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## Black and Bold zine

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DECEMBER 2021

# BLACK AND BOLD



RAMSEY BENNANI, MARIELA MARIANO, BRITANEY  
MCKINNEY & NATALIA MURO

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# EDITORIAL

DECEMBER 2021 • VOLUME 1



## A NEW BEGINNING

Two years into the pandemic caused by COVID-19, an unprecedented health crisis that has caught us all off guard, we look back at how the world has changed since then and in what direction we are moving now.

The purpose of our magazine in the following pages is to delve into the social, political and economic dimensions of the coronavirus crisis, with special emphasis on the effects this devastating pandemic has had on the African-American community in the United States.

The future will depend on how we react to this event. Solidarity, leadership and generosity as an effective antidote in these difficult times.



## THE PANDEMIC NOT AS A CRISIS, BUT AS A LESSON

We need everyone to stand up against discrimination. Racism and discrimination against racial, ethnic and religious minorities are increasingly widespread during the COVID-19 crisis. Now is not the time for division, but to reach out and include those left behind.

Through the articles, the objective is to approach the reality of the most numerous racial minorities in the United States. In what situation has the pandemic left them? How have they moved forward?

We will see how COVID-19 has harmed the rights and freedoms of many of them, suffering discrimination in access to education, housing or healthcare, but we will also find stories of overcoming, resilience and inspiration towards others and towards the world that make us believe that a better future is possible.

# TAKING THE LEAD

Black female scientist takes lead in COVID-19 vaccine development.



Kizzmekia Corbett by Kent Dayton

Corbett was born on January 26, 1986, in Hurdle Mills, North Carolina, to Rhonda Brooks, a single mother. However, Corbett was raised in a big family in Hillsborough, North Carolina, with multiple step-siblings and foster siblings. She received her education at local schools, where her teachers recognized her potential and advised her mother to place her on advanced courses. In the years ahead, when she was in the tenth grade, Corbett was selected for a summer program focused on minorities students at the University of North Carolina (UNC) in Chapel Hill. This opportunity served her as a chance to develop her gifts and love for Science and Biology since while there, she worked in chemical laboratories at the UNC.

A graduate of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC), Corbett received her undergraduate degree in biological sciences and sociology from the same institution in 2008. After completing her undergraduate studies, she went to UNC-Chapel Hill to pursue her graduate studies in microbiology and immunology, where she researched antibody responses to the dengue virus for her Ph.D. Following graduation, Corbett accepted a position as a research fellow at the National Institutes of Health.



By Timothy Nwachukwu

## ON THE VACCINE



The fierce competition led to a spectacular outcome: the vaccine was authorized at record speed and has since been distributed to tens of millions of people around the world. By taking the lead on the creation of a quite efficacious vaccine to fight against COVID-19, many view Kizzmekia S. Corbett, as a scientist who is predestined to go down as lead scientist in history. Less than a year after the virus began spreading throughout the world, the vaccine began to be delivered to millions of healthcare professionals and others who were at high risk of infection.

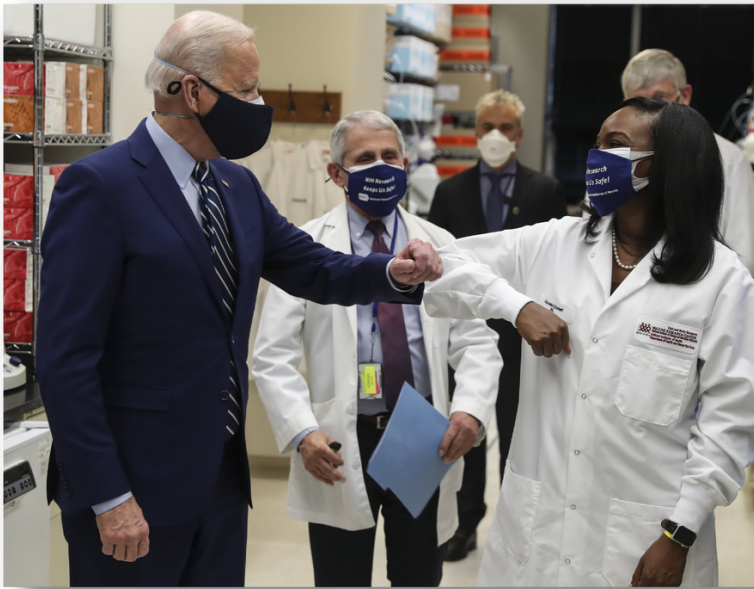
The investigation on other coronaviruses carried out by Corbett and his colleagues while working at the National Institutes of Health created the framework for the creation of the COVID-19 vaccine prior to this year's pandemic. These early efforts were important in enabling them to manufacture the COVID-19 vaccine in conjunction with the biotech company Moderna at a fast rate. Dr. Corbett is not only an internationally respected immunologist, but she is also advocates for racial health inequities and the significance of placing confidence in science. Corbett is a light of hope and an inspiration for scientists of the future during these unprecedented times in history.



Kizzmekia Corbett

The outbreak of SARS-CoV-2 in late 2019, often known as the coronavirus, sparked widespread alarm and resulted in thousands of individuals being hospitalized or experiencing economic hardship. Many scientists across the world have begun working on developing a vaccine and treatment to ease patients' symptoms while also flattening the curve to prevent the virus from spreading any further. At the same time, Dr. Kizzmekia S. Corbett was working at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) Vaccine Research Center, where she had worked as a research fellow for six years later becoming team leader for the center's Coronavirus Vaccines Team. COVID-19 and its threats were an enigma to many scientists around the world, and few barely understood the virus as she did, making her an essential piece in the development of the Moderna vaccine.





