

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY AND THE CORONAVIRUS

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The race-grievance industry denounces the surgeon general for his message to black America.

A disproportionate number of black Americans are falling victim to Covid-19. It was only a matter of time until the race-grievance merchants began their campaign to name, blame and shame America.

Three factors contribute to the disparity, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The first is living conditions in densely populated low-income areas. The second is the work circumstances of minorities, who are more likely to work in the service sector and in essential jobs that cannot be done remotely and are more often accessed through public transportation. The third is the higher prevalence among blacks of pre-existing health conditions such as obesity, diabetes and hypertension.

The CDC's data on projected and actual Covid-19 fatalities suggest a fourth factor: compliance with its guidance on precautionary measures to frequently wash hands, shelter in place except for essential tasks, and use a face mask and maintain a safe distance from others when in public. Compliance with those guidelines was required to save lives, and preventive and protective practices have been shown to make a difference. The original projection that the pandemic would take 200,000 American lives was based on the expectation of a 50% rate of compliance. That death toll was reduced when the actual compliance rate was more than 90%. In other words, personal behavior became an important variable in the struggle against this disease.

When Jerome Adams, the African-American U.S. surgeon general, made an impassioned appeal to segments of the black community to take more responsibility for their actions as a means of reducing their risk, he was demeaned and attacked by the black elite race-grievance merchants. Nikole Hannah-Jones—coordinator of the New York Times’s “1619 Project,” which declares that all the current problems of blacks in America are part of the inevitable, irrevocable legacy of slavery—and a band of other opportunists took to the airwaves and social media to condemn Dr. Adams and anyone else who dared suggest the fate of black America could be altered by any force within its control. To assert that blacks have the power to affect their own destiny was deemed racist, heartless and outrageous.

The surgeon general isn’t the first black leader to experience the wrath of the race-grievance merchants. In a speech on Father’s Day 2008, Barack Obama told absent fathers to stop making excuses and take financial and emotional responsibility for their children. He was immediately confronted with the wrath of “spokespersons” for the black community—including Jesse Jackson, who declared that the candidate was “talking down” to blacks and (thinking he was off-camera) issued a vulgar threat.

Mr. Obama’s message was muted and didn’t become central to his tenure as he promised. Tragically, the effect it could have had on a generation of young people was lost. The nationwide network of grass-roots leaders I have worked with who strive to address street violence, rampant homicides and gang warfare in their low-income communities will say that the majority of predators and victims alike come from fatherless homes.

These neighborhood leaders—many of whom are part of the 1776 campaign to promote principles of personal responsibility and self-determination—urge the surgeon general to stand firm with his message. They have witnessed flagrant disregard for protective measures among groups in their community, who party and play pickup basketball games—jeopardizing not only their lives but also the lives of their parents and grandparents at home. News reports of defiant flouting of the guidelines within the black community abound. These include a house party in Chicago attended by more than 100, a block party in Pensacola, Fla., that drew hundreds, a crowd of 50 at a check-cashing office in Richmond, Va., and a picnic in Savannah, Ga., where revelers passed blunts as they ate and drank.

Many of the grass-roots leaders I know have been addressing this crisis by going to the streets to call for a change in behavior that can make a life-or-death difference. Dr. Adams's exhortation gave a vital boost to their desperate efforts.

In this critical moment, we offer the opportunity for the surgeon general and other leaders to go around the racial-grievance gate-keepers and self-proclaimed spokesmen for the black community and speak directly to those who are suffering the problem.

We urge Dr. Adams to continue, and strengthen, his vital message when lives hang in the balance