



## **Special Issue Editorial: An Unequal Toll: The Color and Class of COVID-19**

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### **Can We Survive?**

COVID really tried to mess up our lives  
we were stuck inside watching the world televised  
how many people have to die  
before we gain control over this sick crippling demise  
some people try to play it off and go against effective regulations  
no more going out because it seems to endanger the nation  
kids stuck at home with ineffective attention to true education  
remaining hopeful that they understood the lesson  
restaurants and businesses all closed or shut down  
factories across the country like their cities locked down  
no more travel in and out  
no more parties to get down  
loved ones lost everyday  
tears poured unto the ground  
but I know we'll persevere for it's we who wear the crown  
skin coffee, copper tone, black, white, or brown  
Yes! We will forever be around.

-Askia

## INTRODUCTION

The current Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) global pandemic has impacted millions of people from around the world. However, if the racial and socioeconomic demographic profile of the COVID-19 mortality cases in America clarified anything, it is the dissolute effects of color and class. Statistics on the impact of COVID-19 for historically marginalized groups is nothing short of tragic. In some cities, Black and Brown communities, particularly those from low socioeconomic backgrounds, are dying at alarming and disproportionate rates. In Chicago, for example, 70% of coronavirus deaths are among Black people, who make up only 30% of the city's population (Ramos & Zamudio, 2020). These disheartening statistics reverberate facts that options for staying healthy against COVID-19 are constructed by a socioeconomic and racialized reality (Pichardo, Christophers, & Ortega, 2020). Recommended health and education choices that would help combat COVID-19, including working from home, social distancing, and online learning, are, in many cases, unavailable and challenging for these underserved populations.

As the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic unfolds, the detrimental effects highlight the disproportionality of severe illness and death among racial minority and ethnic groups (Centers for Disease Control, 2020). Due to systemic racism and oppression worldwide, such groups have and continue to be negatively impacted because of the conditions in which they live, learn, work, and play, contributing to their overall health and wellbeing. Additionally, such conditions produce significant health risks, necessary support, and consequences among racial minority and ethnic groups (Brown & Ravallion, 2020). These findings are not surprising for many researchers who have long analyzed the complex intersection between health and racial-ethnic disparities (Louis-Jean et al., 2020). Specifically, Dr. Marcella Nunez-Smith, director of the Equity Research and Innovation Center at Yale School of Medicine, says, "We know that these racial-ethnic disparities in COVID-19 are the result of pre-pandemic realities. It's a legacy of structural discrimination that has limited access to health and wealth for people of color" (as cited in Godoy & Wood, 2020). Essentially, the pandemic is a painful reminder of how racial dynamics continue to manifest themselves in every part of the world.

## PURPOSE OF THE SPECIAL ISSUE

COVID-19 exposes patterns of socioeconomic stratification that have a devastating impact on historically marginalized groups that cannot go unnoticed. COVID-19 has rapidly transformed our lives and communities by compounding

existing injustices while at the same time opening up the possibility for rapid transformation of our socio-political context (Laster Pirtle, 2020). This special issue aims to share contributions that analyze and articulate the vexing problems emanating from COVID-19 on historically marginalized groups (based on race, gender, culture, class, etc.). In essence, the articles in this special issue highlighted the complex intersection between health and racial-ethnic disparities. Against this backdrop, this special issue of the *Journal of Underrepresented and Minority Progress (JUMP)* brought together academic and practitioner perspectives on the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on marginalized communities of people across the world.

## **OVERVIEW OF PRESENTED ARTICLES**

Stanislaus et al. (2021) analyzed the impact of COVID-19 on underrepresented students in the job market. They further highlighted inequities of the COVID-19 pandemic on job prospects and social capital for students of color and propose recommendations for disrupting the overlooked consequences of offering college services remotely.

Hornsby (2021) highlighted the convergence of racial and surveillance capitalism in a neoliberal education, ushered in by the response to a global pandemic, and examines the problematic connection between surveillance and racial capitalism as it relates to COVID-19 pandemic remote learning, the implications of the converged state of pandemic learning and possible solutions.

Johnson (2021) addressed how this unprecedented pandemic necessitated HBCUs to undergo a rapid strategic transformation of their campus operations with limited resources to remain competitive. Considering these challenges, Johnson's study examined the role of crisis management as well as investigated the efficacy of decision-making processes of the governing boards and leadership at four (4) HBCUs and how significant alterations to their academic, instructional, and technological infrastructures to remain operational and continually provide students with academic support services.

Starks et al. (2021) examined the impact of the global pandemic on the lived experiences of Black women to further highlight the extensive complexities of race and gender due to COVID-19. The authors privileged their experiences through dialogue—as five Black women who also serve in the world as professional educators. They explored personal challenges and triumphs and centered their unique perspectives amid a national and global crisis. By sharing their individual stories, they sought not to represent Black women as a monolithic group but rather to recognize the nuances of their experiences while identifying commonalities among different perspectives that may serve to inform future support for Black women.

Using Hill-Collins's (1990) Black Feminist Theory as a framework, Stephens et al. (2021) explored the impact of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) on the HIV/AIDS efforts of community-based organizations (CBOs) servicing this population and the informal learning and other support efforts provided by CBOs during the pandemic. The authors' stories underscored the collective trauma associated with the pandemic and how the shelter in place mandates led to social isolation, anxiety, and depression among Black women living with HIV/AIDS.

Krsmanovic (2021) examined government restrictions imposed during the pandemic that impacted international students planning to attend U.S. higher education institutions and those currently enrolled. The author reviewed 160 colleges and universities' websites based on large enrollments of international students to investigate the level of support institutions provided their international students during the global crisis.

Basak (2021) explored the Covid-19 pandemic proliferation in Bangladesh and its impact on the socio-psycho-religious equilibrium of citizens. The author further examined how Bangladesh has managed to bridle the rate of infection and death through strategic policies and practices.

The articles in this special issue highlighted the significant disparities across marginalized communities of people that have emerged because of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Dr. Marcella Nunez-Smith, director of the Equity Research and Innovation Center at Yale School of Medicine, the detrimental effects of COVID-19 highlight the disproportionality of severe illness and death among racial minority and ethnic groups and are the result of pre-pandemic realities. Dr. Smith further opined that the recent experiences of these underserved populations are "a legacy of structural discrimination that has limited access to health and wealth for people of color" (as cited in Godoy & Wood, 2020). Together, the works in this special issue unmasked and illuminated historical and current inequalities based on color and class that have resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic through research and discussions about social, political, economic, and educational implications.

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