

# Same River Twice?:

Reflections on Addressing Addressing the  
Disease Burden in Black, Indigenous, and People  
of Color Communities

**Wizdom Powell, PhD, MPH**

Director | Health Disparities Institute

Associate Professor | Department of Psychiatry

UConn Health

**“You can never step into the same river twice; for other waters are ever flowing on to you.”**

-- Heraclitus (6<sup>th</sup> Century BC)

# 1918-1919 “Spanish Flu” Pandemic



- 675,000 Deaths
- Black/African Americans experienced lower influenza mortality than whites in 1918

## BUT DATA WERE MISSING

- No one accounted for inequitable response strategies, preexisting racial differences in healthcare access, and systemic neglect
- Influenza testing/treatments were unevenly distributed
- Rates of infection and mortality were not systematically tracked/monitored

## AND

- One year later, Blacks experience a return to higher mortality the year after...

# Health Equity vs. Health Disparities

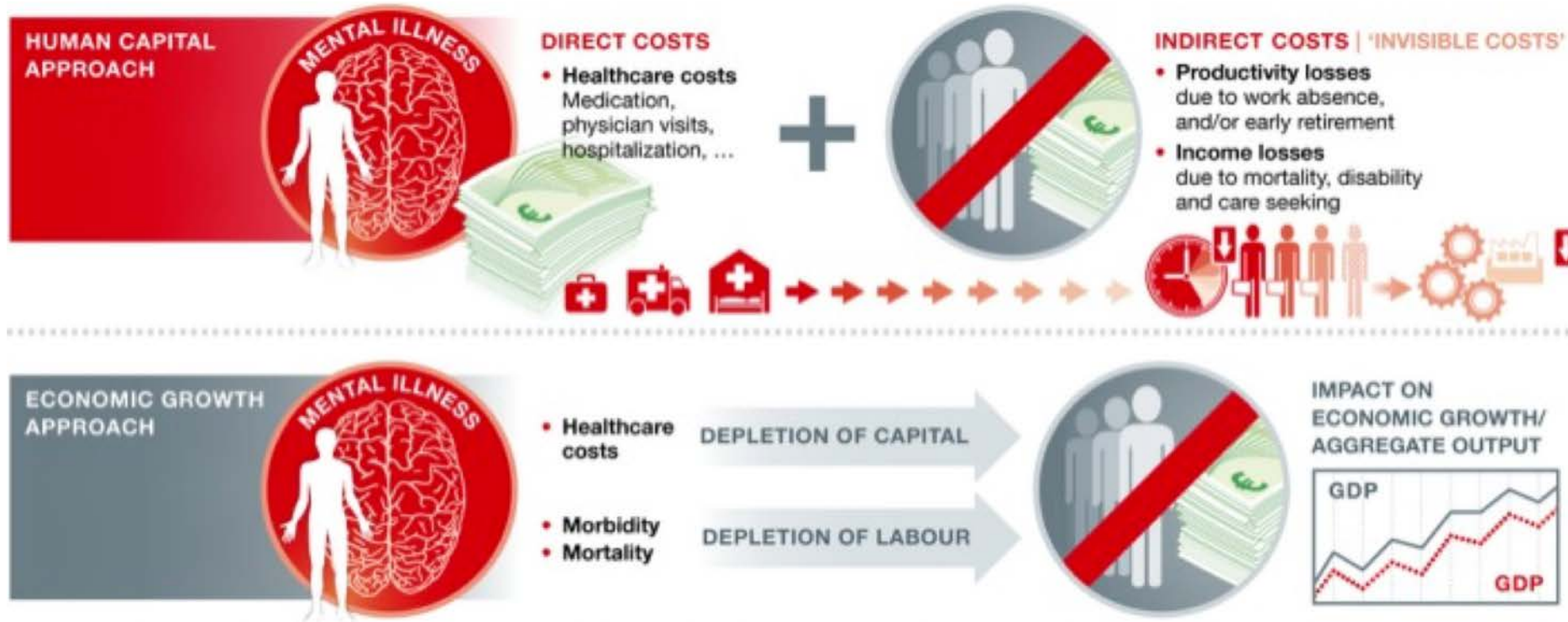
**Health Equity means that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be their healthiest, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, income, sexual orientation, where you live, or other social conditions that influence health outcomes.**

**Health Disparities are preventable differences in the burden of disease, injury, violence, or opportunities to achieve optimal health that are experienced by socially disadvantaged populations.**

# The Economic Case for Addressing Health Disparities

## National Estimates

- ▶ Health disparities have **direct costs** on healthcare spending and **indirect costs** on worker productivity and income.
- ▶ Health disparities also **negatively impact economic growth**.



