Covid 19 and African Americans: Reality, Rebuilding and Resilience

## Commentary on the NAACP Health Team Webinar by Monterey County NAACP Health Chair Victoria Lee

“Covid-19 is the biggest threat to black lives in this century.”​ - Dr. Dwayne Procter

Black people in America were hit the hardest during this pandemic, especially those with underlying health risks such as diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease. We need to address poverty, and health disparities, according to Dr. Stephen Thomas professor of health at the University of Maryland.  Our communities need policies that increase access to health care, ensure prisoners receive proper care, give frontline workers better access to protective equipment, and more testing sites for everyone.  We need to work as a community to overcome this pandemic. Ask yourself, “What have you done to help your community during the pandemic?” There are some simple things.

We must vote so better policies can be implemented. We can get involved in grass-roots projects,  helping to feed our community, protect our community by gathering PPE, and educating the community on how to keep safe. We also need to prepare for a possible vaccine. Will it be safe? And how do we make sure it is widely available?

“We have to save ourselves.”​ - Dr. Stephen Thomas, chief of Infectious Disease​ at Upstate University Hospital in Syracuse.

My vision of us saving ourselves begins with just that, us as people seeing ourselves in the future living better lives than our ancestors do. Living healthy lifestyles that will sustain us by eliminating our underlying health risks. How do we do that? By focusing on what makes us healthy such as, clean water, fresh food, education, exercise and access to all of the above.  Policies can include healthy food projects that can deliver healthy food during the pandemic, especially to our seniors and community members with disabilities, and grants to organizations that promote nutritional education, as well as access.

Michelle Obama’s “Let’s Move” Project was an excellent beginning. The program addresses the disparities that we are facing today, such as obesity and childhood diabetes.    I’m a strong believer in living in the present, focusing on what’s important as I put one foot in front of the other moving forward. Always forward, I don’t look back, because I’m not going that way. I grew up in a home that always had delicious food. Butter, salt and whole milk were included in almost every meal. I loved it, and I still do, but it won’t make my body healthy if I consume it seven days a week. At some point, I had to decide to eat healthy or live sick.

Covid-19 is unforgiving, it will kill anyone it wants and it destroys you if you have health problems and are older. It doesn’t matter your race, culture or age if the foundation is damaged. Build a strong mind and body. When a tornado runs through a town, the only thing left are the foundations of the homes it ripped apart. Treat your body well and it's better equipped to fight viruses and germs.

“When you want to succeed as badly as you want to breathe, then you’ll be successful.” - Eric Thomas.

Let’s not wait until we can’t breathe before we decide to change the way we live, because by then, it may be too late.

Start now!

Victoria Lee is the NAACP Monterey County Health Committee Chair and is a  mother to three children, including one cancer warrior who is a two-time  brain tumor survivor. Currently, she’s a peer-to-peer mentor at the Brain Tumor Foundation in Los Angeles. She has worked with children who are affected with learning disabilities for 20 years and utilizes the positive parenting model. Additionally, she is certified in applied behavioral analysis (ABA), meditation, visualization and stress reduction techniques. She also enjoys fundraising, organizing community events, and painting. She lives in California and holds a Bachelor’s of Science in Psychology with a minor in Child Development and a focus on  applied behavioral analysis.

Resources:

* <https://naacp.org/coronavirus/>
* <https://letsmove.obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/>
* <https://www.investinginfood.com/what-we-do/>
* <https://www.ymca.net/healthy-living>