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COVID-19 BLACK NEWS

COVID-19 Black is a health initiative of Unity Care

Andre Chapman at the Solidarity in the Struggle event

Inside the Issue

COVID NEVER LEFT

This summer we as society became so close to putting the Pandemic behind us. In Santa Clara county specifically, we have been ranked one of the Nations top counties to be vaccinated. With at least 1.5 million people, we were on an upward hike, nearing herd immunity. But as summer turns into fall we are seeing that positive trend rewind. Now, the local new case rate is 10% with over 100 new covid cases being linked directly to the delta variant in the last three weeks.

Now all Bay Area counties have resumed the mask mandate regardless of vaccination status. How did we end up back at the beginning? Covid cases on the rise, hospitals filling up, and the lockdown order seemingly imminent. How we ask, but we all know the answer. Experts are directly linking the delta variant's success to unvaccinated people.

Even though approximately 49% of people in the United States have been vaccinated, is that enough to stop the disease? The experts say no. Those who are unvaccinated remain highly vulnerable to severe disease and are the ones getting sick and continuing to spread the disease.

So, what are we to do? The data has come back time and time again — the vaccine is effective in protecting people from the virus. Everyone needs to become vaccinated, not only is it the greater good needed in our society, but it can save your life.

BLACK MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

Counseling Today
By Lindsey Phillips

In the summer of 2016, Philando Castile was fatally shot in his car by a Minnesota police officer during a traffic stop. Castile wasn't alone. His girlfriend, Diamond Reynolds, and her 4-year-old daughter witnessed the entire incident.

After the shooting, Reynolds, who was now in handcuffs, was understandably distraught and emotional. Her daughter tried to comfort her, exclaiming, "Mom, please stop saying cusses and screaming 'cause I don't want you to get shooted." A few minutes later, the girl said, "I wish this town was safer. ... I don't want it to be like this anymore."

The girl's words illustrate how racism and racial violence affect children even at a young age. "Black youth are just as affected as their Black parents are by systemic racism and injustices," says Crumb, an ACA member whose research interests include rural and school-based mental health services. Black children are affected directly and indirectly. They witness racial violence and discrimination themselves, and they hear adults talking about it at the kitchen table. "Then, they assume these thoughts, these fears ... [and] this distrust," Crumb adds.

Black children will be exposed to inequities earlier than their White peers because of their parents' lived experiences and the conversations they overhear. If they talk about racism, they have internalized it and will learn to live with it. That burden is heavy, and its okay and necessary to give our children tools and resources to cope with living in a racist society.

COVID 19 & MENTAL HEALTH

It has been over a year now since the COVID-19 pandemic struck the United States at full force. A year of isolation and zoom birthdays, economic and social upheaval, and the uncertainty of what tomorrow brings. Looking back to March 2020, we knew these were unprecedented times. But we didn't fully grasp how difficult things were going to get. And we certainly didn't know that the challenge of COVID-19 would last this long.
In a short time the COVID 19 pandemic turned into a global emergency. The fear of becoming infected and the lockdown measures have drastically affected people's daily routine. But even before the deadly virus took over our lives, disparities existed between the most vulnerable populations and the most affluent, making Black communities more vulnerable to the impact of the disease. The people being most affected and not receiving equitable care, are Black people. At this rate, Black people in this country will be battling the long term financial effects and mental effects of covid for years to come, possibly generations to come.
As we look to the next generation, there is a concerning trend occurring. In recent years suicide rates among youth and young adults have statistically gone down. But unfortunately for Black Americans, suicide rates have gone up. Now more than ever, we need to prioritize mental health for our community. We have to break the stigma surrounding seeking therapy and medication.

UNDERSTAND THE NUMBERS - BLACK FOOD CONNECTS TO BLACK HEALTH

Nationwide study findings include:
• Low-income zip codes have 25 percent fewer chain supermarkets and 1.3 times as many convenience stores compared to middle-income zip codes. Predominantly black zip codes have about half the number of chain supermarkets compared to predominantly white zip codes, and predominantly Latino areas have only a third as many.

• Low-income neighborhoods have half as many supermarkets as the wealthiest neighborhoods and four times as many smaller grocery stores, according to an assessment of 685 urban and rural census tracts in three states. The same study found four times as many supermarkets in predominantly white neighborhoods compared to predominantly black ones.38 Another multistate study found that eight percent of African Americans live in a tract with a supermarket compared to 31 percent of whites.

Healthy food can save your life

Some of the causes for health disparities are systemic, says Deidre Johnson, CEO and executive director of the Center for African American Health. "If you are struggling financially, it's a lot easier to spend a buck on some fries than some fruit," Johnson says.

- *The rates of food insecurity were much higher for households headed by African Americans (19.1 percent — two and a half times the rate for white non-Hispanic households (7.9 percent)) and Hispanics (15.2 percent — two times the rate for white non-Hispanic households (7.9 percent).*
- *The food insecurity rate is highest in the South, followed by the Midwest, West, and Northeast.*

AMERICAN FOOD APARTHEID

Let's talk about affordable food and neighborhood grocery store equity. In the United States access to quality, healthy food is not a guarantee and often is not accessible for minority communities. For millions of Americans—especially people living in low-income communities of color— finding a fresh apple is not so easy. Full-service grocery stores, farmers' markets, and other vendors that sell fresh fruits, vegetables, and other healthy foods cannot be found in their neighborhoods. What can be found, often in great abundance, are convenience stores and fast food restaurants that mainly sell cheap, high-fat, high-sugar, processed foods and offer few healthy options.

African ancestry and Latino neighborhoods have traditionally been redlined away from affluent (white) communities where you can find multiple grocery stores, farmers markets, and maybe some personal gardens. There is a term that describes this scenario, traditionally referred to as "food desert", but we will be referring to this as **food aphartide**.

"Food desert" has become a common term to describe low-income communities—often communities of color—where access to healthy and affordable food is limited or where there are no grocery stores. (2) "Food desert" is an inaccurate and misleading term that pulls focus from the underlying root causes of the lack of access to healthy food in communities.

"It's not a food desert, it's food aphartid" are the words of food activist Karen Washington. Washington is opposed to using the expression "food desert," which she calls "an outsider term" that calls desolate places, rather than places with enormous potential, to mind. She prefers "food apartheid," which "brings us to the more important question: What are some of the social inequalities that you see, and what are you doing to erase some of the injustices?"