

African Americans & COVID-19

April 2020

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INTRODUCTION

At Risk & Overly Impacted Yet Resilient

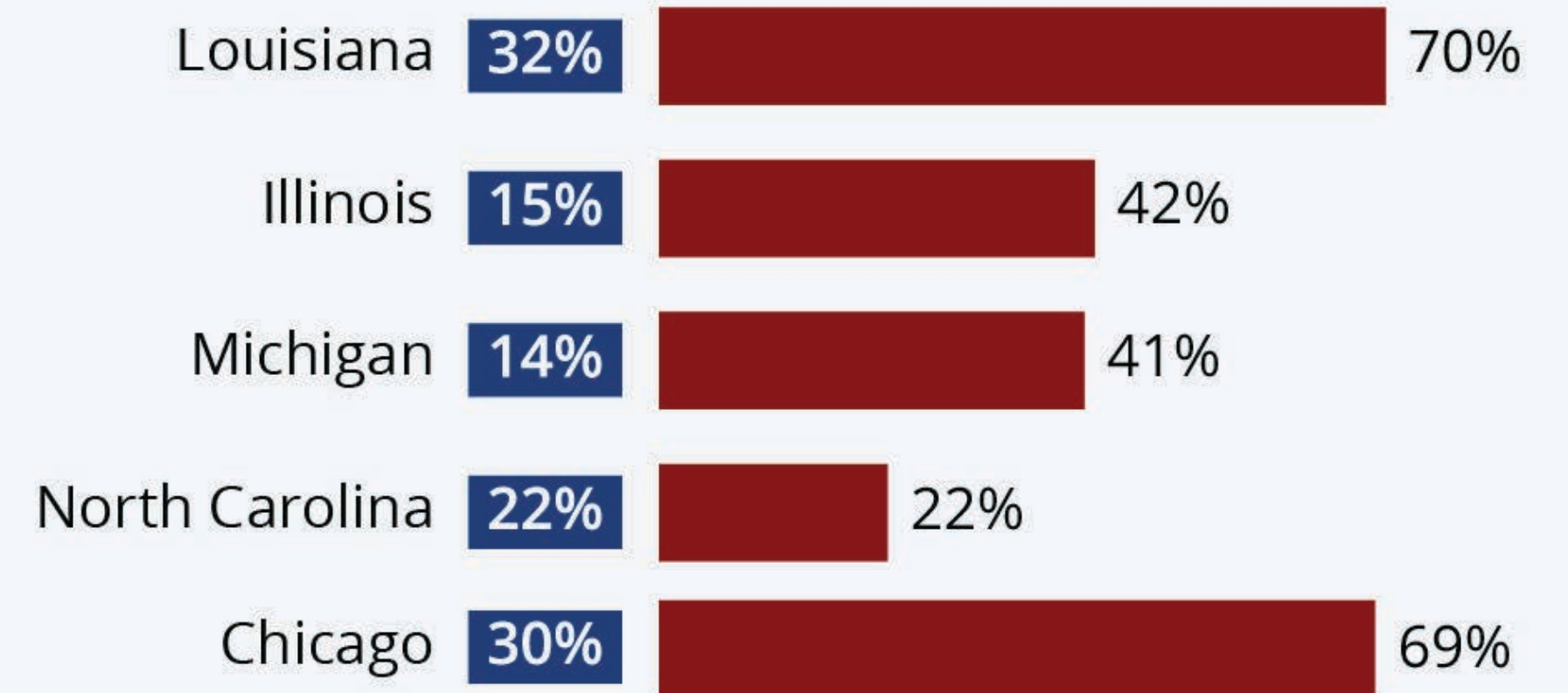
African Americans are overly represented in the categories of essential workers across a variety of industries, including healthcare, grocery store workers and food service, which do not allow for them to work remotely, with black women especially impacted in employment. Overall, many African Americans are already vulnerable to socioeconomic factors that put them at a unique disadvantage to the general population with regard to COVID-19.

Sources: 2010 Census, respective state/city health departments

COVID-19's Devastating Impact On African Americans

African American share of state/city populations and COVID-19 deaths (as of Apr 06, 2020)

■ Share of state/city's population ■ Share of COVID-19 deaths



INTRODUCTION

Addressing the Deeper Impact

Many black leaders and celebrities including P. Diddy and Revolt, BET and the NAACP have organized virtual town halls to discuss how COVID-19 is affecting black people at an alarming rate.

