

As an African-American man, I am devastated by the destruction this virus is leaving behind. COVID-19 left a trail of malaise and death when it touched down in anywhere, USA, but it's even more alarming to witness the disproportionate amount of fatalities the black community is suffering. When the news media began to expose the infection rate and deaths in the Black community, I told my wife, "is everyone surprised?" The disproportionate amount of sickness and death of African-American people be the unveiling of the societal inequities that have plagued Black people for over 450 years. I can remember when the salacious and irresponsible news circulating about Black people being immune to this dangerous virus. As silly as it may have sounded, Black people wanted to believe we could escape this virus by the power of melanin, but the situation turned out differently. Black people were dying in America and in the African diaspora. I began to focus on the outrageous number of infections and deaths plaguing African-Americans. If I was to understand this more, I had to read and research to find answers. Here are factors that is causing COVID-19 to wreak havoc on the Black community.

Being raised in Brooklyn, New York, I know that New York City is densely populated. For Black Americans and Blacks from the Caribbean and globally, moving to the big city meant a step closer to the ideal of the American dream, but in a racial society, moving to a particular area where you are not welcomed has consequences. The social phenomenon of "White flight" meant a mass exodus of White people leaving the city when they saw Black people migrating to their town from the Jim Crow south. In the 1980s and 1990s, a shift in the American economic landscape caused jobs to vanish. The beautiful housing complexes were turning into housing projects. This started a substandard housing trend in the urban areas. Crime became an issue due to a lack of job opportunities. The cities that were once thriving for White America were turned into colonies for Black people. In these metropolitan areas, you had an enclave of Black people now wondering what to do to make a living. If you ever wonder why Black people densely populate significant cities, this is one of the answers.

Black people are in an economic bind due to the lack of employment opportunities, thus, the stressful part is finding employment, how far one has to travel to go to work, and the number of jobs one has to get to earn an acceptable living wage. Working long hours and short on family time does not bode well for anyone. Finding employment is essential for sustaining life. According to the CDC, what jobs do Black people have? Essential worker jobs. The CDC states, nearly a quarter of employed Hispanic and Black or African American workers are employed in service industry jobs compared to 16% of non-Hispanic whites.

Also, Black or African-Americans makeup 12% of all employed workers but account for 30% of licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses. Black people are working on the front lines, putting them at risk for potential infection.

One of the most overlooked aspects of COVID-19 is health care and disparate treatment. You read and hear the countless stories of Black people being under treated or being ignored by the health care system. Consider the story of Ms. Rana Mungin, a teacher from East New York, Brooklyn. She was an asthmatic a could not receive admission into a hospital until she could not breathe. She was having panic attacks and encouraged to stay home. Rana died on April 27th, 2020. Another story of Kevin Clark, a respiratory therapist who complained of flu-like symptoms. He was not treated at once. Kevin died from complications related to COVID-19 in a Queens hospital. These two stories are part of a larger narrative of Black people and the disproportionate number of COVID-19 related deaths.

Why is this happening? It's related to the economic and social inequities in this country. Black people have shouldered this dubious distinction after being freed from enslavement. Plainly stated, Black people were designed to fail here. There was never a road paved to freedom for us. The struggle was always the choice, and the other choice was death. Indeed, COVID 19 has dealt the Black community a mighty blow, but, to quote one of my favorite Hip Hop artists, Jeru the Damaja, "Like

my ancestor's drums, we beat the odds."