Source: Trautmann, S., Rehm, J., & Wittchen, H. (2016). The economic costs of mental disorders: Do our societies react appropriately to the burden of mental disorders? *EMBO Reports*, 17(9), 1245–1249.

# Zero-Sum Game

My Interests  
"I Win"

Your Interests  
"You Lose"

We are opponents - when I win, you lose

# Addressing the Disease Burden in Black, Indigenous, and People of Color Communities is Not a Zero-Sum Game

“An investment in one group can cascade out and up and be a substantial investment in the broader well-being of a nation -- one whose policies and practices create an [equitable economy](#), a [healthy community of opportunity](#), and [just society](#).”

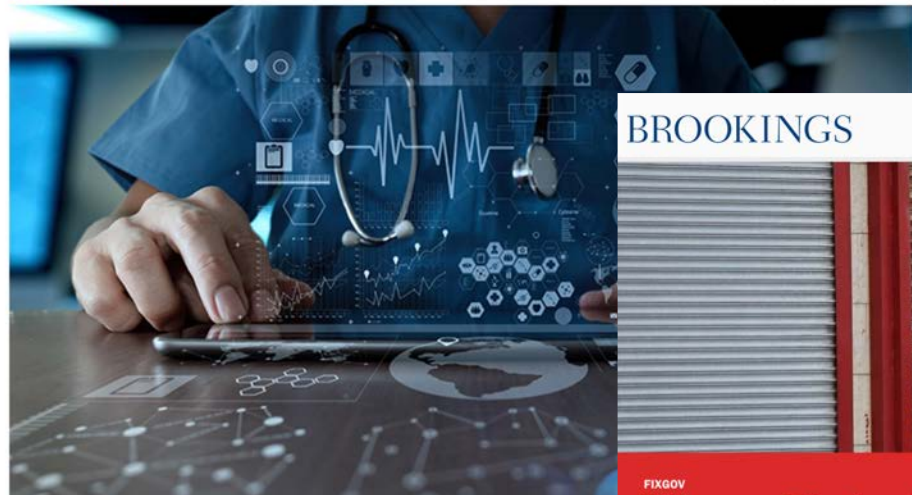
-- "Equity: Not a Zero-Sum Game", by Angela Glover Blackwell, author of "Curb-Cut Effect", published in Stanford Social Innovation Review, Winter 2017.

## The Fierce Urgency Of Now: Closing Glaring Gaps In US Surveillance Data On COVID-19

Nancy Krieger, Gregg Gonsalves, Mary T. Bassett, William Hanage, Harlan M. Krumholz

APRIL 14, 2020

10.1377/hblog20200414.238084



## The COVID-19 response must be disability inclusive

There are more than 1 billion people living with disabilities (PLWD) world-

these communities, so care workers and family members can continue to safely support PLWD, be enabled to meet health care, and to and maintain their educational commitments

Human Rights Watch. Human rights dimensions of COVID-19 response. Human Rights Watch, March 19, 2020.

The New York Times



BROOKINGS

AI POLICY 2020 CITIES & REGIONS GLOBAL DEV INTL AFFAIRS U.S. EC



FIXGOV

### Why are Blacks dying at higher rates from COVID-19?

Rashawn Ray - Thursday, April 9, 2020

Opinion

## The Pandemic's Missing Data

We desperately need to release the statistics on race and ethnicity.

