

Co-founder of Black Lives Matter Alicia Garza visits UL

BY TEVIN STINSON
THE CHRONICLE

While discussing the history of the Black Lives Matter movement to more than 100 community members gathered at the Winston-Salem Urban League (WSUL) on Friday, March 4, co-founder Alicia Garza said the fight against racial injustice in America is more than a social media trend or hashtag.

According to Garza, the movement that started in 2013 following the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the shooting death of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin in Florida is the latest in a long line of protest movements for African-Americans vying for equality in a country that was built on the backs of African slaves brought to the country years ago.

"This isn't anything new and it is much bigger than social media," she said. "This movement began way back in 1619 when black people were brought here on boats."

During an open forum with WSUL president James Perry, Garza mentioned when she took to Twitter to voice her frustration on Zimmerman's acquittal, she had no idea her own words would become the banner for a nationwide movement. Garza said she was surprised when her "love letter" to black people across the country started to gain national attention.

"I didn't write that letter for national attention. I wrote it because too many people sworn to protect our communities are getting away with murder," said

Garza. "The verdict in that case said our lives don't matter and I felt the need to say something about it."

While discussing intersectionality, the impact of the movement, and how it continues to grow, Garza also took time to address the backlash the movement has received over the years, particularly those who rebuttal "Black Lives Matter" with "All Lives Matter." Garza said although we all want to live in a world where all lives matter, that is not the world we live in.

"All lives do matter; however, that's the utopian society we are striving for," she continued. "That's the vision we are trying to get to, but it's not the world we live in today," Garza said.

Garza noted that throughout history, the black struggle for equal rights has attempted to restore the humanity to a nation that from its inception lost its soul by removing its indigenous people and stealing land. She mentioned when the struggles of black people are taken into consideration, there is a chance that life for all Americans can improve.

Garza said, "The struggle has consistently raised the question of what it means to be a human being."

"We live in a nation where our founding documents describe us as three-fifths of a human being," she continued. "So when you live with the notion that black lives matter, there is a chance for everybody to get a little more free."

Before leaving to catch a flight back to her hometown of Oakland, California, Garza took a number of questions from members in the audience. When asked about the future of the movement, Garza said she was confident the movement will

continue to spark change, not only in America, but across the world.

A number of residents who attended the forum said they were empowered by Garza's words. Eniola Adeniyi, a student at North Carolina A&T, said after

listening to Garza speak, she feels confident that the movement is headed in the right direction.

"As a young up and coming community activist, the discussion gave me a lot of insight," said Adenine. "Moving forward I'm confident that the Black Lives Matter movement will continue to create change in the African-American community."

Garza's visit to the Urban League concluded a week-long visit to the Twin City which was highlighted

by the Vincent Harding Seminar on Nonviolent Social Change for students at Wake Forest University.

Throughout the week, Garza led discussions with students on the intersections of identity, collaboration, and media and move-



Garza



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