U.S. President Joe Biden greets Kizzmekia Corbett and Anthony Fauci at the National Institutes of Health in February  
Bloomberg | Bloomberg | Getty Images

Additionally, Corbett has assumed a major task as a vaccination educator, particularly reaching out to communities of color, which have been disproportionately hit by COVID-19 and have long faced healthcare inequities. In the African-American community, Corbett plays a unique role in the fight against COVID-19 as one of the most visible African-American scientists. Acknowledging her position she attempts to close the gap between vaccination research and public awareness by conveying the information in terms that are understandable to the general population. Corbett expresses that "For a long time, we kept the general public out of vaccine development until the moment came to administer the vaccine. And it is simply intolerable." Corbett reaches out to the community not only as a doctor but also as an individual that can simply understand the concerns of many people who reach out to hear people's concerns and educate rather than judge and move on. Corbett routinely communicates with the church and school groups via email, collaborates with news organizations, and creates internet videos to share the message. Corbett also volunteers in schools, serving as a role model for children from low-income communities and encouraging them to pursue careers in STEM.

Kizzmekia Corbett turned 34 a week after her lab-created mRNA-1273. Her boss at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, Anthony Fauci, would refer to her as a "rising star." Within a year, her lab would be visited by two sitting presidents for briefings. Corbett, like mRNA-1273, suddenly appeared, but both the scientist and the science of messenger RNA vaccines took a long time to develop. Corbett revealed in a recent interview with Chris Sweeney that "It was almost surreal. I haven't wrapped my mind around it or any of these moments in the past few months there's just so much going on." She continues to explain her busy schedule prevents her from really appreciating the events where she has the opportunity to meet leaders or people she has admired herself. Corbett was barely recognized outside the realm of viral immunology before being catapulted into the forefront by the COVID-19 epidemic. Corbett worked as a senior research fellow at NIAID's vaccine development section, where he studied viral illnesses such as dengue fever, respiratory syncytial virus, and new coronaviruses such as MERS. These early research efforts were critical in accelerating the development of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Corbett's job is only beginning, as she continues to receive awards, congratulations from international leaders, and hundreds of high-profile media inquiries. As well as an offer to run her own lab in the Department of Immunology and Infectious Diseases at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Corbett mentioned that she wanted a laboratory where everyone feels like family, with old and young brothers, and where everyone can openly express their thoughts and findings without hesitation "The other thing I think is important is to lead by listening" ( Sweeney 2021). It is critical that members feel not simply a sense of belonging in the lab, but also that their voices are heard. Additionally, she also is an associate member of the Ragon Institute at Massachusetts General Hospital, MIT, and Harvard. Corbett intends to concentrate her efforts on viral immunology research that will aid in the preparation for possible future pandemics and the creation of universal vaccinations.

# Success Besides The Storm



AISHA "PINKY" COLE

In addition to being the founder and CEO of Slutty Vegan Atlanta, Aisha Cole is also known as "Pinky," and she is recognized for her plant-based delicious fast food that produces hour-long lines at each of her vegan restaurants. When Cole opened Slutty Vegan in Atlanta in 2018, she took a more modern approach to how she would market and sell the restaurant than she had in the previous year. As part of her culinary adventure, Cole started out in a shared kitchen, developing her now-famous bawdy burgers like the "One Night Stand," before moving on to open a food truck later that year. Cole has already developed three other franchise locations in the Atlanta region, with the third being placed in the Jonesboro neighborhood. The restaurant's success has been fueled by high energy, celebrity endorsements, word of mouth, and of course, delicious cuisine has all contributed to the restaurant being the most popular among both vegans and meat-eaters in recent years.

Slutty Vegan ATL has remained relevant among a generation that has grown up with social media because of the connection Cole has built with her clients. Social media and advertising are only a few of the methods that Cole has used to build and expand her business. The values she promotes are not only through her business goals but also through her ideals and actions that stem from a stronger bond with the community around her, all of which have a positive impact on the world.



PINKY COLE



by Darnell Wilburn

## Giving back to the community!

Cole describes the atmosphere in her restaurants as "Six Flags-like," with a lot of people talking simultaneously, music, and laughing. However, philanthropy is a significant component of her company's operations. The Pinky Cole Foundation has established scholarship funds for students at Clark Atlanta University, which will be administered by the foundation. Cole highlights her mother's influence on her compassion in an interview with Leigh-Ann Jackson for bon appetit, and she shares her memories of growing up in the system with her father imprisoned and being raised by a single, self-sacrificing mother. Cole admires and praises her mother for instilling in her the importance of helping and supporting others despite the fact that they had very little themselves. Cole clarifies what she means "I didn't understand what was going on at the time. But I still hold it in high regard today, which is one of the primary reasons I established the Pinky Cole Foundation." Cole's charity is not only related to her business, but it is also closely tied to her childhood ideals and life experiences.