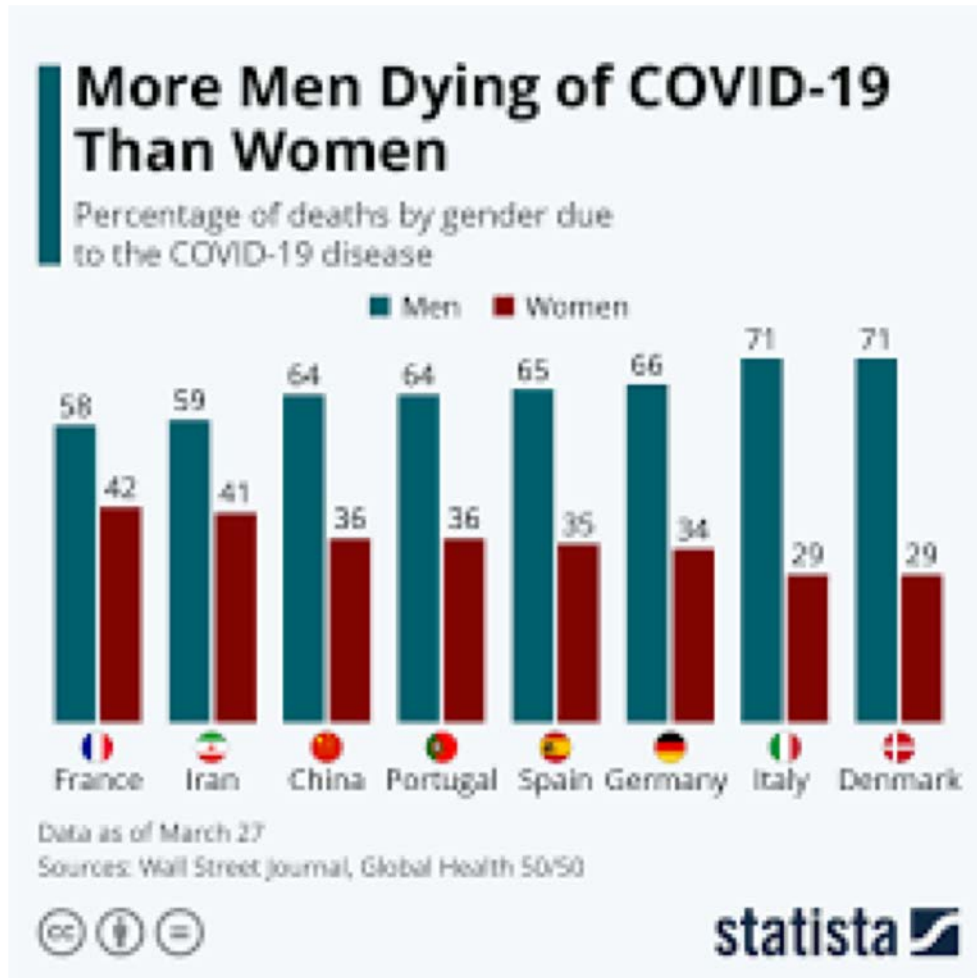


# Concern grows that COVID-19 disproportionately impacts minorities, but the data is incomplete



# Women Get Sicker, Men Die Quicker?

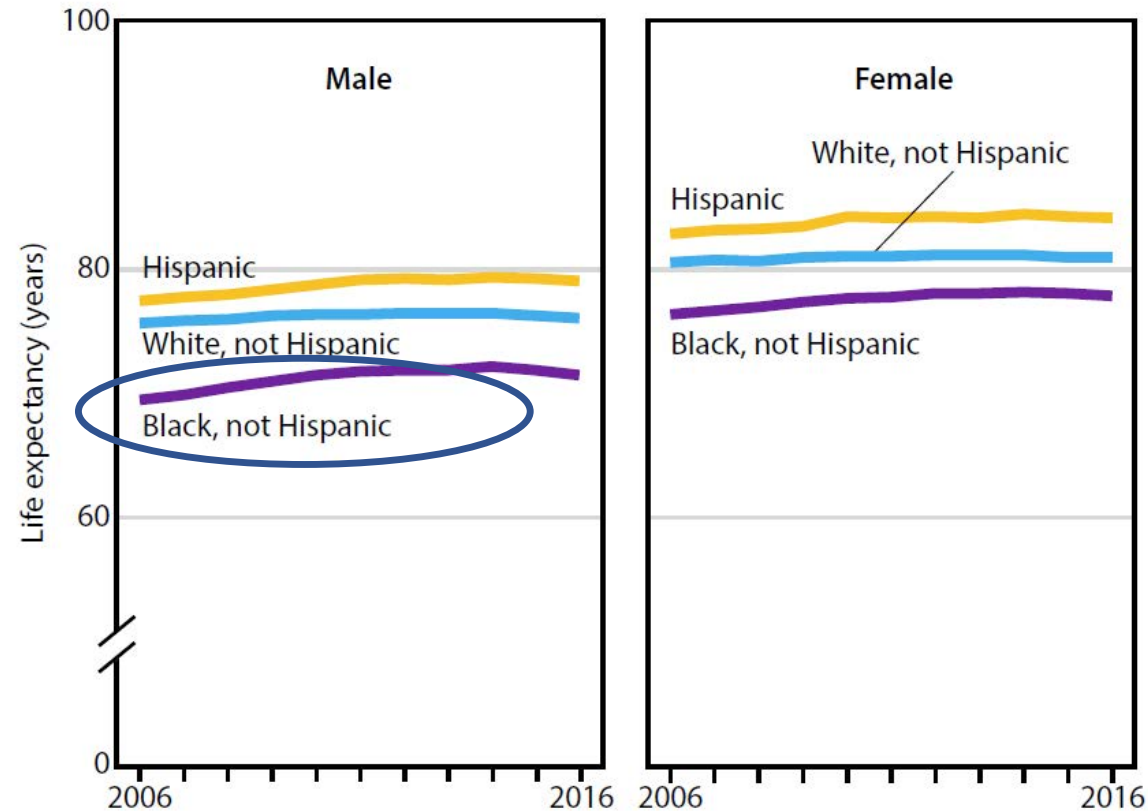
## Gender Disparities in COVID-19 Mortality



