

Wisdom of the Elders

*Bearing
Witness to
Our Past,
Present &
Uncertain
Future*



PANELISTS:

Dr. Kameelah Rashad - Founder & President | Muslim Wellness Foundation
Asha Noor - Coordinating Director | Communities United for Status and Protection
Zaheer Ali - Senior Fellow & Oral Historian | Pillars Fund
Mohamud A. Mohamed - Chaplain | University of Minnesota
Brother Luqman Kenny Gamble - Philanthropist & Music Legend

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**BLACK
MUSLIM
COVID COALITION**

ZOOM WEBINAR: THURSDAY APRIL 9, 2020 | 8-9:30PM EST

RSVP Required: bit.ly/bmccwebinarapril9 | blackmuslimcoalition.com | blackmuslimcoalition@gmail.com

**CORONAVIRUS**[Colombia's Race to Build Ventilators](#)[A Tale From the Medical Front Lines](#)[Trump's False Coronavirus Reality](#)[New Jersey Braces Itself](#)**CORONAVIRUS**

Texas Lt. Governor: Old People Should Volunteer to Die to Save the Economy

According to Dan Patrick "lots of grandparents" are willing to sacrifice themselves for the cause.



BY BESS LEVIN

MARCH 24, 2020



Appreciating Our Black Elders

“They are more than sick cases and incidence numbers. Our elders hold the wisdom of having lived through several other global health pandemics, wars, the civil rights movement and the Jim Crow era, as well as terrorism attacks such as 9/11. Many survived these while raising children and holding down backbreaking jobs. They’ve seen this country through a unique lens of being thought of as less-than for their race and social class, and now because of their age. They display a strong sense of resilience that we could learn from during the pandemic. Instead of seeing them as a weak link in the economy, we need to advocate for marginalized groups who truly need support from our leadership. We need to look to our elders to learn how to pool resources and ways to lean into a stronger sense of community.”

-Dr. Christina Harrington

AGENDA

- Welcome, Du'aa & Introductions
 - What is the Black Muslim COVID Coalition?
 - Why now? Psychosocial impact of social distancing on older adults
 - Power of storytelling and 'story listening'
 - What's at stake? The precarious state of cultural memory
 - Overview Wisdom of the Elders Project: Goals/Objectives
 - Reflections & Stories from the Elders
 - Question & Answer
 - Conclusion & Next Steps
-

Dr. Kameelah Rashad

Founder & President, Muslim Wellness Foundation

Founder & co-Director, National Black Muslim COVID Coalition

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Zaheer Ali

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Ustadh Mohamud Mohamed

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Luqman Kenny Gamble

Philanthropist
Music Legend

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An initiative launched by the **Muslim Wellness Foundation** (MWF) and **Muslim Anti-Racism Collaborative** (MuslimARC) on March 23, 2020 to address the need for effective planning, preparedness, and organizing in Black Muslim communities during this global pandemic.

VISION

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Muslim Wellness Foundation and Muslim Anti-Racism Collaborative are organizations which wholeheartedly believe that liberation, healing justice and self-determination are inextricably linked. Drawing on the legacy of our ancestors, elders and our roots in the Black Freedom Movement, our bold initiative aims to strengthen leadership, support wellness, and provide popular political and economic education for personal and social transformation in this time of crisis.

THEORY OF CHANGE

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We have adopted an interdisciplinary, intergenerational, multi-ethnic, faith and healing centered, trauma-informed community-based organizing approach in order to build upon our strengths and achieve our vision of a healthy and whole community. This coalition is grounded in the frameworks of:

- Radical Healing
 - Healing Centered Engagement
 - Cycle of Liberation
-

COALITION GOALS

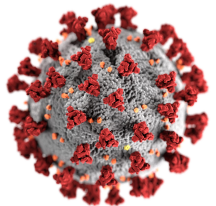
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Our aim is to utilize community organizing principles, deeply rooted faith and spirituality and cultural resilience and knowledge to:

- **Disseminate accurate information** to bolster individual and collective health and well-being.
 - **Share best practices** and resources to respond to community needs in all phases of the pandemic
 - **Support optimal physical health** and spiritual and emotional wellness
 - **Strengthen and support Black Muslim leadership**
-