During Global Citizen's "One World - Together At Home" special, organized by Lady Gaga partnering with WHO (World Health Organization), Beyoncé utilized this larger-than-life platform to spotlight how the virus is impacting the black community more profoundly than other segments of America. The special featured artists, philanthropists and world leaders to inspire people around the world, focusing on communities impacted by COVID-19. It aired across 60 global broadcast networks, nine major digital platforms and hundreds of affiliates, across more than 175 countries. It reached over 270 million viewers worldwide and, according to Nielsen, an estimated 20.7 million U.S. viewers.

Brennan Suen @brennansuen · Apr 18

In surprise appearance, **Beyoncé** talks about **COVID-19's** disproportionate effect on Black Americans on Together At Home



37

1.6K

5.5K



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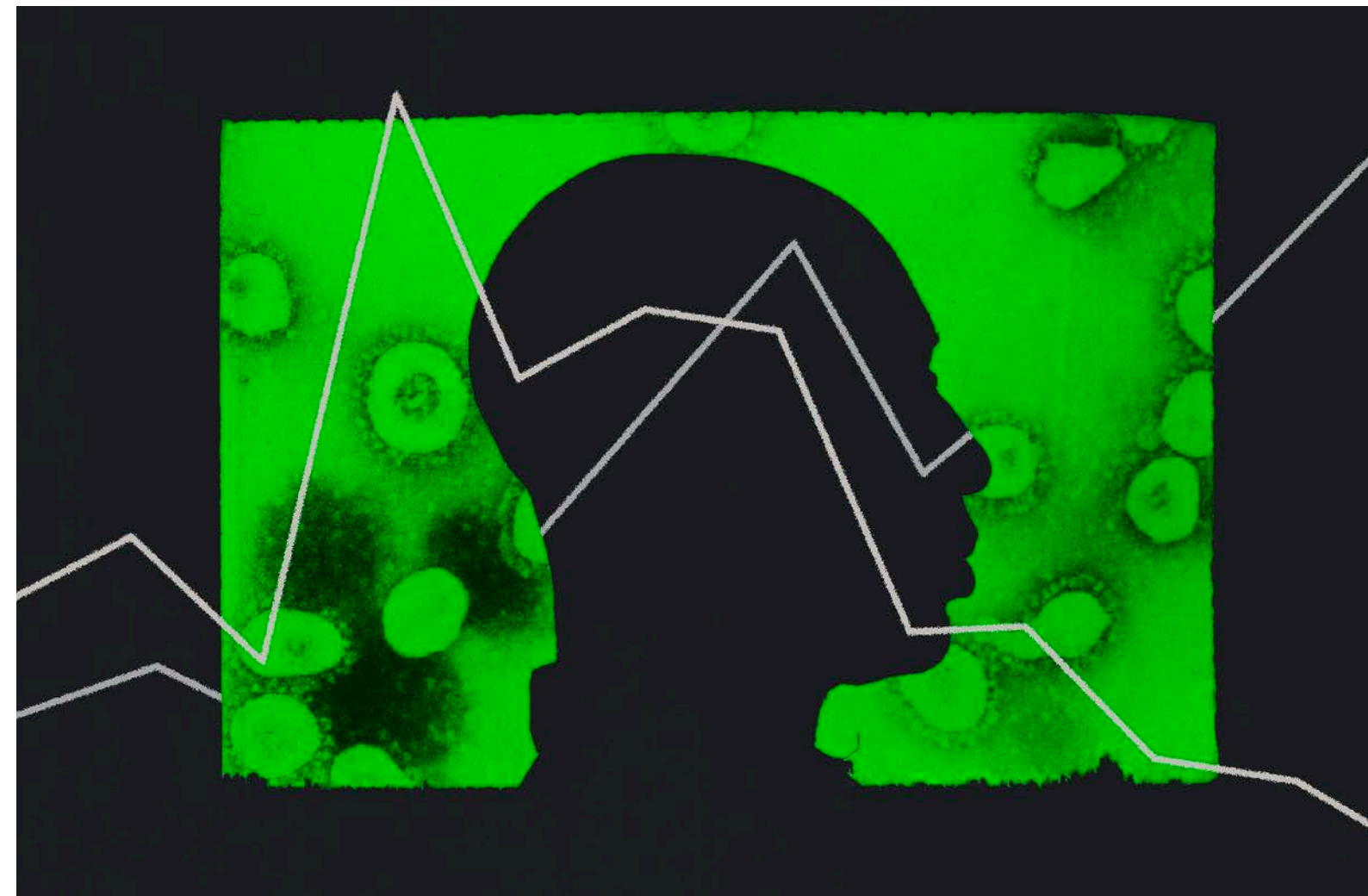
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1 Myth & Mistrust