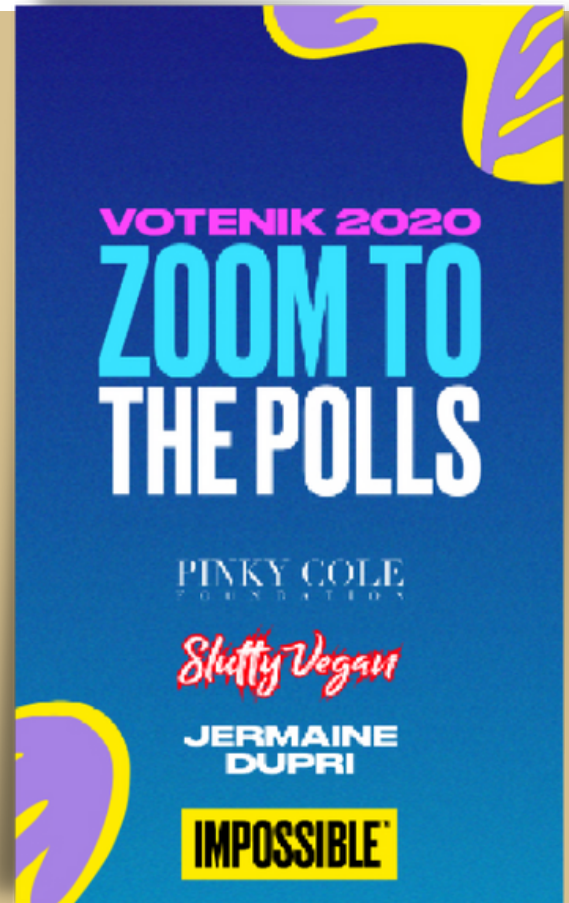
Pinky Cole Foundation is a non-profit organization that is led by Pinky Cole is dedicated to the advancement of women in sports. In addition to following their commercial ambitions, the foundation's principal focus is on assisting future generations of color in achieving financial success in their lives. During COVID-19, the organization created and developed a plan to enhance the health and safety of members of the community, which is now being implemented. Efforts have also been made to pay the rent for other small businesses in the Metro-Atlanta area, offer meals to the City of Atlanta-sponsored foundations, and establish an Entrepreneurs Anonymous Digital project to aid businesses that have been particularly hard struck by the pandemic.



Raymond McCrea Jones for The New York Times

*Lets get involved!*

The several contributions that Cole has made to local businesses and families have also made her presence in the community known and felt since she has led many community engagement activities and donations. As a result of the police brutality protests that took place in the summer of 2020, Covid-19, and the subsequent murder of Rayshard Brooks by an APD officer that took place that summer, Cole decided to take additional action, funding his children's college tuition as well as donating a car and life insurance to his family. Additionally, Cole entered the political sphere when she established the Votenik 2020: Zoom the Polls turnout, a weekly virtual series of dialogues aimed to increase voter participation throughout the country. As opposed to concentrating just on the president, Cole emphasized the need for political involvement and action in local communities as well as state level. Cole also says that her neighborhood influenced her activism, and now she wants to spread awareness and activism to members of her community while stressing the need for representation in the local government for the local community.



By Impossiblefoods.



Raymond McCrea Jones for The New York Times



## *Repeated History or a New Beginning?*

WRITTEN BY BRITANEY MCKINNEY

We see with the COVID-19 pandemic how we can roll out these vaccines at a fast rate so our everyday lives can get back to normal. But for the black community, the energy around the vaccine is a little different. We have seen in the past how vaccines amongst other things have impacted the Black community and this time it is no different. The main question that I have is regarding COVID-19 why is the black community hesitant to get the vaccine? But honestly, the answer is simple, this distrust for the vaccine comes from the past with the Tuskegee trials and deep-rooted history of it. It can also be dated back to slavery among many other things. There is distrust within the government as well, considering that they have control over how fast the vaccine was produced and released to the public.

The Tuskegee trials was a 40-year government experiment that took a significant toll on the Black communities. The trials consisted of 600 African American men that were promised free medical care in exchange for participating in the study to see the full progression of syphilis. Some of the men were injected with syphilis and others were not and were treated with placebos (aspirin and mineral supplements). They also convinced the local physicians not to treat the participants at all but rather than to research what was done. With being able to track the disease's full progression the men didn't have effective care including if they died, went blind, or even insane including other health problems due to their untreated disease. With having this untreated disease spouses have been diagnosed with it and it was passed down to children at birth.

**"What people need to understand is some of the hesitancy is rooted in a horrible history, and for some, it's truly a process of asking the right questions to get to a place of getting the vaccine."**

Considering the outcome of this experiment we can obviously see why the black community is hesitant with getting the vaccine. Considering that Black individuals were the test subjects in the past they feel like history is repeating itself. There is also uncertainty whether that there are possible side effects with this vaccine that could lead to future health complications or even physical defects. Within the Black community, there is also fighting for access to information about the vaccine. Considering there was a reward for participation within the Tuskegee trials this can lead to skepticism considering with pandemic they are offering rewards as well such as free doughnuts, fries at Shake Shack, \$10 gifts at Target, etc. With the offer of these rewards, I can tell that they are pushing with the same amount of pressure to see whether the vaccine is effective or not. The Black community could see this as a red flag, and it comes back full circle with the distrust within the government. Why is the government pushing so hard for this vaccine that they feel the need to include all these incentives for individuals to get vaccinated?

The Black community has been distrusting the government for a very long time as well as politics. We can see this with voting rights, voter suppression, housing, and economics. Voting rights and voters suppression has the most heat within the government considering that they are still fighting for it now. With all the laws and regulations that have been put in place, it makes it harder for minority communities to vote considering that they don't fit all the requirements or even that there is some type of loophole within the system that makes them ineligible to vote such as a criminal record. With these restrictions, it makes for individuals to be less coming forth with the government considering that they are also putting up these constant challenges and blockages for basic rights. This also ties within not having the basic access to information that could

benefit them in the future. With housing and economics, we see that the black community is treated less than their other counterparts with this idea that they cannot afford certain things and are being paid less than their white counterparts which is a cause for concern. With this being a cause for concern the government hasn't done anything to help alleviate the current issue at hand but rather state in more or fewer words, that they have bigger fish to fry than to fix poverty as well as the housing issue and the economic issue at hand within the black community as well as other communities.

The black community has this sense of hesitancy considering that there is a clear pattern here. It roots back to the 1930s or even longer than that and it continues to happen. There is also the voice in the back of their thinking about what happened to their ancestors and whether it is going to happen to them as well. With the government's involvement with the vaccine, voting rights, voter suppression, housing, and economics the black community is being disproportionately treated and they don't want to continue that cycle.



