

**New York State Assembly and New York State Senate
Joint Legislative Hearing on
Solutions to the Disproportionate Impacts Of COVID-19
On Minority Communities**

Monday, May 18, 2020

By Invitation of

**Assemblywoman Tremaine Wright, Chair
Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic and Asian
Legislative Caucus**

**In A Post-Pandemic World:
Ending Black Inequality and Promoting Public Policy Equity,
In Pursuit of The American Dream**

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In A Post-Pandemic World, Ending Black Inequality: 12 Major Goals:

1. **Maximize Black Digital Education from Pre-K-16; Achieve 90% High School and College Graduation Rates (access hardware, connectivity, training, jobs, contracts);**
2. **Universal Broadband, Internet, 5G Access in Black and Rural New York Communities; Blacks have lowest Internet response rates for 2020 Census**
3. **Achieve 100% Unbiased Law Enforcement; Recruit, Train and Promote Black Law Enforcement; Better Screen, Train, Re-Assign, Discipline existing Forces**
4. **Maximize Tele-Medicine in Black Communities;**
5. **End Structural Racism & Discrimination: A Major Black Stressor & Co-Morbidity;**
6. **Increase to 25% share, NYC Black Doctors, MPA-MPHs, Nurses, Allied & Community Health Workers; Hire Contact Tracers et.al. from Covid Communities;**
7. **100% Food Security; Maximize Black Urban Farming; Purchasing from Black Farmers; and 30% Black Business contracts in the Food Supply Chain (DOE etc.);**
8. **Achieve 80% Black Participation in 2020 Census, Voting, Redistricting, Activism;**
9. **30% Black Business manufacturers in Health Products and Services Supply Chain; Business Incubators, Storage and Supply Houses in Black communities (Armories);**
10. **Maximize Black Affordable Housing Supply (Lower AMI); and Home Ownership;**
11. **Continue & Replicate “Vital Brooklyn” Health and Community Development Model, including Black Faith Institutional Development;**
12. **Use Vital Brooklyn “Participatory Action Research” (PAR) Model to ensure Community Input, Planning, Beneficiaries and Evaluation.**

In A Post-Pandemic World: Ending Black Inequality, And Promoting Public Policy Equity, In Pursuit of The American Dream

by John Louis Flateau, Ph.D.

Local, state and national research has definitively established that Black Brooklyn and Queens are the epicenter of the national coronavirus pandemic. Not by coincidence, do African Americans and their diaspora, have a tragic historical relationship to the present catastrophe. My own ancestry includes a great grandmother, Sarah Flateau, killed by the 1918 pandemic in Ascension Parish, Louisiana. And there is a grandfather, Lieut. Daniel G. Hill, Jr., who was recruited as a graduate of HBCU, Lincoln University; commissioned from America's first US Army Black Officers Training School, Fort Des Moines, Iowa; and fought in France in WW I.

He came home ill from the war, dodged the bullet of the "Spanish flu"; and also survived the "Red Summer" of 1919, one of white America's rages against Black America, including the lynching of returning American Black soldiers in uniform. Rev. Dr. Hill, was a descendant of slaves, American soldier, AME minister, social worker, "A Race Man" and activist, and Howard University professor and Dean. He traversed this nation, with his wife and children (including my mother, Jeanne) in societally pandemic America, at a time when Black Lives mattered even less than now. By God's grace, our family survived and thrived, so that their progeny can bear witness today.

In 2020, 100 years later, our family has again lost to the pandemic, in Louisiana and Brooklyn, at Medgar Evers College, Black Brooklyn churches and neighborhoods, friends and family. Juxtaposed with our raging pandemic, already ravaging Black communities, inserted among today's triumphant and tragic videos gone viral are: a young Black man, Daquan Jones, innocent bystander being beat down by NYC police, during a social distancing sweep, eerily mirroring the Eric Garner murder scene; and a young Black man, Aumad Arbery, shot dead for "jogging while Black," by white racist, father and son vigilantes in Glynn County, Georgia.

After NYC's 90% Black, "stop and frisk" unconstitutional policing was confessed to and reformed; today in a pandemic, Blacks are 22% of NYC, but 66% of arrests and summonses for "social distancing violations". Blacks are still caught in the time warp of a modern day middle passage, 400 years after the first enslaved Africans were disembarked, at Point Comfort in colonial Virginia. From 757,000 total Africans, 92% enslaved (698,000) in the 1790 Census; to 50 million Africans in America today (including the 10% undercount), disproportionately dying in the 2020 pandemic; once again undercounting ourselves in Census 2020; and shortchanging our fair share of Resources, Representation and Rights (the "3 R's"). How much more, must we endure, -- Africans in America, to be truly free, in the land of liberty?