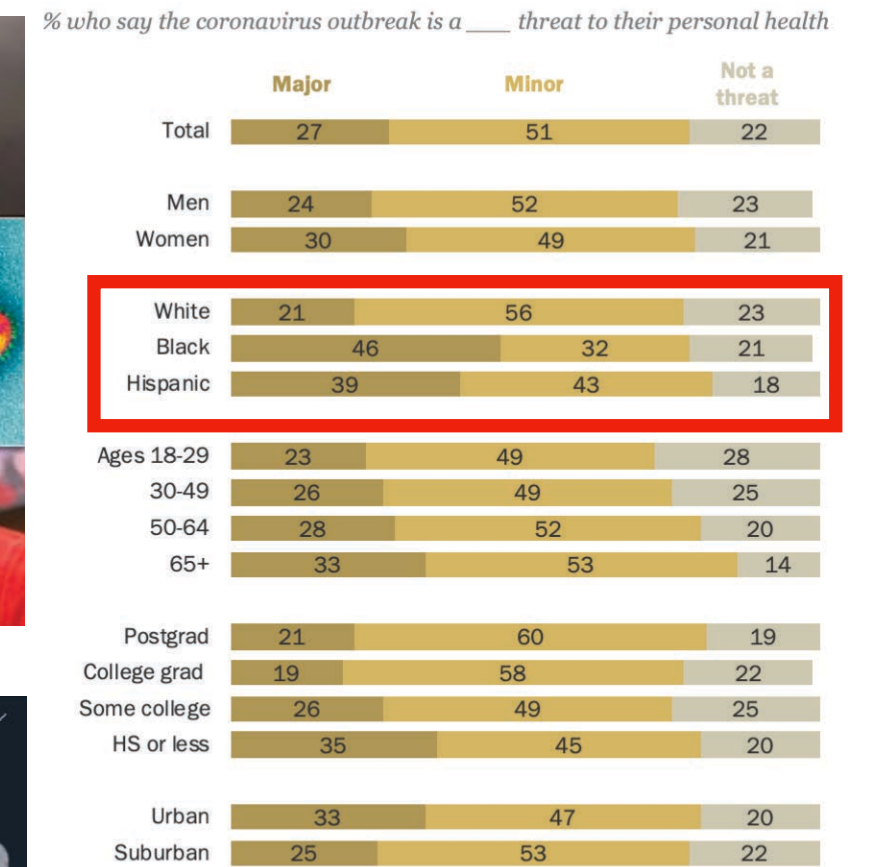
The African American community has a historic mistrust of the government and medical community. This has led to the growth of myths and conspiracy theories impacting response.

The “Tuskegee Effect”— a legacy of mistrust



The “Tuskegee Effect”— The Tuskegee experiment and scandal, ‘70s Sickle Cell experiments and the story of Henrietta Lacks are some of the numerous U.S. medical experiments conducted solely on African Americans, the legacy of which manifests as a distrust of U.S. medical and healthcare systems and reluctance to seek medical treatment.

Dismissing the myth of immunity & false perceptions



There is a myth spread that “fake news”, memes and social media posts stating black people were immune from COVID-19 created a mindset that led to increased at-risk behaviors early in the pandemic cycle with African Americans. However, 46% of black people view the coronavirus as a major threat to their own health, compared with 21% of white adults.

2 The Inequity of Victim Blaming

African Americans have received a lot of criticism and blame for their high death rates from COVID-19 due to preexisting health conditions or assumed behaviors of tobacco, alcohol and drug use. This victim blaming masks economic factors such as employment, food deserts, healthcare treatment bias and other key factors putting them at higher risk being valued for labor, but not for their lives.

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U.S. Surgeon General incites victim blaming & backlash

U.S. Surgeon General Jerome Adams when asked about the disparity between the rate at which black Americans are contracting COVID-19 as opposed to other racial groups, said, “African Americans and Latinos should avoid alcohol, drugs and tobacco.”

“Do it for your abuela, do it for your granddaddy, do it for your big momma, do it for your pop-pop,” he said.

