

AMA Journal of Ethics®

March 2021, Volume 23, Number 3: E267-269

ART OF MEDICINE

COVID-19 and Buckets Inequitably Filled by Our Shared Histories

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected patients of color and illuminates long-standing inequity in health status, health outcomes, and access to health care. Maldistribution of burden of disease, risk exposure, and how vulnerable we are to our lives unraveling is not merely unfortunate, not simply due to a bad turn of the cosmic wheel, but unjust, as illustrated in this digital self-portrait.

Figure. *Overflow*



Media

Procreate application for iPad.

This digital self-portrait prominently features a bucket representing burdens we bear. Filled by our shared histories, some of our buckets might only contain a few drops and some of our buckets are primed to overflow, perhaps at any moment. Events and circumstances in one's ancestors' lives and one's own life add to or subtract from—sometimes simultaneously—how one manages and copes with a bucket's content and responds to the needs and vulnerabilities of an individual who has gotten wet. We all get wet if we don't own our histories and do our part to render equitable all our buckets' depths.

Depending on how full a bucket is, one drop could prompt overflow. Maldistribution of burden of disease and risk exposure, persistent in prepandemic experiences of many Americans of color, makes COVID-19 harder on those of us whose buckets have been burdened, not lightened, by our shared histories and might not hold one more drop.

Words inscribed in the artist's hair characterize some **experiences of many Americans of color** during pandemic isolation, job loss, grief over loved ones' illnesses and deaths, and uncertainty. Words inscribed in the artist's mask are those that have become the face and voice of the pandemic in news media flashes, hashtags, conflict, and discontent.

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Editor's Note

This is the winning artwork of the 2020 John Conley Art of Medicine Contest. The page numbers and doi are subject to change when the March 2021 issue in which this article will appear is published.

Citation

AMA J Ethics. 2021;23(3):E267-269.

DOI

10.1001/amajethics.2021.267.

Conflict of Interest Disclosure

The author(s) had no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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