youth advocate for Native American and LGBTQ rights • BAYARD RUSTIN (1912-1985): Black, gay, Quaker civil rights activist who served as a Freedom Rider, a coordinator of the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, and a labor organizer promoting the desegregation of trade unions • SONIA GUINANSACA: award-winning queer migrant poet, cultural organizer, and social justice activist • KAT ULANDAY BARRETT: a pin@y-american transgender disabled queer poet, performer, and educator.

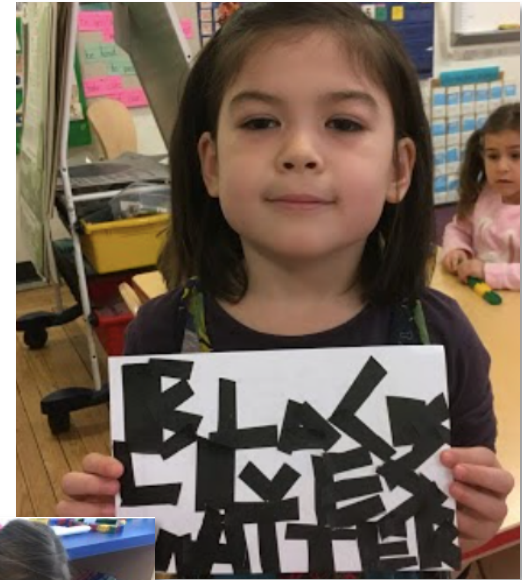
leeandlow.com/books/what-we-believe

Examples of the Impact of Black Lives Matter in the Classroom

- Students refer to the principles all year long in other subjects and continue to make meaningful connections
- Students suggest that characters in books could benefit from engaging with the principles!
- At Trinity Washington University, the librarian showcased books that support the week of action and created a space for students to share BLM at School meant to them.



Examples of the Impact of Black Lives Matter in the Classroom



Examples of the Impact of Black Lives Matter in the Classroom



Successful Implementation of Black Lives Matter in Schools

- Students understand that every part of their lives has been touched by racism
- Students understand *why* the Black Lives Matter is the most important social movement of their lifetime
- Students (and educators) understand diversity WITHIN racial and cultural groups and exploring intersectionality
- Students connect the 13 Guiding Principles and demands to their lived school experience




<https://www.blacklivesmatteratschool.com/>

Engaging with Families

- At the beginning of the school year, let families know that social justice and identity will be discussed
- Include excerpts from classroom conversations to demonstrate to families what students are saying
- Refer to "A Letter to Grown-Ups" at the beginning of *What We Believe: A Black Lives Matter Principles Activity Book*.
- Ask families to discuss the 13 guiding principles at home
- Share why the demands matter to families

A LETTER TO GROWN-UPS

Talking to Children about Black Lives Matter



DEAR GROWN-UPS,

Thank you for picking up this book and sharing it with your young people; we're so appreciative of your time, and your willingness to begin this important work. As a teacher who's been in the field for more than two decades, I can say that engaging with children as they grapple with big ideas is one of the most rewarding aspects of my job. I've been using the principles of Black Lives Matter in my classroom for the past three years, and it has been delightful to see the children's enthusiasm as they think seriously about our world, and to watch them refer back to the principles throughout the year.

Black Lives Matter was founded by three Black women—Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi. In 2013, after the man who killed Trayvon Martin was found not guilty, Alicia originated the phrase "Black Lives Matter" in a social media post about her grief and ongoing faith in Black people. Patrisse turned the phrase into a hashtag and shared it widely, and Opal helped build an online platform for it. Together with other activists, they created a set of guiding principles for a liberation movement. As these principles are a living document that acknowledges and reflects the lived realities of Black people in the United States, they have shifted in number and expression through the years, but they have consistently celebrated the power and diversity of Black people and centered women as well as queer and trans folks. After the Ferguson protests in 2014, the movement spread across the United States in a network of chapters that allowed local organizers to determine what was needed in their communities and the best way to respond to those needs. Alicia, Patrisse, and Opal say their goal "is to support the development of new Black leaders, as well as create a network where Black