America's "Wellness Check" --is Black America's death watch. There are vastly disproportionate Black and Brown pandemic deaths in: New York City; Newark, NJ; Baltimore, Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee; New York State, New Jersey, Georgia, Mississippi, Alabama and Louisiana; with new hotspots emerging daily. According a recent Johns Hopkins University "Coronavirus Dashboard," report which tracks deaths globally and locally, -- the top three death watches, out of 3,200

counties in the entire nation are: Brooklyn-4,373; Queens-4,363; and the Bronx-3,137; all in New York City. Long Island (#6, Nassau-1,940; and #8, Suffolk-1,597; combined 3,537 deaths), would be #4 in the nation, if their deaths are combined. Three New Jersey Counties, Essex(#10 in the nation)), Bergen and Middlesex, have combined 3,931 deaths, #3 in the nation. Chicago / Cook County-2,264 deaths is #4; Detroit/Wayne County, 2,082 deaths is #5; Manhattan, 1,913 deaths is #7; and Los Angeles County has 1,515 deaths, #9 in the nation.

A research consortium of Johns Hopkins, Emory University, Georgetown, Univ. of Mississippi et.al., did a recent national study of disproportionate COVID prevalence in Black communities. The study found that the 22% of 3,200 US Counties which are 13% or more Black (our national percentage), accounted for 49% of US 1.3 million cases; and 55% of US 76,000 pandemic deaths in early May. The US death count is now 85,000 and counting; with projections of 140,000 plus.

Additional research has found that Michigan is 14% Black; but Blacks account for 40% (3 times the number) of pandemic deaths; Wisconsin is only 7% Black, with 33% (5 times) of deaths; Mississippi is 38% Black with 61 % of deaths (1.5 times); Milwaukee is 39% Black with 71% (2 times) of deaths; Chicago is 30% Black with 56% of deaths (2 times); Orleans Parish is 60% Black with 70% of pandemic deaths. NYC is 22% Black (2 million), but had 30% of pandemic deaths (33% higher than its proportion in the population). Further, NYC reporting 21,000 deaths, may have missed an additional 5,200 pandemic deaths, according to CDC's recent data analysis.

The corona pandemic, has ripped off the ugly scab hiding America's vicious malady and tragedy: 400 years of the rabid, chronic disease of structural racism, driving Black Inequality. America's enslaved Africans; still unresolved Civil War and aftermath; white supremacy, covert and overt, and on the rise again; Black inequality in the health, education, labor markets, income and entrepreneurship domains.

Our leaders' fatal equivocation, moral ambiguity, petty political games, and economic paranoia, have converged at America's jugular. And now, we are all confronting seismic shifts towards a transformative and uncertain, social, economic and political future. Crippling economic impacts, including an official rate of 15% with 20 million officially unemployed; and another 20 million, unofficially unemployed or under employed, America's highest joblessness since the Great Depression.

America is in the ICU once again. Is there a doctor in the house? We and our God are our savior, and we need a miracle cure. An enlightened, unified, multi-racial democracy called "we the people" is our own best medicine. To paraphrase philosopher George Santayana, 'Those who don't know their history are doomed to repeat it.' Either our Leaders didn't see the pandemic coming, or they ignored the warning signs. Both scenarios are unacceptable.

Our slow response has reaped so far, 87,000 deaths in just two months and growing at a rate of 1,000+ per day; more total deaths than in the Vietnam and Korean Wars. America is only 4.2 % of the world population but 28% (7 times our population rate) of global pandemic deaths (334,000); and 1.4 million American cases; or 32% (3 times our population rate) of 4.1 million global confirmed cases. Both, pandemic deaths and cases are currently under-reported, as health professionals and leaders seek to deconstruct grim realities; belatedly conduct racial analyses; and

launch testing and tracing strategies. Race matters: we must know who is dying, how and why. And then, stop the carnage. Black and Brown deaths are being under-reported within the under-reports. People are dying at home; were sent home untreated; and were untested for the virus.

The most powerful military on earth, our soldiers always have a fighting chance. How did this pandemic manage a surprise attack on the home of the brave and the land of the free, the richest, smartest(?), most powerful nation on earth? And who didn't have a fighting chance? Our seniors, those with diabetes, hypertension, pre-existing conditions; our health professionals, under resourced, not trained in cultural competence or managing pandemics; first responders, essential workers; our Black, Latinx, Native American communities; our nursing homes and meat plant workers; the incarcerated and their guards. While the blue states are spooking the reds, we can't move fast enough to bury our dead; the sins of our forebears, are on our heads; and those who are silent, don't vote, don't fill out their Census Form so we can have better health care, --are not part of the solution, and are transmitting a societal plague upon future generations.