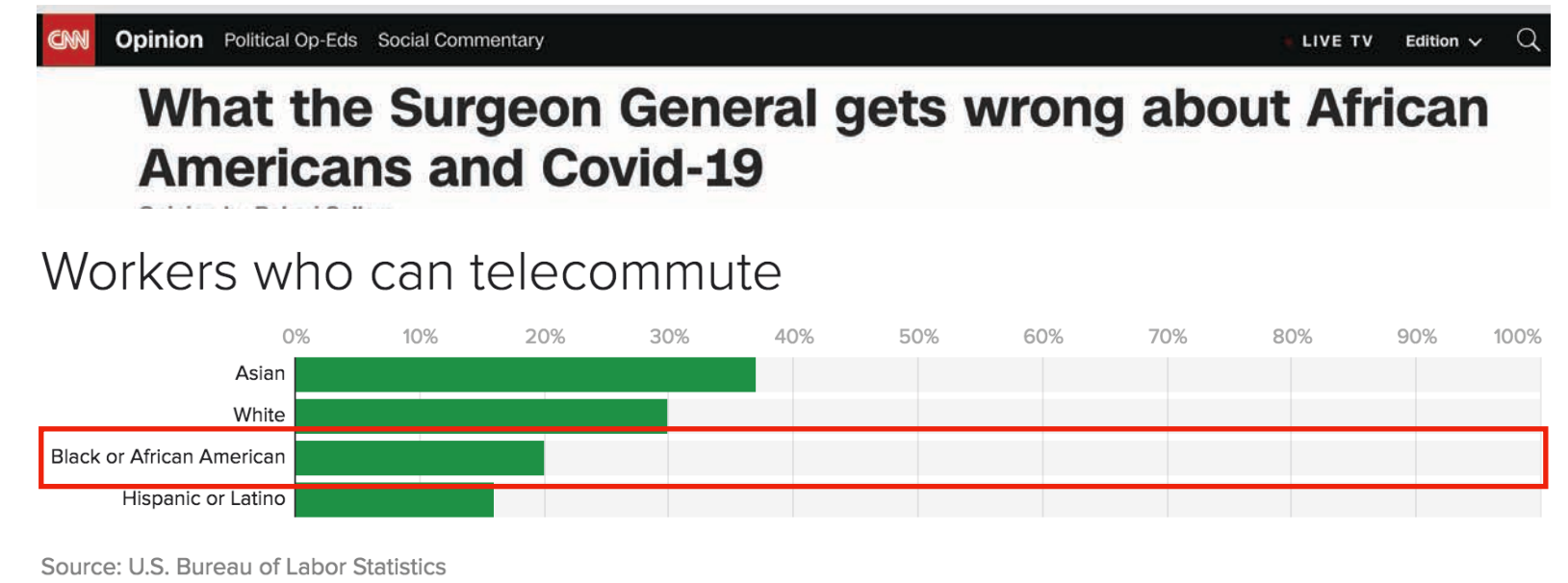
Black health experts say surgeon general's comments reflect lack of awareness of black community
 "The Adams statement is, at best, irresponsible and, at worst, reflective of systemic structural racism."

M. L (like Bernie took). Hip Hopkins @MLHipHopkins · Apr 10
 Interesting how there wasn't any **victim blaming** language for **Covid-19** victims in the US until the face of them became **black** and brown.

LaT @latxcvi · Apr 10
 Spoiler-alert: The **Surgeon General's** bullshit message is purposefully **victim-blaming**, b/c if they didn't imply the Black & Latino patients disproportionately dying of **COVID-19** are doing so of their own fault, we might have to address their **general** disparate healthcare treatment.

Many sources, including the U.S. Surgeon General, received significant backlash for perceived patronizing victim blaming and not seeing larger issues at play.

Complex factors are driving African American COVID-19 disparities



More likely to work non-remote, essential, unstable and frontline jobs as well as use mass transit, the African American community is suffering from higher exposure and a lack of adequate healthcare and treatment options.

3 Classic Competition & Club Quarantine

The music and entertainment industries have seen dramatic slowdowns. Music streaming is down almost -10%, with Latin Music -26.0%, Hip-Hop -20.5% and Pop -16.8%, in part due to these chart-leading genres' correlation to clubs, radio and public gatherings. However, artists are finding innovative ways through social media to bring people together creating virtual community connections and shared experiences.