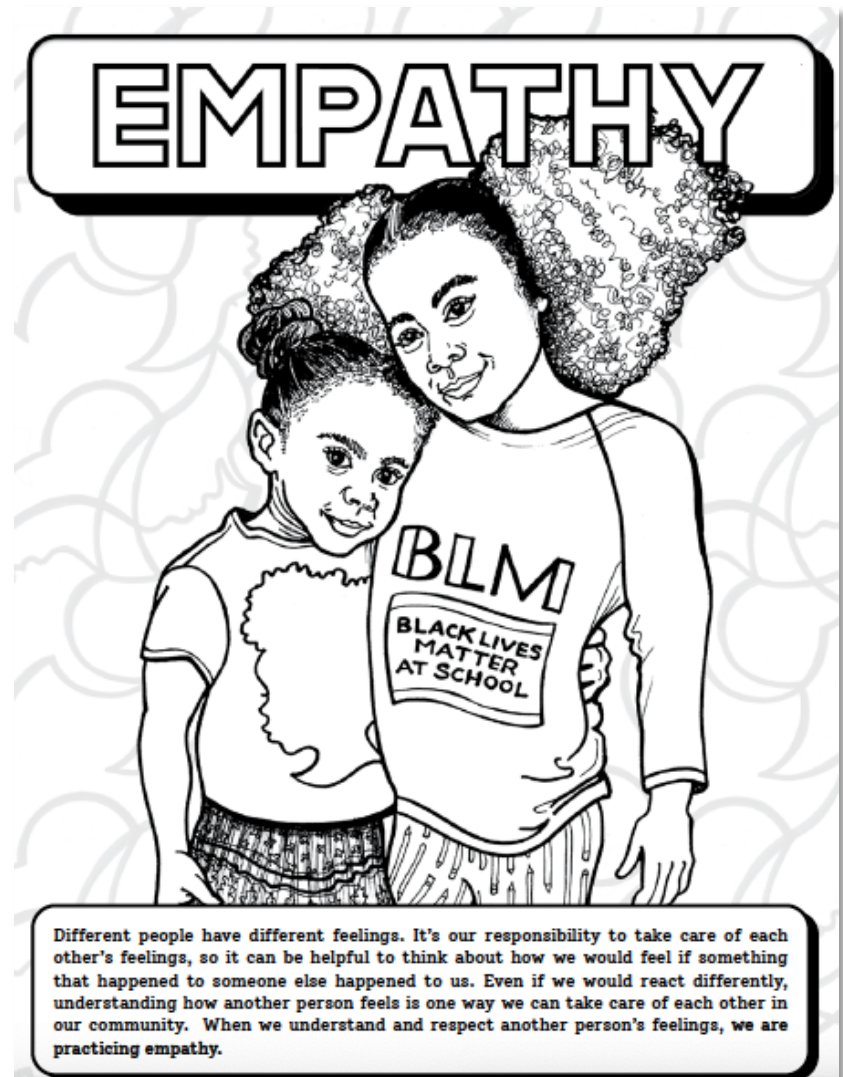
people feel empowered to determine our destinies in our communities" (blacklivesmatter.com/herstory).

I got involved through Black Lives Matter at School (blacklivesmatteratschool.com), a national coalition advocating for racial justice in education. In early 2017, Tamara Anderson, a parent and activist in Philadelphia, distilled each principle from the Black Lives Matter website at that time into a one- or two-word phrase as a way to highlight the goals of the movement for her daughter; this language was adopted by the national Black Lives Matter at Schools steering committee. I then translated the principles themselves into kid-friendly language and wrote some guidance for adults talking to young children. Artist and teacher Caryn Davidson created a series of stunning visuals for both the NYC chapter of Black Lives Matter at School and the national organization. I approached Caryn to collaborate on the first iteration of this activity book, which has been a huge hit with teachers and kids from pre-K to twelfth grade. We've found that teachers of younger children use the book as a true activity book, while teachers of older children share the text to make sure their students understand the principles before they springboard off into more nuanced conversations. I'm thrilled to be able to offer a version here that incorporates the lessons other teachers and I have learned from actually adopting the principles in our classrooms.

