

**Ishmael Reed:** Michael. Are Black people committing collective suicide by not taking this vaccine?

**Michael LeNoir:** I think they are. Not suicide necessarily because a lot of people have the virus without a problem. The virus won't necessarily kill you, but certainly other people around you who are not vaccinated are at risk.

**Ishmael Reed:** It's not just the Tuskegee experiment that discourages Blacks from getting vaccinated?

**Michael LeNoir:** In Tuskegee they didn't treat the patients. Here's a situation where you're being treated and everybody's getting the same treatment. So the fact that they were singling out Black people makes no sense.

**Ishmael Reed:** Now we got these statistics--I think they're about a month old. It says people who receive at least one vaccine are sixty-five percent White, six percent Hispanic and two percent Black. That doesn't sound right.

**Michael LeNoir:** The latest statistics for Black people are eight percent, nine percent.

**Ishmael Reed:** But does that mean over ninety percent of Black people are not getting it?

**Michael LeNoir:** No. Nine percent of the shots that have been given have been given to African Americans. So that's nine percent of that. Ten percent means two hundred thousand Blacks.

**Ishmael Reed:** Is that good or bad?

**Michael LeNoir:** I think it's better than people had expected. I think what was really paradoxical about it is that it's Black people over sixty-five who were most at risk of getting shots at a much higher clip. But now the new cases of Coronavirus are happening among people in their forties, fifties, and sixties. So they were the people getting real sick with the virus. So older people seem to be getting the virus more logically than the younger people.

**Ishmael Reed:** I mean, it seems like it would be the reverse.

**Michael LeNoir:** Well why? Older people are more at risk. If you're over sixty-five, you're more likely to die from the virus than if you're under 65, so they're more at risk, especially if they're in nursing homes and other communal places and that makes older people more motivated to get the shot.

**Ishmael Reed:** This is still not a calamity as has been depicted for Black people?

**Michael LeNoir:** Well, I think, no, it's not a calamity. It's just an unintelligent decision. I mean, I think what happens is that because we're Black, they kind of patronize us and say, "Oh well, you know, they have the right to do this and we shouldn't have pushed you so hard." Well it's just dumb. If you think about it, I mean, whatever method of measurement used to not get a vaccine has been completely blown away by the fact that the vaccine is safe, the vaccine is effective and the vaccine allows you to go about your business in a more normal fashion. So all things about, I mean, every aspect of the vaccination program is very good for people. So you know you've got a number of people working on the vaccine closely, and are watching and waiting. If you look at India, you can finally figure out exactly what would happen without it. And then the other thing is that because of places like India, at one point when one billion people are not vaccinated, you will see some very serious variants coming.

**Ishmael Reed:** What's happening in Africa? I thought Africa's record was pretty good.

**Michael LeNoir:** Well in Africa, the record is better because they know they have autocratic societies. They do better.

**Ishmael Reed:** They do better on climate change than China.

**Michael LeNoir:** Democracy may not be the most efficient form of government. There's some bad stuff going on in Africa, but you don't hear much about it.

**Ishmael Reed:** Do you think that this emergency or this pandemic will ease by the summer as they're saying?

**Michael LeNoir:** The pandemic will ease in this country, but as long as it's active somewhere, then it threatens people everywhere. Our statistics would be close to sixty, seventy percent by the beginning of the school year next year, especially when we start immunizing down to age twelve and then down to age two. So we'll be able to kind of control it in this country, but as long as it's present worldwide, another virus has an opportunity to mutate.

**Ishmael Reed:** Are viruses going to become deadlier? I mean, you know, there's the reach that, uh, that viruses began to lead to the extinction of the species?

**Michael LeNoir:** Well, that's certainly possible. It's probably happened already. It's probably wiped out large populations over 50,000 years of modern man and 400,000 years before that animals were extinguished. There were viral pandemics, they just weren't recorded, to know how many died out. What's happened now though, is I think we've got scientists that can stay with these viruses pretty quickly and so I think the next pandemic won't be handled in the same way. I think the pandemic was so bad because of what we had eaten. The whole process, you know, I think without Trump... Trump has changed so many things. I mean, I can't understand how this con man from the North can take all of these people from the South and lead them over this cliff.

**Ishmael Reed:** He's responsible for hundreds of thousands of deaths.

**Michael LeNoir:** Yeah, absolutely.

**Ishmael Reed:** Thank you.

