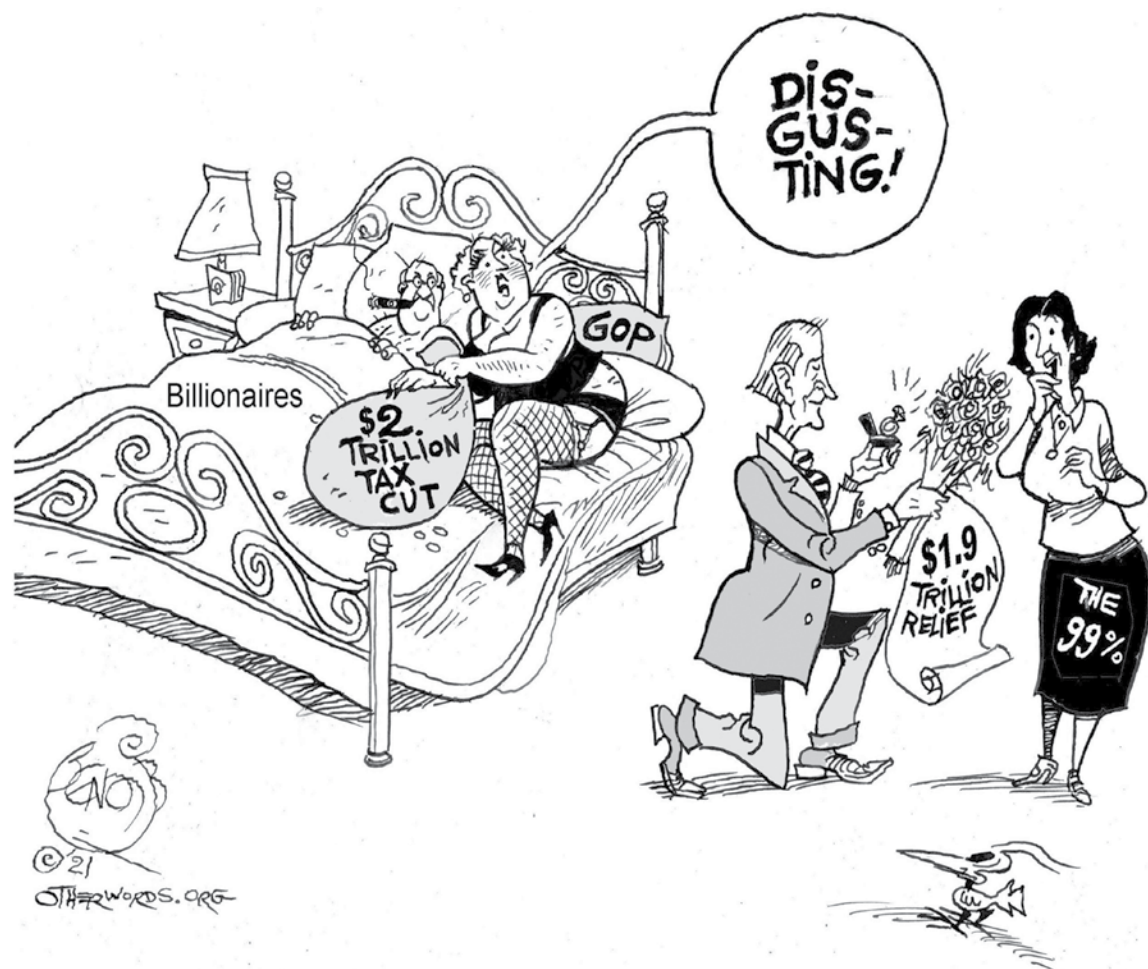


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OPINION



Strong Majority Want a COVID Vaccine

Challenge is misinformation and lack of trust

BY MARC H. MORIAL

A strong majority of Black and Americans are confident in the safety of the COVID-19 vaccine and are ready to take it, according to a new poll commissioned by the National Urban League and The Alliance of National Psychological Associations for Racial and Ethnic Equity.

These findings run counter to a “blame-the-victim” media narrative that pins the appalling racial disparity in vaccination rates on Black hesitancy to take the vaccine.

Only 14 percent of Black Americans polled said they “definitely” would not get the vaccine, and 15 percent said they “probably” would not. Yet the Black share of the vaccinated population is lower than the Black general population in every state that has reported demographic data. According to an analysis by The New York Times, the Black vaccination rate is half the white rate.