AREAS OF FOCUS

- Health and Wellness
- Spiritual Well-being
- Education
- Advocacy & Organizing
- Economic Development
- Arts & Culture



An Epidemic...within a Pandemic: Black Americans & COVID-19

SCIENCE

AMERICA SET UP BLACK COMMUNITIES TO BE HARDER HIT BY COVID-19

Experts hope the pandemic is 'a wake up call'

By [Justine Calma](#) | [@justcalma](#) | Apr 8, 2020, 5:24pm EDT





▲ A man wearing a protective mask is seen on a subway platform in New York City. Photograph: Jeenah Moon/Getty Images

'It's a racial justice issue': Black Americans are dying in greater numbers from Covid-19

The coronavirus can infect anybody but African Americans are dying in disproportionate numbers, especially in



By –
Kat Stafford,
Associated
Press

By –
**Meghan
Hoyer,**
Associated
Press

By –
**Aaron
Morrison,**
Associated
Press

Outcry over racial data grows as virus slams black Americans

<

Left: A woman holds a child as she walks past people waiting in line to receive testing during the global outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outside Roseland Community Hospital in Chicago, Illinois, U.S., April 7, 2020.
REUTERS/Joshua Lott TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY

Related

WATCH: 'No need to use COVID to score political points,' WHO chief says after Trump criticism

By Jamey Keaten,
Associated Press

Los Angeles undergoes massive effort to get homeless into hotels

By Christopher Weber,
Associated Press

PBS NewsHour | April 8, 2020



Coronavirus in Illinois
updates: Total COVID-19
deaths pass 500 as Pritzke...



Watch live: Trump, coronavirus task
force hold press briefing

COVID-19 cases in Illinois by
ZIP code: Search for your
neighborhood



Rush University Medical
Center was built for a
moment like this. Take a...



Chicago's coronavirus disparity: Black Chicagoans are dying at nearly six times the rate of white residents, data show



By CECILIA REYES, NAUSHEEN HUSAIN, CHRISTY GUTOWSKI, STACY ST. CLAIR and GREGORY PRATT
CHICAGO TRIBUNE | APR 07, 2020 | 9:47 AM



Coronavirus wreaks havoc in African American neighbourhoods

🕒 7 April 2020



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Coronavirus pandemic



Chicago has seen a total of 98 deaths with 72% of them black residents

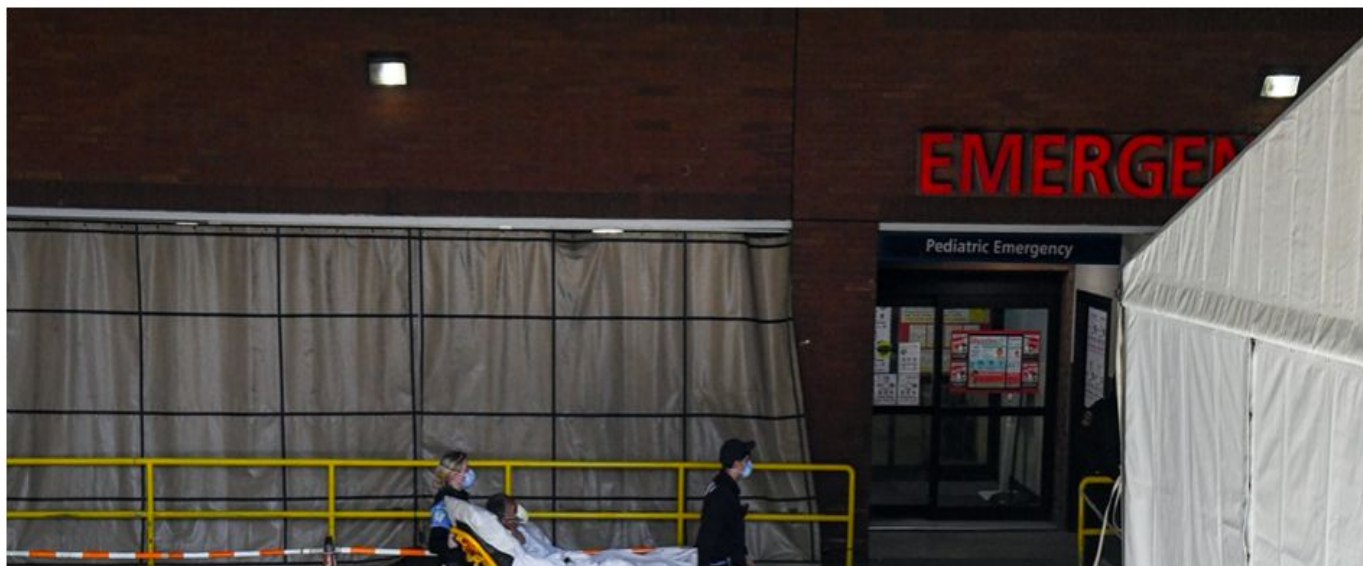
Stark statistics from Chicago health officials have underscored the heavy toll of coronavirus on black Americans.