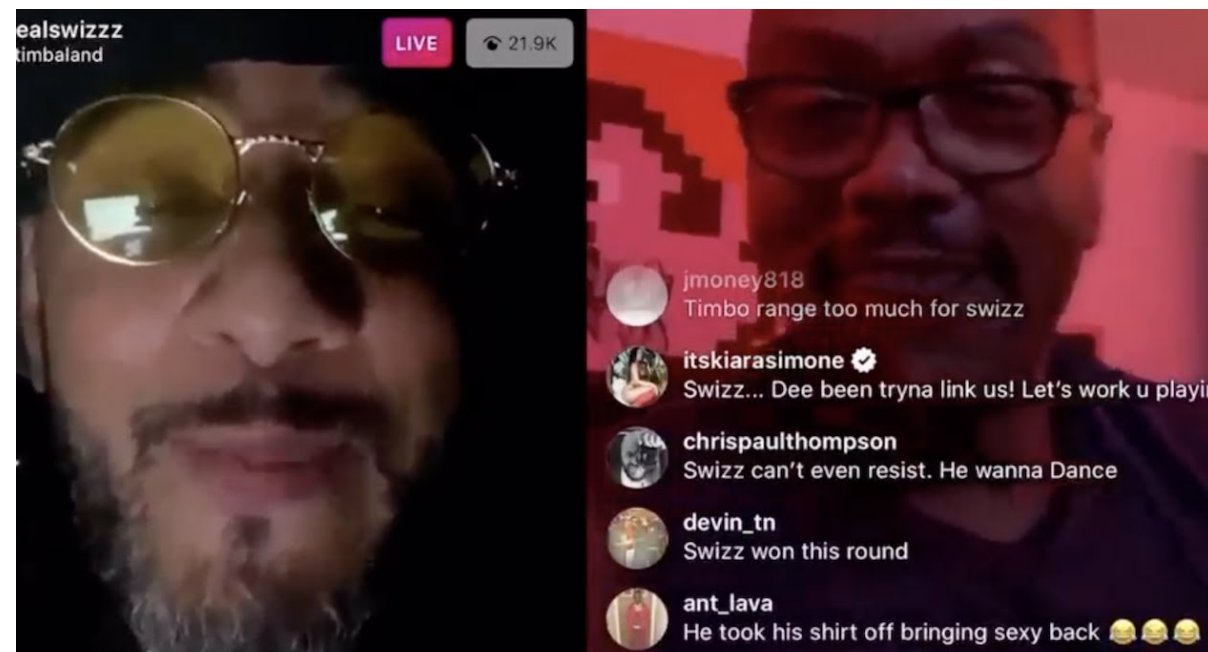
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Club Quarantine & Virtual Parties



