

Which 'Public' in Public Health?: LGBTQ+ Black and Latinx Mobilization in the US During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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COVID-19 Crisis

- Novel coronavirus detected in China in December 2019
- March 11, 2020: spread to 114 countries; WHO Pandemic
- US: Patchwork of inconsistent state and local responses

Focus on Vulnerable

- Initial public health messages in the US largely emphasized vulnerability of adults aged 65 and older
- Ignores populations who are vulnerable to disease due to social and political factors
 - LGBTQ+ populations and im/migrant populations



History of Pandemic Stigma

- LGBTQ+ Populations:
 - HIV/AIDS
- Im/migrant populations
 - SARS, H1N1

Exclusion of Individuals with Intersecting LGBTQ+, Black, Latinx identities

LGBTQ

- Barriers to culturally competent care
- More likely to rate poor health
- Beginning of pandemic: employment insecurity; lack of federal employment protections
- Heightened housing insecurity

Black and Latinx Individuals:

- Increased risk of exposure through work
 - More likely to engage in work considered essential than white peers
- Latinx Im/migrants:
 - Agricultural services
 - Restaurant work

Exclusion of Individuals with Intersecting LGBTQ+, Black, Latinx identities

- Intersectional identities, such as being LGBTQ+ and Black, Latinx, or undocumented compound these vulnerabilities

Local Context

- Vulnerabilities Heightened in Central Florida
- Known for service economies
- Large agricultural sector
- Exacerbated by broken unemployment system
- Necropolitics of state-sponsored neglect
 - Excusable deaths: workers, minoritized individuals



Coronavirus Updates

Gov. Says Florida's Unemployment System Was Designed To Create 'Pointless Roadblocks'

August 6, 2020 · 5:53 PM ET



LAUREL WAMSLEY



Backdrop: Dual Pandemics

- COVID-19
- Police violence against Black people in the US
- Summer of 2020: Racial justice mobilizing in the wake of murder of George Floyd

Activist Action

- Absent functional state interventions, local organizations took action
- Contigo Fund



Estamos Contigo - We're With You

Activist Responses: Contigo Fund

- Formed after Pulse Shooting
- Focuses up advancing social justice through grassroots mobilization of LGBTQ+ people of color
- Average \$750,000 grantmaking
- Fieldwork since 2016
- NSF-funded study



Estamos Contigo - We're With You

Activist Responses: Contigo Fund

- LGBTQ+ Relief Fund
- \$35,000
- Low-barrier application in the languages most commonly spoken in Central Florida
- Spanish, English, Haitian Creole, Vietnamese, and Portuguese



*"We're with you,
Estamos contigo."*

Activist Responses: Contigo Fund

- Organizing for all Black Lives
- \$100,000 to Black-led LGBTQ+ organizations
- Purpose: structural change must come through investment in Black leadership



Meaningful Impacts

- “My community was there for me when my government wasn’t”
 - LGBTQ+ Relief Fund recipient
 - Leader of Black-led LGBTQ+ organization that received funds

Take Aways

- Contingo Fund's response:
 - More than financial assistance:
 - Asserts a politics of belonging
 - Combats erasure of vulnerability
 - Challenges the necropolitics of state-sponsored neglect

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Questions?

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