In several states across the U.S., more women appear to have contracted the coronavirus. However, **death rates appear to be highest among men.**

# Perfect Storm for Male COVID-19 Disparities

## Shortened Life Expectancy among Black Men



NOTES: Life expectancy data by Hispanic origin were available starting in 2006 and were corrected to address racial and ethnic misclassification. Life expectancy estimates for 2016 are based on preliminary Medicare data.

SOURCE: NCHS, *Health, United States, 2017*, Figure 1. Data from the National Vital Statistics System (NVSS), Mortality.

# Opportunities for Legislative Action & Systems Change

## Systematic Collection of Race, Ethnicity, Language Data

Black and Latino residents hit particularly hard by COVID-19 in Connecticut, as experts fear disparities will widen

By ALEX PUTTERMAN  
HARTFORD COURANT | APR 08, 2020 | 1:54 PM



WNPR.ORG  
**Preliminary Data Raise Questions About Coronavirus Risks For Connecticut Residents Of Color**

OP-EDS OPINION

### Why we need to be talking about health equity during the coronavirus pandemic

By WIZDOM POWELL and TEKISHA DWAN EVERETTE  
SPECIAL TO HARTFORD COURANT | APR 11, 2020 | 6:00 AM

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### UConn Researchers Find Blacks Are Disproportionately Impacted By COVID-19

by Christine Stuart | Apr 8, 2020 6:44pm

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Posted to: Health Care, Public Health, COVID-19, Human Rights

Race	% Cases	Population % in CT
White	60.8	66.5
Black	17.2	12.0
Asian	2.9	4.9
Hispanic/Latinx	15.9	16.5
American Indian/ Alaska Native	0.2	0.6
Other	2.9	-

Confirmed COVID-19 cases based on race and ethnicity. Data as of April 1, 2020. Source: Connecticut Public Health Department

COURTESY OF UCONN HEALTH

# Opportunities for Legislative Action & Systems Change

## Protect Medicaid

**PLOS ONE**

OPEN ACCESS PEER-REVIEWED

RESEARCH ARTICLE

### The potential impact of the Affordable Care Act and Medicaid expansion on reducing colorectal cancer screening disparities in African American males

Wizdom Powell, Leah Frerichs , Rachel Townsley, Maria Mayorga, Jennifer Richmond, Giselle Corbie-Smith, Stephanie Wheeler, Kristen Hassmiller Lich

Published: January 24, 2020 • <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0226942>

Medicaid expansion and protection has the potential to reduce racial/ethnic disparities in screening, detection, and treatment.