Black Chicagoans account for half of all coronavirus cases in the city and more than 70% of deaths, despite making up 30% of the population.

BBC News | April 7, 2020

Black Americans Face Alarming Rates of Coronavirus Infection in Some States

Data on race and the coronavirus is too limited to draw sweeping conclusions, experts say, but disparate rates of sickness — and death — have emerged in some places.



National

The coronavirus is infecting and killing black Americans at an alarmingly high rate

By **Reis Thebault**, **Andrew Ba Tran** and **Vanessa Williams** April 7

Challenges faced by Black Elders

- Physical
- Emotional
- Financial
- Spiritual
- Technological

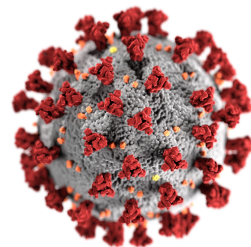
Strengths of Black Elders

- Physical
- Emotional
- Financial
- Spiritual
- Technological

OPINION: Poor, Older Black Americans Are an Afterthought in the COVID-19 Crisis

An Encore Public Voices Fellow urges public officials to take notice

By [Christina N. Harrington](#) Assistant Professor, Encore Public Voices Fellow April 3, 2020



Wisdom of the Elders

Social Isolation & Older Adults

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Social Isolation is Bad for the Mental Health of Older Adults

By Harry Owen Chatters Taylor
March 5, 2018

RESEARCH



LIFE

“I Would Just Love to Put My Arms Around Everybody”

What it feels like to live through the coronavirus pandemic as an 84-year-old.

By CHRISTINA CAUTERUCCI

MARCH 31, 2020 • 10:55 AM

 TWEET

 SHARE

 COMMENT



Social Isolation & Older Adults

- “...the mortality effect of social isolation is like smoking 15 cigarettes per day.”
 - - Harry Taylor (researcher on older adults and social isolation)
- Subjective isolation
 - diminished feelings of closeness to family and/or friends
- Objective isolation
 - infrequent interaction/contact with family and/or friends (ex. living alone)
- Loneliness:
 - subjective distressed feeling of being alone or separated. It's possible to feel lonely while among other people, and you can be alone yet not feel lonely.

Social Distancing & Older Adults

5 Tips to Help You Talk to Your Older Parents About Social Distancing

1. Make sure you're the right person for this conversation
2. Come from a place of love — not control
3. Ask a lot of questions
4. Share information from trustworthy sources
5. Accept that you can only control you

Source: <https://www.healthline.com/health-news/talking-to-your-parents-about-the-importance-of-social-distancing>

A photograph of an elderly man with a white beard and a white cap, wearing a white robe. He is looking off to the side with a slight smile. The background shows a simple, light-colored building and a dirt ground.

**Bearing
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Our Past,
Present &
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Future**

**“When an elder dies,
it is as though an entire library has burned down.”**

-African Proverb

Connections to Our Past & Future



Storytelling & Story-Listening

Zaheer Ali

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As...

