

BE BOLD WHITE PRIVILEGE/STANDING WITH OTHERS GROUP REPORT

May 17, 2020

I have chosen to use COVID-19 as the lens of our report, as it uniquely exposes our country's innate problem of privilege and racism.

The national chapter of Asian Pacific Advocates and other national human rights groups sent a letter to President Trump calling on him to publicly denounce the increase in racist hate crimes against Asian Americans, as reported by the FBI. Unfortunately, even this past Monday, this administration made at least a covert racial comment to an Asian American reporter. Many Asians are being encouraged to wear sunglasses with their masks to conceal their Asian features.

COVID-19 exposes many weaknesses in our health care system. Testing, delay in results, supplies and general health care continue to be problems in minority communities. The Navajo Nation, which has the 3rd highest COVID infection rate in the US, is suing the federal government because they're having to share relief funds with Alaskan Native corporations through the CARES Act.

The group known as OutRight released a new report, "Vulnerability Amplified," with findings remarkably indicating that LGBTQ communities everywhere, but especially those of color, are suffering disproportionately in comparison to other groups. Their challenges include food insecurity, health care access, increased exposure to violence, mental health impacts and risks to their managerial survival

On May 6, Mayor Lightfoot announced a new city phase to address the disparity among people of color, with the LatinX community representing the largest percentage of COVID-19 cases and the Black community representing the largest percentage of deaths. Chicago is partnering with several organizations in an effort to build greater equity in health outcomes.

As a result of systemic racism, Black Americans make up 40% of our country's homeless population. Street living and shelter living increase the risk of infectious diseases. And the use of masks adds one more reason to fear people of color.

Once the COVID-19 curve is flattened, young people from Black and Brown communities will return to the same health care barriers, with limited resources and little support. Reforming these structures is crucial.

What have we done? Our group has met four times to discuss various aspects of white-supremacy, racism and advocacy for marginalized groups. Our members have participated in the following activities, sessions and demonstrations:

- Racial Justice Summit session, CARE (Coalition of Allies for Racial Equity):
- Chicago Police Board meetings, addressing social justice
- Community Renewal Society: several sessions addressing challenges of people of color
- Many Board of Education's Culture, Climate and Behavior Committee meetings addressing educational equity at OPRFHS
- Dialogues through the OP Community Relations Commission to promote cross-racial understanding and relationships
- Dominican University's Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation activities
- Lighthouse Foundation presentations with Rev. Jamie Frazier: Black Queer and Living Through COVID-19
- Making and Unmaking Whiteness session
- Social Justice Initiative & Institute for Research on Race and Public Policy

Dr. Ulysses Burley, founder of a group known as UBtheCure, says, "Part of the issue with the disparity of the virus' effect on racial groups is that minorities have been viewed and treated as expendable for some time, and there is a lot of warranted medical mistrust. There must be a commitment to generational transformation and voting rights must be preserved to engage in the political process."

I'd like to end with a quote from a white Christian activist, John Pavlovitz.

What I hope and pray, is that more white people, especially those who claim to be Christian, will also stand to reject the supremacy and racism that yields such willful homegrown terrorism; that we will use the unearned currency of our privilege to declare this violence un-American and inhuman and unacceptable.

Peace,
Wilbert