

The COVID-19 Crisis Profoundly Exposes African Americans to the Scourge of Poverty and Racism

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Global Research, May 04, 2020

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Poverty & Social Inequality](#)

They live below the poverty level. They are prison [inmates](#) in large numbers. They are most likely to be [killed](#) by the police, a longstanding grievance that originated the Black Lives Matter (BLM) [movement](#) to protest against police killing and wider issues such as racial profiling, police brutality and racial inequality in the US criminal justice system.

In addition, they are comparatively much less paid. They suffer excessively from job loss and underemployment. They are “essential workers” in service industries, exposing themselves to a range of infections. They are “last hired and first fired.” They face higher death rates and higher prevalence rates of chronic illnesses.

They are African Americans living in the United States of America.

As the Covid-19 subverts the states of the world’s biggest economy, the number of black deaths in the US due to the novel coronavirus is unprecedentedly and disproportionately high and they are dying of the disease in throngs.

Conceding the worst impact of the disease on the ethnic US Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [said](#) last week that the existing data [which is twisted and unreliable] suggested lopsided burden of the Covid-19 and deaths among the racial and ethnic minority groups, American African being the largest.

Even though the black Americans [account](#) for only about 14% of the country’s population, almost [30%](#) of them are affected by the killer bug. Their fatality rate is even higher as nearly [one-third](#) of the total deaths attributed to the Covid-19 were of African Americans.

Some of the states represent much bluer picture. In Louisiana and Michigan, more than [58%](#) and [41%](#) of those who died of the highly contagious disease were black, although they make only [32.7%](#) and [14.1%](#) respectively.

Likewise in New York City, the death [rate](#) of black/African American persons is 92.3 deaths per 100,000 population – which is more than double to that of white. In Chicago, black’s deaths, at 56.5% of the total, were roughly [four-times](#) that of white’s.

A pictorial [illustration](#) by the National Geographic showed that they are overrepresented when compared to their proportion in the total population. It plainly expressed that the disproportionate death rate has spread throughout the country and was not confined to specific states.

Looking at the shocking black mortality rate, the leaders and health professionals [urged](#) the

Trump administration to release comprehensive racial demographic data of American Covid-19 victims and devise clear strategies to blunt the devastation on the African Americans.

The statistics may not be surprising given the social determinants of health are widely missing in the US communities of color persons. Coupled with underlying conditions such as diabetes and hypertension – the lack of access to healthcare and poverty has pushed the most vulnerable African Americans to the brink of despondency.

An organization campaigning for inequities confronted by the African Americans and other ethnic and racial minorities – Layer's committee for Civil Rights Under Law – in its letters to the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) on [April 6](#) and [April 24](#) called for transparency in the racial deaths but didn't get any response.

The chilly HHS response raised fears about the growing ethnic intolerance and ambivalence in the US federal government and its tenacious reluctance to safeguard the health and life of its black people, cuing that the country is being divided on xenophobic grounds.

It further sheds light on the excruciating truth that the systemic racism is being implemented nationwide and expounds how African Americans have been subjugated by structural racism, political exploitation and economic exclusion.

Trump administration's unwillingness to release the racial breakdown of the Covid-19 cases pressed the Senator Elizabeth Warren to decry its bigotry attitude towards black communities.

"Because of government-sponsored discrimination and systematic racism, communities of color are on the frontlines of this pandemic," Massachusetts Congresswomen said in a [statement](#).

She teamed up with other Democrats to [introduce](#) the bicameral Equitable Data Collection and Disclosure on Covid-19 Act earlier this month and demanded "comprehensive national data," citing stark racial disparities in the coronavirus cases and fatalities.

The White House deliberately overlooked the humungous threat to the African Americans although the Office of Minority Health at HHS had clear information that the death rate in black Americans has been generally [higher](#) than whites for heart diseases, stroke, cancer, asthma, **influenza and pneumonia**, diabetes, HIV/AIDS and homicide.

So well before the Covid-19 spate, the American government knew that the blacks, living with the chronic illnesses, were prone to the disease. It had the idea that people with these ailments could have the greater risk of hospitalization and death; still it ignored the forewarnings by the health professionals.

Dr. Ebony Hilton, Associate Professor of anesthesiology and critical care medicine at the University of Virginia, [said](#) "I knew that the coronavirus would leave a higher rate of death in the African-American community," "I knew we would be in an uphill battle. I could see the storm coming."

Racism isn't restricted to health and social issues being faced by the black Americans; it is bluntly visible in the middle of the US economic downslide and labor market crisis, which is spraining their already flabbergasted economies.

By dint of this racist bend, the African Americans are expected to [feature](#) disproportionately in 26 million US jobless claims. As the critical workers have the lowest median net worth, slowest wage growth and bottommost home ownership – the least likelihood of them to be insured and get paid sick leaves [make](#) them the most vulnerable community in the US.

Way the varied disparities is persecuting the African American communities in the US, it illuminates that the reason of their compounded health, economic and social problems of is racism.

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