

# COINTELPRO is Alive and Well: FBI Spying on BLM Leadership

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In 1971, New Left members of the Citizens' Commission to Investigate the FBI successfully broke into an FBI office in Media, Pennsylvania, where they discovered extensive documentation of the COINTELPRO program to infiltrate, discredit, and disrupt various factions within the burgeoning left movement from 1956-1971. This program extensively targeted the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, "neutralizing" leaders of the movement through imprisonment, trumped up charges, public humiliation, and in the case of Fred Hampton, assassination.

The fear of targeted FBI infiltration and persecution still looms large on today's left. It was revealed by the Center for Constitutional Rights and Color for Change after having filed a Freedom of Information Act request that the FBI has been spying on activists within the Black Lives Matter movement far more than originally believed.

Tracking of the movement began in 2014 under then-President Obama's Attorney General Eric Holder, through social media accounts as well as physical surveillance and informants. The disclosed dossier reveals that the FBI staked out the residences of activists and gathered information on vehicle registrations. Other activists have had their flight patterns tracked when en route to a protest owned by Monsanto. Considering that nowhere in the dossier was it mentioned that there was a concern for violent activities by the movement, the question of why the FBI is targeting non-violent protesters exercising their right to free speech is one that we should be asking ourselves.

"Political dissent and protest are not crimes; neither are they terrorist activities to be monitored or put down by counterterrorism units. Nonetheless, the U.S. government has a long, well-documented history of using surveillance, monitoring, and the threat of coercive state force to intimidate and silence Black-led movements for social justice and empowerment," says Color of Change executive director Rashad Robinson.

"The revelations of FBI, DHS, and local law enforcement surveillance of the movement for Black lives leads us to fear that the current surveillance of the movement is more coordinated, extensive, and systematic than has been revealed thus far and that it is intended to silence the demands of Black activists and related movements."

Modern surveillance of black movements extends back to at least the the beginning of the 20th century following the Russian Revolution. Politically agitated black people with possible Soviet sympathies were targeted by the state. J. Edgar Hoover targeted Black leaders as far back as Marcus Garvey's Back to Africa movement.

But why target Black Lives Matter? What threat does a reformist movement pose to the American system? We can see an interesting contrast with the March for Our Lives protesters who are also concerned with gun violence. In just five weeks, the middle-class organizers of March for Our Lives pulled off a highly publicized event that counted hundreds of thousands of people in attendance. Major celebrity endorsements, funding in the realm of millions of dollars, positive and intense media coverage, and organization on the part of experienced NGO leadership brought the movement into the national spotlight. Compare this to Black Lives Matter who have been ignored, and at times demonized, by the media. Why is this?

On the whole, Black Lives Matters raises issues that confront systemic conditions that oppress poor African-Americans, systemic racism and state violence while March for Our Lives simply centers on regulation of gun ownership. The demands of the black community cannot be solved without addressing many of the inconvenient truths about our political and economic systems that middle and upper-class Americans are unwilling to hear; for starters, the role that income inequality and class differences play in begetting racism and designating minorities as “the other”. The answers will not be found among liberals who believe that fundamentally, as it currently stands, everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed as everyone else in society. If we come to this conclusion, it can only follow that those oppressed by the system will be viewed as dangerous to the “freedoms” within the liberal status quo. Thus, the liberal remedy for this is to crackdown on agitators instead of helping to overcome these contradictions.

## Sources

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Оригинальная статья