# ***GIVING BIRTH***

A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH?

## **EVERY MOTHER COUNTS**



### **COVID-19 and Maternal Health Disparities Among Women of Color**

Maternal health is an issue of great importance in all countries of the world and, therefore, it must be examined carefully and treated with the utmost respect. As is usually the case in any situation of this nature, there are several factors that must be taken into account when determining the reasons behind the unequal treatment of women of different racial groups regarding maternal health. Neither the expert researchers nor the numbers lie, and both paint a bleak picture of the health gap between American women of color and white women. Yes, in the United States, black women are more likely to die during or after pregnancy due to racial disparities in maternal health in the country.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), black women are 3 to 4 times more likely to die from birth-related complications than white women and *"white women have a maternal mortality rate of 13 deaths per 100,000 live births, while the rate for black women is 44 deaths per 100,000 live births."*

Although this is a complex issue that is affected by a wide variety of factors, experts say that the main cause of this situation can be defined briefly and simply: racism. There is a broad consensus among medical organizations and professionals that racism and discrimination have a direct impact on healthcare and medical assistance, including maternal mortality rates. There are significant disparities in birth outcomes between black and white mothers, even when factors such as education and socioeconomic background are similar.

# Racism in Maternity Care?

Institutionalized racism and other discriminatory behaviors contribute to the existence of large differences between the health care provided to black and white mothers. The figures presented show that women of color perform worse than white women. And all this without their education or salary being determining factors when it comes to receiving adequate medical treatment.

Katrina Anderson, counselor at the Center for Reproductive Rights, is one of the many voices that have spoken out about this unfortunate situation, expressing the injustice and enormous disadvantages faced by black mothers in the United States.

The large number of births that result in death is not only a useful indicator to measure poverty, but also puts the spotlight on gender inequality and social injustice in a country. According to recent data, the United States has one of the highest maternal mortality rates among developed countries: the CDC estimates that the country has about 17 pregnancy-related deaths per 100,000 births.

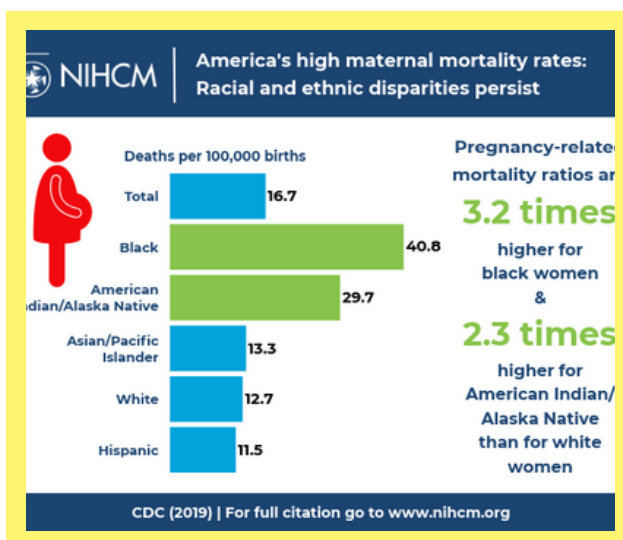
Aside from racial discrimination, black women also face physical obstacles. There are studies that show that black women are less likely to receive quality medical advice or beneficial and effective treatments during pregnancy than white women. Yes, there is a lack of access to care due to which poor quality of care plays a role in the disparity, particularly among women at lower socioeconomic levels.



*"The U.S. is the only country with an advanced economy where maternal mortality has increased in the last decade" – Katrina Anderson*

Some of these obstacles have to do with the fact that many black women lack access to quality contraceptive care and counseling. Likewise, Black women have limited access to abortion. They are the ones who often experience delayed care, increased cost or simply lack of access to care. In addition to the handicaps, there are other obstacles that hinder medical care for women of color and make them more vulnerable, such as limited access to transportation in cases where the health center is located far from the home, or the difficulty in accessing information that would allow them to receive quality health care with all the guarantees.

As if the situation was not already difficult for pregnant women of color, the year 2020 brought the worst pandemic in recent memory. COVID-19 has undoubtedly had a strong impact not only on the U.S. economy, but also on U.S. healthcare system. While there was already a considerable gap in maternity care provided to black and white women, the coronavirus has only worsened this reality. It is still too early to establish how and to what extent the pandemic has impacted black women more severely during pregnancy than white women, but there are already some studies whose conclusions point in that direction.



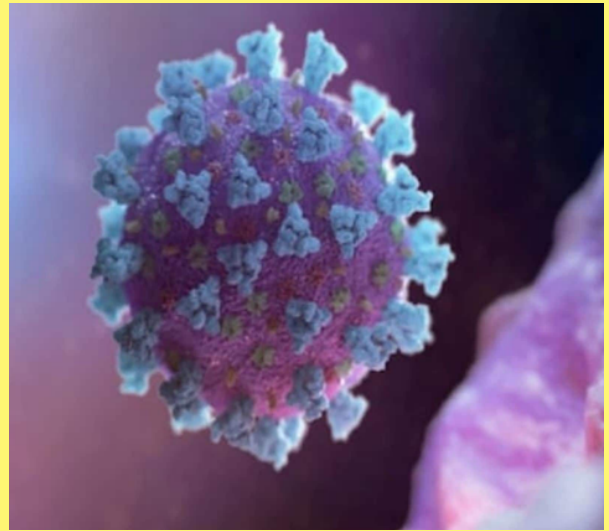
# Looking Ahead

The combination of COVID-19 and systemic racism in the country has exacerbated racial disparities in maternal health and in particular the maternal health of women of color. As previously stated, prior to the pandemic, black women were three to four times more likely to die from pregnancy complications than white women. Now, although official data is not yet available, it is expected that this figure has worsened significantly.

