



January, 2022

A letter to my people- Bearing Witness

Beloved Brothers and Sisters, particularly the unvaccinated,

The challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic have resonated with us all in so many special ways. One important consequence has been our response to the call to get vaccinated so as to save lives, including our own. We understand that it's really a very tough decision. Please understand that if you have not yet been fully vaccinated we love you and share in our collective agony and anxiety over the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, some of us have had to bear witness to some heart wrenching, possibly unavoidable tragedies. We have lost many of our loved ones, many others are still suffering from the infections or displacement from home or work or livelihood. But the images of our family members or friends dying alone in the hospital, with regrets or confessions of the deceptive misinformation for not taking the vaccine remain, to say the least, stressful. Consider: The 29- year- old niece whom we mourn with painful hearts of a life cut too short, with young children left behind for us to care; The 44- year- old doctoral student who died within 4 days of the infection, and the community rallied around to mourn and contribute toward sending the body to her parents on the East Coast for burial; We suffered the emotional toll of planning the funeral of a 58- year- old with 5 teenage/youth- adult children and dealing with the funeral home, public health officials in California and Africa as well as the embassy in Washington, DC, the airlines, and transportation services in preparation to ship his body to Africa. We can go on and on of the sorrowful stories of people amongst us who died or are suffering of the COVID-19 after refusing to vaccinate. As we pen this note, a worried 85-year-old mother has asked the community to pray for her unvaccinated son on a ventilator suffering from the infection, and thankfully she tested negative, along with her grandson and son's wife who are vaccinated. Yes, we'll continue to pray for the son, and hope that he'll recover to testify.

While we acknowledge the many reasons for refusal or reluctance in taking the vaccine, we appeal to you to listen to our black scientists and public health authorities of African descent whom we have trained, supported, and prayed for their professional judgment to get us out of the pandemic. We believe that God's answer to our prayer to end the pandemic is the vaccine, plus other health and safety precautions and guidelines we must obey—despite our vaccination status. Let's not look for another God to do the needful. According to the Sacramento Department of Public Health the rate of vaccination among members of our black community is only about 45%, which is unacceptable, the lowest among all key racial/ethnic groups in the County. Frankly, this rate is not acceptable and does not represent who we are as a people. It seems un-explainable that whilst 80% of all Californians have been fully vaccinated, only our communities have fallen so far behind in the rate of vaccination. We need to do better to achieve the so- called herd immunity of 80% or higher and help all of us get out of the misery and pains of the pandemic!

Please, brethren and beloved sisters, if you have not yet been vaccinated, do the needful in the spirit of Ubuntu: "I AM because you are, therefore we are." Let's seize the moment, own this one, despite the very strong head winds that have held you back and take that first step and find a place in your heart to help strengthen the community we have together. Let's prevent our people from dying unnecessarily from the COVID-19. We are counting on you to consider the interest of the collective, our community, and our people. With one love, let's join the effort to educate each other by sharing the good news of vaccine safety as our own doctors have reinforced every day. Indeed, each one, teach each one! Let us bear good witness to the positive change we desire!

Signed by Coalition of Concerned Leaders

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Ms. Janice Wisdom, President, Sacramento Caribbean American Association

Dr. Veronica Ufoegbune, Chair, Nigerian American Public Affairs Committee, California

Mr. David Kamara, President, Sierra Leone Humanitarian Project of Sacramento

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Dr. Babatunde Salako, President, Association of Nigerian Physicians in Americas, Northern California

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Dr. Sylvester Uadiale, Sacramento Africa Peace Committee

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Can-al Medical Supplies/UPS store

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Toni Tinker, President, Black American Political Association of California

Ubuntu: One Love, Save Lives- Vaccinate!