Many children, especially older children, may be aware of current events, particularly around police brutality toward Black people, and it's our responsibility to give them opportunities to share their experiences in a safe space. It's important that we're honest with our young people, and acknowledge

Addressing Resistance

- Know your school's mission statement and refer to it
- Be intentional with the principles that you start with (such as "Empathy")
- Resistance to teaching Black Lives Matter at school is racism: be explicit in what it is and address it
- If possible, bring in someone from the National Steering Committee to explain the movement
- Read Chapter 13 in *An Uprising for Educational Justice: Black Lives Matter in School*



Black Lives Matter at School Resources

Black Lives Matter at School National Curriculum:

<https://www.blacklivesmatteratschool.com/curriculum.html>

Black Lives Matter Principles Extension Activities:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-a3b3u6Zozf7arploHGaAKGOrF7orTSP/view>

Language Guide for Discussing Race and Culture from Berkeley International High School:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WhSp9aXQJ5HtXTdYI6XZbCDpMabPqbz0/view>

NYC BLM at School List of Children's Books to Support Black Lives Matter Principles:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/19RH46fxpFo0JoVkd7ouqwllmGjEtvvplEwjKCzKSpb0/edit>

Black Lives Matter at Schools History PowerPoint:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Km_9ezNGHKc8K8QPI9CLPlgzIYDAdBf_/view

Black Lives Matter at NYC Schools Group Vision and Practice:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1xbCPFUhTf99mQm257CZKJKd-rhKqsubc25NsH5ZGv-0/edit>

BLM at Schools: How to Participate:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1O6LJQ7V_jESrIUDqgQUNSf453ydaenS7/view

Continuum on Becoming an Anti-Racist Multicultural Organization:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oMSkXi6_on9HehAr2Ua6KdRQksIJ5X2S/view

NEA Ed Justice:

<https://neaedjustice.org/black-lives-matter-at-school/>

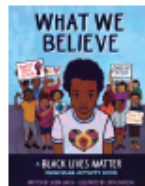
What We Believe Supplemental Resource

The Resource & Activity Guide can be found on the *What We Believe* book page and is free to distribute and adapt:
https://www.leeandlow.com/books/what-we-believe/teachers_guide

Lee & Low has Teacher's Guides for almost every single title on the book pages, so check them out! They have discussion questions, Interdisciplinary activities, background information, and more!



What We Believe: A Black Lives Matter Principles Activity Book Resource & Activity Guide



Author **Laleña García** has taught in New York City early childhood education programs for more than twenty years. *What We Believe* grew out of her work with Black Lives Matter in Schools, a teachers' organization striving for racial equity in education, and she has presented at local and national conferences on teaching the principles of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement to children. A graduate of Yale University and the Bank Street College of Education, she lives in Brooklyn, New York. Please visit her website at rootedkids.org and follow her on Instagram at @blm_in_kindergarten.

The following question-and-answer session offers tips and suggestions from Laleña on how to include *What We Believe* in your relevant setting.

Q: How do I introduce Black Lives Matter and What We Believe to young people?

A: When I introduce Black Lives Matter to my students, I start in a community meeting in my school, where both the kindergarten classes are together. I sit down and say, "Today we're going to talk about Black Lives Matter. Raise your hand if you've heard these words. Great! Raise your hand if you have something to share about these words." Students' responses have ranged, but what usually comes up is "trying to make things fair for Black people." So then I can respond, "Great! Yes, Black Lives Matter is about making things fair for Black people. It's also about the ways we live in our communities. At school, we're part of a community, and there are things we do to take care of each other. The principles of BLM are ideas about how people can take care of each other. Today we're going to read a book about one of the principles, and then I'm going to show you a poster, to help remind you. We'll keep the posters up in our classroom ALL YEAR, so you can always look at them."

Keep in mind that these discussions come after we've talked about community norms, identity, and what you get to choose for yourself, and we've had matter-of-fact conversations about things like skin color, hair length, gender, and friends. It's essential to create a caring community first to ensure students' safety. We teachers also have to do work ourselves — first by consulting resources, books, and other reputable organizations — because if you're teaching new curriculum with your old attitudes, your students are actually going to still be learning the same lessons.

Q: How do I introduce the Black Lives Matter principles to young people?

A: For each principle, I read a book (please see the list at the end of this guide, which should be added to every year, as more and more books centering Black joy are published), and then I show them the corresponding poster and we talk about the principle and one of the prompts. Now that the words and prompts are all together in one book, we can use that book during these discussions.