America the beautiful, the good, the bad, the ugly. America's 331 million people, only 4.2 % of the world population of 7.8 billion, has had the most powerful economy in the world, for the last 150 years. In 2019, America had a \$22 trillion GDP, 24 % of the \$88 trillion Global GDP. America, 4% of the world's population, produces 24% of the world's goods and services. Our nearest competitor, China with 1.4 billion people, 4 times America's population, has a \$7 trillion smaller GDP (\$14 trillion) than America. America has the world's greatest scientists, universities, medical centers, intellectual capital, and is the global financial capital.

America's persistent problem of Black Inequality is not due to a lack of resources, but maldistribution, and a lack of effective and equitable sharing of those resources. America has waived in moral courage to break with the sins of its past; and is dodging its challenges of the present and future. The economic benefits for the 1%, are significantly derived from centuries of white wealth building via enslaved and underpaid labor; and mega-fortunes too enticing to forego. What we have, is a lack of political will to pay for targeted, policy and data driven solutions. Once and for all, we must eradicate the problems, and reinvent present policy, program and practice, which are still undergirding Black inequality, in health care, education, income, wealth accumulation, entrepreneurship, housing and home ownership, criminal justice, voting rights, civil rights, cultural rights and human rights.

We must replace the bad, with new and better paradigms of public policy and programs, public finance and its inextricably intertwined and subsidized private capital, to finally and definitively defeat, Black inequality in its myriad domains. The devil is in the details. Let the policy think tankers, and the legislators and public and private sector leaders of good will, and the American people, get to work now, before the next pandemic comes. A new, "Post-Pandemic Public Policy Agenda" must be conceived, envisioned, and forged from the present pain, so that we never find ourselves in this place again. Here are a few ideas to consider.

The corona pandemic caused a massive shutdown of Pre-K-16 public and private school buildings and university campuses, almost instantaneously forcing, these educational systems into Distance Learning mode. The 80,000 DOE teachers of 1.1 million school children; and 20,000 CUNY

professors of 500,000 CUNY students; and administrators are undergoing ongoing training; and making an “all in,” paradigm shift to digital learning management systems such as Blackboard; and videoconferencing systems such as Webex, Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Google Classroom; in order to migrate to a 100% Distance Learning, digital learning environment. In just a matter of a few weeks, thousands of laptops and tablets were purchased and distributed to students; their homes were equipped with free internet service; and their educational process went forward, in a new digital world.

Khalif Browder’s wrongful imprisonment in a NYC jail caused him to commit suicide. His young mother died of a heart attack. You too, might over-eat, have high blood pressure, abuse substances, be dysfunctional, if you were living under the incessant stresses of structural racism. Scientific, peer reviewed studies have documented that Blacks subjected to the daily stresses of structural racism, live less healthy lives and have the shortest life spans of any race. Granted this is a tall order, rebuilding a world without racism, sexism, agism and other -isms. Maybe we’ll just pass the buck to our children and grand-children to fix?

This pandemic has highlighted the fact there is indeed a digital divide in Black and Brown households. Another verifier of this divide involves the 2020 Census. The Census Bureau and other entities are daily tracking Self Response Rates (SRR). NYC data shows that in wealthier, white census tracts, there is up to 80% internet response; but in Black and Brown census tracts, they are not only lagging in response rates overall, in the very communities bearing the brunt of the pandemic. They also have much higher paper form and phone response rates; and lower internet response rates. This is a clear indication of the persistent digital divide. Incidentally, there is a similar pattern of lagging response rates overall, and high paper response and phone rates; and low internet response rates, in a number of rural, upstate New York, white counties and towns.

In New York and elsewhere, education has made a paradigm shift to digital mode, turning on a dime. And this seismic shift to on-line education is not a temporary response to covid, but a permanent educational migration. Thus closing the digital divide, expanding broadband access, and placing a digital educational device in every home, in Black and Brown, and rural communities, becomes an absolute imperative going forward, if we are ever going to close the inequality gap in educational achievement among Black and Brown children. Otherwise, the gap will just grow wider, between the haves and the have nots.

Let’s note another policy domain, regarding the eradication of economic inequality. The \$2.9 trillion federal covid stimulus package in the form of the CARES Act, imparted billions of dollars in bailouts to the airline, hotel, and tourism industries, which as a result of covid, are now undergoing fundamental downsizing, job loss and industry transformation. But very few of those dollars have flowed to small businesses, which provide 80% of American jobs; and where the retail and services sector, heavily small business, comprises 70% of the \$22 trillion US GDP.

And there is big money being made in the midst of this pandemic, and Black owned businesses must receive their fair share, especially in light of the terrible toll the pandemic is imposing on Black communities, businesses and essential employees in New York City and across America.