- Historical Recovery
 - Archival Creation
 - Freedom Dreams
-

Honoring Our Elders

Ustadh Mohamud Mohamed

Honoring our elders is a fundamental part of our Islamic Tradition:

Amr bin Shu'aib narrated that his father, from his grandfather, who said that the Messenger of Allah said:
“He is not one of us who does not have mercy upon our young, nor knows the honor of our elders.”

The Primacy of the Elders: A Prophetic Perspective

It was narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said, ***“Jibreel ordered me to give priority to the elderly.”***

Malik ibn Al-Huwayrith (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet said, ***“When the time for prayer is due, one of you should announce Adhan and the oldest among you should lead the prayer.”*** (Al-Bukhari)

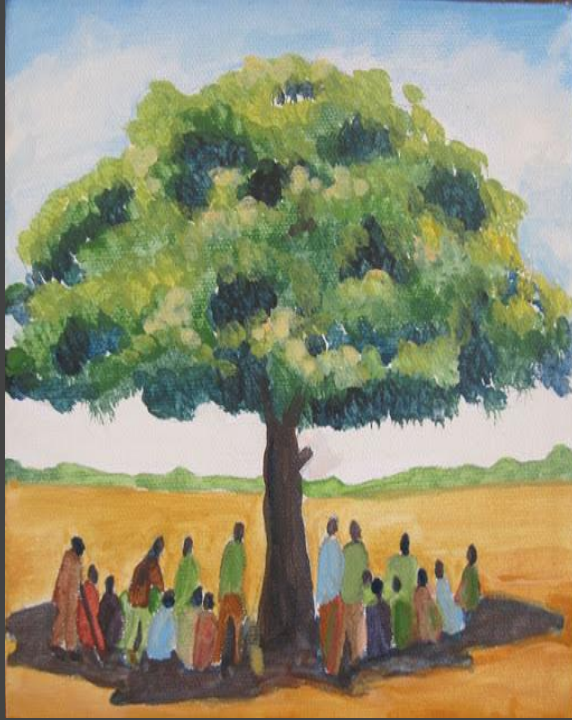
Anas ibn Malik (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said, ***“If a young man honors an elderly on account of his age, Allah appoints someone to honor him in his old age.”*** (At-Tirmidhi)

How do we prioritize our elders? Especially in this moment of crisis?

Cultural Memory

- Sites of cultural memory vary from culture to culture, but generally include:
 - texts/oral traditions
 - rites of passage
 - monuments/markers
 - celebrations/observances
- Jan Assmann (Scholar of religion and anthropologist)

The Power of Place/Memory/Evocation



Home is of the Mind

“Well, it is not true that my history is only in my heart; it is indeed there, but it is also in that dusty road in my town, and in every villager, living and dead, who has ever walked on it. It is in my country too; in my continent and, yes, in the world. That dusty little road is my link to all the other destinations.” -Chinua Achebe (Home & Exile)

Wisdom of the Elders Project

Coordinator: Asha Noor

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VISION: This intergenerational ethnoautobiography seeks to collapse the space caused by social distancing, and to absorb radical healing through storytelling, connection, ancestral knowledge and resilience.

MISSION: To disrupt the narratives that view our Elders as disposable burdens, rather than the carriers of our truths, and protectors of our legacies.

GOAL: Co-power intergenerationally by regaining what has been lost through oppressive narratives that flatten the role of our elders and their infinite wisdom.

“KOR WAYEEL WAA WADAA INDHO”

they see everything, they know everything.

- Somali Proverb

Reconnecting

- Bridging the gaps created through conflict, migration, and displacement.
- Language - a tool for connection, and disconnection.
- Broken linkages and cultural differences.

Indigenous Interconnectedness

Ubuntu:

- “I am because you are - a universal bond connecting humanity at all levels”

“... the essence of being human. Ubuntu speaks particularly about the fact that you can't exist as a human being in isolation. It speaks about our interconnectedness. You can't be human all by yourself, and when you have this quality - Ubuntu - you are known for your generosity.

