

**When Coronavirus is Just
Another Traumatic Experience**

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One day I came home and noticed my son had a rash, I am a new mom so I did not realize a diaper rash may not have bumps, but raw red skin. I freaked out. I imagined the absolute worst scenario that someone had violated my kid. I handed my son over to my husband and melted in a puddle of tears and devastation on the floor. Once I recovered, I realized I had been triggered and was re-experiencing a traumatic event from my childhood. Generally, I am able to be numb, distracted, or avoid these triggers yet because it was my child my normal defenses were overrun. When people ask about how I am dealing with coronavirus, I say I am basically fine. I feel lots of things, but my number one emotion is numbness.

Enter all the vulnerable communities who have been traumatized by generational and current manifestations of injustice: indigenous, black and brown people, our global neighbors, the unhoused, the unemployed, people trying to migrate and live as immigrants into this country, people who are incarcerated. In all of this, Coronavirus just feels like something else we have to get through, and—I boldly claim—we will because we are experts on moving forward through crisis, chaos, and tragedy.

Responses to Coronavirus have been both painful and hopeful. This virus and accompanying pandemic have brought a moral clarity that many organizers long to see. We fight every day for it. In the midst of a global pandemic, it seems clear to everyone who we need to protect: the vulnerable, make sure low wage workers, and uninsured neighbors are cared for, we see that bureaucracy and bi-partisan politics do not serve the people. I worry that our moral clarity will wear off and we will return back to business as usual once the country begins to recover. The people who were already hurting will be hurt more and we will simply add another layer and experiences of trauma to their list.

We can foresee the impact Coronavirus will have on our economy and health organizers worry about the impact it will have on our democracy. We are in the middle of the census where many in our community are at risk to be under counted. We have critical prosecutor and local elections to get our community mobilized around. We are in the middle of building a decarceration and decriminalization movement. We are in the middle of a 2020 election year, voting campaigns, ballot initiatives, and base building work that is critical to amassing long term power in our communities. I am challenging us all to think of how our current moral clarity will advance our justice work in big ways, while the moral clarity remains:

Unhoused: Cities not just standing up temporary housing and sanitation options but a permeant plan for a new shelter facility, affordable housing as mandate of development, and local investment loans for singles and families with low savings to buy their first home.

Undocumented: Not just providing care and testing for corona, providing quality health care and safe conditions, as mark of a humane immigration policy not just something we get clear about in a public health emergency.

Incarcerated: Already, Iran has released 54,000 people from prisons, local organizers have been calling for an end to cash bail systems that punish poor people, waste public resources that can create real public safety by reinvesting in underfunded human resources programs and services.

I think you see my point, let us not make Coronavirus another traumatic event for communities and people who have already been through so much. Let us use this moment of moral clarity to truly become one people under God, with liberty and justice for all.

As the health and social services general ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the National Benevolent Association partners with congregations, regions, general ministries, and a variety of Disciples-related health and social service providers to create communities of compassion and care. Founded in 1887 by six women responding to the needs of the day and on their doorsteps, for more than 130 years the NBA has continued to serve "the least of these." Learn more at www.nbacares.org.