What we do have, however, is information on black COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths. Once again, the community of color in the United States is suffering much more from the effects of the pandemic than white citizens. Although this situation of health discrimination against blacks predated the outbreak of the pandemic, the fact is that the pandemic has further highlighted the urgency and importance of finding solutions to help achieve a balance in health care for all mothers-to-be, regardless of their race.

There is no question that Black women deserve to have a safe and healthy pregnancy and childbirth. There is a need for systemic changes to significantly improve Black maternal health outcomes, which begins with the health care system improving access to care and making the places Black women live and work healthier, and even fairer and more responsive to their needs.

What are the solutions to maternal health inequities that disproportionately affect black women? I would like to highlight two different ways in which they are trying to address this situation.



*“Hispanic and non-Hispanic Black pregnant women appear to be disproportionately affected by SARS-CoV-2 infection during pregnancy” - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

The first is the Better Starts for All initiative, which seeks to facilitate access to prenatal care for all women. The program targets pregnant women in certain counties in Ohio and in some areas of Washington, and offers interventions aimed at providing support, education and health care to these communities that have historically struggled to perform well in this area. These includes mobile health services, supportive obstetric care and virtual education. In the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, the situation for many pregnant mothers has worsened dramatically, so programs such as these are essential to ensure that both mothers and their babies receive the care and attention they need.

On the other hand, it is also worth mentioning the Momnibus Black Maternal Health Act, introduced this year, which aims to address the maternal health crisis in the United States. It is a law that seeks to alleviate the legislative deficiencies that exist to date regarding the health care of black women during pregnancy. The three main priorities of this legislative initiative are to ensure that all women have access to Medicaid for the duration of their pregnancy as well as for 12 months after delivery, to expand the number of social workers who support these women, and to improve pregnant women's access to community services that enable them to thrive in their environment.

DECEMBER 2021

# HIDDEN FIGURES

## Women of Science

A few years ago, a Yale University study published in the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science* demonstrated the existence of discrimination between men and women in science. This was occurring from university classrooms to scientific laboratories. With the same competencies and skills on paper, female students are considered less qualified than their male peers by biology, physics, and chemistry professors at U.S. universities.

Biases against women in science are related to dominant cultural stereotypes. Because science is perceived as a rather masculine discipline, women are observed as less competent. This virtually non-existent representation of women in science leads to many problems for those who want to pursue careers in science, and creates impossibly high standards, especially for women who have been historically marginalized, such as women of African descent.

Below we will analyze and highlight the stories and achievements of three exceptional women, all of whom are incredibly courageous, resilient, and capable. With their contributions in different fields of science and technology they overcame barriers, became pioneers and made history, but they remain unknown to a vast majority of people. Because science is not just for men and there is room for the brightest black female minds to excel and prove their worth.

### BLACK EXCELLENCE

Natalia Muro Godino

# Shirley Ann Jackson

President of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

This American physicist was the first African American woman to earn a doctorate from MIT. Jackson was born in Washington and her parents strongly encouraged her education at a time when there were still segregated schools. Thanks to the landmark 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* that mandated the integration of schools, Jackson was given the opportunity to follow her dreams.

She graduated with outstanding grades and entered MIT as a student in 1964; she was then one of twenty black students at the famous university and the only one studying theoretical physics.

It was not easy for her to make friends and she experienced discrimination from her peers, but she chose to stay at MIT for her doctoral thesis. In 1973 she received her Ph.D. in nuclear physics, becoming only the second African American woman in the United States to earn a doctorate in physics.

As a subatomic particle researcher Jackson directed physics laboratories in both the United States and Europe during the 1970s. She also spent 15 years at Bell Laboratories, where her experiments led to major advances in telecommunications: portable fax, fiber optic cables and the technology behind caller ID and call waiting.

In 1995, President Bill Clinton chose Jackson as chair of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, where she had control of all aspects of the nation's nuclear industry outside the military. In 2014 Shirley Jackson was selected as a member of Barack Obama's Intelligence Advisory Board and she has been awarded the National Medal of Science.



*"Treasure your curiosity and nurture your imagination. Have confidence in yourself. Do not let other puts limits on you. Dare to imagine the unimaginable".*

# Alice Ball

Chemical Researcher

Alice Ball developed the only effective treatment for leprosy until the advent of antibiotics. She was the first American of African descent to earn a master's degree in chemistry from the University of Hawaii and to be hired as a professor of chemistry at the University of Hawaii.

She graduated from the University of Washington with a degree in pharmaceutical chemistry. Her excellent grades earned her a scholarship to pursue a master's degree at either the University of California at Berkeley or the University of Hawaii. She chose the latter.

She began researching a cure for Hansen's disease, better known as leprosy. Chaulmoogra oil, used for centuries in Chinese and Indian medicine, was the only antidote until then.



Dr. Harry T. Hollmann, who worked at Kalihi Hospital in Hawaii, specializing in leprosy patients, asked Alice for help in finding a solution. She isolated the chemical compounds in the oil and with them created the first water-soluble remedy, easier to inject and less painful.

She passed away at the age of 24, it is not very clear from what. In 1918 it was reported that 79 patients at Kalihi Hospital had been discharged. The injection he created was used for 20 years.

In 2000 he was honored by placing a memorial plaque on the only chaulmoogra tree on the University of Hawaii campus. Mazie Hirono, former governor of the state, declared February 29 "Alice Ball Day" and the University awarded her the Regents Medal of Distinction.