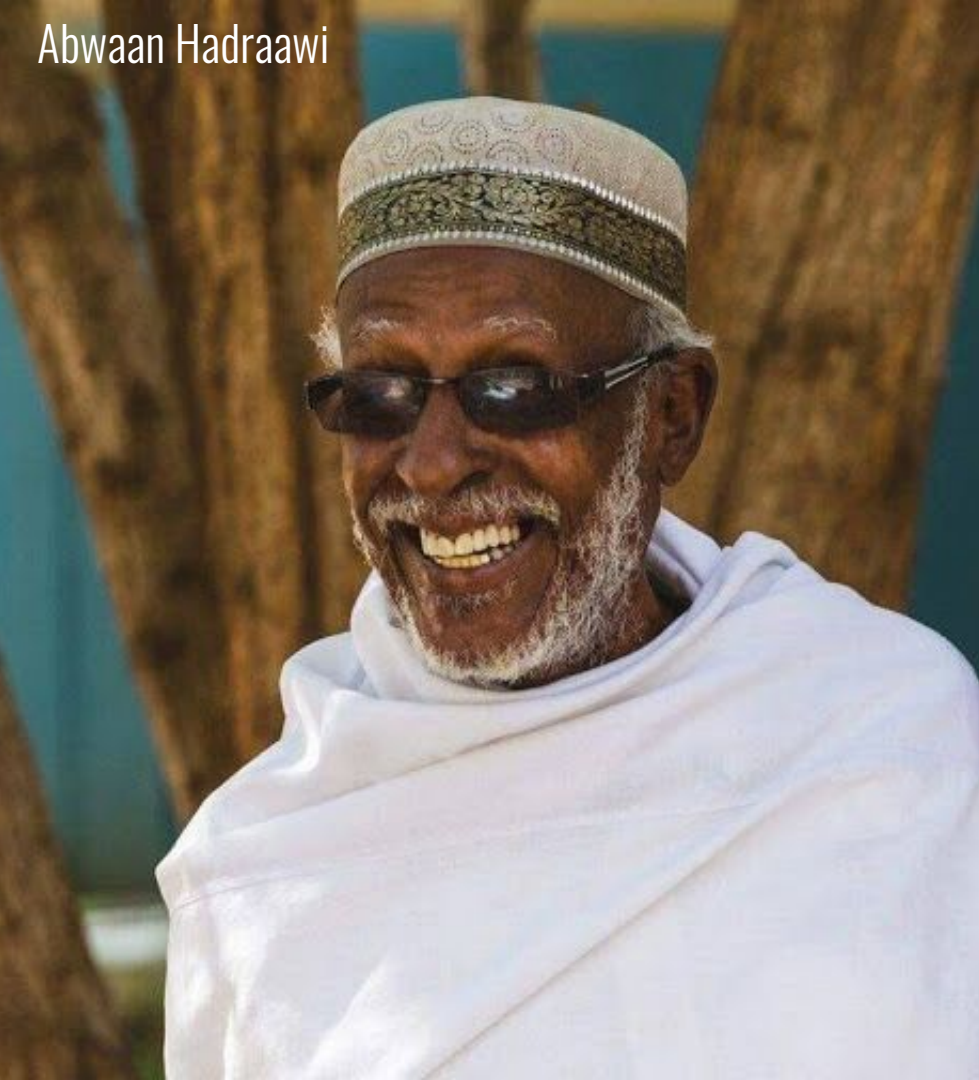
- Reverend Desmond Tutu

Sankofa “is an African word
from the Akan tribe in Ghana.

The translation of the word
and the symbol is:

