US Blacks Toll Hit by COVID-19 Grows as More Data Emerges

By: Telesur
19/04/2020

On Friday, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released its first breakdown of COVID-19 case data by race, showing that 30% of patients whose race was known were Black.

As a clearer picture emerges of COVID-19's decidedly deadly toll on Black people, leaders are demanding a reckoning of the systemic policies they say have made many Blacks far more vulnerable to the virus, including inequity in access to health care and economic opportunity, Associated Press (AP) reported.

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Acoording to the agency, a growing chorus of medical professionals, activists and political figures is pressuring the federal government to not just release comprehensive racial demographic data of the country's COVID-19 victims, but also to outline clear strategies to blunt the devastation on Black people and other communities of color.

On Friday, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released its first breakdown of COVID-19 case data by race, showing that 30% of patients whose race was known were Black. The federal data was missing racial information for 75% of all cases, however, and did not include any demographic breakdown of deaths.

The latest AP analysis of available state and local data shows that nearly one-third of those who have died are Black Americans, with Black people representing about 14% of the population in the areas covered in the analysis.

Roughly half the states, representing less than a fifth of the nation's COVID-19 deaths, have yet to release demographic data on fatalities. In states that have, about a quarter of the death records are missing racial details.

Health conditions that exist at higher rates in the black community -- obesity, diabetes and asthma -- make Black people more susceptible to the virus. They also are more likely to be uninsured, and often report that medical professionals take their ailments less seriously when they seek treatment.

"It's America's unfinished business -- we're free, but not equal," civil rights leader Rev. Jesse Jackson told the AP. "There's a reality check that has been brought by the coronavirus, that exposes the weakness and the opportunity."

For his part, Daniel Dawes, director of Morehouse College's School of Medicine's Satcher Health Leadership Institute, said America's history of segregation and policies led to the racial health disparities that exist today.

"If we do not take an appreciation for the historical context and the political determinants, then we're only merely going to nibble around the edges of the problem of inequities," he said.

On the other hand, in some areas, Native American communities also have been hit hard. In New Mexico, Native Americans account for nearly 37% of the state's 1,484 cases and about 11% of the state's population. Of the 112

deaths where race is known in Arizona, 30 were Native Americans, AP reported.

Meanwhile, some experts have described the Trump administration's response to COVID-19 as inadequate, acoording to Kristen Clarke, president of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, Black Americans "have every reason to be alarmed at the administration's anemic response to the disproportionate impact that this crisis is having on communities of color." ????

Mistrust runs deep among residents in many communities, the experts said.

St. Louis resident Randy Barnes, for example, is grappling not just with the emotional toll of losing his brother to the COVID-19, but also with the feeling that his brother's case was not taken seriously.

Barnes said the hospital where his brother sought treatment initially sent him home without testing him and suggested he self-quarantine for 14 days. Five days later, his brother was back in the hospital, where he was placed on a ventilator for two weeks. He died April 13. Barnes' brother and his wife also were caring for an 88-year-old man in the same apartment, who died from the virus around the same time.

"Those people are not being tested. They're not being cared for," Barnes said.

For reasons like this, Jackson's Rainbow PUSH Coalition and the National Medical Association, a group representing Black people??????????????? physicians and patients, this week released a joint public health strategy calling for better COVID-19 testing and treatment data. The groups also urged officials to provide better protections for incarcerated populations and to recruit more African Americans to the medical field.

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