

NAACP

Eugene ~ Springfield Branch

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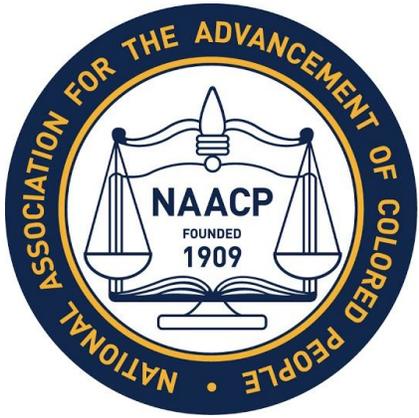
Eugene/Springfield, Siletz Tribal Member

Op-ed - Police Brutality, COVID-19, & Climate Change

Following the unjust deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, and Breonna Taylor, people across the nation have taken to the streets to voice their grief and outrage. Locally here in Eugene, OR, [thousands gathered](#) to protest the racial disparities and police brutality affecting Black communities. As we come together to show our solidarity in addressing these injustices, public health officials have issued a warning to be prepared for a second wave of COVID-19 cases to spread throughout the country. This is an extremely important issue to take into account for those supporting the BLM movement, especially those who identify with the BIPOC community.

According to the [Center for Disease Control](#), the percentage of African Americans who have been hospitalized for COVID-19 is almost two-times higher than that of white populations. LatinX populations and Native Americans also have more cases per capita compared to whites. The numbers vary however, due to a lack of data and effective response from the federal government.

Communities who are most vulnerable to COVID-19, are also at an increased risk of being negatively impacted by Climate Change. These disparities are due to historically racist land zoning and management policies, access to healthcare, environmental inequality, and working conditions. African American and Black populations are also more likely to have preexisting



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health conditions, putting them at an increased risk of contracting the virus. BIPOC communities are more likely to be exposed to air pollution, increasing temperatures, and severe weather and natural disasters.

To ensure a just recovery from COVID-19, and a just transition to a sustainable and healthy future, and an end to police brutality and racially charged violence, our elected officials need to support [legal efforts to recognize the impacts caused by slavery and racism](#) on legislation, and that provide the framework for justice, equality, and healing.

Instead of addressing the social justice and health crises at hand, the Trump Administration is monopolizing on the public's outrage over the killing of unarmed Black men and women, and the disproportionate health and environmental impacts affecting Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.

The Trump Administration has prioritized the protection of industry and corporate entities' economic gain over the health and well-being of those most affected by COVID-19. He has also issued an affront on clean air and water through a number of environmental rollbacks, further increasing the negative health impacts on BIPOC communities. He has limited State and Tribal Authority under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act to regulate water quality and reduced the amount of time needed to review natural gas permits that may affect them. On top of that, [air quality regulations are being reduced](#), giving fossil fuel industries the green light to produce dirty energy. [Recent studies](#) have begun to identify links between air pollution and the number of COVID-19 deaths, and the disproportionate numbers that exist among vulnerable populations.

“We need our legislators to protect the natural resources that provide us life. We need to recognize as a collective that the institutions we use to govern ourselves were built on genocide and slavery. As non-white allies, we need to center the voices of those on the frontlines of the BLM movement. As a community, we need to keep ourselves safe, connected, and stay home.” -