

What COVID-19 has revealed

Written by Mandela Barnes, Lt. Governor
Saturday, 04 April 2020 07:54 -



Lt. Governor Mandela Barnes shares his thoughts on the pandemic.

MADISON - As we grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic and its implications, I would like to share my thoughts on what this crisis has revealed about our state and nation.

First, this crisis has exposed a glaring inequality that exists in our society. It begs the question: What does it really mean to live in the richest country on earth if we're unable to adequately care for people in need during an emergency?

While wealth continues to concentrate at the very top, working class people are struggling to get by, much less save for an emergency. And until healthcare is a universal right, people will die because of how expensive it can be to live when you're poor and facing a medical crisis.

This is why we must continue the fight for structural change - so that the needs of the many are prioritized above the interests of the few. Let's take this opportunity to reimagine society, our communities, and what quality of life actually means.

President Trump's absence of leadership and racist rhetoric - referring to COVID-19 as

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the "Chinese-virus" - has hurt our ability to mitigate COVID-19 and unite as a nation.

The best response to a pandemic is prevention, and our failure to act decisively is the result of failed presidential leadership. President Trump's decision to dismantle a National Security Council directorate at the White House in 2018 charged with preparing for when another pandemic would hit the nation - and his cuts to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) budget has seriously hampered our ability to respond to this pandemic.

We must also reject referring to COVID-19 as the "Chinese-virus." At a time when we should be setting aside differences and coming together, President Trump seeks to divide. Here in Wisconsin, we have already seen the harmful effects of this racist language: **Milwaukee's own Lucky Lui's chinese restaurant has announced they will be closed indefinitely after workers received xenophobic and verbal attacks from customers.** COVID-19 doesn't discriminate based on race, and neither should we.

Despite everything, Wisconsinites are sacrificing for their fellow neighbor and displaying heartwarming generosity each and every day. Here are just a few examples of ways local businesses are helping out during these difficult times:

- **Central Standard Distillery** , based out of Walkers Point in Milwaukee, has pledged to turn their focus to producing free disinfectant and sanitizing products with their supply of distilled alcohol
- **The Machinist Union (IAM) Local 1406** , at GE Datex-Ohmeda in Madison, is fighting to produce much needed ventilators
- **Monterey Mills** , a Janesville-based textile mill and supplier of fabrics, and Oak Creek-based Eder Flag, have teamed up to take on the demand for respirator masks

Our greatest opportunities exist in our greatest challenges. We are going to come out of this stronger and together.

Thank you for doing everything you can to keep Wisconsin safe and healthy.

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