



Racial Inequities Op-Ed and LTE Framework

Overall Goal

The following framework may be used to draft, refine and place Op-Eds and Letters to the Editor (LTEs) to draw attention to the racial inequities further exposed by COVID-19. [Click here](#) for additional messaging support on racial inequities and in particular the impact on Black people.

Why now? Lawmakers, members of the media and the general public are all seeking out additional information and possible solutions in combatting the worst effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. As health advocates, you are an essential resource at this time – and your voice, and the voices of those in your community, need to be heard now.

Helpful Tips for Increasing the Likelihood Your Piece Gets Placed

1. **Know your paper's policies.** Most Op-Eds and LTEs have a maximum word count of between 700 and 800 words for the former and 250-300 for the latter. Longer posts will typically not be considered. Additionally, each paper has specific channels by which to submit your post. Consult the publication's website.
2. **Be timely.** Is your story new and engaging? If you are responding to an article or letter to the editor that has been recently published, you typically have a 2-3 day window to submit a response.
3. **Be direct.** You have limited space to get your point across. Make sure your letter is concise, informative, and compelling. Grab the readers' attention!
4. **Get personal.** Share a personal story. Personal stories can make complex policies easier for readers to understand. How has COVID-19 affected you or your family? Why are you passionate about this issue?
5. **Think about your audience.** Editors are more willing to publish an Op-Ed or LTE that shows relevance to its readers. Cite any local actions or issues that have surfaced recently.
6. **Encourage others to take action.** This is your opportunity to provoke others into action. This is a critical time for making our voices heard – and we will need all of our supporters to take action.
7. **Don't be afraid to call others into account.** If you are responding to a previous letter or statement by a public official, mention them by name. But do remember to be respectful. When referring to a previous LTE or Op-Ed, use the title and date.

8. **Be reasonable and courteous.** Don't attack any public figure or fellow writer personally. Avoid being too negative.
9. **Don't lie.** Make sure any facts and figures are correct.
10. **Be brief.** It's worth repeating. Be clear and concise.

Op-Ed or LTE Structure

- **Opening**
 - Grab the reader's attention in the first line. Make a bold claim, share a surprising fact, timely observation or make a personal connection.
 - Connect the opening sentence with the thesis of your Op-Ed.
- **Tell a Story**
 - Personal stories provide a compelling way to demonstrate the real-life impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and make complex policies easier for people to understand.
 - Stories don't need to be a miracle or a one-of-a-kind story, but should have broad appeal and connect with the reader.
 - Ask yourself: how will these policies benefit people, including those disproportionately impacted?
- **Support your story with evidence/arguments**
 - Include compelling facts & figures. Link to sources.
 - Offer a solution.
 - Acknowledge any main counterarguments and refute them.
- **Closing**
 - Drive the message home. Reiterate your opening point.
 - Call others to action! What do you want your reader to do?

Powerful Storytellers

- Frontline health workers
- Health experts
- Impacted community members
- Grocery store workers, seasonal workers, 'gig' economy workers

When submitting an Op-Ed or LTE, be sure to provide:

- Full Name
- Address
- Phone Number
- Email Address

COVID-19 Racial Inequities Sample LTE Template

This could be broadened and expanded into an Op-Ed by including more supporting evidence from the [linked messaging guidance](#) and [state policy recommendations](#), as well as personal stories from your state or community.

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the shortcomings of our nation's health system, including the disproportionate impact of the virus on communities of color and others that have too often been left behind through enduring and discriminatory health and economic barriers.

The coronavirus is not affecting people or communities in the same way, and it's exposing the deep racial inequities embedded in health and health access. Black people, in particular, are feeling the weight of this crisis and are dying at alarming rates as more data emerges.

- Insert data points about the impact of COVID-19 on communities of color, particularly Black communities (either from your state or from [nationally available data](#) of some of the hardest hit regions).

Access to high-quality health care and the ability to obtain testing and treatment should not depend on your ZIP code, the color of your skin, the language you speak or the size of your bank account. Viruses don't discriminate along these lines.

Our political leaders must do more for those who are being hardest hit – and there are some immediate steps that we should be taking here in [STATE].

- To better understand the racial inequities of COVID-19 cases and deaths, policymakers at all levels must immediately increase data collection so interventions can be targeted to those most at risk.
- Policymakers must provide more equitable access to testing, treatment and follow-up care for people of color, starting with the Medicaid program.
- It is critically important that policymakers provide economic support, support for housing and nutrition, and protect people from predatory debt collection. These policies are essential for people of color, who already face barriers to economic security and opportunity due to structural racism and other forms of discrimination.

We don't yet know how we will emerge as a community out of this crisis – or when. And yet, history teaches us that we all do better when everyone does better. We're in this together, and we must ensure that everyone has equal opportunity at getting through this crisis healthy and whole. The gaps in our health care safety net affect us all.

We always enjoy seeing and sharing successfully placed Op-Eds and Letters to the Editor. If you get placed, please share with your State Advocacy Manager!