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## why everyone should start wearing pro-black apparel

show your support on your sleeve

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PHOTO VIA GLOSS RAGS

Simply surviving in America as a Black person is a revolutionary act, and loving your Blackness publicly is doubly so. One of the easiest ways to show your love is to wear your cause on your sleeve—literally in the form of pro-Black apparel. It’s a way for Black people, white folks, and non-Black people of color to show their support for the cause, letting the world know they believe Black lives do matter.

Shirts proclaiming the wearer to be “Not Your Respectable Negro (<http://teespring.com/respectabilitypoliticsv2>)” rail against the idea that Black folks must behave in a certain way to be considered fully human, or that if we would just submit quietly, police violence wouldn’t be an issue. Wearing “Black Girls Are Magic (<http://teespring.com/blackgirlmagic3>)” emblazoned across your chest takes a shot at misogynoir (<http://www.gradientlair.com/post/84107309247/define-misogynoir-anti-black-misogyny-moya-bailey-coined>)—and it makes you feel magic, to be real. Kind of an off-topic pro tip: For maximum Black Girl Magic, I like to pair the t-shirt with these earrings (<http://rachelstewartjewelry.com/product/cornelius-1520300>) from Rachel Stewart Jewelry. Grip some before she has to shutter her shop, and support Black girl makers.

Pro-Black t-shirts aren’t just for Black folks—although non-Black folks might want to avoid wearing something like the We the Protestors’ “I Love My Blackness—and Yours (<http://teespring.com/ilovemyblackness>)” shirt. Wearing a shirt that says “Black Lives Matter (<http://teespring.com/blklivesmattertee>)” or “Decriminalize Blackness (<http://teespring.com/decriminalize-blackness>)” isn’t just supporting Black makers, it’s opening the door to a conversation on *why* Black lives matter, or *how* Blackness is criminalized by the state. So, if you’re going to rock a shirt like that, you need to understand the philosophy behind the Black Lives Matter movement, research the criminalization of

Blackness, and be prepared to explain it to other potential allies. The point is not to just make a fashion statement, but a political statement. That requires using words beyond the ones on your chest.

You should also be prepared to experience some backlash. For example, a lot of people tend to respond to the idea that Black lives matter with “All lives matter”—which is, of course, reductive and ignores the point that the reason we have to say *Black* lives matter is because, historically, Black lives have been worth less than white lives. Just take comfort in the fact that wearing a t-shirt is far less confrontational than being out on the front lines protesting. And you can choose to walk away from engagement if the person you’re talking with is just trolling you.

Almost every day, a new hashtagged name appears on my Twitter timeline. Without even checking the details, I know that means another Black person has been shot or killed by American law enforcement officials. Blackness is under attack in the United States—hell, it’s under attack worldwide—and it is overwhelming. I am grateful and awestruck by the Black (and white) folks who are out in these streets risking their lives, putting their bodies on the line to protest state-sponsored violence against our people, however, not everyone has the physical or mental ability to do the same. To get my non-Black peeps prepared to have an intelligent, well-informed comeback to any salt thrown your way, I’ve compiled this list of links. Even if you’re not planning on rocking a pro-Black tee, I’d suggest doing this reading, anyway—it will make you a better ally to Black folks.

### **In response to “All Lives Matter”:**

[The next time someone says ‘all lives matter,’ show them these 5 paragraphs \(http://fusion.net/story/170591/the-next-time-someone-says-all-lives-matter-show-them-these-5-paragraphs/\)](http://fusion.net/story/170591/the-next-time-someone-says-all-lives-matter-show-them-these-5-paragraphs/)  
[‘All Lives Matter’—Words of Moral Cowardice \(http://www.freep.com/story/opinion/contributors/2015/08/24/lives-matter/32269707/\)](http://www.freep.com/story/opinion/contributors/2015/08/24/lives-matter/32269707/)

### **The criminalization of Blackness:**

[On the Routine Criminalization of America’s Black and Brown Youth \(http://www.thenation.com/article/routine-criminalization-americas-black-and-brown-youth/\)](http://www.thenation.com/article/routine-criminalization-americas-black-and-brown-youth/)

[To Wake Up Dangerous: on Thugs and the Criminalization of Black People \(http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jay-dodd/post\\_6865\\_b\\_4805812.html\)](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jay-dodd/post_6865_b_4805812.html)

### **On the philosophy behind the Black Lives Matter movement:**

[A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement by Alicia Garza \(http://www.thefeministwire.com/2014/10/blacklivesmatter-2/\)](http://www.thefeministwire.com/2014/10/blacklivesmatter-2/)

What I meant when I said that #BlackLivesMatter (<http://sfbayview.com/2015/07/what-i-meant-when-i-said-that-blacklivesmatter/>)

**Why “respectability politics” is BS:**

Respectability will not save us: Black Lives Matter is right to reject the “dignity and decorum” mandate handed down to us from slavery

(<http://www.anrdoezrs.net/links/8510882/type/am/http://www.salon.com/2015/08/25/respectability-politics-is-a-sham/>)

“Respectability Politics” Is a Sham (<http://www.alternet.org/civil-liberties/why-respectability-politics-sham>)

Now go forth, share the knowledge, and represent the cause.



**Teespring**, Free Black Woman Remix Tee, \$20, available at [Teespring \(http://teespring.com/free-black-woman-remix-tee\)](http://teespring.com/free-black-woman-remix-tee).