In WW II, President Roosevelt commandeered industry and shipping, to build bombs, ships, planes, tanks, guns, ammo, food and uniforms to save Europe and win the War. It is a threat to our national health and security that our current the President did not swiftly invoke the War Production Act, to commandeer our major industries to produce PPE and Ventilators and medical supplies in a critically timely manner; and leverage the centralized purchasing power of the \$4 trillion federal government, American Business' #1 customer.

More timely national action would have reduced the American pandemic death and illness toll to a fraction of the current 90,000 American lives and climbing; and the current 4.5 million virus cases and climbing. Instead, state and local governments competed again each other for foreign and domestic purchases, driving up prices; and blowing multi-billion holes in state and local budgets for emergency health care, police, fire, EMS, food, transit, educational technology et.al. And instead of federal reimbursement for the cost of their slow response, Washington (except the House) is now saying once again to New York and other ravaged jurisdictions, -- "Drop Dead!". But those with the inside track, not those with the greatest need, got their medical supplies first.

New York ingenuity in a time of crisis, in less than 30 days, invented small manufacturers of surgical masks and gowns in the Navy Yard, Industry City and beyond. NYC and NYS with their 30% MWBE goals need to capitalize Black owned Businesses to be the new generation of producers of goods and services in our Post-Pandemic World. Gov. Cuomo with his great peer leadership, in a few weeks, assembled a seven state, northeast regional purchasing coalition, to bulk purchase billions in domestic products and services, to reduce our over-reliance on China and foreign economic powers, for critical domestic necessities, such as medical supplies.

If America is ever going to make amends, let us do it now: build and buy from Black owned Businesses. America burned our Black businesses to the ground. America lynched our entrepreneurs and enslaved our workers. America rescinded our 40 acres and a mule; and re-enslaved us through convict leasing, tenant farming, share cropping and domestic terrorism. America stold our Black Farmers acreage from 20 million in 1900 down to 3 million today. Roosevelt and the Dixiecrats cut Black domestic and agricultural workers out of the New Deal legislation: no Social Security, no legal right to organize for fair wages.

The FHA, VA, Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) and the Banks, redlined Blacks out of home mortgages and loans; and herded us into disinvested, racialized ghettos. America built her first empires, dominating global markets in cotton, tobacco and sugar, using up to 4 million enslaved workers in the 1860 Census, mostly on Southern plantations. One enslaved African valued at \$2000 in 1860, is worth \$30,000 today, white man's property, to be bought, sold, insured collateralized, and often worked to death.

Wall St., banking, insurance and shipping, built from the Trans-Atlantic African Slave Trade, the US Domestic slave trade, and other commerce and industry; 246 years years of the free labor of Africans (4.4 million, 89% slaves in 1860); followed by 160 years to date, of under paid Black labor and intellectual capital; billions bilked from housing discrimination, over charged rent and subprime mortgages. America has run up quite a bill. But not to worry, America, we'll give you

a bargain interest rate, and installment plan, like you've done for us. To paraphrase MLK, Jr., -- please, no more checks marked insufficient funds.

When white America gets a cold, Black America gets influenza and dies triple fold. This time, when America rises, when we all rise together, finally whole, and defeat this pandemic, Black America, 50 million strong, should never again, be quarantined or socially distanced, in the back of the bus; or thrown under the bus. By now, we should own the transportation sector. We should be driving the bus. --America, are you all packed and ready, to go for a scenic ride, in our new Post-Pandemic World?

The Post Pandemic Public Policy Development Model already exists. Gov. Cuomo's \$1.4 billion "Vital Brooklyn" program, launched at Medgar Evers College in 2017, is a multi-faceted health and community development initiative, covering half of Brooklyn's 2.6 million residents, --and precisely the communities where the pandemic has hit the hardest. Vital Brooklyn organically grew out of a bottom-up, community and health care partnership, utilizing a consultative planning and advocacy process known as Participatory Action Research (PAR). PAR identified the social determinants of health (SDOH), neighborhood by neighborhood, and their customized solutions.

DuBois Bunche Center-Medgar Evers College, Maimonides Medical Center-CCB, MIT Co-Lab, and One Brooklyn Health Systems are the key collaborative partners who for the past four years, have been using a this SDOH framework, to research key community-driven questions, and find the solutions to improved, quality health care in local neighborhoods. The team has produced five major reports thus far, as well as solution-driven implementation models, working with the NYS and NYC Health Departments, other agencies, and key stakeholders such as community, elected officials, non-profits and labor.

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A Post Pandemic World: Ending Black Inequality... – NYS Joint Leg've Hearing, 5.18.20 – John Flateau, PhD

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