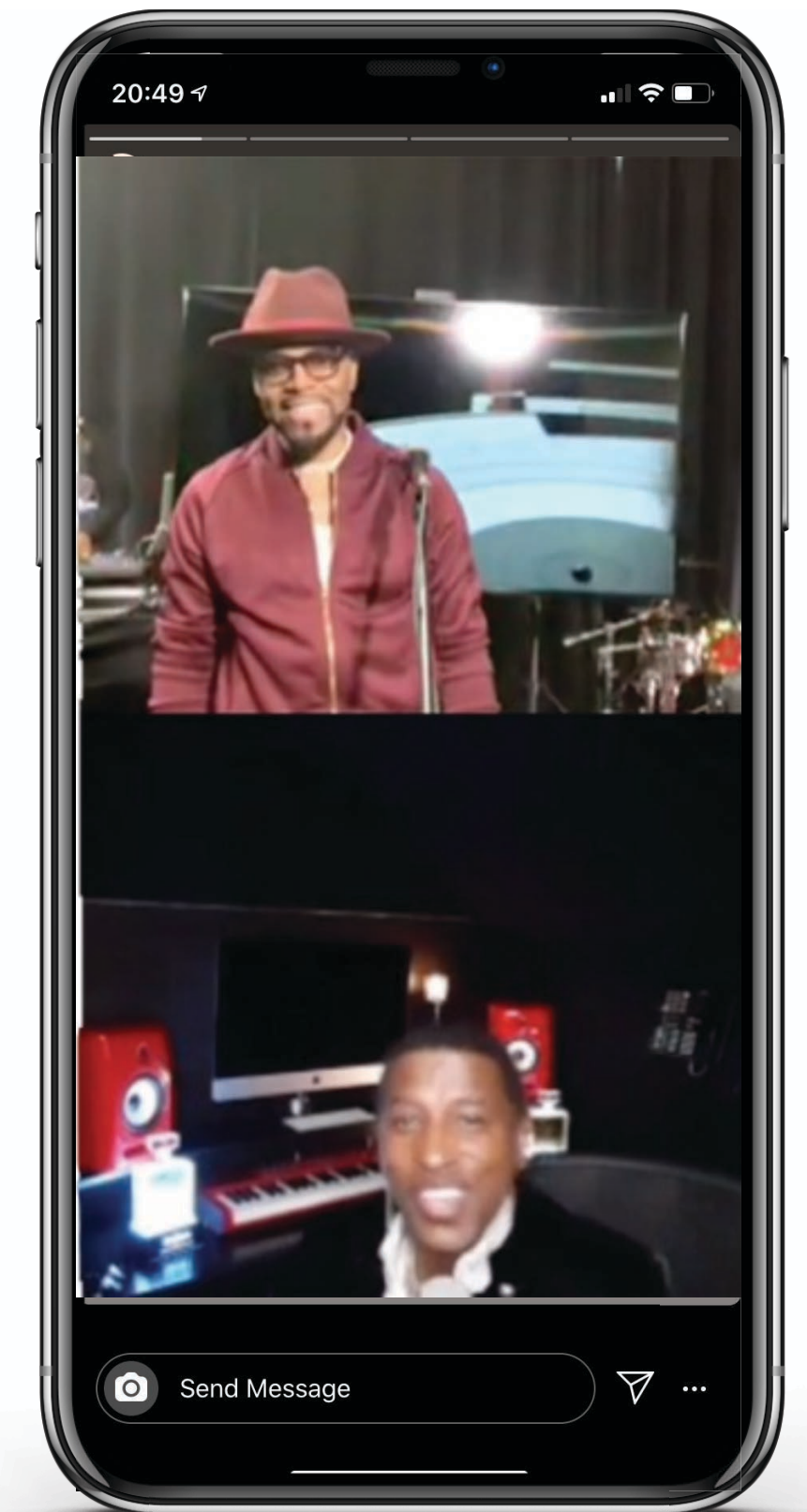
D-Nice and Club Quarantine attract over 100K viewers including Michelle Obama, Bernie Sanders, Ellen and various celebs.

Epic IG Music Battles



Legendary music producers Swizz Beatz and Timbaland created a virtual music battle series that has become appointment social media with prolific R&B and Hip-Hop artists competing with their epic catalogues including Neyo vs. Johntá Austin, Mannie Fresh vs. Scott Storch and RZA vs. DJ Premier.

IG Battles Creating Appointment Social Media Moments & Memes



Battles like Babyface vs. Teddy Riley have trended on social media resulting in numerous memes and entertaining moments for those sheltering in place.

4 Mask On, Mask Off — Profiling & Bias

Personal Protective Equipment in the form of official masks are in short supply or sometimes financially unavailable for many frontline workers. However, homemade masks have put many black people at risk due to a bias of law enforcement and store workers. The African American community is actively combating this through fashion and education.

Due to profiling, for black men, masks are a matter of life and death beyond COVID-19



Senators urge anti-bias police training over face mask fears during coronavirus pandemic



Why I don't feel safe wearing a face mask

I'm a Black man living in this world. I want to stay alive, but I also want to stay alive.

U.S. • COVID-19
'It Conjures Up Every Racial Stereotype!' For Black Men, Homemade Masks May Be a Risk All Their Own

While masks may be mandated for safety and to save lives, for many African Americans, especially black males, this may put them at more immediate risk than COVID-19, including criminalization in places of business and violent police response.

Black designers are using fashion to combat mask biases and fears

10 Black Designers Providing Effective Face Masks

HOME · FASHION
HERE'S WHO IS ON THE FRONT LINES HELPING MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS AND CITIZENS.



Black designers are adding a sense of safety and fashion to masks to support healthcare workers and the community, while also helping to fight the stigma of masked black faces.