*“It is not taboo to fetch what is at
risk of being left behind.”*





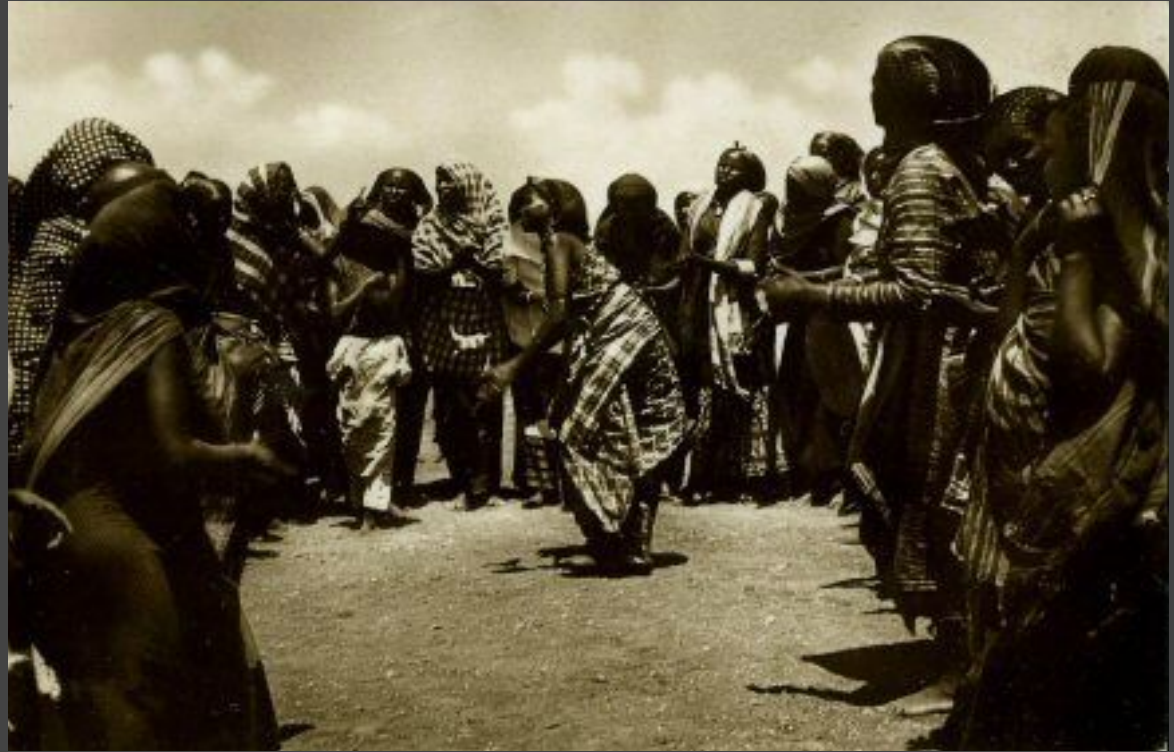
SOMALI ORAL TRADITION

Somalis have passed down oral history via a rich culture of storytelling; through various mediums including, but not limited to: **folktales, poetry, prose, proverbs**, and **songs**. This was a way to transmit culture, news, traditions and ways of being across generations. Two key components that preserve authenticity are memory and practice -- both heavily disrupted by migration, conflict, and trauma. Drawing on, and rebuilding this legacy is to heal, and continue innate ways of being.



Buraanbur/Jaandheer as examples of complete embodiment :

- Movement, affirmations, dance, and drumming
- Honoring elders, and ancestors Collapsing past, present and future
- Fluidity of time and space
- Transmission of knowledge from elders



*“We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality,
tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one
directly, affects all indirectly.”*

- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

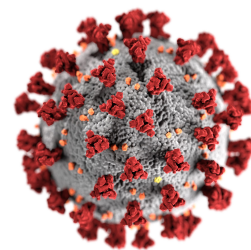
Reflections from the Elders

Lugman Kenny Gamble

What Does This All Mean for Black Muslims?

- Instilling pride and resilience (to counter internalized self-hatred and oppression)
- Deepen connection
- Collective Healing



