

COVID-19 HAS EXPOSED A PRE-EXISTING UNDERLYING HEALTH CONDITION IN OUR SOCIETY



Following news reports that people from BAME communities are disproportionately contracting and dying from COVID-19 compared to the general population, church leader and the Chair of the Movement for Justice and Reconciliation (MJR) Alton Bell is calling for the UK government to take major steps to redress the inequalities in health outcomes for UK's minority ethnic population.

Rev Bell stated, "A variety of reasons have been put forward about this disproportionality. These include some scientists stating it is due to a lack of vitamin D3 which helps strengthen the immune system. Another reason put forward is that BAME communities are more susceptible to the coronavirus because they have underlying health conditions."

He continued, "Whilst these reasons may have legitimacy, they ignore the inequality experienced by BAME communities and how that can impact health. It is also worth noting that BAME people tend to work in jobs where they have to interface with the public which means that many have not had the option of working from home during the lockdown."

"Although underlying health conditions may have contributed to the disproportionate number of deaths, too few people have recognised that social inequality and the legacy of enslavement are also major contributory factors."

MJR, a charity founded in 2015, seeks to address the legacy of the Transatlantic Slave Trade and chattel slavery on Caribbean people and encourage community reconciliation in new and innovative ways.

Since its formation, MJR has conducted acclaimed research led by Dr Clifford Hill and his team, studying the legacy of enslavement on the descendants of the enslaved and the descendants of the beneficiaries, held exhibitions that explain the history of Caribbean enslavement and demonstrated the impact of the legacy which continues today.

In light of the disproportionate number of BAME people contracting and dying from the coronavirus, MJR is calling on the UK government to take immediate action to tackle this public health crisis among BAME people, specifically among African Caribbean people, and to agree plans to make a concerted effort to redress the social inequality.

Research shows that the enslavement of people in the Caribbean has contributed greatly to the large numbers of their descendants experiencing high blood pressure and type 2 diabetes. COVID-19 has exposed a pre-existing underlying health condition in our society and there is a lot of work that needs to be done to rectify this. Which should include more support for health and wellbeing education targeting the African and Caribbean community as well as taking more concerted action to treat socio-economic inequalities that contribute to poor health.

MJR, which has the necessary expertise, stands willing to engage in discussion with our National Government and local authorities about how to take matters forward.

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For further information contact Rev Alton Bell at apbell@mjr-uk.com or phone 07956 363058 visit www.mjr-uk.com