*"I work and I work and still it seems that I have done nothing".*

# Katherine Jackson

NASA Mathematician

Born in Virginia and pushed by her father, little Katherine Johnson stayed in school, even when she had to travel miles, to continue her education; those were times when African Americans like her didn't make it to college and sometimes, especially if they were women, didn't even finish school. Because of her intelligence, she skipped several grades, graduating from high school at 14 and from university at 18, specializing, of course, in mathematics.

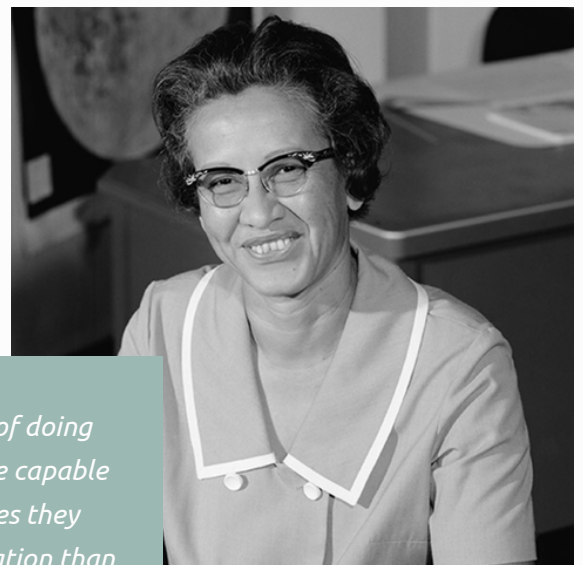
Like so many women of the time, she dedicated herself to parenting, and also to teaching. Until the Second World War, when more manpower was needed and until then the male world was opened to women. At NACA women had to be "human computers," recalculating wind tunnels and other tedious tasks; they all did so well that the organization continued their services after the war. In that context, in 1953, Katherine Johnson joined the ranks of the NACA.

What she would do there would be an extraordinary career: she calculated the trajectory of the first American in space, and her work was vital in the Apollo missions that took man to the moon. She was the one who created emergency plans and calculations in case everything went wrong, time windows for launches and more. At first she was called in to verify the calculations made by the early computers, then this physicist and mathematician went on to work directly with the technology, until her retirement in the 1980's. John Glenn, the first American to orbit the moon, for example, specifically requested that Katherine Johnson calculate the trajectory and verify what the computer said; otherwise, he wouldn't get on the aircraft.

Of course, being a woman and African-American, Katherine Johnson and her accomplishments went unnoticed for decades, even having written dozens of papers for NASA. Until now. In 2011, Katherine received the Medal of Freedom, an honor in the U.S., from President Obama.



*"Girls are capable of doing everything men are capable of doing. Sometimes they have more imagination than men".*



# Covid-19 v. Education: the Battle for our Future

By Ramsey Bennani

The Coronavirus pandemic has had a negative impact on almost every socio-economic aspect present in our daily lives, yet one question that remains unanswered is how this pandemic will affect our society in the years to come. The answer lies in the United States education system, but it might not be the answer we are hoping for, as according to nationwide statistics, COVID-19 has severely affected the education of our nation's children in a very negative way. Moreover, racial and economic gaps become more prevalent in the face of the pandemic, as this is reflected through a lack of academic achievement, prosperity, and security. The pandemic has forced an abrupt transition from in-person learning, to virtual learning — and the transition was poorly handled by schools and universities across the nation as brought about many challenges and difficulties for students of various backgrounds.

Those who live abroad faced hours of time differences, and even those who remained in the United States, primarily low-income students, faced accessibility hardships as they often did not have access to computers or a stable internet connection. School boards across the nation report that most students that fall into this category come from families of color, so black students have seen a noticeable decrease in academic achievement due to the evident increase in the socioeconomic gap. According to the New York Times, black students “could experience even greater learning losses, equivalent to 10 months” of falling behind academically. In fact, the pandemic widened preexisting opportunity and achievement gaps, as historically disadvantaged students were disproportionately affected. In math, for example, students in predominantly Black schools ended the academic year with around six months of unfinished learning. In addition to the months of catching up, students need to achieve by the next semester, grades have also seen a steady decline, which can negatively impact both mental health, and a student’s future in terms of potential academic acceptances.



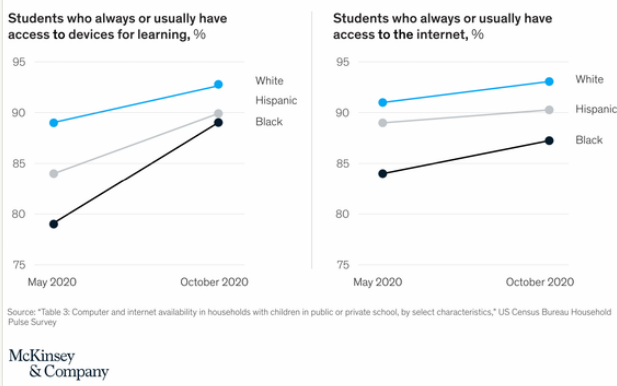
According to Reuters, “In the Chicago district, 14.3% of the more than 172,000 elementary and middle school students received Ds or Fs in math in the second quarter of this school year.”. Moreover, when looking into higher education statistics, “About 85 percent of respondents said the pandemic had a negative effect on their performance. Another 9 percent said the pandemic didn't affect their performance, and about 5 percent said the pandemic had a positive influence on their performance.” based on a national survey. In this same survey, university students even criticized the quality of virtual learning, stating that they have a more difficult time learning online as opposed to the more traditional in-person learning. This decline in performance can be attributed to a multitude of factors, such as the unprecedented nature of this change, a wildly different approach to learning. But most importantly is the question of accessibility as virtual learning assumes the economic and financial stability of students whereas many cannot afford to own a computer, pay for stable internet, or find the time to join a class to their potentially hectic employment schedule they need to maintain in order to pay for classes.

