

Ishmael Reed: What about the two mask thing they're suggesting now? Two masks? They said you got to wear two masks now.

Michael LeNoir: They say to do that to protect you.

Ishmael Reed: They're saying that these cloth masks are no good if you put a flashlight there and the flashlight goes through.

Michael LeNoir: Right. That means the virus can get through, especially with these new variants. They are much more ineffective. They have a little bit more juice for sticking to you.

Ishmael Reed: What kind of masks are you using?

Michael LeNoir: I'm using the N-95.

Ishmael Reed: Black people are more likely to get infected than Whites. What's going on?

Michael LeNoir: African Americans are more at risk because they have a propensity and to have more chronic conditions. For four hundred years we've led the nation in chronic conditions: kidney disease, diabetes, asthma, cancer, so that once your immune system is compromised by those diseases that the virus has a much more fertile ground. Second is lack of access to care. We don't go to the doctor as much as we should, as early as we should. So many black people were the First Responder and didn't know it. People worked in nursing homes, people drove buses, people worked in grocery stores and people had public Johns and didn't know that they were at risk for getting this virus. So those three dynamics means we're going to be sick beginning with the fact that we have such a position of where we live, what we eat, and the third part of that is that is the early response, which makes us that much sicker.

Ishmael Reed: Well, the anti black propaganda coming from the media is that Latinos get it because they're essential workers and Blacks get it because of their lifestyles. This is the right wing line that I heard a couple weeks ago from this Black guy named Kmele Foster who appeared on the Bill Maher show who's also very critical Black culture. I tracked him down and he worked for Fox. He belongs to some organization that's being funded by the Koch brothers and so you can see that the right wing is saying it is the lifestyle of Blacks which causes them to get it more.

Michael LeNoir: I never heard that legitimately anywhere. Latinos are first responders, too, but they live in multiple family homes. That's the big thing for them. That's one of the bigger reasons why they get it.

Ishmael Reed: I don't know if you saw Bill Maher, the most recent one where they had two scientists who said that the virus was originated in a lab and not at a food market.

Michael LeNoir: That's possible. I think they got a task force over there looking at that now, but it is possible that it is a lab virus and it just got away.

Ishmael Reed: Well, why would they be messing around with a virus like that?

Michael LeNoir: Because that's germ warfare.

Ishmael Reed: Well, I guess they've succeeded.

Michael LeNoir: They did if that's true. Maybe they didn't think about that earlier but more and more people are talking more about it now.

Ishmael Reed: How would you rate these vaccines? The difference between them?

Michael LeNoir: You have to rate it by two things. One is effectiveness and the ability to prevent disease. With effectiveness, the Pfizer vaccine and the Moderna vaccine rates

are better. The new Johnson & Johnson vaccine, the one shot vaccine is not as efficacious. It does prevent deaths and serious illness from the disease.

Ishmael Reed: sixty-seven percent.

Michael LeNoir: Sixty-percent efficiency, but I don't think anybody died in the trial and I think the disease when they did get it was much less of a problem, so I think that it's a One-Shot virus too, that's another thing, which has certain advantages in other countries and cultures. So that's another piece of it.

Ishmael Reed: Now they're calling this new virus the South African virus, but people who have not traveled to South Africa got it in this country, so why do they call it the South African virus?

Michael LeNoir: Because it started in South Africa and it traveled here. They were probably exposed to somebody who was exposed to somebody else who got it in South Africa.

Ishmael Reed: How are the viruses affecting Black people psychologically or how is it affecting the country psychologically because a lot of people blaming this extreme politics on people being, you know, you know claustrophobic or whatever, you know shut in.

Michael LeNoir: I don't think that's the case. I think it's because a lot of people are cooped up and are not able to socialize and be around their friends. There's the stress about being with a partner you don't like and who doesn't like you. So I think it's more that I think most of them comes from not being able to interact and to be socially active either in school or at work where your friends or your relatives.

Ishmael Reed: So you think there's been an increase in cases statistically? Have they been able to measure the rise of mental illness and connected to this virus?

Michael LeNoir: I think there are a lot of different conditions of mental illness. Opioid addiction and overdoses are higher than they've ever been. They just have been moved out of the spotlight by the coronavirus and so that's one thing. The other part of that is if you look around if you look at domestic violence it is much higher because people living together closer together are a little more edgy.

Ishmael Reed: Getting on each other's nerves.

Michael LeNoir: So I think a lot of the mental health conditions have to do more with being isolated from people being away from school and work and the jobs I think instead the virus itself.

Ishmael Reed: We hear that Blacks are eight times as likely to get the virus in Whites. How many how does that translate into numbers? How many Black people have died because this problem?

Michael LeNoir: I haven't heard eight to one. Where did you hear that?

Ishmael Reed: Oh, I heard that on the news somewhere. (LeNoir looks it up).

Michael LeNoir: I know that they're twice as likely to die. African-American are 1.4 times more likely to get, 3.7 times more likely to be hospitalized and 2.8 times more likely to die. (Source cdc.gov)

Ishmael Reed: So how long are we going to be with this?

Michael LeNoir: Well the virus might be with us for fifty years. This virus is not going to go away. You will probably be vaccinated for it at least once a year, maybe more longer, but they'll figure that out. I think for the foreseeable future we will have this virus.

Ishmael Reed: Carla and I are over seventy. We get these notes from Kaiser saying they don't have vaccines. What happened? They got all these vaccine companies.

Michael LeNoir: They don't have all these vaccine companies. They only have two.

Ishmael Reed: But they have lot of stuff not being distributed, right?

Michael LeNoir: Yeah. First of all we're not the only ones getting the vaccine in America. Second the Trump administration lied saying that they had plenty of vaccines when they didn't. So with them ramping up the Powers Act it allows them to force factories to make the vaccine in larger numbers. That's a distribution issue. I don't know why you and Carla can't get it because you're over seventy-five.

Ishmael Reed: Well Kaiser says they will let us know when we can get it. They don't have it now.

Michael LeNoir: I'm surprised at that because they're supposed to be giving them to people over seventy-five.

Tennessee Reed: I called them like three times and they didn't have anything available at the Oakland campus and they didn't give us any ballpark figure of when they would have them.

Michael LeNoir: Call Kaiser and other Kaisers like San Leandro. Call Patient Services.

Ishmael Reed: You got any last words or any comments we haven't covered?

Michael LeNoir: People who don't get the vaccine are going to be vulnerable because wherever they go: large crowds in large numbers they are going to be exposed to somebody who has the virus and so that somebody in a big baseball, football, or basketball crowd will be an active virus carrier and if you get it your morbidity mortality rates will go up to the same as they are right now where many people have it. So I don't think your life will never be exactly the same. You really will not be free from exposure to coronavirus. Either we get to eighty percent herd immunity which is not likely. Still they'll be lots of people walking around with you say 80% herd immunity in a nation of thirty million people. That's 600,000 people carrying the virus.

Tennessee Reed: I have a question. What about people like my aunt who are severely immunocompromised and have to rely on herd immunity?

Michael LeNoir: She can still get the vaccine.

Tennessee Reed: She just had her first vaccine.

Ishmael Reed: Yeah, what about these drug stores?

Michael LeNoir: That program hasn't seemed to roll out so well at least from what I've seen.

Ishmael Reed: Michael, thanks for this.