

## **‘If Black Lives Matter, Black Excellence Must Also Matter’ by Feyisayo Johnson**

So often, Black History Month is overcast by the cloud of colonial atrocities and institutional racism which permeate and uphold past and present societies. This tends to overshadow the true celebration of Black culture and Excellence, which should equally characterize Black History Month.

The Black Lives Matter Movement exists in the context of ensuring the most basic right of Black individuals. That is the right to live. However, Black History Month reminds us that to live is not simply to be alive. It is to create, to share, to love.

Therefore, if Black lives are to matter, Black Excellence must matter. As should Black culture and the amplification of Black voices. Young Black Excellence has historically been overlooked, stolen and ignored. Yet more recently, Black Excellence is being uplifted.

In March 2023, Calcea Johnson and Ne’Kiya Jackson, two Black teenage girls from New Orleans, were able to prove the Pythagorean Theorem using trigonometry, something many twentieth century mathematicians considered impossible. Dedication, resilience and strength often exist in excess in Black individuals to receive the recognition that white counterparts have historically achieved.

The Black Lives Matter Movement ignites flames of anger, turns the faucet of grief, and forces open a jar of pain that marks the Black experience. Yet we must simultaneously lift up today’s Black achievements, advances and Excellence in life’s spotlight. Only in this way will Black Lives matter in their entirety; not confined to the rudimentary right to be alive, but to thrive.