

Obama: Black Lives Matter Raises 'Legitimate Issue'

President Barack Obama said on Thursday that the Black Lives Matter movement is raising a "legitimate issue" about African-Americans being treated unfairly in certain communities.

Obama made his first public remarks about the group, which grew in aftermath of police shootings of unarmed black men, during a discussion of the importance of criminal justice reform.

Critics of Black Lives Matter allege the group promotes bias against other groups, including white Americans and police, and started the saying, "all lives matter."

"I think the reason that the organizers used the phrase, 'Black Lives Matter,' was not because they were suggesting nobody else's lives matter," Obama said while speaking on a panel convened at the White House to address criminal justice issues.

"What they were suggesting was, there is a specific problem that is happening in the African-American community that is not happening in other communities. That is a legitimate issue that we've got to address."

The Black Lives Matter movement grew on social media around the protests in Ferguson, Missouri after a white police officer shot and killed an unarmed black teen in August 2014.

"There is a specific concern as to whether African-Americans in certain jurisdictions are not being treated fairly or are subject to excessive force more frequently," Obama said.

He cautioned that pointing out bias against the black Americans by police should use data rather than anecdotes and

avoid painting the picture with “a broad brush.” {eoa}

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