

COVID-19 Paper

Dekia Greene

Texas Christian University

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COVID-19 has shut down the entire world and shifted everyone's focus to the safety and well-being of one another. This individual strain of the centralized virus (Coronaviruses) can be spread from individual to individual through droplets released in the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The most common symptoms include coughing, fever, diarrhea, sore throat, or shortness of breath. The best way to protect oneself from the virus is to practice great hygiene habits, like washing one's hands often, as well as practicing physical and social distancing. The United States was first hit in mid-January and since then, over 1 million Americans have been infected, and 58,000 have died up until April 30, 2020.

The virus is disproportionately affecting African American neighborhoods. According to a report done by Centers of Disease Control, the death rates among African Americans is 92.3 deaths per 100,000 population, showing that there is an overpopulation of Blacks as hospitalized patients. The rate at which African Americans were being impacted by COVID-19 was so alarming that the Attorney General made a decision to start collecting data in regard to the racial disparities. Washington Post shared that after analysis, counties that are identified as majority Black have "three times the rate of infections and almost six times the rate of deaths as counties where white residents are in the majority." It is known that African Americans are more susceptible to health problems like diabetes, obesity, asthma, and hypertension, or in other words, factors that play into a weakened immune system; this then puts them in a higher risk position when it comes to COVID-19. The racial disparity around those suffering from

COVID-19 shows that racial and class inequality impacts every avenue of life. There's a saying that says "when white America catches a cold, Black America gets pneumonia." The New Yorker updated the aphorism to fit the current times, "when white America catches the novel coronavirus, Black Americans die."

Most African Americans in our society are working low-wage jobs that are coincidentally classified as essential amid COVID-19. The New Yorker continued to elaborate on how intersectionality is leading Blacks toward the possibility of infection. For instance, high risks are appearing amongst those who are incarcerated, those who are homeless, those working in mass transit, those working in retail, and those who hold jobs where social distancing is practically impossible. In the Atlantic, they did a column on how *Atlanta* (predominately populated by African Americans) *Isn't Ready to Reopen- and Neither is Georgia* with the 60th mayor Mrs. Keisha Bottoms. In the article, Mrs. Bottoms states how she does not support the governor's decision to begin opening businesses around the state, because eliminating social distancing at this moment of time is not supported by the scientific data provided nor should one be oblivious to the fact that the businesses issued for reopening are "especially popular in African American neighborhoods." There is an idea floating around that if Blacks change their personal habits then their susceptibility to better health and wellness will result in less exclusion and more efficient access. However, because of the systemic issues engrained in our country, the stain of racism will continue to disproportionately affect African Americans in every avenue of life.

During this time, I think the best efforts that could be the most beneficial for the African American community is public honesty and more testing opportunities. Honesty is an important act because African Americans are often misled so that they will continue to be of service to a community that doesn't have their best interest at heart. If our leaders practice integrity and value

the worth of individuals when making controversial decisions, I truly believe that the rate at which Blacks are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 would decrease. Furthermore, the act of unequal healthcare opportunities is a constant issue in the African American community that has power in causing future disparities like diseases and deficiencies. If better healthcare access was available in our majority Black communities, in general, it would lead to African Americans having better health habits as well as a better relationship with going to receive healthcare; while during these times in particular, it would allow for more testing opportunities.