5 All We Have Is Us

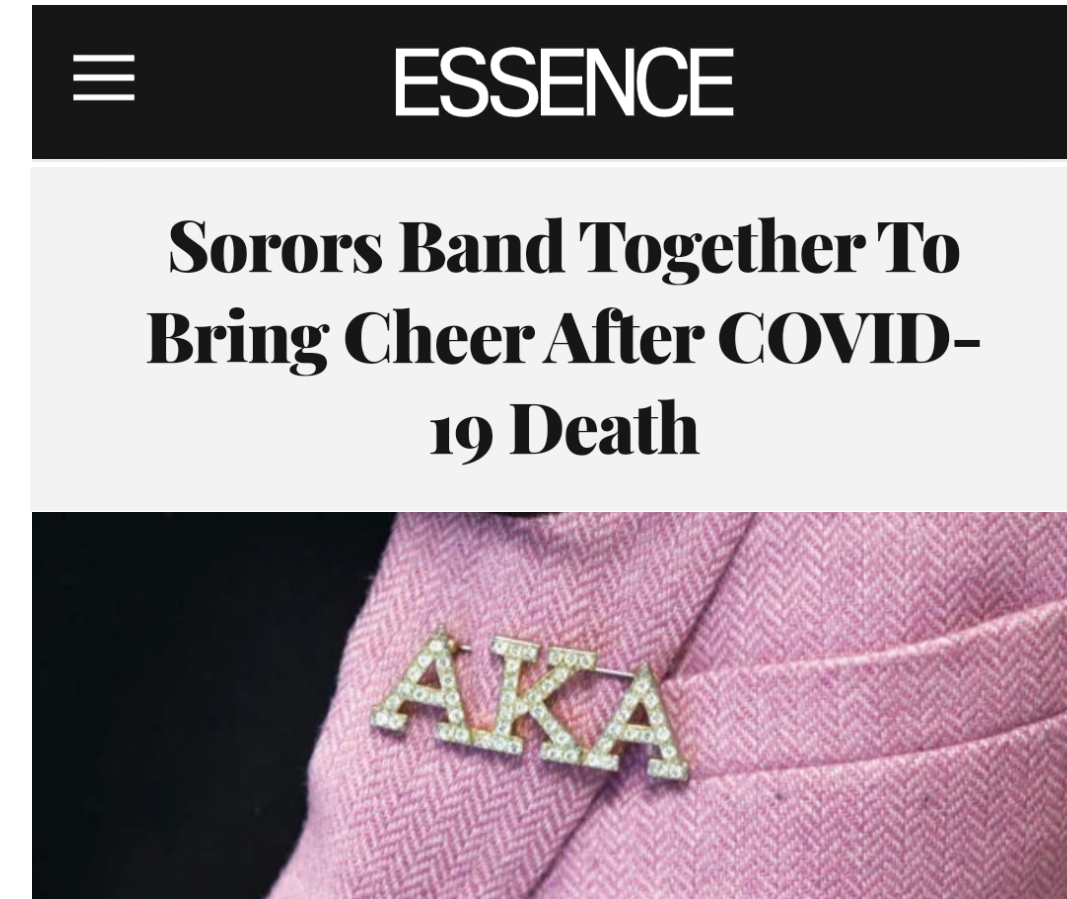
Community solutions and service to each other is proving to be the most reliable solution for African Americans amidst government plan uncertainty and mixed responses. Despite all this, the community remains proactive and hopeful.

Faith & healthcare partner to save souls & lives



The Black Church is not only providing spiritual, emotional and financial support, but also partnering with doctors for testing and treatment.

Black Greek organizations committed to community service



Black Greek sororities and fraternities are actively supporting the community and those affected by COVID-19.

Social Media & Black Twitter band together for black businesses



Solutions for supporting black-owned businesses, which tend to be small businesses, are being provided through social media and Black Twitter.

Takeaways & Key Implications

5 key takeaways and implications:

1. Empathy and education will go a long way in combating the effects of COVID-19 in the black community. Brands that show partnership and speak with the community to provide support and resources economically and healthcare related will garner better brand affinity within the community.
2. Be solution-oriented. Don't focus on the problems of the community, but look toward how to be of service to those in need during and after the pandemic.
3. Assist in removing stigmas and biases that exacerbate issues for the black community. Actively challenge the myths around victim blaming regarding perceived at-risk behaviors and the criminalization of masked African American faces.
4. Support black music, art and entertainment by showcasing talented artists and performers. Connect with the social media moments authentically through promotions or relevant creative partnerships with those keeping us engaged and entertained while sheltering at home. Work with streaming platforms to provide financial opportunities for artists who rely on public performances for their livelihood.
5. Set up programs or join with community partners to assist the economic recovery for the black community and black-owned businesses. Provide support, direct intervention or long-term plans to aid those in need.

Thank you.

April 2020

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