

# The COVID-19 Vaccine

## Perspectives from the Black Community

We know that some of you may not trust the vaccine. That is understandable, especially given the history of the U.S. government causing medical harm to people of color.

Here are some perspectives from others in the Black community to help you make your own choice about whether to get the vaccine. **One thing to remember is that it is your choice. This information is only meant to inform you as you decide what's best for you.**



*Nurse Sandra Lindsay, one of the first people in the U.S. to get the COVID-19 vaccine.*

## I'm a Black doctor who didn't trust the COVID vaccine. Here's what changed my mind.

**By Dr. Eugenia South**  
**Assistant professor of emergency medicine at the University of Pennsylvania**  
*Excerpts from an article on NBCNews.com*

I am a doctor and have seen Black patients treated with disrespect; their concerns and symptoms dismissed. I reflected on this complex relationship between racism and mistrust as I considered whether to take the COVID-19 vaccine. ... For many months, I was definitely against being among the first to get the shot. Instead, I planned to wait and see how others did with the vaccine. ...

On Dec. 17, 2020, I received my first dose of the vaccine. Here is what helped change my mind.

First, I had to educate myself about how the vaccine had been created. The mRNA technology behind the COVID-19 vaccine has been under development for decades. Yes, its compressed timeline was aided by governmental funding, but the vaccine was worked on by thousands of scientists, underwent a rigorous three-phase clinical trials process, and was approved by two federal advisory boards. ...

Second, I read the experiences of people of color and trusted Black physicians who participated in vaccine trials. Reading their thought processes, how they weighed risks and benefits, and what their symptoms were after the second dose helped me envision taking the vaccine. ...

Third, my mom practically begged me to get the vaccine. Since March, she's been hearing my own terrifying stories about COVID-19 patients. ...

Still, I was undecided until the Pfizer trial was published. The graph from that study showing the continued rise of COVID-19 infection in the placebo group compared to the near complete drop-off in those who received the vaccine will forever be imprinted on my mind. In addition to being a physician, I am a scientist. And while the historical examples of experimentation on Black bodies in the name of science are too numerous to count, and concerns about racism and bias in research persist, I still trust rigorous science. I was almost ready to say yes. ...

I weighed the unknowns against the risks of contracting the coronavirus — death, a prolonged hospital stay or, and perhaps most convincing to me, the increasingly documented lingering, and not rare, long-term complications from COVID-19 itself: brain fog, difficulty breathing, extreme fatigue, depression.

The choice became clear. I would get the vaccine.

I didn't feel well for three days after my second COVID-19 shot. I had a fever, body aches and headaches for 24 hours; then fatigue. Motrin and Tylenol helped with my symptoms, which were a small inconvenience to gain the freedom of finally being able to work in the emergency department without fear. ...

I share my journey from "no" to "yes" ... with whoever will listen, to allay fears and open doors for conversation. I want to help people make informed decisions.

# Why Did You Get the COVID-19 Vaccine?

"I was nervous about getting this vaccine, because of the historical harms done to Black people in the name of medicine. What helped was listening to a number of medical doctors from the Black community, people who looked like me, who were sharing information that made sense to me. That started with our own Dr. Marcia Adams, OYA's medical director. They helped me trust that I could make an informed decision on the vaccine that was in the best interest of my family. I ultimately got the vaccine to be safe and to be able to re-engage with staff and youth in our facilities in person."



**Nakeia Daniels, OYA Deputy Director**

"I am both African American and Puerto Rican, and there have been well-documented atrocities toward both ethnic groups perpetrated by our own country. As a man of faith, I choose to move forward, not focusing on past issues, believing that I am doing what's best for my family and community, and getting the vaccine. I only had a bit of soreness afterward, but that was a minor sacrifice so that I might be able to continue interacting with and advocating for the staff I work with, and engaging and mentoring the youth I serve ... safely!"



**Kim "Mack" McKandes, GLC at Rogue Valley YCF**

"Literally, this is about saving lives. I trust the scientists. And it is the scientists who created and approved this vaccine. So I urge everyone: When it is your turn, get vaccinated. It's about saving your life, the life of your family members, and the life of your community."

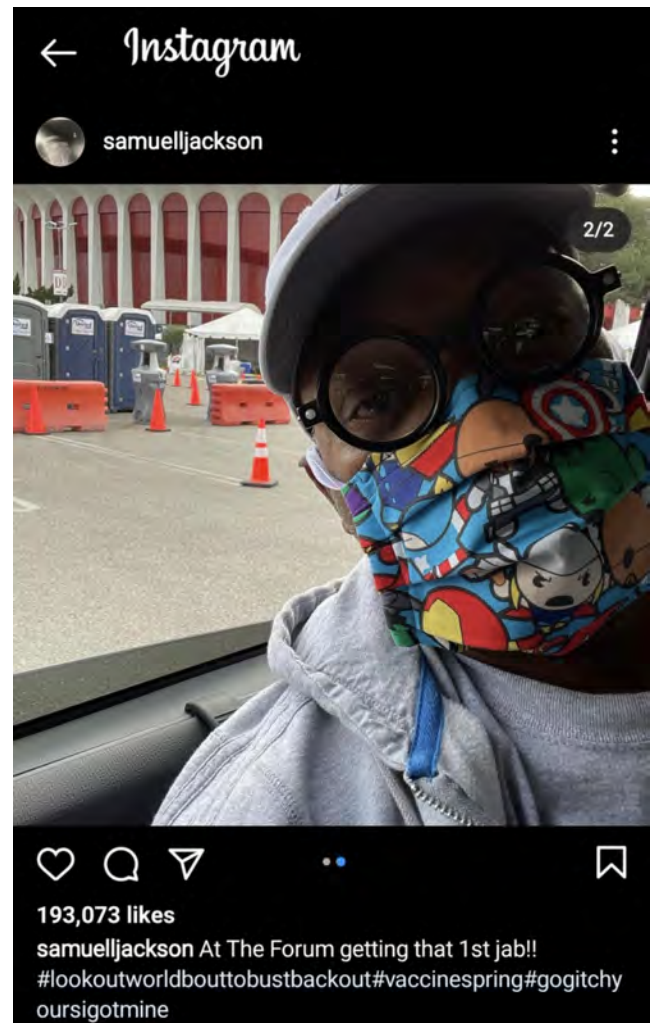


**Kamala Harris, U.S. vice president**

"Based on history and past misdeeds, I knew my community was watching the scientists, and that the scientists knew they were being watched. That being said, someone needs to go first. My entire career has been in law enforcement and security, military and civilian. Taking this shot was not the first time I have needed to go into the unknown to fulfill my duty to the community. Equally important to me, I have elderly parents that live out of state. I need to be ready to travel and arrive to help, not put them in danger."



**Raymond Byrd, OYA's chief investigator**



## Is the Vaccine Safe?

Both vaccines currently being used were tested on between 30,000 and 60,000 volunteers to make sure they were safe and that they worked. The volunteers included healthy people and those who are at a higher risk of getting COVID-19. They also included people of different races, genders, and ages. None of these volunteers had serious side effects. The vaccine was effective about 95% of the time at keeping them from getting sick with COVID-19.

## Will the Vaccine Make Me Sick?

You might have minor side effects from the vaccine, but it will not give you COVID-19. The most common side effects are tiredness, muscle aches, and headaches. Usually, these only last a few days. Some people have no side effects at all.