**"85 percent of respondents said the pandemic had a negative effect on their performance."**

Unfortunately, those most affected by this question are people of color, and therefore black students and families, as systemic racism and inequality present in a multitude of social aspects prevent them from being able to afford the same necessities — covid related academic material for instance — unlike white families who have historically had the unwarranted socioeconomic advantage. Although gaps in access have narrowed since the fall of 2020, the gap still exists, and black students still have the least amount of access to the internet and devices required in order to continue learning compared to other racial groups. Based on the academic difficulties caused by the pandemic, the adult life of this generation of students is threatened, as the steady decline of grades and academic prosperity undermines their ability to attend university or find a fulfilling job that not only enables them to support themselves but maybe even a family.



Gaps in access have narrowed since the spring but still remain.



Another issue raised by the pandemic in response to education is the mental health of students, as parents report that their children have begun experiencing, or rather exhibiting, symptoms of depression and anxiety such as social withdrawal, self-isolation, lethargy, and irrational fears. Some parents even report that their children were clinically diagnosed with depression and anxiety as a direct result of the failing education system wherein students are stuck at home and glued to a computer screen for hours on end. Racial disparities exist even with regards to this aspect, as black parents are seven to nine percentage points more likely than white parents to report higher levels of concern. The COVID-19 pandemic has created an immense amount of difficulties for students across the nation, yet pre-existing racial disparities were still amplified as a direct result of the pandemic. The transition back to in-person learning might begin to alleviate these difficulties, yet with the Omicron variant spreading rapidly across the world, there is still a certain amount of uncertainty surrounding our children's education, and subsequently, their academic success.

Children have begun experiencing, or rather exhibiting, symptoms of depression and anxiety such as social withdrawal, self-isolation, lethargy, and irrational fear — as a result of the pandemic.



## Speak Up or Stay Home

By Britaney McKinney

At the height of the pandemic, we saw the Black Lives Movement soar, and we saw many more demonstrations of protests than what we have seen in more recent years. With there being more protests there is cause for concern about the transmission of COVID-19 considering the number of people that have been present at these protests. But these protestors have been following COVID protocols with making sure they are wearing their mask but just not social distancing. With that in mind, it seems like the police aren't doing their part to keep the transmission rates low with the tactics that they have been using during the protests.

The protestors were seen even handing out hand sanitizers, masks, and gloves to their peers to make sure that they flatten the curve while speaking their mind for something they believe in. These individuals seem to have a straightforward idea of how they want to proceed with the agenda at hand while still being safe. It seems like they are more responsible and caring with the actions that they took during the protests besides not being able to social distance because of the number of people that are also protesting. With them taking these precautions would this lead to spreading the virus at a faster rate or would it slow down the transmission rate? Honestly, the world may never know but

*"A LOT OF PEOPLE'S EYES LIT UP WHEN HE PUMPED THE SANITIZER INTO THEIR HANDS."*



considering that these people are risking their lives speaks volumes. The Black Lives Matter movement has taken a more drastic turn on how they conduct these protests and the tactics that they are using are different than what they were in the past. However, on the other hand, the police had a completely different mindset with their tactics.

Throughout the protests, it was seen that the police were using tear gas, pepper spray among many things against the protestors. It was to be said that one police officer even pulled down a protestor's mask to pepper spray them. What does this say about "slowing down" the transmission rate? From where I'm standing and looking at the situation at hand it doesn't seem like it's slowing down anything. Also, the mass arrests of protestors lead to more people in a holding cell than what is allowed makes the rate of transmission higher potentially. With tear gas and pepper spray, it leaves the protestors no choice but to pull down their mask to get some air or even milk to get the sting of pepper spray from out of their eyes amongst other articles

of clothing. With them having no choice is it technically their fault that they could be spreading the virus? No, absolutely not because the police put them in a situation that shouldn't have been there in the first place. The regulations that the police department has set in place don't align well with the pandemic protocols that are set in place.

Where does that leave the people that want to protest? There is more of this coming forth idea of double negative with protesting. You have two options either risk your health fighting for something that you believe in or risk



*"POLICE MOVING IN TIGHT FORMATION, MANHANDLING PEOPLE AND SPIRITING THEM AWAY TO CROWDED CELLS."*

"WHY DID THESE  
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your life at the hands of the police during these demonstrations. There isn't any room for anything else. Even though they have found a loophole within these two options is it enough to get by and continue the journey/path that they are currently on? Or does it lead to the police taking more advantage of the situation by using excessive force to deescalate the situation with these large crowds? With the police having an upper hand that could lead to more harm than good.

In the past, police have been seen to use the extreme for the smallest entities but rather than taking the high road they rather boost their authority and egos and that leaves for bigger consequences. Hence why the Black Lives Matters protests began to become the new bigger and broader focus of the pandemic. Considering they weren't afraid to step outside their homes without having the risk of infection. With the responses from the media and the public, the police were put into the hot seat, and this causes frustration on both parties which causes tension to rise. With these tensions rising it makes the police feel like they aren't doing their jobs



correctly. If they aren't doing their jobs correctly it makes them feel like they are not fulfilling their civic duty and that's why they used the tactics that they used on protestors. With using these types of tactics on the protestors there isn't any sense of humanity. The police make it seem like the crowd is the enemy and that's all. There is no compassion or forethought of why they are out protesting during a pandemic in the first place.

