



## **New Jersey Institute for Social Justice Position on COVID-19 Vaccination**

The New Jersey Institute for Social Justice encourages New Jersey residents to get vaccinated for COVID-19.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the deep cracks of structural racism in our foundation, causing earthquakes in New Jersey's Black communities. Indeed, [COVID-19 was the number one cause of death for Black people in New Jersey in 2020.](#)

As a racial justice advocacy organization, we understand that the cracks, which are by policy design, have led some people, including in the Black community, to understandably express skepticism about the vaccine.

The history and enduring legacy of racial discrimination in science and medicine is real – ranging from the abhorrent Tuskegee syphilis experimentation to the nonconsensual use of Henrietta Lacks' cells to the everyday discrimination that Black people face from a medical establishment infected with structural racism. In fact, it is largely as a result of this racism that the Black community has a disproportionate rate of underlying conditions that cause increased vulnerability to COVID-19 – and that we must, in fact, advocate for our government to ensure an equitable distribution of the vaccine itself.

At the same time, we believe that those closest to the harm must benefit most immediately from the solution. We are therefore following the counsel of a diverse medical and scientific community to urge people, particularly Black and other people of color disproportionately impacted by the disease, to take the vaccine. We encourage people to ask questions of their doctors and trusted medical validators about any concerns.

Vaccination will help to protect individuals and communities, and also allow society to reach herd immunity so that the virus is no longer a potent threat. In this way, we can begin to repair the cracks of structural racism that have been deepened by the current crisis, to chart a new path forward for New Jersey's communities.