Access, not hesitancy, is the reason for this disparity, as U.S. Rep. Karen Bass, psychologist and professor Cheryl Grills and I discussed in an op-ed published



this month in the Washington Post.

Among those who are hesitant, however, information is key: Overall, more than a fifth of

Black Americans said they have heard, seen or read something that made them less likely to take the vaccine. Among those who said they definitely or probably would not take the vaccine, 55 percent had consumed negative information about it.

Negative information about the vaccine mostly centered on safety concerns, side effects, and skepticism about how quickly the vaccine was developed and approved.

This corresponds with recent reporting that Black and Hispanic communities are confronting vaccine conspiracy theories, rumors and misleading news reports on social media. YouTube revealed this month that it has taken down more than 30,000 videos that made misleading or false claims about COVID-19 vaccines over the last six months.

Our poll found that concerns about the safety of the vaccine, are the primary barrier among Blacks who don’t intend to vaccinate. Of that group, nearly 60 percent agreed that “the vaccine is too

new, I want to wait and see how it works for others.” More than a third agreed that “I am worried that people of color are being used as test subjects.”

Our challenge, then, is to employ trusted messengers such as public health professionals, community leaders and friends and neighbors to address those concerns attesting to the vaccine’s safety. I was proud to join a group of trusted clergy in my own community who received the vaccine publicly in an effort to build trust.

These efforts are working. Hairstylist Katrina Randolph is part of the Health In-Reach and Research Initiative – or HAIR – a network of barbershops and beauty salons working with the Maryland Center for Health Equity at the University of Maryland School of Public Health.

“At first, 75% of my clients were saying, ‘I’m not going to get the vaccination.’ But as we had these conversations and I told them things that I was being educated about, they began to do research and then they felt more comfortable with the vaccination,” Randolph said. “Now I hear from 90% of my clients, ‘I can’t wait to get vaccinated.’”

Marc H. Morial is president and chief executive officer of the National Urban League.



PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/PORTLAND OBSERVER

Jamie Turner works the kitchen as the owner and operator of Ja'Das Soulful EatZ, expanding her catering and food cart business into a new family soul food restaurant next door to the Miracles Cub at 4200 N.E. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

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program for youth who are interested in learning the food service industry in’s and out’s, in addition to be a second chance employer.

Her menu and catering services include such delicacies as cornmeal fried Basa, cornmeal fried catfish, fried shrimp, shrimp & grits, buttermilk chicken strips, fried wings (buffalo, BBQ, lemon pepper & original), Henny Wingz (Hennessey wings), soulful burgers, Po Boy sandwiches, fries, yams, mac n cheese, and collard greens.

Specials include deep fried ribs, oxtails, gumbo, peach cobbler and pound cakes. Other desserts include sweet potato pie, banana pudding, and gourmet cupcakes. The drinks offered are sweet tea, kool aid and soda.

The Ja'Das Soulful EatZ Restaurant at the Miracles Club is open Thursdays through Sundays from noon to 7 p.m. Call 971-325-7396 or email jadasoulfuleatz@gmail.com. The restaurant also accept online orders.

The Ja'Das Soulful Food Cart at 7330 N.E. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. operates Tuesdays through Sunday, also from 12 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Protecting Community Health

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green street planter, the street, or storm drain that can lead to a city waterway.

“Pollution prevention is always preferable to clean up. I am proud of Environmental Services for stepping up to a growing need and providing services in a respectful, dignified way for our houseless community as well as protecting our rivers and waterways from human waste,” said Commissioner Mingus Mapps.

Environmental Services started the pilot after noting an uptick in reports of illegal disposal and in an effort to address the source instead of cleaning up after discharges.

The program’s first day was Friday. Crews served nine vehi-

cles in an area in north and northeast Portland, and one in southeast. Crews expect to be able to collect about 7,500 gallons of wastewater from sinks and toilets per day and service up to 20 vehicles.

Crews will establish regular routes on Fridays based on field reports from city staff and be available as needed during other days of the week. Crews plan to alter routes each week and seek to determine the demand for this service as well as how often follow-up servicing is needed. They can also make minor repairs to the RVs to ensure safe and reliable sanitary pumping.

Environmental Services will continue the pilot through June under a limited budget of \$10,000 and evaluate next steps. The program is patterned after a similar pilot in Seattle.