

ALICIA GARZA

b. January 4, 1981

BLACK LIVES MATTER COFOUNDER

**Alicia Garza
is an activist who
cofounded the racial
justice movement
Black Lives Matter.**

*“We understand organizing
not to happen online but to be built
through face-to-face connections.”*

Alicia Garza is an African-American activist and writer who cofounded the racial justice movement Black Lives Matter.

Garza (née Schwartz) grew up with her African-American mother and Jewish stepfather in Marin County, California. Her activism began early. In middle school she worked to make birth control information available to San Francisco Bay Area students.

Garza attended the University of California San Diego. At 22, she met Malachi Garza, a biracial transgender male activist and organizer. A year later she came out to her family. She married Garza in 2008.

In 2013 Garza cofounded #BlackLivesMatter following the the not-guilty verdict in the fatal shooting of Trayvon Martin, an unarmed black youth. The hashtag derives from a post she published on Facebook.

In 2014 Garza led the Freedom Ride to Ferguson, Missouri, after the shooting death of Michael Brown—another unarmed black youth—by a police officer. She also attempted to stop a Bay Area Rapid Transit train to memorialize Brown’s death. She and other protestors chained themselves to the train before police arrested them. The Ferguson-shooting protests coincided with the development of Black Lives Matter chapters across the country.

Garza works in Oakland, California, as a community organizer around issues of health, student rights, domestic worker rights, police brutality and anti-racism. She identifies as a queer woman and has been an outspoken advocate against violence aimed at transgender and gender-nonconforming people of color. Her writing has been featured in Rolling Stone, The Nation, The Guardian, The Huffington Post and other publications.

Garza served as director of People Organized to Win Employment Rights in San Francisco and won the right of youth to use the city’s public transportation for free. She also fought gentrification and helped expose police brutality in the Bay Area. She serves on the board of directors of Forward Together, a grassroots organization that trains people for leadership, and she is involved with Black Organizing for Leadership and Dignity. She also directs special projects for the National Domestic Workers Alliance.

Along with other honors, Garza received the Bayard Rustin Community Activist Award and twice received the Harvey Milk Democratic Club Award. She was named to The Root 100 list of African-American Achievers between the ages of 25 and 45 and to Politico’s 2015 guide to thinkers, doers and visionaries. In 2015 the Advocate selected her among its nominees for Person of the Year.

Garza lives in California with her spouse.



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