Q: How do I introduce the coloring pages to young people?

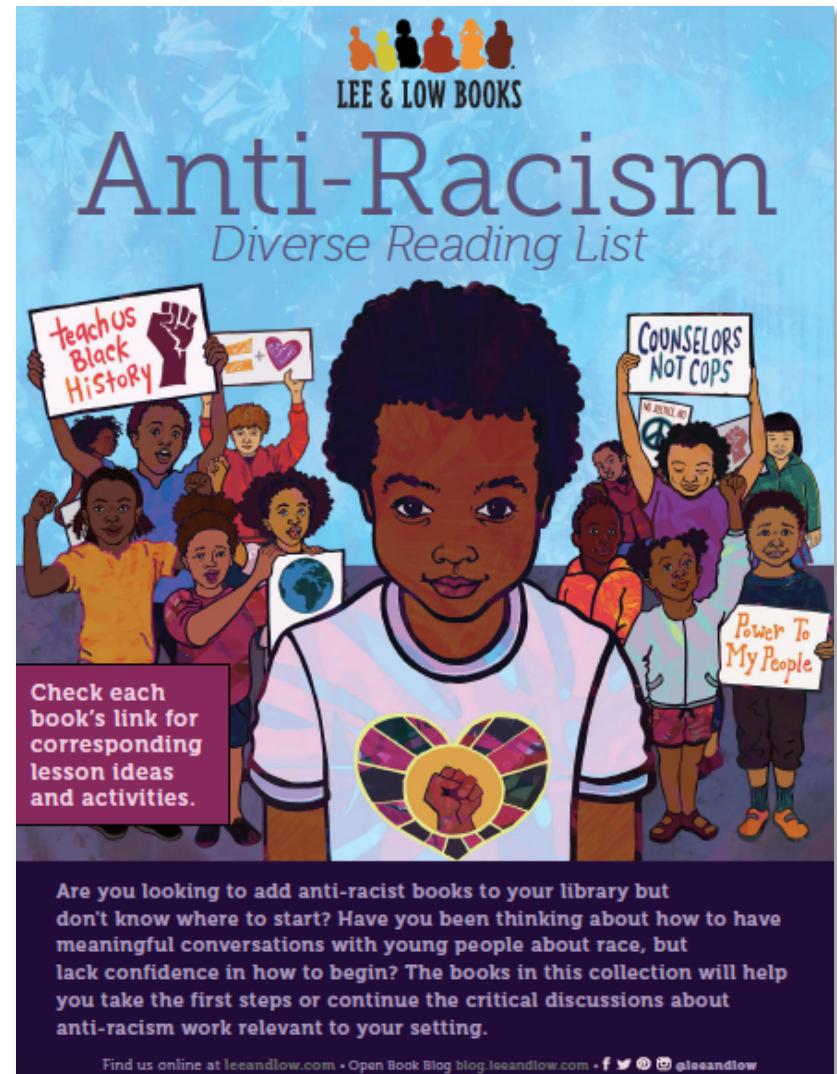
A: I use the coloring book pages after we've had several conversations about the principles. We'll talk about how we've learned some of the principles, and I'll tell them that all the pages we've learned about are open, and they can choose to color on them; if they see a principle we haven't learned about yet, that page is closed, and we'll talk about it later. Then I'll read the prompt to them; some of them choose to answer the question with a picture, and some of them choose to just color. That's fine, because we've already had a conversation about the prompt as a class.

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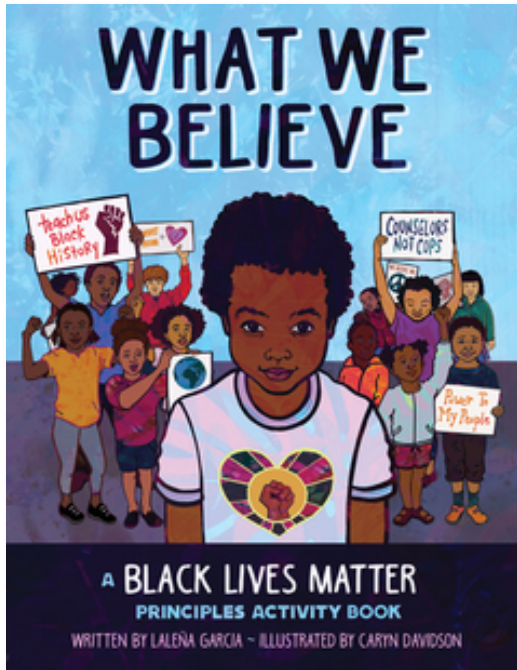
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Lee & Low Books Anti-Racism Book List & Collection

