COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted communities of color.

In the United States: Black, Brown, and Indigenous people are contracting COVID-19 at a rate 2-3 times higher than white people, and dying at a similar rate. This disparity is two-fold in that communities of color have lower access to healthcare, and are being put at a higher risk of contracting the virus as a result of the front-line jobs that many with those identities hold.

Jewish tradition implores us that we cannot stand idly by while our neighbors suffer. It is incumbent upon us to contribute, through education and service, to building a more just world for all people.
This MLK Day, we examine and learn the ways in which medical racism, the systematic and widespread racism against people of color within the medical system, and white supremacy, the social, economic, and political systems that collectively enable white people to maintain power over people of other races, contribute to the impacts of COVID-19. How is ongoing service one way to combat structures of systemic racism?

Racial inequality continues to show up in our communities and even more so when we look at the impact of COVID-19:

- In the United States, Black and Latinx individuals are almost twice as likely to die from COVID-19 — the chart below shows data on this trend.

- In the United States, only 4% of doctors are Black, compared to 13% of the population; this lack of equal representation contributes to the disparity in COVID-19 treatment protocol.

- In comparison to 33% of all US adults, 49% of Latinx individuals have reported that someone in their household took a pay cut or lost their job as a result of COVID-19.

### COVID-19 CASES, HOSPITALIZATION, AND DEATH BY RACE/ETHNICITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rate ratios compared to White, Non-Hispanic persons</th>
<th>American Indian or Alaska Native, Non-Hispanic persons</th>
<th>Asian, Non-Hispanic persons</th>
<th>Black or African American, Non-Hispanic persons</th>
<th>Hispanic or Latino persons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CASES</td>
<td>2.8x higher</td>
<td>1.1x higher</td>
<td>2.6x higher</td>
<td>2.8x higher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOSPITALIZATION</td>
<td>5.3x higher</td>
<td>1.3x higher</td>
<td>4.7x higher</td>
<td>4.6x higher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEATH</td>
<td>1.4x higher</td>
<td>no increase</td>
<td>2.1x higher</td>
<td>1.1x higher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Race and ethnicity are risk markers for other underlying conditions that impact health -- including socioeconomic status, access to health care, and increase exposure to the virus due to occupation (e.g., frontline, essential, and critical infrastructure workers).

Source: Centers for Disease Control
Reflecting on the facts above, let’s consider two texts that can help frame our responsibility to racial justice work, and why we commit to serve alongside impacted communities.

**MIDRASH TANHUMA, MISHPATIM 2**

*Translation by Tr’uah, the Rabbinic Call for Human Rights*

*If a person of learning participates in public affairs and serves as judge or arbiter, that person gives stability to the land. But if a person sits in their home and says to themselves, “What have the affairs of society to do with me? Why should I trouble myself with the people’s voices of protest? Let my soul dwell in peace!”—if one does this, they assist in destroying the world.*

**BEYOND VIETNAM: A TIME TO BREAK SILENCE**

*Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. April 4, 1967*

“These are revolutionary times. All over the globe people are revolting against old systems of exploitation and oppression, and out of the wounds of a frail world, new systems of justice and equality are being born.”

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- How do each of these texts contribute to your thinking around racial justice efforts today and ways we can serve communities affected by racism?
- What does the Midrash Tanhuma text say about responsibility to one’s community?
- How might we interpret the concept of a person of learning participating in public affairs giving stability to the land?
TAKE ACTION
January 4-January 18, 2021

Medical racism is just one example of how our systemic racism impacts the lives of Black people in America. We sustain the core Jewish belief that every human has infinite worth and inherent value. Motivated by our Jewish and universal values, we commit to identifying tangible and actionable things we can each do in pursuit of justice and racial equality. Jewish tradition and values implore us to care for those who are vulnerable; the next step is to build and uplift relationships across lines of difference, which requires learning directly from those impacted by these issues.

Inspired by the work of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., we serve in solidarity, with a commitment to equity. Volunteering is one way to show up for our neighbors and address immediate needs created by institutionalized racism and other intersecting injustices. Jewish tradition reminds us that the pursuit of justice is a continual effort we must recommit to over and over, just as committing to anti-racism is an ongoing process. Below are a few ways you can continue to serve and learn.

Will you #ServeTheMoment and join us in amplifying this ongoing work?

- Join a local in-person volunteer opportunity; from city clean-ups to food delivery programs.
- Check out opportunities from Repair the World and some of our Jewish Service Alliance partners here.
- Engage in virtual service; check out Repair the World’s MLK Day site for national virtual volunteer opportunities and consider joining a Racial Justice Shabbat with OneTable.
- Further your learning and commitment to more education around issues of race; check out our Next Steps Guide.