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News, Research and Events

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A conversation with Bun B on race and racism in America

Legendary hip-hop artist and social activist [Bernard "Bun B" Freeman](#) has long been an important voice against racial prejudice and violence, not only in Houston but across the nation. On Tuesday, he discussed the protests sparked by the killing of George Floyd, and the urgent need to combat racial injustice, at a webinar moderated by [Anthony Pinn](#), the Agnes Cullen Arnold Professor of Humanities at Rice University and the director of Rice's [Center for African and African American Studies \(CAAAS\)](#) and [Center for Engaged Research and Collaborative Learning \(CERCL\)](#).

"In 2020, we should not have to bombard people with the message that Black lives matter," Bun B said, but the killing of George Floyd is a turning point. "George Floyd is different because there is video proof. We're all standing on that sidewalk. The physicality of the act was different." The use of social media to spread awareness has led to a shared sense of outrage and a collective fight that cuts across ideologies and doctrines, he said.

As a hip-hop artist, Bun B also discussed the intersection of social justice and his music. He sees it as a form of "edutainment," music that can inform, educate and engage people while also entertaining them. Hip-hop music is a voice of defiance and a rallying point that encourages people to be active participants in the community, he said.

Moving forward, Bun B sees police reform as a necessary step to address racial injustice. This would involve, among other things, reallocating funds to support mental health services and implementing independent review boards to handle situations where the police have been accused of wrongdoing. Another key starting point is to have conversations with family members, friends and co-workers about these difficult topics. "It may not be a comfortable conversation but the images we're seeing in this world aren't comfortable," he said. "The only way to avoid seeing those images is to stop avoiding these conversations."

To learn more and to watch this critically relevant webinar that attracted a wide range of viewers, please see the [event page](#).

“Covid-19 is clearly showing what Texans already know: the state needs to address underlying, non-medical conditions that have a dramatic impact on their health.”

Elena Marks, Nonresident Fellow in Health Policy, Baker Institute;
President and CEO, Episcopal Health Foundation,
to [Community Impact Newspaper](#)



The impact of Covid-19 on vulnerable families

While the pandemic upends life around the globe, many vulnerable people in the U.S. — including low-income mothers, children, undocumented immigrants and refugees — face serious challenges that extend beyond immediate health concerns. In a recent [series of reports](#), [Quianta Moore](#), fellow in child health policy, collaborated with Baker Institute experts across disciplines to look at the struggles of these populations and the policies that may help them.

The series launched with [an examination of the pandemic’s impact on low-income, working mothers](#). Moore and [Joyce Beebe](#), fellow in public finance, and [Zeinab Bakhiet](#), a research project manager for the Center for Health and Biosciences, considered how federal legislation enacted to prevent the spread of Covid-19 has unintended consequences for those who must now balance a low-wage job with extra childcare responsibilities. In a [related brief](#), Moore and [Christopher Greeley](#), a professor of pediatrics at the Baylor College of Medicine, explain how parental stress can produce negative physiological responses in the developing brains of infants and young children. This irreversibly alters the child’s brain structure, impacting their long-term prospects for good health and academic and economic success. Now is the time to institute policies and practices that mitigate the effects of the pandemic on the next generation, they write.

A [third report](#) — by Moore and [Laura Zelaya](#), the outreach coordinator for the Center for Health and Biosciences, and [Pamela Lizette Cruz](#), a research analyst for the Center for the United States and Mexico — argues that Covid-19 relief policies should include provisions to protect the well-being of undocumented immigrants in the U.S. for the safety and health of all who reside here. Similarly, resettled refugees face inherent vulnerabilities that are worsened by the Covid-19 crisis. Such challenges can be mitigated through trauma-informed, culturally appropriate health care, social service and educational resources and greater clarity about access to Covid-19 benefits and provisions, write Moore, Bakhiet and [Kelsey Norman](#), the director of the Women’s Rights, Human Rights and Refugees Program, in the series’ [final report](#).

To learn more about the impact of Covid-19 on vulnerable families, check out the [full series](#) in the Baker Institute’s online research library.

Covid-19 updates from the Baker Institute Blog

Covid-19 Updates: By the Numbers. Vivian Ho, the James A. Baker III Institute Chair in Health Economics; Kirstin Matthews, fellow in science and technology policy; and Heidi Russell, associate professor at the Baylor College of Medicine, provide the latest updates on vaccines and policy interventions, and why people respond differently to infection.

Browse the Baker Institute [research library](#) and the [Baker Insitute Blog](#) to keep up with the latest research and news on the coronavirus pandemic.

Upcoming Events

Webinar — Upsetting the status quo: The future of electricity market design. At a webinar featuring the work of Robert Idel, graduate fellow at the Center for Energy Studies, experts consider the need for new solutions as electricity markets around the world come under increasing pressure to incorporate wind and solar energy. **July 17 | Noon**

Webinar — Mexico's changing business and regulatory environment in the USMCA era. A panel of experts explore how the regulatory and business environment in Mexico is changing and what it means for doing business across the border. **July 23 | 11:00 am**

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