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### Direction for Protection: Multimedia Messaging to Address Racial Health Disparities

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# DIRECTION FOR PROTECTION:

## Multimedia Messaging to Address Racial Health Disparities

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### Abstract

According to the CDC (2021), black people have higher risks of hospitalization and death from COVID 19. The Kaiser Family Foundation (2021) reports that black adults are less likely to have received the COVID 19 vaccination than white, Asian and Hispanic adults, placing them at greater risk for COVID 19 infection. Lower rates of vaccination focus attention on the need for messages tailored to underserved populations. In this study, we review historical and contemporary events to acknowledge important milestones in public health. Using graphic arts, we present a symbolization of the social determinants of health and a poster highlighting some of the many contributions to microbiology and immunology from African Americans. This was a pilot project for developing more sensitive and culturally relevant vaccine messages.

### Symbolizing Social Determinants

The first part of this research involved learning about social determinants of health, including racial and economic determinants. Our source of information was the Healthy People 2030 website. The goal was to gain greater insight into the public health perspective and create a graphic image representing the 5 social determinants of health.



This image symbolizes five dimensions of life impacting our health:

- Education Access and Quality
- Economic Stability and Income
- Health Care Access and Quality
- Neighborhood, Housing and Built Environment
- Social and Community Context

### African American Immunologists

Key contributions to the science of immunology were made by African Americans, but systemic racism has obscured their great accomplishments. Here we present just a few of these historic figures.

In 18<sup>th</sup> century Boston, a deadly smallpox epidemic was spreading rapidly. Before the germ theory of disease was prevalent, an enslaved African man named Onesimus communicated and demonstrated his technique for obtaining immunity. This involved rubbing the suppuration of an infected person into a small incision. The technique was imparted to a physician who used the method to inoculate hundreds and save many lives (Blakemore, 2019).

The Hinton Method is a blood test to detect syphilis, invented by Dr. William Augustus Hinton, an immunologist at Harvard University. In a grim irony, hundreds of African American sharecroppers were not treated for syphilis in the infamous Tuskegee Syphilis Study from 1932-1972, just as Dr. Hinton's test became the diagnostic standard (Levine, 2021).

Dr. Kizzmekia Corbett is an African-American microbiologist and immunologist at the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH). By leading preclinical studies, developing testing arrays, and helping design the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine, Dr. Corbett played a major role in the fight against the COVID pandemic. Dr. Corbett's immunology work also involves health communication as she conducts outreach to address vaccine skepticism in African American communities (Levine, 2021). In honor of these and other figures, we created this poster:



This image commemorates scientists and pioneers in microbiology and immunology. It is a prompt to the viewer to do some research and find out more about the history of microbiology, immunology and vaccine science.

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