COVID-19 Isn't Racist, But the System Is!

The news media and many politicians have acted shocked that African American people are getting COVID-19 and dying from it at much higher rates than white people.

As the numbers keep coming out, it has become impossible even for racist-in-chief, Trump, to ignore. He called it a "tremendous challenge," but his only response was to say that the federal government might release some data soon. Who needs more data, when the truth is already known? What has been needed since January (or before), when the threat of a pandemic was clear, is action – not more meaningless words.

Here is data on race collected by some state and local governments and other organizations:

- Nationally, in areas where racial data were shared by officials, about 42 percent of the COVID-19 deaths were Black people, while the Black population in those areas was only 21 percent.

- The population of Illinois is 14 percent Black and 17 percent Latino, but 64 percent of the state's COVID-19 cases and at least 40 percent of the deaths have been people of color.

- In Louisiana, 32 percent of the state's population is Black, but they account for over 70 percent of COVID-19 deaths.

If it were rich white people who were dying disproportionately, you know it would be a top-of-the-list priority.

Why is race such a big factor in the U.S. in how the virus impacts people? Because the long history of racism affects every aspect of life in the U.S.

This country has lived under the shadow of racism since its earliest days, when the concept of race developed to justify the enslavement of African people and the brutal slave trade. The lies about supposed biological racial differences have impacted the lives of people in this country and much of the world ever since.

For centuries, the U.S. capitalists and their politicians have tried to divide working people against each other by race. And the racist prejudices promoted by those in power have unfortunately found a hearing in sections of the white population.

Racism has kept many African Americans in poverty. This is reflected in every aspect of American life. Poverty is closely tied to race. According to U.S. government figures, which undercount poverty, 21 percent of all U.S. children live in poverty, but that includes about 46 percent of Black children and 40 percent of Latino children!

Housing discrimination embedded in local, state, and federal laws for over a century has kept Black people in poor neighborhoods. And despite legal changes this discrimination continues today.

Racist segregation in housing is a fact. And because of the ways many schools are funded, communities of color face seriously underfunded schools. That means students are not encouraged to develop their skills and are less prepared to go to college and also less successful in getting better-paying jobs (if they are open to them).

Supermarket chains often refuse to locate stores in poor communities of color, so segregation means poor nutrition. And healthcare providers, especially in the private sector, refuse to locate clinics in these communities. This means that communities of color have a higher rate of pre-existing health conditions which has made them more vulnerable to the virus.

Racism means denying access to necessary resources, which can be a death sentence during this pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has magnified the functioning of this system and its consequences. This should be another wake-up call that it's time for this deadly racist system to go.