# Opportunities for Legislative Action & Systems Change

## Deploy and Reimburse Community Health Workers

FIRST OPINION

### Create a cadre of community health workers to fight Covid-19 in the U.S.

By ERIC D. PERAKSLIS / MARCH 31, 2020



# Strategies for Centering Health Equity

## Focus on the Most Vulnerable

- Individuals with chronic disease/psychiatric illness/behavioral health challenges
- Unemployed/underemployed
- Racial/ethnic minorities
- Incarcerated/formerly incarcerated
- Pregnant women
- Individuals with intellectual/physical disabilities
- Homeless
- Uninsured/uninsured

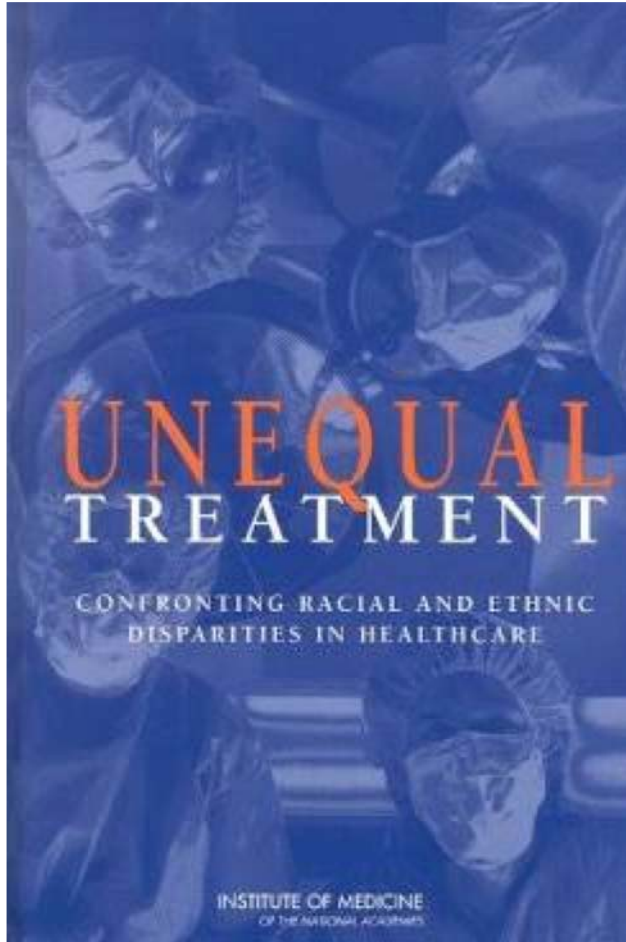
# Strategies for Centering Health Equity

## Focus on the Most Vulnerable

COVID-19 is a double threat to the health outcomes & economic security of communities who already face systemic inequities and injustice due to race, ethnicity, income, immigration status, ability status, or other identities.

# Strategies for Centering Health Equity

Focus on the Fundamental or Root Causes



A photograph of a Black man with a mustache, wearing a blue polo shirt with white stripes, looking off to the side. The image is overlaid with text boxes. A white box in the top right contains the text "There is a physical toll of discrimination." in blue. A dark blue box at the bottom contains the text "STUDIES HAVE FOUND LINKS BETWEEN EXPERIENCING DISCRIMINATION AND NEGATIVE PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH EFFECTS." in white. A white box at the bottom left contains the text "Race Matters." in blue. At the bottom right, there is a logo for the Connecticut Health Foundation with the tagline "Changing Systems, Improving Lives." and the UCONN Health logo.



# Shadow Pandemics:

Racialized violence diminishes trust in health systems



**BREONNA TAYLOR**  
*June 5, 1993 – March 13, 2020*



**AHMAUD ARBERY**  
*May 8, 1994 – February 23, 2020*




**GEORGE FLOYD**  
*#JUSTICEFORFLOYD*

During the pandemic, while sheltering in place, communities of color are bearing virtual witness to these events. These tragic events have implications for trust and mistrust in medical organizations/providers.

# Shadow Pandemics:

## The COVID-19 Crisis Is a Trauma Pandemic in the Making

“As we have been reminded in this situation, it’s important to be prepared for the medical impact of a pandemic. Our society also needs to prepare for the psychological impact of a crisis like this. Hundreds of thousands of people around the world have been socially isolated and have experienced dramatic and rapid losses in their lives, all while having little preparation for a crisis of this magnitude.”

 Michael J. Salas, PsyD

**“Rivers are always moving. But the river remains a river even if it is not the same river.”**

# HDI Team Acknowledgements

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# Contact Information

Wizdom Powell PhD, MPH  
Director, Health Disparities Institute  
[wpowell@uchc.edu](mailto:wpowell@uchc.edu)

Emy Flores  
Administrative Program Coordinator  
[eflores@uchc.edu](mailto:eflores@uchc.edu)

Health Disparities Institute  
University of Connecticut Health  
241 Main Street, 5th Floor  
Hartford, CT 06106  
<https://health.uconn.edu/health-disparities/>

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