Without having any compassion or forethought the police are seen as the enemy in the eyes of the public. What the public sees is individuals that are fighting against police brutality versus the police and how they are treating the protestors is just proving their point further. By proving their point further, we also can add in the factor that they are also not helping slow the rate of covid down but rather amplifying it considering the number of arrests that they are making, tear gas, pepper spray, etc. which is a cause for concern. With this being a cause for concern, where does the line get drawn? Is it with changing protests strategies during the pandemic, staying home altogether, or not protesting at all? Or is it the way the police are trained to handle certain situations or them choosing to ignore it?

# Covid-19 and Housing: A Deepening Crisis

By Ramsey Bennani



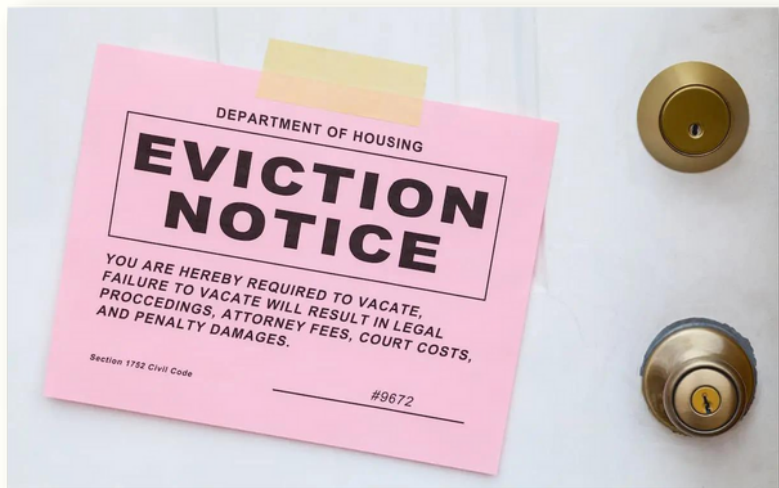
The COVID-19 Pandemic, which has been spreading illness across the globe for three years now, has concurrently amplified a multitude of social issues when looking at the African American community in North America. Housing inequality is one such issue, as COVID-19 increased the hardships faced by Black people in America seeing as the pandemic makes it more difficult for Black people to find and maintain a stable home (due to pre-existing segregation biases), but the housing inequality makes it so Black people are disproportionately affected by the pandemic itself. Upon closer inspection, the pandemic and housing inequality seem to feed one another and form a vicious cycle wherein Black people are naught but the victims.

There already exists a long history of housing insecurity for black people in America due to widespread marginalization and racially motivated policies, such as redlining, that aim to impoverish black people. The Coronavirus pandemic has intensified these hardships due to record-breaking job loss rates, and poor infrastructure. In fact, it is reported that black people in America have become increasingly less confident in their ability to pay rent on time as a result of final hardships caused by the pandemic.

Subsequently, as 32 percent of black adults faced job loss due to the pandemic, around 30 percent of black people struggle to pay rent on time — this statistic is based on Black respondents who failed to pay last month's rent on time. Moreover, according to data provided by Brookings, Black respondents faced a fifty percent increase in their chance of being evicted from their homes during the pandemic as a result of the financial hardships previously illustrated, whereas White people were the group that faced this issue the least out of all. Not only does this force Black people to look for new homes in lower-income areas, as the economy and job market during the pandemic faces a severe decline, but it also creates an unnecessary element of stress and uncertainty for those affected.



The threat of eviction, along with the actual act of eviction, can fuel multigenerational poverty and housing disparity as it makes it more difficult for renters to find housing in the future when taking the fact that evictions are listed on both credit and public record. Seeing as the ability to rent is made even more challenging, this forces Black people to search for homes in redlined districts where the chances of contracting the virus are increased. The high eviction rates also correlate with the increased homelessness rates during the pandemic, as the number of shelter residents has significantly increased alongside the enforcement of anti-homeless laws. Ultimately, such policies make it more difficult for those affected, largely people of color, to make ends meet and escape the cycle of poverty and suffering they have been subject to for so long.



When looking at low-income housing sectors, people of color are the primary residents — this includes black people more often than not. Historically, black people have been placed in redlined districts due to systemic racism in the housing industry where racial segregation still thrives. Such districts are notoriously underfinanced and have poor infrastructures that negatively impact the residents' day-to-day lives. Overcrowding, a lack of healthcare availability, and overall lack of cleanliness in these neighborhoods are but some of the problems found in these low-income communities. The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the flow of residents moving onto such neighborhoods, which further augments such issues. Considering the spreadability of the virus, alongside the aforementioned infrastructure issues, it is no surprise that black people in America are approximately 3 times more likely to contract the COVID-19 virus than white people, leading to a higher death toll in predominantly black communities.

Moreover, the lack of healthcare systems in lower-income neighborhoods makes it more difficult for the people living there to properly address the pandemic when they are afflicted by it, as medical facilities in such areas are notoriously underfunded and understaffed, leading to an unmanageable influx of patients who cannot be properly treated. Lastly, as overcrowding and unsanitary conditions become more commonplace — reminiscent of tenement housing in the 1800 and 1900s — the spreadability of the coronavirus is severely increased, despite the fact that the virus itself is known for its easy aerial transmission.

In order to address the housing inequality issue, especially with regards to the COVID-19 pandemic, certain reforms ought to be made in the form of financial services, as well as protection against policies aiming to make it more difficult for renters to ensure secure housing. Moreover, low-income neighborhoods need more access to medical facilities in order to address the needs of residents, who are more likely to contract COVID in large numbers, as opposed to those who live in medium to high-income communities. The COVID-19 pandemic has severely increased the already grueling inequalities faced by members of the black community with regards to housing, as eviction rates run rampant across cities in the United States, unemployment rates steadily increase, and homelessness becomes an even bigger social concern.



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# BLACK AND BOLD

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