

MSNBC's *The ReidOut*

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7:00:19 p.m.

48 seconds

JOY REID: There's really nothing going on this end, so I think I'll just do a show. You know, it's all quiet out there in Twitterworld.

ARI MELBER: I feel — I feel like you might have some news, Joy.

REID: I feel like it's — you know, there's nothing happening. But I'll — I'll get — I'll make something happen for an hour. We'll see.

MELBER: We'll see.

REID: Cheers. Bye. Thank you very much. Alright, good evening, everyone. We have a lot to get to tonight on *The ReidOut*, including some of — you may have noticed a wee bit of Twitter excitement over some comments I made last night about Nicki Minaj's comments about the vaccine and we're going to get to that tonight as well and about misinformation. All of that stuff is coming up in tonight's show. I'll have more to say about that.

(...)

7:15:50 p.m. [TEASE]

10 seconds

REID: And the far-reaching impact of vaccine hesitancy, especially among black Americans. Rapper Nicki Minaj had some choice words for me on Twitter last night. I welcome the dialogue. You don't want to miss it.

(...)

7:40:38 p.m. [TEASE]

17 seconds

REID: Still ahead — [TO SENATOR ALEX PADILLA] thank you — all it took was one tweet from Nicki Minaj to her 22 million followers to serve up a whole boat load of controversy about the spread of vaccine misinformation, especially in Black communities. We'll respond with just the facts next on *The ReidOut*. Stay with us.

(...)

7:45:06 p.m.

4 minutes and 28 seconds

JOY REID: Okay. So, yesterday, I had a spontaneous reaction to hip hop star Nicki Minaj tweeting about a friend of a cousin in Trinidad who allegedly had a negative reaction to a Covid vaccine that some folks said it sounded kinda like an STD. But I'm not a doctor, so I digress. Essentially, she made public her own vaccine deliberation, which according to trusted friends, is a better way to describe vaccine hesitancy, which, by the way, is not the same as refusal. But by doing so, she used her social media platform and her 22 million Twitter followers to cast doubt on the vaccine to a heavily black audience. Needless to say, both my comments and her series of infuriated responses went viral. Clearly, Nicki was not amused. But that's okay. I feel like every moment is a teachable moment and this might be one that illustrates on Twitter in public how hard it is for us to talk to each other on these two sides of the get the vax, don't get the vax aisle. There's a lot of frustration and anger among those of us who feel like we've been doing the right thing to end this damn virus and those who are just plain not doing the things and those who are not getting vaccinated are mad at us for excluding them from our spaces and, in some cases, from our lives. So, there's a lot of anger out there. What disturbs me are those who care nothing about black communities and who are actually hostile to our interests. I'm talking white nationalist curious Twitter bugs and chatter bugs like Tuckums and Marjory Green and Candace Owens, who leapt out to try to scoop up Nicki and put her on their team, using her vaccine misinformation to try to back up their own phony campaigns, pushing their base to reject the vaccines while they're probably fully vaccinated themselves. These are the same Republicans and Republican talkers who have been working overtime to try to put vaccine refusal on black people's shoulders, to try to morph mandates into some airborne virus version of 1950s segregation as if they would have opposed segregation if they had been around back then. It's not only disingenuous, it's also anti-facts. The data is clear that it is Republicans and more specifically Republicans who listen to Fox News and people like Tuckums and Marjorie and Candace who are the majority of those refusing to be vaccinated. Black Americans are Democrats and we poll like Democrats when it comes to our willingness to get the vaccine, so we are not the problem. But that said, Nicki's tweets point out a very real thing. There is still a lot of vaccine hesitancy among Black folks. Everything from just being reluctant or fear of potential side effects, all the way up to conspiracy theories about the vaccines that are causing people to refuse to take them or just delay and that needs to be addressed. Let's be clear, there are good, solid reasons for black people to have these doubts. Our history in this country when it comes to the medical and medical research establishments are not good. And when we had a socio — sociopath President in office, who was manipulating the CDC and FDA, pushing for a quicky vaccine, by election day, so that he could assure his owe re-election, you could count me among the hesitant. Trump nearly broke the once trusted CDC and the FDA, to the point you couldn't be sure that you were hearing from scientists and not just the political hacks when either agency spoke. And so, yeah, people like me were real hesitant. But luckily, there have been doctors and scientists who could reassure those of us who were willing to be reassured that the vaccines, once they came out, months later, were indeed safe and had been produced without any Trumpist input, whether or not they came through the unfortunately named Operation Warp Speed. We didn't have to do our own research, because we could literally talk with the black woman, Mr. Kizzmekia Corbett, who developed the Moderna vaccine, or with doctors on this very show who personally treat Covid patients and could assure us that the vaccines were safe. That's why I got vaccinated months ago and my immediate family got vaccinated. And yes, I talked to my doctor. Something that, by the way, lots of black folks who live in red, southern