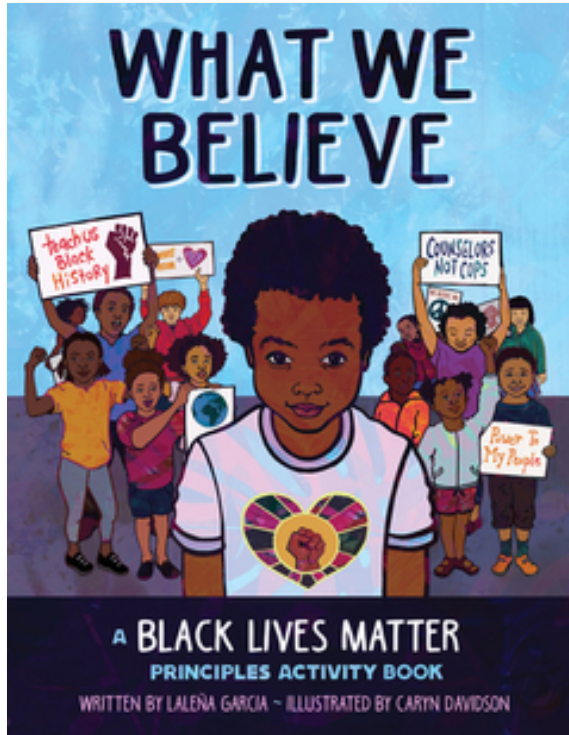
- Are you looking to add anti-racist books to your collection but don't know where to begin?
- The books in this collection will help you take the first steps or continue critical discussions about anti-racism work relevant to you setting.
- Grades PreK-8+
- Anti-Racism Booklist Collection Link:
<https://www.leeandlow.com/collections/anti-racism-book-collection>
- The link to the free PDF can be found here:
https://www.leeandlow.com/uploads/loaded_document/875/AntiRacismDiverseReadingList.pdf



Question & Answer



Websites & Social Media

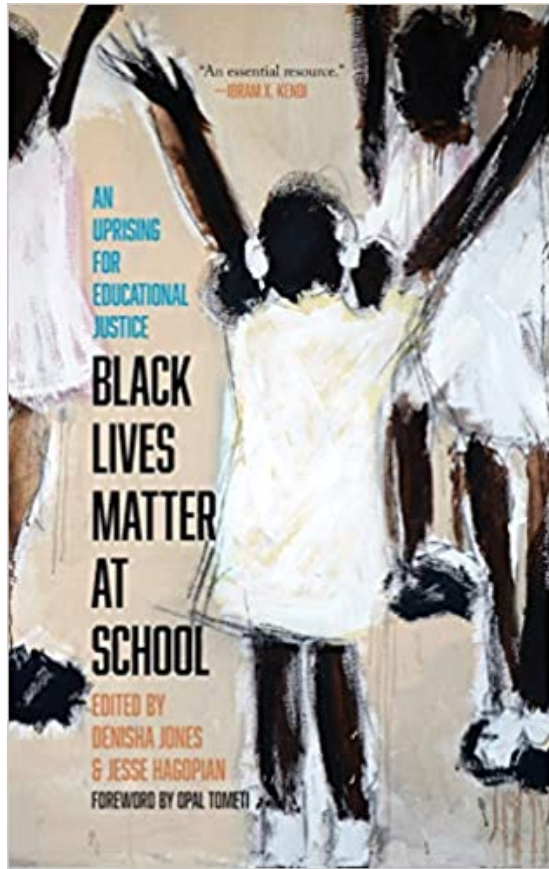


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Black Lives Matter in the Classroom: A Conversation with Experts

This webinar is being recorded and the link to view the webinar, resources and the Lee & Low Anti-Racism Book List will be shared within the week. Please contact kpotter@leeandlow.com for a certificate of completion.

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