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[Home](#) > The Life of a Black Academic: Tired and Terrorized

The Life of a Black Academic: Tired and Terrorized

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Henrika McCoy, [Inside Higher Ed](#)

By now you have probably seen posts on social media written by your black colleagues indicating they are tired. Just to be clear, that weariness is long-standing, and it is no secret to other black people. It has simply now morphed into exhaustion that is so overwhelming that we are now voicing it out loud to you.

For months, we have seen countless reports of how the COVID-19 global pandemic has led to [disproportionate numbers of black people becoming ill or dying every day](#). Just know that those numbers are rooted in the second version of [America's original sin: slavery](#) (the first version being the almost complete annihilation of, and the stealing of land from, the indigenous American Indian population). The diseases that increase the likelihood of illness and death for blacks, if one contracts COVID-19, have their origins in the diets forced upon those who were enslaved and maintained today by the lack of access blacks have to healthy foods and poor access they have to health care. You may see those numbers and feel despair. But your black colleagues see those numbers and, in addition to feeling despair, may also be picturing the possible devastation of lives: their friends, relatives, neighbors or even their own.

As if the assault of COVID-19 on black bodies as a covert method of white supremacy and terrorism were not enough, we are increasingly and regularly witnessing the overt assault of white supremacy and terrorism on black bodies. We have had to hear about and [witness the murder of black men and women](#) by those charged with serving and protecting them and others, who are self-appointed yet awarded the privilege to act as arbiters of justice against black people. We have been inundated with videos where black people have had their right to simply inhabit a space be questioned and restricted because white supremacy has rendered that power a birthright.

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