states that have refused to expand Medicaid cannot do because they don't have a doctor or regular contact with the medical establishment in their states until they get sick. Vaccine hesitancy in the black community is a real and pressing issue. It's not something to fight about on Twitter. It's something to talk about. And coming up next, we're going to do just that with Dr. Uché Blackstock. Don't go anywhere.

(...)

7:53:11 p.m.

7 minutes and 7 seconds

REID: There's a tried and true tactic deployed by the right when it comes to, well, any problem facing the United States and that's blaming the black people

BRIAN KILMEADE [on FNC's Fox & Friends, 09/13/21]: When the President of the United States is losing patience, he's losing patience with Ph.D's. They are one of the largest section of people who aren't getting the shot, medical workers as well as African-Americans because only four of 10 have gotten the shot. Why doesn't the President call out African-Americans who put him in office and yell at them to get the shot?

REID: Okay. So, yes, vaccine hesitancy is an issue in the black and people of colored communities. A recent CNN poll shows 22 percent of black Americans say they'll not get vaccinated, the same as overall — as the overall national average. But among Republicans, well that number was 35 percent. Joining me now is Dr. Uché Blackstock, the founder and CEO of advancing health equity. Thank you so much for being here. Sister, I appreciate you being here. So let's start. You — you responded to Nicki's tweet because the thing, I think, that wasn't the first tweet so much where she said her own kind of connection to getting the vaccine had to do with working which, for a lot of people, the mandates are why they're going to do it. It was that second tweet where she said a friend of a friend of a friend somehow wound up with impotence, you know, like, impotence-related problems. And you tweeted: "Nicki, I'd love to talk to you about the COVID vaccine. Impotence is significantly more likely from Covid and there have been no documented cases of impotence associated with the COVID vaccine." I can tell that, even among vaccine hesitant people that I know and argue, that is one of the things they say it'll make you infertile, it'll make impotent. Are there any kinds of instances of these kind of things happening from the vaccine?

Dr. UCHÉ BLACKSTOCK: Thank you for having me, Joy, and you know, the fertility myths are just — they won't go away. They're very sexy. They're very seductive and they've been associate would the vaccines in the past and they are now again with the Covid vaccine. And so, what's unfortunate it keeps on being perpetuated despite growing evidence there's no known association between a Covid vaccine or impotence or infertility in females or males at all.

REID: Yeah, you know, and I think the Nicki tweet hit me personally a little bit more, probably because I, you know — I'm a big fan of her music. I have a lot of it in my phone but also she's caribbean American like myself and like yourself. You know, and I know that I'm fighting with Caribbean American members of my own family who even when they're not in the United States

are getting this crazy disinformation. And we're in, you know, multiple countries, like, arguing with people. My godmother is in Jamaica right now and is terrified because she doesn't know who's vaccinated around her. People are refusing to get it who she's associated with and she's had to, you know, push them away. And let's just look at the vaccine rates. In the United States we're at 54 percent, which is not bad. But in the Caribbean, it's, like, really, really low. Trinidad is only at 32 percent. Jamaica is only at six percent. The country — she's talking about Trinidad. These Caribbean islands are much more at risk of dying from Covid because they can't even get access to the vaccine. That frustrates me.