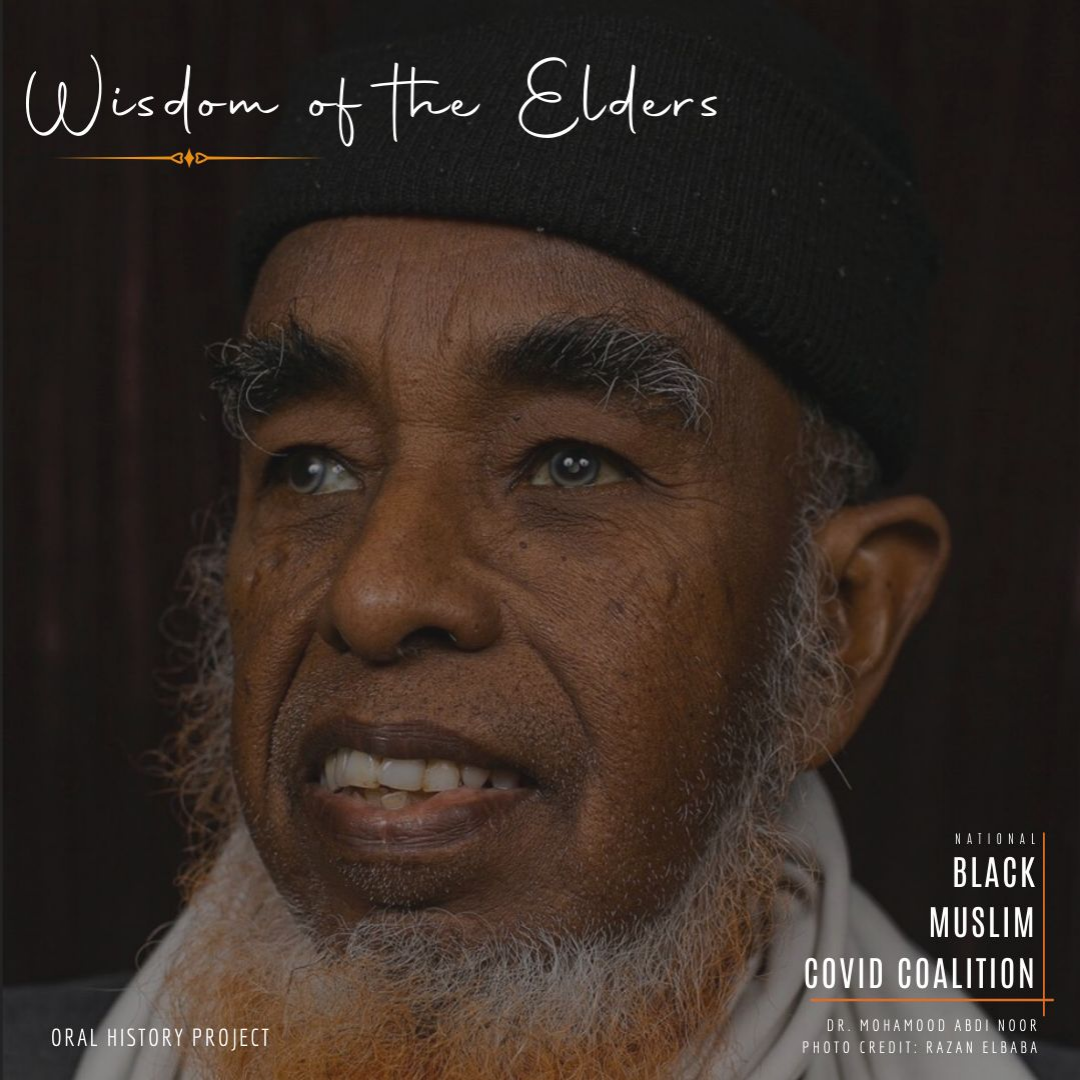


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NEXT STEPS

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ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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DR. MOHAMOOD ABDI NOOR
PHOTO CREDIT: RAZAN ELBABA

JOIN US!

NATIONAL BLACK MUSLIM COVID COALITION

The National Black Muslim COVID Coalition was launched by Muslim Wellness Foundation and Muslim Anti-Racism Collaborative to address the need for effective planning, preparedness, and organizing during this global #Coronavirus pandemic. This coalition draws from our roots in the Black Freedom Movement and is grounded in the frameworks of radical healing, healing centered engagement and the cycle of liberation. We have adopted an interdisciplinary, intergenerational, multi-ethnic, faith and healing centered approach to community-based organizing in order to build upon our strengths and achieve our vision of a healthy and whole community. Our aim is to “organize, mobilize, and empower” in six key areas: health and wellness, spiritual well-being, education, arts & culture, advocacy & organizing and economic development and support those who are on the ground doing important work .

blackmuslimcoalition.com/join



“If you hear of an outbreak of plague in a land, do not enter it; if the plague breaks out in a place while you are in it, do not leave that place”

-Sahih Al-Bukhari

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