BLACKSTOCK: Exactly.

REID: Does it frustrate you?

BLACKSTOCK: Yeah, no, it's very frustrating. And I'm a Nicki fan and I also have a lot of Caribbean relatives who are also very hesitant about taking the vaccine. Interestingly, my Jamaican father was first in line to get the vaccine because, you know, I'm his daughter and we had multiple conversations about the importance of him taking the vaccine to keeping him safe and I think my concern with Nicki's tweet is it sounds like she was sort of thinking out loud about the vaccine, but to put that information out there with the platform she has is harmful. It's dangerous and so — mmhmm? Go ahead?

REID: Can you tell me a better way to have this conversation with people who are vaccine hesitant? When you confront people who are hesitant, what is a way to talk to them — not the refusers. Not the Republicans —

BLACKSTOCK: Right.

REID: — who are like, “Trump is my god, I'm never getting the vaccine.” But people in our communities that are just nervous about it, what do you say to them?

BLACKSTOCK: Well, you know what? Everyone has their own whys and why not's. I ask them what is the reason for you that makes you concerned? What have you heard/ Where did you get this information from? Cause that's the other thing. People are getting information from unreliable sources. They're getting information from their hair stylist, from their barber. They're not getting it from the public health professionals, they're not getting it from the physicians. I try to be as nonjudgmental as possible. Even though it's incredibly frustrating, I always want to make sure we're keeping the lines of communication open and I also realize that I may not change their mind with one conversation. We may need multiple conversations. But what's most important is making sure that they have accurate, responsible messaging, that they have the facts. So, for example, like with fertility, there's no data. There's no data at all out there showing that the Covid vaccine negatively impacts male or female infertility. In fact, what we know about covid is Covid has been associated with impotence. Covid infections have been associated with erectile dysfunction. And Covid infections in pregnant people leads to increased hospitalization and death with pregnant mothers and pre-term delivery. So, we have to make sure that we are getting that information out there to the public because there's disconnect between —

REID: Yeah.

BLACKSTOCK: — what Covid can do and what the Covid vaccine can do.

REID: You know, and I did a recent pro-vaccine event trying to encourage people to come and get vaccinated at Melba's with my friend Melba Wilson.

BLACKSTOCK: Oh yeah.

REID: And a lot of people who came up were just actually — they were actually terrified. You know, there was a one who wept, we took her in and we had to hold her hands and had to pray with her because she was so terrified of the vaccine. But she did it and she was, you know, so proud of herself afterwards. But one of the big issues with vaccine hesitancy, particularly that's directed at us and the disinformation being directed at us, it's being done when half of black Americans still live in the south, where most of those states have not expanded Medicaid. And so, if I'm a person who has lots of money and I can afford to say, "be skeptical of the vaccine," the people who hear that probably don't have a doctor, don't have access to health care, can't ask a doctor, and — and God help them if they got sick. They're going to die. I've got enough money and good insurance where I can probably survive.

BLACKSTOCK: Yeah

REID: That bothers me.

BLACKSTOCK: Yes, yes. Joy. That's such an excellent point and even more so why we — why we need black celebrities, musicians, athletes, really, I think, to be speaking out more in favor of the vaccine than they have done. I've been personally — been incredibly disappointed among the silence among black celebrities about the importance of taking this vaccine. Because we know even putting out some degree of misinformation, their base — you know, their fans are people in the rural south, like you said, people who don't have access to health care, people who don't have access to good public health.

REID: Yeah.

BLACKSTOCK: And so they are much more vulnerable which makes it even more potentially dangerous to put out that information.

REID: Indeed. Dr. Uché Blackstock, thank you for being here and having this conversation with me. I really, really appreciate you. That is tonight's ReidOut. By the way, don't forget to check out the all new *ReidOut* blog: Jahad takes on the cast of unhinged challengers in the California recall and breaks down the right-wing hero worship for anti-vaxxers.